THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF SHĀH ISMĀʿĪL DIHLAWĪ

by

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Abstract

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The loss of political power in the nineteenth century left the Indian Muslims with shattered illusions. At that hour of crisis, some religious scholars contemplated the idea of reform and religious renewal. Shāh Ismāʿīl was one such scholar who as a theologian, preacher and activist was qualified for such a task. After having taught and given **fatwás** in the Akbar Ābādī mosque madrasah in Delhi for some time, Shāh Ismāʿīl suddenly joined hands with a sufī zealot, Sayyid Aḥmad of Rā'e Barelī. The two men started a **Jihād** campaign which was initially intended to purify or purge Islam of accretions from without. Very soon the verbal **Jihād** was transformed into a **Jihād** of arms. The **Jihād** campaign was not a success, even during the life-times of its leaders, although its aftereffect continued to be felt right up to 1947 when partition took place.

Shāh Ismāʿīl's ideas on a multiplicity of subjects such as **tawhid** and **shirk**, **sunnah** and **bidʿah**, and **ijtihād** and **taqlīd** grew out of a concern to bring about far-reaching reforms. Emphasis was placed on creating a strong ethical order and solidarity among the Muslim community which alone could save it from plunging into the great Hindu ocean. Changes could be brought about if Muslims reformed their ways. This type of thinking, once radicalized, has significant implications. It provides the logical leap in the direction of **Jihād** which, circumstances being favourable, becomes its outgrowth.

Abstrait

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La perte du pouvoir politique dans la dix-neuvième siècle laissa les Musulmans Indiens avec des illusions brisés.   A cette heure de crise, certains érudits réligieux contemplaient l'idée de reforme et de renouvellement réligieuse.   Shāh Ismāʿīl était un tel érudit, qui était qualifié comme théologien, prédicateur et activiste pour une telle tâche. Après avoir enseigné et donné des **fatwas** dans le mosquée madrasah Akbar Abādī à Delhi pour une periode de temps, Shāh Ismāʿīl s'associa avec un zélateur **ṣūfī** par le nom de Sayyid Ahmad de Rā'ē Barēlī.   Les deux commencèrent une campagne **jihād** qui avait l'intention, au début, de purifier ou de purger l'Islām des accroissements venus de l'extérieur.   Très tôt, le **jihād** verbal était transformé dans un **jihād** d'armes.   La campagne **jihād** n'obtena aucuns resultats, même pendant les vies de ses chefs, quoique ses répercussions continuaient à se faire sentis jusqu'à l'année 1947, quand le partage avait lieu.

Les idées de Shāh Ismāʿīl sur une multiplicité de sujets comme, par exemple, **tawhīd** et **shirk**, **sunnah** et **bidᶜah**, et **ijtihād** et **taqlīd** se développèrent d'un souci à amener des reformes d'une grande portée. L'emphase était placé sur la création d'un ordre fortement éthique et d'une solidarité parmi la communauté musulmane, qui seuls pourraient la sauver de noyade dans le grand océan Hindou.   Des changements

étaient possibles si les Musulmans étaient prêts à se reformer. Cette sorte de pensée, une fois radicalisée, a des implications significantes. Elle fournit le saut de logique dans la direction de jihād qui, dans les circonstances favorables, devient sa conséquence.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EI	**Encyclopaedia of Islam,** first edition.
EI^2	**Encyclopaedia of Islam,** new edition.
IC	**Islamic Culture.**
IS	**Islamic Studies.**
JASP	**Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.**
JARS	**Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.**
JRSP	**Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan.**
P.Q.	**Pakistan Quarterly.**
PHS	**Pakistan Historical Society Journal.**
MW	**Muslim World.**

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze the religious thought of Shāh Ismāᶜīl Dihlawī, the grandson of Shāh Walīullāh, and a theologian of the early nineteenth century. The importance of Shāh Ismāᶜīl in Indian Islam lies primarily in his involvement in a **Jihād** campaign initiated by Sayyid Ahmad of Rā'e Barēlī, commonly known as Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd. The Sayyid's **Jihād** was aimed mainly at the purification of Islam in India. However, with time, the **Jihād** assumed a militant nature and resulted in a military campaign against the Sikhs. In one such campaign both Shāh Ismāᶜīl and his religious mentor, Sayyid Ahmad, were killed along with a group of their followers.

Since Shāh Ismāᶜīl played an important role in the movement, it will not be out of place to present at the outset an account of Sayyid Ahmad's life and the nature of his **Jihād** movement. It is necessary to do so because a narrative of Shāh's life and his ideas in isolation from the **Jihād** movement of Sayyid Ahmad would seem incomplete, since they are closely interrelated. Furthermore, such a discussion will help us to understand some important related issues, namely, whether the movement was a nationalist one as most of the post-1947 biographers of the Sayyid claim. It will also enable us to determine the validity of the oft-repeated story that during his religious journey to Mecca, Sayyid Ahmad had come into contact with Wahhābī teachers and that he imported Wahhābism to India.

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Sayyid Ahmad of Rā'ē Barēlī, son of Sayyid Muhammad ^{C}Irfān was born in 1786 in Rā'ē Barēlī.[1] He was the 36th direct descendant of Hasan, the son of ^{C}Alī.[2] Quite early he manifested sūfī tendencies which were reinforced by his upbringing in a sūfī milieu. At the age of four, he was admitted to a school where as a student he proved unpromising to the teachers and his parents. He attended the school for three years but gained nothing except the acquisition of a few chapters of the Qur'ān by heart; it is said that it took him three days to memorize the first easily graspable poetic verse of **panj kitāb** (a small book in Persian taught to children) and then he forgot it again.[3] When the father saw this helpless condition of his son, he remarked, "Leave the matter of his education to God, He will provide whatever he thinks better for him. The apparent compulsion is of no use."[4]

Shāh Ismā^{C}īl and Ja^{C}far Thānesarī, disciples and biographers of Sayyid Ahmad, explain the illiteracy of Sayyid Ahmad in terms of his relationship to the family of the Prophet.[5] In other words, this illiteracy is analogized to the Prophet's illiteracy. According to these two scholars the Sayyid was not only a direct descendant from the family of the Prophet, but in his physical features, the Sayyid also resembled Muhammad.[6] This may explain why W.W. Hunter throughout his book **The Indian Musalmans** uses the words 'Apostle' and 'Prophet' for Sayyid Ahmad. Similarly, Ram Gopal, following the pattern of Hunter, makes a wrong assertion in saying that Sayyid Ahmad "styled himself, and was verily regarded as, a prophet."[7] It should be noted that the

possiblility of Sayyid Ahmad's belonging to the family of the Prophet cannot be ruled out; similarly other stories about Sayyid Ahmad relating that in a dream the Prophet fed him three dates; that ˁAlī gave him a bath and that Fāṭimah clothed him a nice garment[8] may also be true. These stories reflect the sūfī inclinations of Sayyid Ahmad. On the other hand, the story that he resembled the Prophet in his features sounds like a credulous fabrication. It appears that this story was intended to embellish the sainthood of Sayyid Ahmad. As for the title 'Prophet' which Hunter uses for Sayyid Ahmad, it may be pointed out that this title was given jocularly to the Sayyid by his opponents.[9]

When Sayyid Ahmad was seventeen years old, his father died. The problem which he faced at that time was to find a job to support his family. With this in mind, he went to the nearest city, Lucknow, accompanied by his friends. After four months he left, having been unable to find a job. He then went to Delhī to study under Shāh ˁAbdul ˁAzīz, the celebrated traditionist of his time. ˁAbdul ˁAzīz, welcomed the Sayyid and entrusted him to the care of his younger brother Shāh ˁAbdul Qādir. ˁAbdul Qādir admitted Sayyid Ahmad to his seminary; again the Sayyid showed his lack of interest in books, and the story has it that the letters on the page vanished from his sight when the book was put before him.[10]

It should be indicated here that although Sayyid Ahmad was for all intents and purposes almost an illiterate person so far as ˁilm-i zāhirī (exoteric knowledge) was concerned, it seems, nonetheless, that

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he was an expert in ᶜilm-i bātinī (esoteric knowledge). This became clear when ᶜAbdul ᶜAzīz, the teacher of Sayyid Ahmad, initiated him into three renowned sūfī orders, the Qādirīyah, Chishtīya, and Naqshbandiya. When the stage of teaching him shughl-i barzakh arrived, Sayyid Ahmad protested against the practise and queried ᶜAbdul ᶜAzīz about the difference between idolatry and shughl-i barzakh. In the former, the Sayyid pointed out, the image worshipped was made of stone or paper whereas in the latter the image was imaginary; yet in each case it was an image which was being worshipped. ᶜAbdul ᶜAzīz could not answer that question and instead recited the following couplet from the Persian poet Hāfiz:

> Colour your prayer-carpet with wine if your religious guide so orders
> Because the sālik is not unaware of the formalities of the path."[11]

The sūfī ideas of Sayyid Ahmad can be found in Sirāt-i-mustaqīm, the only book attributed to Sayyid Ahmad. The Sayyid is said to have written it with the help of his two learned disciples, Shāh Ismāᶜīl and ᶜAbdul Hayy.[12] The book begins with a discussion of two ways of loving God; one being hubb-i ᶜishqī (Loving love), the other being hubb-i imānī (Love on account of faith or reason). The former leads to rāh-i Wilāyah or the path of sainthood and the latter leads to rāh-i nubuwwah or the path Prophethood. According to Shāh Ismāᶜīl, the author of the book, the love of a Prophet for God is superior to a mystic's love for God because the former is concerned with creating a good society on earth whereas the latter is concerned only with the

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betterment of his soul; however the two are complementary.[13] As the sufī expressions of Sayyid Ahmad could not be discerned by the common people, Shāh Ismāᶜīl had to render them into simple words so as to make them intelligible to the common man. When the book was completed it was read over to, and corrected by Sayyid Ahmad.[14]

II

Sayyid Ahmad Khān says that in order to keep his sufī experiences secret from people so that they might not disturb him and that he could have sufficient time to complete his esoteric knowledge, Sayyid Ahmad jointed the army of Amīr Khān Pindārī of Tonk.[15] Be that as it may, the Sayyid was again facing an economic problem, and as he was not eligible for any other job such as that of a qādī or a clerk because of his illiteracy, he had no choice but to work in the army. He was first recruited as a trooper,[16] then he was assigned the duty of leading people in prayer.[17] The story that Shāh ᶜAbdul ᶜAzīz sent the Sayyid to the army of the Amīr does not seem authentic.[18] Sayyid Ahmad remained in the army of the Amīr for seven years. The army of the Amīr is said to have been influenced morally by the presence of the Sayyid.[19] The piety and high moral character of the Sayyid led to his promotion to the rank of advisor and special bodyguard of the Amīr who consulted him on every matter.[20] During this period the Sayyid developed his spiritual potential to such a degree that the desire to preach in public and initiate people into his sufī order became very strong. He could no longer stay in the army of the Amīr and thought it appropriate to withdraw from the Amīr's service in order to ini-

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tiate a general calling (da^{c}wah). Incidentally, the time of his departure from the Amīr's army coincided with the signing of a treaty between the British and the Amīr and, as a result, some biographers of the Sayyid have suggested that he deserted the army as a signal of protest against the decision of the Amīr.[21]

It was in 1817 that the Sayyid left the army and returned to Delhī. By this time his former teacher Shāh ^{c}Abdul Qādir had died, and his seat of ifta' was taken over by Shāh Ismā^{c}īl.[22] Until then Shāh Ismā^{c}īl had not shown any interest in ^{c}ilm-i bātinī, having been more interested in ^{c}ilm-i zāhirī.[23] Among the early converts of the new reformer were Shāh Ismā^{c}īl and ^{c}Abdul Hayy, the scions of the family of Shāh Walīullāh, as ^{c}Azīz Ahmad calls them.[24] Shāh Ismā^{c}īl was eight years older[25] and more knowledgeable than the Sayyid, and the same was true of ^{c}Abdul Hayy; yet Sayyid Ahmad seems to have held these ^{c}ulamā' and a host of others in such a spellbound condition that they rendered menial services to him and ran, with their shoes off, by the side of his palanquin, wherever the Sayyid would go.[26]

After having made a considerable number of proselytes, the Sayyid, then aged 38, intended in 1820 to make a religious journey to Mecca for Hajj. It is said that it was ^{c}Abdul ^{c}Azīz who urged Sayyid Ahmad to go to Mecca;[27] in any case, the Sayyid, accompanied by one thousand followers,[28] set out for the Hijāz. The party first went to Calcutta where they boarded a ship for Mecca. Sayyid Ahmand returned to India in 1824 after having made the pilgrimage. (William Hunter, however, gives the date of the Sayyid's return as October 1822.)[29] Garcin also mentions the story of the Sayyid's going to Constan-

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tinople, increasing the number of his disciples and getting a present, the value of which was 9 lakhs of rupees.[30] This story, however, cannot be confirmed by other sources.

The journey to Mecca fired the Sayyid's imagination, and now he began to compare the religious condition of India with that of ^cArabia and other Muslim countries he had visited. Thus far he had been a reformer of abuses, but now he took it upon himself to undertake an active Jihād against non-Muslims. Whether this was a premeditated plan or came about through some impulse, is not clear. However, according to Sir Sayyid, Sayyid Aḥmad had had a vision that he would die as martyr along with a group of Muslims, and his eagerness in a Jihād was a fulfillment of that vision.[31]

When Sayyid Aḥmad, as a sūfī and reformer, appeared on the scene, it was the time when the Sikh rule was predominant in the Punjab. The Sikh rule was notorious for its oppression of Muslims,[32] and this tyranny of the Sikhs was put forward as a reason for the waging of a Jihād against them. The exact date of the Jihād can be known from the following extract from **Targhīb al-Jihād** (Incitement to Religious War), a treatise written by a certain **mawlavī** from Qanūj. According to this incensed **mawlavī**,

> The tribes of Sikhs have long held sway in Lahore and other places. Their oppressions have exceeded all limits. Thousands of Mohammadens [sic] they unjustly killed, and on thousands have they heaped disgrace. The Azān or the summons to prayer, and the killing of cows, they have entirely prohibited. When at length their insulting tyranny could no longer be borne, Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad (may his fortunes be permanent) having for his single object the protection of the Faith, took with him a few true musalmans, and going in the direction of

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Kabul and Peshawar, succeeded in rousing the
Mohammadens[sic] of those countries from their slumber
of indifference and nerving their courage for action
----Praise be to God---- some thousands of believers
became ready at his call to tread the Path of God's
service; and on the 20th Jumadi-ul-ula',.1242 Hijri (or
the 21st December, 1826) the Jihad against the kafir
Sikhs began.[33]

The choice of the Northwestern Frontier as the site of Sayyid
Ahmad's militant activities has been interpreted by some scholars as
indicating the Sayyid's intention not to wage a **Jihad** against the
British. Rather, the object of his **Jihad** was the Sikhs only. In fact
one of the earlier biographers of the Sayyid, Ja^{c}far Thanesari, who
was a close associate of Sayyid Ahmad and who personally participated
in the **Jihad**, asserts the opinion that the target of the Sayyid was
the Sikhs only. According to Thanesari, when Sayyid Ahmad was prea-
ching **Jihad** against the Sikhs in Calcutta, someone asked him, 'Why are
you going so far away to fight with the Sikhs? Why don't you wage a
Jihad against them and recapture Hindustan; hundreds of thousands of
people will follow you." At this the Sayyid replied, "We don't want
to become rulers by snatching the country of the British or the Sikhs.
The only reason of waging a **Jihad** against the Sikhs is that they do
oppressions on Muslims..."[34] Similarly another contemporary bio-
grapher of the movement, Sir Sayyid writes,

Thirty five years ago a celebrated moulvie[sic]
Muhammad Isma^{c}il... by name preached a religious crusade
in Hindustan and called upon all men to aid him in
carrying it out. But on that occasion he distinctly
stated that natives of Hindustan, subject to the British
Government could not conscientiously take part in a
religious war within the limits of Hindustan. Accord-
ingly while thousands of Jehades (Muslim fighters) con-
gregated in every district of Hindustan, there was no
sort of disturbance raised within British Territory.

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> Going northwards, these men crossed the Punjab Frontier, and waged a Jihād in those parts of the country.[35]

. This matter will be discussed further in a later section.

Sayyid Ahmad, followed by his band, reached the Frontier through a detour passing through Gwalior, Tonk, Ajmīr, Sind, Hyderābād, Baluchistān, Qandahār, Ghazni, Kabul and Peshawar. Ultimately he chose Nawshera as his headquarters.[36] According to the story, Sayyid Ahmad sent an ultimatum to Ranjīt Singh, the Ruler of the Punjab, informing him of his intentions.[37] Ranjīt Singh ignored the ultimatum as a result of which Sayyid Ahmad 'girded his loins' to initiate in a rather disorganized fashion, a series of skirmishes against the Sikh army. When the mujāhidīn, the followers of Sayyid Ahmad, left Rā'e Barelī, they were five or six hundred in number; in Qandahār the number reached one thousand. When various bands arrived from India, the total number swelled to 2500.[38] The Sikhs were so much intimidated by the mujāhidīn, that they were willing to relinquish the upper part of the Indus to Sayyid Ahmad, but the latter refused to accept the offer[39] because, as he stated, his intention was only to "carry out the order of God." The lack of discipline which was surfacing in the Sayyid's band was more than compensated for by the zeal and enthusiasm with which they fought. Initially Sayyid Ahmad's followers were victorious despite the huge number and more sophisticated weaponry of the Sikh army. However, it was not long before problems both internal as well as external arose for the mujāhidīn. Internally, a small group of mujāhidīn, headed by a certain Mahbūb ᶜAlī, challenged the authority of Sayyid Ahmad as a leader and deserted.[40] Externally, the

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local tribal chiefs who had so enthusiastically welcomed the new reformer and had allied themselves with him, became suspicious of his intentions, for he had failed to keep those tribal chiefs on an equal footing. Therefore they came to look upon the success of Sayyid Ahmad as a threat to their position and, as ᶜUbayd Allāh Sindhī put it, they came to regard the leadership of the Sayyid as a death-news piyām-i marg for their chieftainship.[41] Thus, they started conspiring against him: in the middle of a war against the Sikhs, Yār Muhammad Khān deserted from the army of the Sayyid and sided with the Sikhs. Apparently, Yār Muhammad Khān went so far as to administer poison to Sayyid Ahmad in an attempt to get rid of him.[42] These events natural-ly occupied Sayyid Ahmad and his military advisor Shāh Ismāᶜīl in putting down this local rebellion engineered by local chiefs.

Sayyid Ahmad was successful in crushing this rebellion, and now the zealous reformer marched towards Peshawar in 1830. The ruler of Peshawar, Sultān Muhammed Khān, brother to Yār Muhammad Khān must have been shocked by the sudden appearance of the mujāhidīn. He decided to give in: after a brief negotiation which took place in Hazārkhānī, a town in the suburbs of Peshawar, the Sultān swore allegiance to Sayyid Ahmad and thus Peshawar capitulated. The Sayyid then decided, against the wishes of his disciples, to hand Peshawar back to its previous owner, Sultān Muhammad Khān; the latter was aided by a Qāzī and a few other persons who would promulgate the sharīᶜah law in the city. Thus after laying the foundations of a hukūmat-i muwaqqatah or provisional government as ᶜUbayd Allāh Sindhī likes to call it,[43] the Sayyid left the administration of Peshawar in the hands of Sultān Muhammad Khān,

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and departed for his headquarters in Panchtār.

The handing over of Peshawar to Sultān Muhammad Khān proved disastrous for Sayyid Ahmad and the **mujāhidīn**. His victory over the local chiefs had only increased their jealousy and resentment, and they now were waiting for an opportune time to break into rebellion. They had never accepted his leadership wholeheartedly, nor were they happy with the abrupt social reforms he introduced.[44] Moreover, in one of the wars Yār Muhammad Khān, the Sultān's brother, had been killed by the Sayyid's army. The Sultān had never forgiven the Sayyid for the death, and it appears that the opportunity of revenge, a prominent feature in the Afghan tribal code, was being awaited. The above factors all contributed to a general conspiracy against Sayyid Ahmad and his deputies. A nefarious plan was hatched by the Sultān and the rest of the chiefs to put to death all the deputies of the Sayyid who were assigned various duties such as collecting tithes from people, working as moral-censors and so on. It was, in fact, implemented in a most grim fashion.

The tragic news of the death of his associates shocked the Sayyid very deeply. Disillusioned and disappointed with the local populace, he now decided to leave the area and migrate to Kashmīr with his followers. In Bālākōt, on his way to Kashmīr, he was surprised by a huge Sikh army of 20,000[45] under the command of Sher Singh who had come there to collect his (**qalang**) tax from the people of that area. A clash resulted: one day before the actual fighting began, Sayyid Ahmad dreamt that the colour of the legs of his **chārpā'ī** (bed) was

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red;[46] the interpretation of the dream was clear: the end of the reformer had arrived. The **mujāhidīn** fought desperately but in the face of a huge and well-equipped Sikh army, they were defeated. Sayyid Aḥmad received a bullet in the thigh that proved fatal while his military commander, Shāh Ismāʿīl, was shot in the forehead.[47] This happened in May, 1831.[48]

III

It will not be without interest to mention the controversy over the "disappearance" of the Sayyid. A substantial number of the disciples of the Sayyid could not believe their master had really died; they asserted that he had not died: they thought, rather, that he was hiding and would reappear in the future to defend the Muslim faith. This occultation myth was strengthened by some statements attributed to Sayyid Aḥmad himself. For example, before leaving his home for **Jihād** the Sayyid had addressed his sister thus: People will say that Sayyid Aḥmad has died but until and unless the infidelity of India, the schism of Iran and the hypocrisy of Afghanistan are gone, my mission will not come to an end.[49] There were stories that after his death the Sayyid was actually seen and recognized by people at different places.[50] It is surprising that learned people such as Yaḥya ʿAlī, of Patna, one of the eleven people who were awarded the death sentence in the 1864 trials,[51] supported the myth of occultation.[52] Similarly the Urdu poet Mū'min believed in the myth of disappearance.[53] In the beginning, Jaʿfar Thānēsarī was as sure of the returning of the Sayyid as he was sure of his own death; however, he

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changed his mind afterwards and accepted the notion of martyrdom.[54]

The chief exponent of the theory of occultation was Wilāyat ᶜAlī, one of the four caliphs of the Sayyid, who was not present at the disaster of Bālākōt.[55] Wilāyat ᶜAlī believed that Sayyid Ahmad had disappeared temporarily; in his absence the preparation of **Jihād** should be carried on; he would certainly return and the Muslims would find salvation in his leadership. After stating the above position of Wilāyat ᶜAlī, Sindhī makes the following remark: Obviously this idea seems very irrational; but since the names of great ᶜulamā' and sūfīs are mentioned in connection with the movement, therefore the only way that it can be interpreted is that it was a political tactic (chāl) whose intention was to keep laymen in touch with the movement.[56]

There was also a controversy as to where the Sayyid was buried. Nawāb Wazīr-ud-Dawlah, a disciple and biographer of the Sayyid relates the following anecdote about the tomb of Sayyid Ahmad. Someone said to Sayyid Ahmad, "You criticize so much tomb-worship. After your death, your followers will worship your tomb. The Sayyid replied, "I will pray to God to make my tomb disappear." The Nawāb remarked, "Lo and behold, the prayer of Sayyid Ahmad was answered, and up to this day nobody knows the exact place where the Sayyid is buried."[57] According to one story, the head was buried at one place and the body at another.[58] Another story has it that the head and the body were floating in a stream, then somebody recognized them and buried them together.[59] There is also a story that Sher Singh engaged a boy to identify the dead body of Sayyid Ahmad and then buried it with respect following the Muslim ritual.[60] All these stories sound baseless and

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preposterous. The anecdote told by the Nawāb was closer to the truth. The truth of the matter is that "the Sayyid's body was identified and burnt by the Sikhs."[61] This being the case, the tomb attributed to Sayyid Aḥmad at Bālākot is not real. The story that Sher Singh had the body of the Sayyid buried with respect sounds unfounded, for, we are told that the **khālisa darbār** at Lahore celebrated the occasion with much jubilation.[62]

<div align="center">IV</div>

A large controversy has emerged over the question of whether the Sayyid's **Jihād** was aimed only at the Sikhs or whether the ultimate target was the British. We have mentioned above the opinion of Sir Sayyid and Ja'far Thānēsarī. The former wrote his account of Sayyid Aḥmad and Shāh Ismā'īl fourteen or fifteen years after the battle of Bālākōt;[63] the latter was a participant in the **Jihād**. These two scholars argue that since the British did not interfere in any way with the religious affairs of Muslims, therefore, the Sayyid could not have thought of waging a **Jihād** against them; the target of the **Jihād** was therefore the Sikhs only.[64]

'Ubayd Allāh Sindhī (d. 1944) claims that the movement was sponsored by Shāh 'Abdul 'Azīz who had declared India to be **dār-ul-Ḥarb** (the country of war), and was now looking for a young and energetic man to spearhead the movement. Such a person he found in Sayyid Aḥmad.[65] Sindhī also mentions that 'Abdul 'Azīz had set up two committees which would operate under his own supervision; one was

administrative in nature and was comprised of Shāh Muhammad Ishāq and Shāh Muhammad Ya[c]qūb whose function was to collect funds at Delhī and then send them to the Frontier; the other was a military committee consisting of Shāh Ismā[c]īl and [c]Abdul Hayy whose duty was to make preparations for military endeavours.[66] The association of Sayyid Ahmad with Shāh [c]Abdul [c]Azīz is well known; the latter was the spiritual teacher of the former. But to say that [c]Abdul [c]Azīz sponsored the Jihād movement or even that he set up two committees is a matter on which Sindhī has given scant evidence. On the contrary, the attitude towards the British of [c]Abdul [c]Azīz and the Mujāhidīn which include Sayyid Ahmad and Shāh Ismā[c]īl themselves, was ambivalent.[67] [c]Abdul [c]Azīz had given permission to Muslims to learn English[68] and accept services under the British. [c]Abdul Hayy had served in the East India Company for some time.[69]

Whereas the early biographers of the Sayyid portrayed the latter as either pro-British or at least indifferent towards the British, the later biographers, especially those who appeared in the post-1947 era, hold the idea that the movement was anti-British in character. The difference in attitude was perhaps based on the wrong assumption that the seeds of 'nationalism' and 'separatism' could be found in the movement. Although the movement was a total failure, yet it was given considerable popular attention and Sayyid Ahmad was depicted as a great national hero,[70] the "liberator of the country."[71] The most outstanding writer on the movements of this era is Ghulām Rasūl Mihr whose voluminous biography of the Sayyid fills close to two thousand pages. The recurrent theme of Mihr's book is that the Sayyid was

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principally against non-muslim rule in India, be it that of the British or the Sikhs or the Jāts. Mihr faults the earlier biographers for concentrating on two objectives of the Sayyid only, that is, i^{c}lā 'kalima Rabb al-^{c}Ālamīn (The Elevation of the Word of God) and **Ihyā-i sunnat-i Sayyid al-Mursalīn** (The revivification of the Prophetic Sunnah); while losing sight of a third objective, namely, **Istikhlās bilād al-Muslimīn az dast-i kafara mutamarridīn** (Deliverance of the Islamic Lands from the hands of rebellious infidels).[72]

According to Mihr, when Sayyid Ahmad was busy on **Jihād**, an Englishman by the name of Mason was touring the country and described the following as the goal of Sayyid Ahmad: The elimination of the Sikhs and the seizure of the Punjab, and then the domination of India and China.[73] But the general train of thought of Mihr is speculative, and therefore he should be read cautiously.

It is appropriate to look at the opinions of Western Scholars on the matter under discussion. The most prolific writer on the movement is William Hunter who held that the 'Apostle' was hostile to the British. R.C. Majumdar in his **History of the Freedom Movement** maintains that Sayyid Ahmad "deliberately conceived the project of reviving Muslim rule in India by fighting the infidel rulers, particularly the Sikhs and the British."[74] Freeland Abbot opines that Sayyid Ahmad believed that the condition of Muslims could be improved by force.[75] On the question of why the Sayyid chose the Sikhs as his first target, Abbot expresses the following opinion: "Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd, of course, raised his **Jihād** against the Sikhs rather than

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against the British, but he looked upon the matter only as one of putting first things first, and first he thought he could defeat the Sikhs."[76]

Some early biographers (who have presented Sayyid Ahmad as pro-British) maintain also that the British held an attitude of indifference towards his military activities. It has been suggested by some scholars that the British really wanted the Sikh power to be liquidated.[77] When the Sayyid came to the fore, it was the time when the British had not yet fully established themselves; their power was rather growing. Therefore, at that stage the British must have welcomed the trouble between Sayyid Ahmad and the Sikhs.[78]

Sayyid Ahmad has been described as an 'adventurer',[79] a 'visionary'[80] and a 'dreamer of dreams'.[81] He might actually have envisioned the supremacy of Islam and Muslims in India, but as Mihr has rightly pointed out, the Sayyid's purpose was not to give a government to Muslims but rather to make them better Muslims.[82] Neither was his purpose to prop up the decaying and corrupt Mughal regime. His goal was rather to strike a new moral order for Muslims which would eventually lead, he said, to **khilāfah ᶜalā'minhāj al-Nubuwwah** (Caliphate on the pattern of Prophethood).

Sayyid Ahmad was a sūfī, but he seems to be of a special kind. Like common sūfīs of his day, he would teach **tawajjuh** (concentration) which has been likened by some to the bellows of a blacksmith.[83] However, unlike them, he would get his arms and shoulders massaged, practise push ups, and devote some time to archery.[84] This was perhaps a preparation of some kind for his militant intentions. He

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wanted to be strong in both body and spirit.

<center>V</center>

A few words are in order on the question of 'Wahhābism' in India, which has been associated with the name of Sayyid Aḥmad.

Many Western Scholars say that during his religious journey to Mecca Sayyid Ahmad came into contact with Wahhābī professors, imbibed their views, and on his return to India brought their doctrines with him.[85]   There is also a story that Sayyid Aḥmad was expelled from Mecca because of the similarity of his doctrines to those of the Wahhābīs, [86] and that he returned to India as a fanatical disciple of ᶜAbdul Wahhāb.[87] According to Freeland Abbot, the 'path of Muhammad' initiated by Sayyid Ahmad was identified by some Muslims as an Indian version of the puritanical Wahhābī movement.[88] J.R.C. (full name not given) expresses the same opinion that the Sayyid's movement may be regarded as an imitation of the 'Arabian Wahhābī movement.'[89] It has also been asserted that the literature produced by Shāh Ismāᶜīl breathes the spirit of Wahhābī ideology.[90]

It may be pointed out also that the reform movement of Sayyid Ahmad has been described as "Wahhābī" in the British Indian Government documents.[91] However, certain facts run counter to such claims. During the period when Sayyid Aḥmad travelled to Mecca, the Wahhābī movement had been suppressed in the Ḥijāz by the Ottomans.[92] The mere fact that Sayyid Ahmad was interrogated in Mecca and expelled reveals that Wahhābī influence must have died out both politically as well as

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historically.[93]   As for the question of similarity between the two

movements, Mas^c ̄ud Nadw ̄i holds that it was because of their common

origins, namely the Qur' ̄an and the Had ̄ith. Both movements emphasized

the Unity of God and condemned all types of associationism (**shirk**) and

innovations.[94]   The same author holds that the Sayyid's movement was

dubbed as Wahhab ̄i because of certain British propaganda;[95] that is,

the British were responsible for the name, and giving it such a name

was a way of fighting the "Wahhab ̄is".

At the same time there were differences between the two move-

ments. The Arabian Wahhab ̄is show their affiliation with the school of

Ahmad B. Hanbal whereas the Indian Wahhab ̄is describe themselves as

ghayr muqallids or 'non-conformists', meaning, that they do not follow

any one of the four medieval canonical schools. The Indian **Wahhab ̄is**

sometimes call themselves Muhammad ̄is,[96] that is, 'the followers of

Muhammad.' Another point of difference between the two is that the

Arabian Wahhab ̄is were entirely inimical to suf ̄ism whereas Sayyid Ahmad

and his disciples maintained their suf ̄i practises. As a matter of

fact, the Sayyid's movement was started through the use of the suf ̄i

practise of **bay^cah** or showing allegiance to one's P ̄ir. In the initial

stage, the Sayyid's disciples used to go into the jungles for long

meditations.[97]

In the reform movement of Sayyid Ahmad, whose brief history we

surveyed above, Sh ̄ah Isma^c ̄il stands out very prominently.   Since

Sayyid Ahmad was not very eloquent, he would ask Sh ̄ah Isma^c ̄il to

deliver sermons and preach the virtues of **Jih ̄ad**. The Sh ̄ah was the

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special advisor of Sayyid Ahmad, and in most of the expeditions he was appointed as the Amīr-i A^{c}lā' or chief commander. When a controversy arose among the mujāhidīn on the question of whether or not Sayyid Ahmad was fit for leadership, it was Shāh Ismā^{c}īl who defended the case of the Sayyid and said that he was the most suitable person for leadership.[98] He was the scribe of the Sayyid; in addition he was the ambassador in the negotiations which the Sayyid convened with the chiefs of Peshawar.[99]

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1 Ghulām Rasūl Mihr, **Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd: Ya^c nī Mujāhid-i Kabīr Hadrat Sayyid Ahmad Barelewi ki Mufassil Sawānih Hayāt awr unkī Tahrīk Ihyāy-i Dīn ki Mukammil Sarguzasht** (Lahore: Kitāb Manzil, 1954), p. 56; Sayyid Abul Hasan ^c Alī Nadwī, **Sīrat-i Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, 3rd ed. vol. 1 (Lucknow: Dārul ^c Ulūm Nadwat al-^c Ulamā', 1368/1948), p. 69; Mīrzā Hayrat Dihlawī, **Hayāt-i Tayyibah** (Amratsar: Thana'ī barqī Press, 1933), p. 285. This book is mainly a biography of Shāh Isma^c īl, although at the end of the book a short biography of Sayyid Ahmad is also given; Muhammad Ja^c far Thānesarī, **Hayāt-i Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd** (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1968), p. 50. This book was originally published in 1891 with the title **Tawārikh-i ^c Ajībah mawsūm bih Sawānih Ahmadī** and divided into five parts. The Karachi edition has dropped the fifth part which contains the letters of Sayyid Ahmad; Abul Kalam Āzād, **Tazkirah**, ed. by Malik Rām (New Delhi: Sahtiya Academy, 1968), p. 460; Tufail Ahmad Manglorī, **Musalmānonr kā rawshan Mustaqbil**, 5th ed. (Delhi: Kutubkhāna ^c Azīziyah, 1945), p. 105; ^c Ubayd Allāh Sindhī, **Shāh Walīullāh awr unkī siyāsī Tahrīk**, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1952), p. 91; W.W. Hunter, **The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?** London: Tribune and Co., 1871, Delhī ed. from the 3rd ed. (Delhī: Indological Book House, 1969), p. 3.

2 Ja^c far Thānesarī, p. 51; **Encyclopaedia of Islām**, new ed., p. 282.

3 Mīrzā Hayrat, p. 287. However, Sindhī mentions that Sayyid Ahmad had learnt the basic Arabic and Persian books from Shāh Muhammad Ishāq and Shāh Isma^c īl (Sindhī, p. 91). Sir Sayyid also mentions that Sayyid Ahmad learnt sarf and nahw, i.e., Arabic grammar and syntax. **Āthār-us-Sanādīd**, part 4, (Matba^c Nawl Kishwar, n.d.), p. 26. Mihr casts doubt on the complete illiteracy of Sayyid Ahmad. According to Mihr, the Sayyid was not a ^c ālim in the sense that Shāh ^c Abdul ^c Azīz and Shāh Isma^c īl were, but he knew the do's and don'ts of **shari^c ah**, and also he understood Arabic and Persian (Mihr, **Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, p. 58).

4 Mihr, **Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, p. 57; Ja^c far Thānesarī, p. 53; Nadwī, **Sīrat**, vol. 1, p. 70.

5 Shāh Isma^c īl, **Sirāt-i Mustaqīm** (Urdu text)(Lahore: Shaykh Muhammad Ashraf, n.d.), p. 16; Ja^c far Thānesarī, p. 53.

6 Ibid.

7 Ram Gopal, **Indian Muslims: A Political History (1858-1947)** (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1959), p. 22.

[8] Shāh Ismā°īl, Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm, p. 369; Nadwī, Sīrat, vol. 1, p. 85; Ja°far Thānesarī, p. 54; S.A.A. Rizvī, "Ideological Background of the Wahhābī Movement in India in the XVIII and XIX Centuries," in **Ideas in History**, ed. by Bisheshwar Prasad (London: Asia Publishing House, 1968), p. 94.

[9] Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān, **Review on Dr. Hunter's Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?** (Lahore: Premier Book House, n.d.), p. 22.

[10] Mihr, **Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, p. 58; Nadwī, Sīrat, vol. 1, p. 82.

[11] Ja°far Thānesarī, p. 61; Nadwī, Sīrat, vol. 1, p. 79; Mihr, **Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, p. 76.

[12] S.M. Ikrām, **Muslim Rule in India and Pakistan**, 2nd ed. (Lahore: Star Book depot, 1966), p. 441. The book is divided into four chapters, with a **muqaddimah** (introduction) and a **khatimah** (conclusion). The first and the last chapters were written by Shāh Ismā°īl while the 2nd and 3rd were written by °Abdul Ḥayy, who translated the whole book into Arabic when the Sayyid journeyed to Mecca; Shāh Ismā°īl, Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm, p. 16; Aslam Siddiqī, "Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd," **Islamic Culture**, vol. XIX (1945), p. 131; S.M. Ikrām, **Mawj-i Kawsar** (Lahore: Urdu Book stall, n.d.), p. 12. According to S.M. Ikrām, the 2nd chapter of **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm** is the soul of the book from the point of view of reform. **Mawj-i Kawsar**, p. 13.

[13] Shāh Ismā°īl, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm** (Persian text) (Calcutta, 1823), pp. 58-60, 67-8 as quoted in Peter Hardy, **The Muslims of British India** (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), p. 53.

[14] Shāh Ismā°īl, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 17; J.R.C., "Notice of the peculiar Tenets held by the followers of Syed Aḥmad, taken chiefly from the 'Ṣirāt-ul-Mustaqīm' a principal Treatise of that Sect, written by Moulavī Maḥommed [sic] Ismā°īl," **Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal** (Nov., 1832), p. 498.

[15] Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khan, **Āthār-us-Ṣanādīd**, part 4, p. 26.

[16] W.W. Hunter, **The Indian Musalmans**, p. 4. About the early life of Sayyid Aḥmad, Hunter writes, "He began life as a horse soldier in the service of a celebrated freebooter, and for many a year harried the rich opium-growing villages of Malwa."; Ishtiāq Ḥusayn Qureshī, **The Muslim Community of the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent (610-1947)** ('S-Gravenhage: Mouton and Co., 1962), p. 196.

[17] Ibid.; Malik Ikrām °Alī, "Muslim Riyāsatoṇ awr Sardāroṇ say Ranjīt Singh ke Ta°alluqat," **Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan**, vol. VIII (Jan. 1971), p. 60.

[18] Sindhī has propagated this story without giving any evidence. Sayyid Aḥmad was completely free in his choice of joining the Amīr's army. According to one story, Sayyid Aḥmad was inspired by God to go to the Amīr. Secondly, if Sayyid Aḥmad was sent by Shāh [C]Abdul [C]Azīz, then why didn't [C]Abdul [C]Azīz, in that period of seven years when the Sayyid was with the Amīr call the Sayyid even once and enquire of him what he had done concerning the advancement of the 'program' of [C]Abdul [C]Azīz? (Sindhī claims that the Sayyid was sent by [C]Abdul [C]Azīz to the Amīr for a certain program which [C]Abdul [C]Azīz had in mind); Mihr, **Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, p. 91.

[19] Nadwī, **Sīrat**, vol. 1, p. 86; Mirzā Ḥayrat, p. 301; Ja[C]far Thānēsarī, p. 72.

[20] Mirzā Ḥayrat, p. 301.

[21] Mihr, **Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, p. 109; Sindhī, p. 93; Nadwī, **Sīrat**, vol. 1, p. 88; Hafeez Malik, **Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan** (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1963), p. 161; Ishtiaq Ḥusayn Qureshī, p. 197.

[22] Sir Sayyid, **Āthār-us-Sanādīd**, part 4, p. 27; Mushīr Aḥmad [C]Alawī, "Hazrat Isma[C]il Shahīd" **Ta[C]mīr** (Lucknow: January, 1951), p. 4.

[23] Ibid.

[24] [C]Azīz Aḥmad, **Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan** (London: Oxford Univ. Press), p. 20.

[25] Ṭufail Aḥmad Manglōrī, p. 106.

[26] W.W. Hunter, p. 4; J.R.C., p. 481; Ram Gopal, p. 22; Murray T. Titus, **Islam in India and Pakistan** (Calcutta: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1959), p. 189; Edward Rehatsek, "The History of the Wahhabys in Arabia and in India," **Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland**, vol. XIV (1878-1880), p. 352; Nadwī, **Sīrat**, vol. 1, p. 113.

[27] Garcin de Tassy, **Historie de la littérature hindouie et hindoustanie** (Paris, 1839), p. 32; Mushīr Aḥmad [C]Alawī, "Ḥazrat Isma[C]īl Shahīd," **Ta[C]mīr** (Lucknow, Feb. 1951), p. 4.

[28] Sir Sayyid, **Āthār-us-Ṣanādīd**, part 4, p. 27.

[29] W.W. Hunter, p. 5.

[30] Garcin de Tassy, p. 32. The story of the Sayyid's visit to Constantinople is mentioned also by S.M. Laṭif, **History of the Punjab** (Calcutta: Central Press Ltd., 1891), p. 437. However, according to Maḥmūd Ḥusayn, the story lacks evidence and therefore seems to be unfounded. Maḥmūd Ḥusayn, "Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd" (I), **A History of the**

Freedom Movement, vol. 1 (Karachi, 1957), p. 563.

[31] Sir Sayyid, **Āthār-us-Sanādīd**, part 4, p. 27. It may be pointed out that Sir Sayyid had confused this vision with the one which the Sayyid had experienced one night before the battle of Bālākōt. However, Sir Sayyid had dropped part four of his **Āthār-us-Sanādīd**, which contains the stories of Shāh ᶜAbdul ᶜAzīz and his disciples, from the second edition. The explanation for this, according to Hafeez Malik and Morris Dembo, in their translation of Sir Sayyid's **History of the Bijnore Rebellion** (Michigan: Asian Studies Centre, Michigan University, n.d.), p. VI, appears to be Sir Sayyid's "impolitic eulogy" of Sayyid Ahmad in which the latter has been depicted as a man of superhuman qualities in bravery, in popular appeal, and in his "command of spiritual power."

[32] The details of Sikh oppressions of Muslims can be seen in Mirzā Hayrat's **Hayāt-i Tayyibah**, Jaᶜfar Thānesarī's **Hayāt-i Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, and S.M. Ikrām's **Mawj-i Kawsar**.

[33] J.R.C., p. 482; W.W. Hunter, pp. 6-7; S.A.A. Rizvī, p. 99.

[34] Jaᶜfar Thānesarī, p. 171; Mihr, **Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, p. 253.

[35] Sir Sayyid, **History of the Bijnore Rebellion**, trans. by H. Malik and Morris Dembo, p. 119.

[36] Sindhī, p. 99; Aslam Siddiqī, p. 138; Mahmūd Husayn, p. 584.

[37] Mahmūd Husayn, p. 585; Aslam Siddiqī, p. 132.

[38] Ghulām Rasūl Mihr, **Jamāᶜat-i Mujāhidīn** (Lahore: Kitāb Manzil, 1955), p. 76.

[39] Ibid., Nadwī says Ranjīt Singh offered 9 lakhs of rupees to Sayyid Ahmad for the area on the right bank of the Indus if he would give up the idea of warfare with Ranjīt Singh, but the Sayyid refused. Nadwī, **Sīrat-i Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd** vol. 2 (Karachi, 1974), p. 219.

[40] Sir Sayyid, **Review**, p. 15.

[41] Sindhī, p. 110.

[42] S.M. Ikrām, **Muslim Rule**, p. 436; Jaᶜfar Thānesarī, p. 227; Mihr, **Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, p. 396; Sindhī, p. 110; Piyam Shahjahānpurī, **Shahādat Balakot** (Lahore: Idāra Tarikh-o-Tahqiq, 1971), p. 89; Garcin de Tassy, p. 34; Ishtiāq Husayn Qureshī, p. 201; S.M. Latif, p. 441.

[43] Sindhī, p. 122.

[44] For example, there was the custom still practised in certain parts of Afghanistan and the Frontier province of **melmastia**, or giving shelter to criminals. This custom was also practised by the pagan Arabs of the time of Muhammad (Nadwī, **Sīrat** vol. 2, p. 87). According to Nadwī, parallel to Islamic **sharīᶜah** another "divine law" was being practised for centuries in Afghanistan and the Frontier province, and the tribesmen were not willing to give up that "divine law" (Nadwī, vol. 2, p. 319). Secondly, the tribesmen married off their daughters to the highest bidders (Ibid.). Sayyid Ahmad explained this evil custom, and his agents are reported to have taken strong measures to eradicate it. Qāzī Mazhar ᶜAlī, the promulgator of **sharīᶜah** law in Peshawar issued a strict order that all the widows and those engaged women whose prospective husbands were present should be married within three days (Ibid., p. 322; Mirzā Hayrat, p. 211). Some Pathan women were married off by force (Nadwī, vol. 2, p. 307). For example, Sindhī relates the story that the daughter of the Khan of Khwashgī was married forcibly to an Indian (Sindhī, p. 115). Third, the imposition of taxes upon the tribesmen was another source of trouble. Prior to the appearance of the Sayyid in the area, the chiefs were the recipients of half of the income from the crops. The introduction of ᶜushr by the Sayyid put an end to the existing system. These causes led to the consternation of the chiefs. It has been rightly pointed out by the author of the article in the **Calcutta Review** that Sayyid Ahmad as a ruler proceeded "to strike twelve centuries out of the World's history, and compel a foreign race to conform to the habits and customs of the Arabians in the time of Muhammad." (**Calcutta Review**, No. CI, 1870, p. 186 as quoted by S.A.A. Rizvī, p. 102.)

[45] Sindhī, p. 118; Jaᶜfar Thānēsarī, p. 284.

[46] Piyām Shāhjahān Pūrī, p. 243.

[47] Nadwī, vol. 2, p. 439.

[48] Mihr, **Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd** vol. 2, p. 414; Mirzā Hayrat, p. 314; Sindhī, p. 118; Tufayl Ahmad Manglorī, p. 116; Abu Yahya Imam Khan Nusharawī, **Tarājim ᶜUlamā'-i Hadīth-i Hind**, vol. 1 (Delhi: Jayyid barqī Press, 1938), p. 92; Mawdudī, **Tajdīd-o-Ihyā'-i Dīn**, 5th ed. (Lahore, 1960), p. 114; S.M. Latīf, p. 443; J.R.C., p. 355; S.M. Ikrām, **Muslim Rule**, p. 442; S.A.A. Rizvī, p. 103; Ishtiaq Husayn Qureshī, p. 201; Mahmūd Husayn, "Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd (II)," **History of the Freedom Movement**, vol. 1 (Karachi, 1957), p. 597; Olaf Caroe, **The Pathans 550 B.C. -- A.D. 1957** (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1958), p. 305; Hafeez Malik, p. 183; J.D. Cunningham, **History of the Sikhs** (S. Chand and Co., 1966), p. 172. At the time of death Sayyid Ahmad was forty six and Shāh Ismaᶜīl fifty three (Sindhī, p. 118).

[49] Nadwī, vol. 2, p. 444; Mahmūd Husayn, "The Mystery of Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd's Death," **Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society**, vol. III pt.III (Karachi, 1955), p. 167; Mihr, vol. 2, p. 445. Another version of the story goes like this: I am going for **Jihād**. I

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will have to fight many wars with hypocrites and infidels. God has promised me that he will not kill me until the schism of Iran, the hypocrisy of Afghanistan, and the infidelity of India is eliminated through my hands. If somebody, while putting the Qur'ān on his head, comes and says to you, "I have buried your brother, never believe him." (Ms. from the library of the Amīr of Tonk.)

50 Nadwī, vol. 2, p. 444.

51 Rehatsek, "The History of the Wahhābīs in Arabia and in India," p. 370.

52 Yahyā ᶜAlī used to recite the following rubāᶜī from Dard:

> Give this much message from Dard
> When the morning breeze passes through the street
>   of the beloved
> Which night will you come?
> Many days have we spent in your waiting

(Nadwī, vol. 2, p. 445.)

53 Mihr, Jamāᶜat-i Mujāhidīn, p. 103.

54 Nadwī, vol. 2, p. 446.

55 Sindhī, p. 130.

56 Ibid., p. 132.

57 Nadwī, vol. 2, p. 516.

58 Mihr, Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd, vol. 2, p. 439. According to Sindhī, the Sayyid was beheaded and the head was taken to Lahore so that Ranjīt Singh could see it (Sindhī, p. 117).

59 Mihr, vol. 2, p. 438.

60 Ibid., p. 437.

61 Mahmūd Husayn, "The Mystery of Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd's Death," Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society, p. 132; Ishtiāq Husayn Qureshī, p. 207.

62 Ishtiāq Husayn Qureshī, p. 208.

63 At the end of the article on Sayyid Ahmad in the first edition of Āthār-us-Sanādīd, Sir Sayyid says, "This event, i.e., the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad, took place fourteen or fifteen years ago (Āthār, p. 28). Āthār-us-Sanādīd was first published in 1847. It was translated into French by de Tassy from the second edition of 1854; de Tassy was

ignorant of the biographical sketches that had appeared in the first edition as part or chapter number four of the book, which, as mentioned above, was dropped by Sir Sayyid in the second edition. This missing part has now reappeared in the recent editions of **Athar-us-Sanadid** published in India and Pakistan (Sir Sayyid, **History of the Bijnore Rebellion**, p. VI).

[64] Both Sir Sayyid in his **Review** and Ja[c]far Thanesari in his **Sawanih Ahmadi** have tried to prove that the energies of Sayyid Ahmad were directed only against the Sikhs. Mirza Hayrat and Piyam Shahjahan Puri hold the same opinion.

[65] Sindhi, p. 91.

[66] Ibid., p. 95.

[67] [c]Aziz Ahmad, **Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan** (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 20.

[68] Sir Sayyid, **Asbab-i Baghawat-i Hind** 2nd ed. (Delhi: Kutub Khana Anjuman Taraqqi-i Urdu, 1971), p. 108; Freeland Abbot, **Islam and Pakistan**, (New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1968), p. 90; [c]Aziz Ahmad, **Islamic Modernism**, p. 20.

[69] [c]Aziz Ahmad, **Islamic Modernism**, p. 21; Mihr, **Jama[c]at-i Mujahidin**, p.111.

[70] In the wake of nationalism in the Indian subcontinent, the role played by the **Jihad** movement of Sayyid Ahmad has been exaggerated. For example, Hakim Muhammad Husayn [c]Alavi, the translator of **Mansab-i Imamat** of Shah Isma[c]il, in his preface describes Sayyid Ahmad as the first founder of Pakistan. Similarly, S.Q. Fatimi, in his Book Review of Qiyamuddin Ahmad's **Wahhabi Movement** (Islamic Studies, vol. 6, p. 202), says that the emergence of Pakistan is the living evidence of the ultimate success of the Sayyid's Movement.

[71] The chapter, in Hafeez Malik's **Moslem Nationalism**, on Sayyid Ahmad's Movement is entitled "The Struggle for National Liberation."

[72] Mihr, **Sayyid Ahmad Shahid**, p. 254.

[73] Ibid., p. 258.

[74] R.C. Majumdar, **History of the Freedom Movement**, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962), p. 276.

[75] Freeland Abbot, p. 100.

[76] Ibid., p. 106.

77 Ja^c^far Thānēsarī, p. 293.

78 The British had signed a treaty with Ranjīt Singh in 1809 on the basis of which it was impossible for the British to give support to any power hostile to the Sikhs. Nonetheless, they were only too happy to see Ranjīt Singh, "the greatest threat to the British supremacy" preoccupy himself with Sayyid Aḥmad (S.A.A. Rizvī, p. 99); Mihr, **Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, p. 334.

79 Ram Gopal, p.22; Murray T. Titus, p. 188.

80 Ram Gopal, p. 22.

81 Jamīl Aḥmad, **Hundred Great Muslims** (Lahore: Ferozsons Ltd., 1971), p. 442.

82 Mihr, **Jamā ^c^āt-i Mujāhidīn**, p. 21.

83 Ibid., p. 18.

84 Ibid., pp. 18-19.

85 See for example, Murray T. Titus, p. 189; Samuel Graham Wilson, **Modern Movements Among Muslims** (New York: Fleming Co., 1916), p. 56; M.S. Zaharaddin, "Wahhabism and Its Influence Outside Arabia," **Islamic Quarterly**, XXIII:3 (1979), p. 148; Edward Rehatsek, p. 353.

86 D.S. Margoliouth, "Wahhābiya," **Encyclopaedia of Islam** as quoted in Fazlur Raḥman, **Islam** (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 250.

87 W.W. Hunter, p. 35.

88 Freeland Abbot, p. 89.

89 J.R.C., p. 481.

90 **Encyclopaedia of Islam**, new ed., p. 431.

91 ^c^Azīz Aḥmad, **An Intellectual History of Islam in India** (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1969), p. 9.

92 Fazlur Raḥmān, **Islām**, p. 250.

93 Ibid.

94 Mas^c^ūd ^c^Ālam Nadwī, **Hindustān kī pahlī Islāmī Taḥrik**, 2nd. ed. (Rāwalpindī: Maktabah Milliyah, 1368/1948), p. 22.

95 Ibid.

96 Muḥammad Ismā^c^īl Salafī, **Taḥrik-i Āzādī-i Fikr** (Qusūr:

Maktabah Naziriyah, 1966), p. 244.

[97] Mihr, _Jamāʿat-i Mujāhidīn_, p. 20.

[98] Sir Sayyid, **Review**, p. 15; Mihr, _Jamāʿat_, p. 124.

[99] Mihr, _Jamāʿat-i Mujāhidīn_, p. 124.

Chapter One

Tawhīd and Shirk

The reformist movements of the 19th century were notable for their rejection of expressions of popular Islam. They advocated a more strict form of Islam which was uncompromising with regard to un-Islamic elements and, especially with regard to unnecessary ceremonies. Their focus was on the Unity of God to the exclusion of all types of **shirk** and **bidᶜat** (innovations). The well-known Wahhabi movement in Arabia and the Mahdī movement in the Sudan (the Sudanese Mahdī began his campaign forty years after the death of Sayyid Ahmad)[1] can be cited as examples. In the context of India, the process of purification and reform had become more important because in that country Islam had never fully entered the life of the community. Despite the fact that Islam remained the state religion for more than six centuries, the country was not in fact conquered religiously.[2] According to Gibb, the conversion of the country was not complete.[3] As Muslim armies moved hastily over the country, the new converts left behind were given scant religious instruction in the new faith,[4] a phenomenon which resulted in eclecticism and syncretism. Given this state of affairs, the duties of a reformer were to reject the eclectic and heterodox elements in religious belief, to restore the monotheistic doctrines of Islam, and, in a nutshell, to revive the original purity of pristine Islam. Therefore, the preoccupation of Shāh Ismāᶜīl with **tawhīd** and **shirk**, now to be discussed, can be more

fully understood when seen as deriving from the above historical
context.

I

As a member of the Orthodox group in society and as a practical
theologian and moralist, Shāh Ismāᶜīl was very much disturbed by what
he considered heretical practises and 'customs' prevalent among the
Muslims of India. His preachy and not-so-subtle style of speech
addressed itself to the socio-religious sloth into which Muslims had
fallen in his day. It was against this 'sloth' that the reform
movement of Sayyid Ahmad, of which Shāh Ismāᶜīl was the second main
figure, reacted.[5] It seems that by emphasizing **tawhīd** and rejecting
shirk, the Shāh intended to wean Muslims from un-Islamic practises and
put them as it were, on the road to the 'genuine' Islam that had been
practised during the time of the Prophet and the early Caliphs. He
was, therefore, a conservative who advocated a form of Islam which
emphasized a literal following of the Qur'ān, the Prophetic **Sunnah** and
a respect for **sharīᶜah**. The most prominent feature of his
intellectual career seems to have been a stress on absolute monotheism
which meant the supremacy of the command or law of God.

As a theologian who was concerned with the immediate religious
and moral uplift ·of his community, Shāh Ismāᶜīl, on matters pertaining
to dogma, seems to have disentangled himself from the abstract
formulations and complexities of the medieval theologians. Thus he
defines **tawhīd** and **shirk** as follows:

> It is worthy of attention that to make a good faith, two
> points are necessary, viz to know that Allah is Allah,

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and the Apostle is the Apostle, respectively. To know Allāh, then, is not to associate with Him anyone else; to recognize the Apostle, is to follow his way alone. The first term is called the Unity (Tawhīd) and its opposite term **shirk**.[6]

Shāh Ismāᶜīl did not particularly concern himself with the details related to the dogma of **tawhīd**, a fact which probably reflected his lack of knowledge of **kalām**. A cursory glance at his **taqwīyat-ul-Īmān**, which chiefly treats of the doctrines of **tawhīd** and **shirk**, reveals the fact that the Shāh was concerned more with the question of what **tawhīd** was not than what it was. As a reformer of abuses, therefore, he articulated and pinpointed those practises and modes of behaviour[7] which, according to him, belonged to the category of **shirk**.

II

According to Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **tawhīd** or belief in the Unity of God is the only means of salvation in the next world.[8] He says that a believer should strive to make his ᶜ**aqīdah** (faith) good. Of one whose ᶜ**aqīdah** is sound, little work will be accepted; on the other hand, of one whose ᶜ**aqīdah** is not good, his good deeds will not be accepted at all.[9] A believer in the Unity of God will ultimately attain salvation even though he may have committed major sins. According to Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **shirk** (disbelief) is the most unpardonable sin.[10] Therefore, it is better to indulge in sins, to become a sheer shameless person, and devour the wealth of another person unlawfully than to be one who commits **shirk**.[11] A 'sinful Unitarian' (**fāsiq muwahhid**) is a thousand times better than a 'pious infidel' (**muttaqī mushrik**).[12]

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In order to substantiate his theory of **tawhīd**, Shāh Ismā‘īl says

that the purpose of all Prophets was to preach Unity to humankind.

Prior to human creation, God created the souls **arwāh** of all men and

then made them confess the Unity by asking them the following ques-

tion: "Am I not your Lord?" **Alastu bi Rabbikum?** They said, "Yea".[13]

Then God said, "Remember, the seven heavens and the seven earths, as

well as your father Adam, are witness hereof, so that on the Day of

Resurrection you may not say that you were ignorant of it. Verily, We

are the Omnipotent, and there is no ruler of the kingdom besides the

Lord, so do not associate anything with Him. We will send unto you

Apostles so that they may remind you of your engagement and through

them We will send, for you, Books."[14] Shāh Ismā‘īl then points out,

that since that covenant which God took from mankind in eternity

(**azal**), God has sent 124,000 Prophets and 104 sacred Books to preach

to the world the doctrine of Unity.[15] He says that belief in this

doctrine is so important that Muhammad said to his companion Ma‘ādh B.

Jabal, "Do not associate anything with Allāh although they kill or

burn you."[16] This Hadīth is underlined to mean that a person should

not believe in anyone else but God and that in this belief he should

not entertain any apprehension that by doing so he may be hurt by

Jinns or devils. That is, a Muslim should not acknowledge the

authority of Jinns and devils through fear.[17] According to Shāh

Ismā‘īl, just as Muslims are told to put up with external afflictions

and not let them impair their faith, in the same manner they are told

not to yield to the torture that they may receive from Jinns and

devils.[18] Shāh Ismā‘īl also mentions the orthodox, fatalistic

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doctrine that God sometimes places the believers under trials and tribulations in order to test them and to distinguish the firm from the infirm and the believer from the hypocrite.[19] The point here is that whether the afflictions are external (such as receiving harm from wicked people), or hidden (such as demonic possession), in both cases believers should remain patient and should not, through fear, recognize their (Jinns' and devils') authority.

III

What actions constitute **shirk**? According to Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **shirk** does not necessarily mean setting up rivals to God: even the unbelievers of the time of the Prophet did not consider their idols to be equal to God;[20] rather **shirk** applies to those acts of devotion which are done to others and also the dedication or attribution to those others of certain acts or qualities such as prostration, making vows, omnipresence, etc., which belong to God alone. Those who ascribe any of these attributes to any creature, or perform such acts towards them, even though regarding them as below God and considering them as his servants, will become guilty of **shirk**.[21] In this matter, there is no difference between Apostles, saints, Jinns, devils, fairies etc.[22] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, then, categorizes the acts of **shirk** into four classes. These are: association in knowledge with God (**Ishrāk fi'l ᶜilm**), association with the power of God (**Ishrāk fi'l Tasarruf**); association with God in worship (**Ishrāk fi'l ᶜIbādāt**); and association with God in matters of daily routine (**Ishrāk fi'l ᶜAdāt**).[23] In this classification Shāh Ismāᶜīl has followed the tradition of Shāh

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Waliullāh who had also in his (**Tuhfat- al-Muwahhidin**) followed the
same categorization. It will be seen that the four different
categories of **shirk** are related to the social and religious customs
prevalent among Indian Muslims at the time of Shāh Ismāᶜīl. Broadly
speaking, the verbal **Jihād** of Shāh Ismāᶜīl was aimed at uprooting
superstitions, black magic, belief in good and bad omens; the idea
that saints, astrologers or fortune-tellers have knowledge of the
future or that the saints can control events or natural occurrences in
the world, etc.

A brief description of the four categories of **shirk** will follow.
Regarding the evils of **Ishrāk fi'l ᶜilm**, Shāh Ismāᶜīl says,

> The attributes of Omni-Presence and Omniscience far or
> near, concealed or manifest, in darkness or light, in
> heaven or on earth, on the peaks of mountains or at the
> bottom of seas, are peculiar to Allāh alone. No one
> else is vested with this power. Should anyone take the
> name of any saint, either at sitting down or standing
> up, or invoke or call upon him in the time of need
> instead of Allāh, or use his name in attacking an enemy,
> or read passages to propitiate him (khatm), or contract
> the habit of studying his name (shughl), . . . or that
> whatever occurs to the devotee in life, such as health
> and sickness, prosperity or poverty, death or life,
> sorrow or happiness, all come to his knowledge . . . By
> such conduct one becomes guilty of **shirk**, and surely it
> can be called nothing else.[24]

According to Shāh Ismāᶜīl, knowledge of the future is possessed
by God alone. Therefore, if someone claims that he has knowledge
whereby he can know the events of the future, he is a liar. To
believe that the Prophet, Jinns, angels etc., as well as astrologers
and fortune-tellers are endowed with such a power is **shirk**.[25] If it
is said that sometimes the prediction of a soothsayer actually comes

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to pass, and therefore he might have obtained some knowledge of the future, this is a manifest error, for there are other times when his prediction does not become true. Soothsayers are not in possession of any divine knowledge. They predict by certain calculations which are generally wrong.[26] The emphasis here is that a saint or astrologer cannot predict the victory, defeat, sickness or health of a person. If a person does not know what he is going to do tomorrow, how can he predict what will happen to others?[27] Moreover, if a person should ask: What is in the mind of such a person? How many leaves are there on a branch of a tree? Or how many stars are there in the sky? The reply to these questions should not be that God and Muhammad know, because the latter has no knowledge of such things. In religious matters, however, a person can say that God and the Prophet know.[28]

As regards astrologers, they are an important Hindū phenomenon because they are consulted on a variety of occasions. This "science" had infiltrated among Muslims due to their association with Hindus. As a large number of Muslims who responded to the call of Sayyid Ahmad belonged to the lower classes, it can be assumed that among these classes there were new converts from Hinduism. This being so these people would be prone to superstitious beliefs such as astrology, belief in omens, etc. Thus, before the intensification of the Sayyid's verbal **Jihād** against religious abuses leading to a call to arms, Shāh Ismāᶜīl had to preach to them the actual Islamic practises and combat unIslamic customs and innovations.

Association in the power of God constitutes the second category

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of **shirk**. Shāh Ismā̄ʿīl says that pagans during the time of the Prophet believed that there was no rival of God. Nonetheless, they, in the Muslim view, became infidels because they regarded their idols as intercessors with God.[29] Therefore, if a person grants such power to any creature, he will also be committing **shirk**. Furthermore the belief entertained by some common people that Prophets, saints and other holymen can exercise power in the Universe, but choose not to do so out of respect for God, is an erroneous view.[30] These people are not meant to interfere in such matters, nor have they the ability to do so.[31] Moreover, a person should not consider an angel, or **jinn Pīr** or **Murshid, Nabī** or **Walī** as a problem-solver **Mushkil-kushā**, one should not take his needs to them; rather one should consider them as help-less as oneself before the power of God. Shāh Ismā̄ʿīl believed in the doctrine of **qadr** and therefore says that "everyone experiences in the world so much as has already been written in his fate, but the whole career of the life of a rationalist is nothing but misery and dis-tress, while that of the other is incessant comfort and happiness."[32] **Ishrāk fi'l Tasarruf** is, then, related to conferring the following attributes upon a saint or any other creature: "To cause death or life, to extend or depress one's means; to occasion sickness or health; to bestow victory or defeat, to effect prosperity or adversity as well as to accomplish desires, etc."[33]

The third category of **shirk** is **Ishrāk fi'l ʿIbādat** or association in worship, which was mainly an attack on saint worship. Shāh Ismā̄ʿīl argues that certain matters, connected with veneration and respect,

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are to be observed for God only. These are called ^cIbādāt (acts of worship). They include prostration, bowing down, standing with folded arms, etc. The Shāh was against the idea of showing excessive respect to saints. For example, standing motionless and with folded arms before an individual as the Hindus do before their idols; showing too much ostentation and too many formalities was a practise which the Indian Muslims had borrowed from the Majūs or Magians. Similarly, all the practises which take place in shrines such as kissing any particular stone, rubbing the mouth and breasts against the walls of a shrine, causing illumination around it, becoming its custodian or caretaker (mujāwir) etc. constitute Ishrāk fi'l ^cIbādāt.[34]

As we mentioned above, the phenomenon of shirk, manifesting itself in several ways, had first attracted the attention of Shāh Walīullāh whose book Tuhfat al-Muwahhidīn bears resemblance to the Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān of Shāh Ismā^cīl. Both of them reject the common notion that great learning is required to comprehend the meaning of the Qur'ān and Hadīth.[35]. Both of them said that knowledge of the unseen was the exclusive attribute of God; that making such pronouncements as Yā Rasūl Allāh (O Prophet of God), Yā Ghauth, Yā ^cAlī; that performing genuflection, prostration, bowing to a creature; that naming a child as ^cAbd al-Rasūl, Banda-i ^cAlī (the slave of ^cAlī), was shirk.[36] Both of them labelled as shirk tomb worship, as well as the decoration of tombs, or holding a certain tree or a certain house in sacred esteem.[37] Walīullāh had realized the dangers of syncretism, a phenomenon brought to Islam by new converts. According to him, the new-converts, in order to justify their pagan practises, tend to seek

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the support of weak Hadīth; they even invent false traditions.[38] In order to check this development, Walīullāh suggests that, "Utmost care is therefore required to keep Islam free from **shirk**, from associationism of all kind with Divine Unity, Divine Will and Divine Power, from all traces of anthropomorphism, and from all concepts which imply parallelism between Divine attributes and qualities and those of the created."[39]

The extent to which Muslim saint worship has been influenced by Hindu rites is clear from the following quotation from **Hidāyat-ul-Mu'minīn** (a treatise written by a follower of Sayyid Aḥmad). The author says,

> In India, more than in any other Mahommaden[sic] country, Islām and kufr have been mixed līke **khichri**. If the Hindus have their Gyah, their Mathura, and their kashi, the Mahommadens have their Makwan (where the tomb of saint Madaṛ is) their Baraich (where the holy Salār, or Salār Mas^ud Ghazī is buried) and their Ajmīr, (where the attraction is the well-known tomb of Khwaja Moyin-ud-Din Chishti.) The one set builds mat'hs over their idols: the other, not to be behindhand, raise domes over their saint's tombs. In the mat'hs, you will find Machants and Gosain: at Mahommaden 'shrines, **Khādims**, **Mujāwirs**, and **Pirzādas**.[40]

The fourth category of **shirk** comes under the title of **Ishrāk fi'l ^Ādāt** (association in matters of daily routine). These include: making vows to saints; giving such names as ^**Abd al-Nabī**, **Imām Bakhsh**; entertaining the belief that a saint can cause good or evil to anyone, for example, saying that a person became insane because of the curse of a saint, or that famine occurred because of a star; using such titles as **Yā Ma^būd Dātā** (O Worshipful Providence), **Beparawā Khudāwand khudāigān** (O great contented Lord), **Mālik-ul-Mulk** (O Master of the

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kingdoms), etc. for a Pīr; or swearing on the name of the Prophet or
ᶜAlī; shaving one's beard in order to look handsome; shaving eyebrows
to become a faqīr; avoiding marriage after the death of a relative and
so on.[41] Similarly, avoiding a person who has smallpox (for fear of
contracting the disease); belief in omens such as holding the view
that a house which is built like the mouth of a tiger (sher dahān)
i.e., a house which is small in front and large in the back, a horse
having a star-like spot on the forehead (sitāra peshānī) as well as a
bold woman, are unlucky.[42]

The above practises owe their origin either to sheer superstition
or to borrowings from local religious tradition (Hinduism). There was
also the custom of looking down upon certain occupations such as
tanning and shoe-mending, which were regarded as unclean and base.[43]
For the purpose of his followers, who belonged to the lower classes,
as we mentioned above, Shāh Ismāᶜīl emphasized the dignity of labour
and said that there was nothing unclean about those professions.[44]

It appears that the regeneration enterprise of Shāh Ismāᶜīl was
intended to elevate the condition of his community from the quagmire
of moral degradation, ignorance and superstition to a state of reli-
gious enlightenment. In order to realize this ideal, both Sayyid
Ahmad and Shāh Ismāᶜīl emphasized the significance of the doctrine of
tawhīd and the evils of shirk. It was the practise of Sayyid Ahmad to
accept the allegiance of a person on two conditions: that the
'newcomer' give up all unIslamic practises, and second that he act
according to the Prophetic path.[45] "Relinquish all the usages of

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Hind, Sind, Fars, or Rum" was the **sine qua non** of his mission.[46]

Despite the fact that Shāh Ismāᶜīl attacked Hindu practises, his attitude towards Hindus seems to have been one of tolerance and understanding. According to him,

> In fact, every religion, which includes among its followers a considerable number of wise men, and especially those who have achieved esoteric depth such as Christian and Jewish mystics, Greek or neo-Platonic philosophers, Persian dualists or Hindu yogis, has a special place for them in its sanctuary of sacredness. They are the source of its flow; but later evil ideas mingle in the stream of a religion, obscene rites predominate, commentaries become wrong and corrupt, and the mind is no longer able to grasp the reality as originally revealed to knowledge.[47]

This attitude of tolerance and understanding may explain why certain educated Hindus became the devotees of Sayyid Aḥmad, such as Tahsildār Hari Rām and Dhankal Singh and gave invitations to Sayyid Aḥmad.[48] Similarly, the Maratha ruler of Gwalior offered a grand hospitality to Sayyid Aḥmad and the **mujāhidīn** while his brother-in-law and minister Rajā Hindu Rāo remained a helpful contact of the **mujāhidīn**.[49] These events show that Sayyid Aḥmad was not, personally, against the Sikhs or the Hindus.

IV

It has been suggested that Shāh Ismāᶜīl, through his teachings, wanted to inculcate a unity of thought **waḥdat-i fikr** and unity of action **waḥdat-i ᶜAmal**.[50] He did succeed in making a number of changes in religious practices. For example, the number of worshippers in the mosque increased,[51] widows were permitted to remarry, and many superstitions were checked.[52] However, he could not succeed in his goal of bringing

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about **wahdat-i fikr** and **wahdat-i** [C]**Amal** as his times were marked for religious controversies and disputations. As a result his opponents, either because of jealousy or competition or purely intellectual gymnastics started to find fault in his speeches. For example, the Shāh in order to prove the absolute power of God said that God could create another Prophet like Muhammad.[53] This statement was caught and challenged by a certain Fazl-i Haqq of Khayr Ābād, the **sarishta-dar** (chief record-keeper and court-reader) to the resident of Delhi.[54] Fazl-i Haqq raised three objections to the statement: that it was a misleading and wrong statement; that uttering such a thing was sacrilegious; and that mentioning it was absurd.[55] Shāh Isma[c]īl sent a **tu quoque** to Fazl-i Haqq telling him that power was one attribute whereas **takwīn** (creation) was another. Thus the fact that God could create another Prophet like Muhammad belonged to the first attribute, i.e., power, and not to the second, **takwīn**. Did not God say in the Qur'ān "Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like thereof? -- Yea, indeed. For he is the creator Supreme, Of skill and knowledge (infinite)."[56] Fazl-i Haqq was not convinced by this reply. Instead, he took advantage of his post as a **sarishta dar**, to get the signatures of 1500 Muslims on an application which was written against the sermons of Shāh Isma[c]īl.[57] The request of the application, written to the resident, was that Shāh Isma[c]īl should be stopped from delivering lectures in the **Jāmi[c]a Masjid**. The resident complied with the request, and Shāh Isma[c]īl was prohibited for some time from delivering sermons. Shāh Isma[c]īl then wrote a letter to the resident giving him eighty reasons why he should permit him to

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initiate his sermons again.[58]

Another strong opponent of Shāh Ismāᶜīl was Ahmad Razā Khān Barēlwī (1856-1921), a sūfī who, in order to preserve the ancient sūfī practises as well as the interpretations of medieval schools of thought, criticized Shāh Ismāᶜīl on many points.   On the question of whether God could create another Prophet like Muhammad, Razā maintained that God could not do so because that would imply that another man after Muhammad could claim to be a Prophet.[59]   Razā also accused Shāh Ismāᶜīl of saying that God could tell lies.[60]   Furthermore, Razā raised objections to many statements made in the Sirāt-i Mustaqīm and Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān of Shāh Ismāᶜīl.   For example, Shāh Ismāᶜīl had dubbed the practise of Tasawwar-i shaykh as heretical;[61]   Razā then pointed out that Tasawwar-i shaykh was frequently being practised in the family of Shāh Walīullāh, both by himself and his teachers and sons; that Shaykh Ahmad Sarhindī called it a wealth which was attainable only by one seeker (of truth) out of a thousand, and that the person who diverts his attention from the practise of Tasawwar-i shaykh is unfortunate.[62]   Another point of disagreement was Shāh Ismāᶜīl's statement that it was shirk to call oneself pīrparast (the follower of a pīr).[63]   Razā pointed out that as for calling on a pīr for aid, it is written in the Intibāh fī Salāsil Awliyā Allāh of Shāh Walīullāh, that he and twelve of his teachers of Hadīth used to make wazīfah in the name of ᶜAlī.[64]

The opponents of Shāh Ismāᶜīl also accused him of using 'disrespectful' language about the Prophet.   The accusations were based on

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certain statements in the Sirāt-i Mustaqīm and Taqwiyat-ul-Īmān. For example, Shāh Ismāᶜīl says in Sirāt-i Mustaqīm that in prayer it is better to concentrate on the image of a donkey than that of the Prophet, because the former will disappear soon whereas the latter will stay for long.[65] Similarly, in Taqwiyat-ul-Īmān he says that the Prophet is like our elder brother, therefore, respect shown to him should not be more than that appropriate for an elder brother.[66] Bad feelings towards Shāh Ismāᶜīl were strengthened by an event which took place in the reign of Akbar Shāh, one of the last nominal Mughal emperors. According to the story, once the servants of Akbar shāh were carrying the Tabarrukāt (sacred remains) from the Jāmiᶜa mosque of Delhī, to the court of the emperor. They passed by Shāh Ismāᶜīl who was sitting in the stairs of the mosque with a group of men. Shāh Ismāᶜīl did not stand up while the rest of the people stood up to show respect to the Tabarrukāt.[67] This was reported to the emperor who called Shāh Ismāᶜīl to his court. He agreed to go on the condition that he be exempt from the ceremonies of the court. (The putting up of a condition by Shāh Ismāᶜīl on going to the court shows how help-less the position of the emperor had become by then). The Shāh's request was accepted and so he went to clear the matter with the emperor. After a brief conversation the emperor mentioned the story of the Tabarrukāt and Shāh Ismāᶜīl's disrespect for them. Shāh Ismāᶜīl replied by saying that he did not believe they were real. The king became even more upset at this reply and said that it was sad that Shāh Ismāᶜīl did not show respect for them. Shāh Ismāᶜīl's reply was, "Sir, if those Tabarrukāt were real, then you would have gone to

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visit them rather than they being brought to you."[68] The king apologized for his mistake and did not say anything.

The above story shows on the one hand that the allegations against Shāh Ismāᶜīl were not well-founded, and on the other hand that Shāh Ismāᶜīl was outspoken in religious matters. The outspokenness of Shāh Ismāᶜīl is clear from the fact that once during the **Jihād**, Sayyid Ahmad, the leader of the movement, came late to the mosque for morning prayer. Shāh Ismāᶜīl rebuked him for that and the Sayyid made a public apology.[69] On another occasion, some people from the tribe of Hasanzā'ī requested Sayyid Ahmad to exempt them from paying ᶜ**ushr**. The Sayyid had nearly granted the request when Shāh Ismāᶜīl came to know about this. He prohibited Sayyid Ahmad form doing so and told him that ᶜ**ushr** was a divine right and nobody, even the Imām or Caliph himself, had the right to remit this obligation.[70]

Both the contents of **Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān** and what the opponents of Shāh Ismāᶜīl, particularly Ahmad Razā Khān, said about Shāh Ismāᶜīl indicate that the influence of ancient sūfī practises as well as belief in the 'miracles' of saints etc., were very extensive at this time. Shāh Ismāᶜīl attacked the cult of saints and that of 'mawlavīs' forcefully. It was natural, therefore, that the defenders of the cult of saints and 'mawlavīs' should react negatively to his views. The 'sūfīs' and 'mawlavīs' must have been infuriated when they read such statements of Shāh Ismāᶜīl[71] as

> In the present age, people follow many ways. Some uphold the customs of their ancestors as precedent; others look to the pious men (Buzurg) for their guides; while, again, some follow the sayings invented by the

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mawlavīs from the ingenuity of their own minds...[72]

It was for this reason that the publication of **Taqwiyat-ul-Īmān** created disturbances. It occasioned so much stir in Madras in 1836 that when a certain Muḥammad ᶜAlī of Rāmpūr, a disciple of Sayyid Aḥmad, who was accused before the Nawāb Sirāj-ul-Umarā' A'zam Jāh(sic) of misleading people, the Nawāb forced him to give up his 'Wahhābī' doctrines, and also to declare that whoever believed in the **Taqwiyat-ul-Īmān** of Shāh Ismāᶜīl, should be regarded as an infidel.[73] He was forced to give this declaration in writing, which was published and hung upon the walls of several mosques and schools in Madras. In the same year, two mawlavīs, Mawlavī Muḥammad ᶜAlī of Rāmpūr and Mawlavī Sulaimān were imprisoned by the mawlavīs of Madras and not released until they had given up their 'Wahhābī' doctrines.[74]

Shāh Ismāᶜīl's emphasis on **tawḥīd** and his rejection of **shirk** was aimed at purifying popular Islam which had become mixed up with many un-Islamic practises and ceremonies. He started his verbal **Jihād** against the vices into which his community had fallen. He was a reformer but a backward looking one. The times of Shāh Ismāᶜīl were characterized by anarchy and religious corruption, resulting, as it is often said, from the political and moral degeneration during the reign of the last nominal Mughal kings. In such circumstances Shāh Ismāᶜīl struck upon and initiated his enterprise of purifying the condition of Muslims. He was also very much bothered by the social distinctions prevalent among the Indian Muslims. The reform program of Sayyid Aḥmad was egalitarian and universal (**hamagīr**)[75] in outlook; therefore, Shāh Ismāᶜīl strongly condemned the idea that Indian Muslims

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should categorize themselves as Sayyids, Mughals, Pathāns, and Shaykhs,[76] a phenomenon which Indian Islam has inherited from the Hindu caste system. Likewise he condemned religious distinctions such as labelling oneself as hanafī, shāfiᶜī, qādirī. Unfortunately, Shāh Ismāᶜīl did not succeed in realizing most of these ideals.

Shah Ismāᶜīl could not forge a religious rapprochement with opponents who found him to be a controversial figure. He was in the habit of holding munāzarāt (religious disputations) with other ᶜulamā'. Even in the second phase of the movement, he became involved in such controversies. As a case in point, once when the mujāhidīn were in Panchtar, some local ᶜulamā' came to him, and Shāh Ismāᶜīl disputed with them on the issue of whether or not taqlīd-i shakhsī was permissible. Shāh Ismāᶜīl won the day, but then Sayyid Ahmad intervened and stopped any further controversy on the issue.[77]

To summarize, in his discussion of tawhīd and shirk the target of Shāh Ismāᶜīl was saint worship, belief that saints can intercede with God, belief in astrology and fortune telling, associating bad omens with certain days and months, pronouncing such words as Yā ᶜAbdul Qādir Jilānī and so on.

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1 Mihr, **Jamā⁻ᶜat-i Mujāhidīn**, p. 21.

2 H. Kramer, "Islam in India Today," **Muslim World**, 21 (1931), p. 152.

3 H.A.R. Gibb, ed., **Whither Islam** (London, 1932), p. 187.

4 Ibid.

5 H. Kramer, "Islam in India Today," **Muslim World**, 21 (1931), p.155.

6 Mīr Hashmat ᶜAlī, **Support of the Faith** (Eng. trans. of **Taqwīyat-ul-Īman**) (Lahore: Shaykh Muḥammad Ashraf, 1969), p. XXVI.

7 In addition to pinpointing the 'heretic' practises of common people, Shāh Ismāᶜil also decried certain ṣufīs, who, although responsible for the mass conversion of Hindus, maintained monistic doctrines, the rejection of ritualistic formalism and the cult of love and thus had come closer to the Vedanta philosophy (M.H. Siddique, "Rise of Muslim Nationalism in India," **J.R.S.P.**, VI (1969), p. 51). Although Shāh Ismāᶜil was himself a ṣufī, he criticized the unorthodox elements who uttered heretical sayings. For example, some misguided ṣufīs attributed the statement **Anā Aḥmad bilā mīm** (I am Aḥmad without M, meaning I am **Aḥad**, which is an attribute of God) to the Prophet. Another one says that if God appeared in any shape other than that of his **Pīr** he would never look at him (**Taqwīyat-ul-Īman**, p. 80). They had also composed poetry conveying similar sentiments. Thus one distich runs as follows: "My heart having been affected with the love of Muḥammad, I have thereby become the rival of Allāh." Another goes as follows: "Be insensible of Allāh, but be attentive to Muḥammad." Some in their enthusiasm and extreme love for Muḥammad exalted him beyond the very Divinity (Mīr Hashmat ᶜAlī, **Support of the Faith**, p. 75).

8 Shāh Ismāᶜil, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 236.

9 Shāh Ismāᶜil, **Taqwīyat-ul-Īman**, p. 11.

10 Ibid., p. 25. Shāh Ismāᶜil cites the following Qur'ānic verse to support his view: "God forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him; but He forgiveth Whom He pleaseth other sins than this . . ."(IV:116)

11 Shāh Ismāᶜil, **Taqwīyat-ul-Īman**, p. 66.

[12] Ibid., p. 33.

[13] Ibid., p. 28.

[14] Mīr Ḥashmat ᶜAlī, **Support of the Faith**, p. 17.

[15] Ibid., p. 19.

[16] Ibid., p. 20.

[17] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān**, p. 31.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., p. 18.

[21] Ibid., p. 19.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., p. 20. For the four types of **shirk** see also J.R.C., **Notice of the Peculiar Tenets**, p. 491.; Samuel M. Zwemer, **The Moslem Doctrine of God** (New York, 1905), p. 82.

[24] Mīr Ḥashmat ᶜAlī, **Support of the Faith**, pp. 7-8.

[25] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān**, p. 35.

[26] Ibid., p. 36.

[27] Ibid., p. 37.

[28] Ibid., p. 82.

[29] Ibid., p. 43.

[30] Ibid., p. 45.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Mīr Ḥashmat ᶜAlī, **Support of the Faith**, p. 45.

[33] Ibid., p. 8.

[34] Ibid., p. 9.

[35] Shāh Walīullāh, **Tuḥfat-ul-Muwaḥḥidīn**, (Lahore: Maktabah al-Salafīyah, 1962), p. 5.

[36] Ibid., pp. 21, 23, 37.

[37] Ibid., p. 39.

[38] Shāh Walīullāh, **Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah**, vol. 1, p. 264 as quoted in ᶜAzīz Aḥmad, **Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment** (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), p. 209.

[39] ᶜAzīz Aḥmad, **Studies in Islamic Culture**, p. 209.

[40] J.R.C., **Notice of the Peculiar Tenets**, p. 489; ᶜAbdullāh Butt, **Aspects of Shāh Ismāᶜīl Shahīd** (Lahore: Qawmī kutub-Khāna, 1943), p. 54.

[41] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān**, pp. 15, 23, 24, 69, 73.

[42] Ibid., p. 77.

[43] ᶜAbdullāh Butt, **Aspects of Shāh Ismāᶜīl Shahīd**, p. 98.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ᶜAlī Nadwī, **Sīrat-i Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, vol. 2, p. 514.

[46] S.A.A. Rizvī, p. 97; Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 150.

[47] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **al-ᶜAbqāt**, as cited in ᶜAzīz Aḥmad, **Studies in Islamic Culture**, p. 213.

[48] Sayyid Abūl Ḥasan ᶜAlī Nadwī, **Sīrat-i Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, vol. 1, pp. 92 and 107 as quoted in ᶜAzīz Aḥmad, **Studies in Islamic Culture**, p. 213.

[49] Mihr, **Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, pp. 287-8, 435.

[50] Nāzir Kākorī, Mushīr Aḥmad ᶜAlvī, "Hazrat Ismāᶜīl Shahīd," **Taᶜmīr** (Lucknow, Jan. 1951), p. 4; ᶜAbdullāh Butt, **Aspects of Shāh Ismāᶜīl Shahīd**, p. 107.

[51] Sir Sayyid says that the number of worshippers in Friday prayers increased so much that a person would mistake the occasion for ᶜEid prayers (**Āthār-us-Ṣanādīd**, pt. 4, p. 57).

[52] About the checking of innovations, Wilāyat ᶜAlī writes: "Heresies and innovations were checked in each and every street and five hundred year old evil customs were uprooted," (Nadwī, **Sīrat-i Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, vol. 2, p.535

[53] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān**, p. 47.

54 Ja^cfar Thānesarī, **Hayāt-i Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, p. 304.

55 ^cAbdullāh Butt, **Aspects of Shāh Ismā^cīl Shahīd**, p. 49.

56 Ja^cfar Thānesarī, **Hayāt-i Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, p. 304.

57 Abū Yahyā Imām Khān Nūshrawī, **Tarājim ^cUlamā'-i Hadīth-i Hind**, p. 81.

58 Ibid., p. 82.

59 Ahmad Razā Khān Barelwī, **al-Kawkabah al-Shahābīyah fī kufrīyāt Abī Wahhābīyah** (Lahore: Noorī kutub khāna, 1312/1894), p. 13.

60 Ahmad Razā Khān, **Hussām al-Haramayn** (Lahore: Maktabah Nabawīyah, 1975), p. 20.

61 Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Sirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 130 cited in Ahmad Razā Khān, **al-Kawkabah al-Shihābīyah**, p. 46.

62 Ahmad Razā Khān, **al-Kawkabah**, pp. 45-46.

63 Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān**, p. 87.

64 Ahmad Razā Khān, **al-Kawkabah**, p. 44.

65 Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Sirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 201. "Himmat" is a term from sūfī terminology which means keeping one's mind free from all thought and fixing it on one object. Shāh Ismā^cīl says that in prayer one should perform **himmat** to God only, that is, a person should try his utmost that no other thought cross his mind while he is in prayer. However, if a person loses his concentration and his mind starts wandering, then it is better for him to think of trivial things such as a donkey, because such thoughts will vanish soon, rather than fixing one's mind on the image of a **shaykh**, or other saintly men or the Prophet for that matter, because this type of fixing of the mind may linger for a long time. This will lead to showing respect and greatness to other creatures, which is **shirk** (**Sira-t-i Mustaqīm**, p. 201). The above statement was taken out of context by his opponents who took it to mean that Shāh Ismā^cīl used 'disrespectful' language about the Prophet.

66 Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān**, p. 85. He says that **Awliyā'** Prophets, etc., are helpless humans and our brothers. They should be respected like humans and not like God.

67 Abū Yahyā Imām Khān, p. 83. These "sacred remains" had been in the possession of the Mughal kings for centuries. During the reign of Muhammad Shāh they were transferred from the Royal Fort to the **Jami^ca Masjid** because of the anarchic situation in the country.

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However, during the reign of Akbar Shāh II, they were brought back to the Fort; Ibid., p. 82.

[68] Ibid., p. 84.

[69] ᶜAbdullāh Butt, **Aspects of Shāh Ismāᶜīl Shahīd**, p. 43.

[70] Mihr, **Jamāᶜat-i Mujāhidīn**, p. 124.

[71] ᶜAbdullāh Butt, **Aspects of Shāh Ismāᶜīl Shahīd**, p. 48.

[72] Mīr Ḥashmat ᶜAlī, **Support of the Faith**, p. XXIV.

[73] Edward Rehatsek, "History of the Wahhābys in Arabia and in India," p. 383.

[74] Ibid., p. 384.

[75] Ṭufail Aḥmad Manglorī, **Musalmānoṇ kā rawshan Mustaqbil**, p. 106.

[76] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Majmuᶜa Taqwīyat-ul-Īmān mᶜa Tadhkīr-ul-Ikhwān** (Karachi: Nūr Muḥammad Aṣahḥ al-Muṭabiᶜ, n.d.), pp. 241, 243, 244-5.

[77] Jaᶜfar Thānēsarī, **Ḥayāt-i Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, p. 311.

Chapter Two

Sunnah and Bid^{c}ah

For a proper understanding of Shāh Ismā^{c}īl's views on **Sunnah** and **Bid^{c}ah**, it is appropriate that we begin by giving a brief exposition of these two terms. **Sunnah** literally means 'trodden path'[1] and among the pre-Islamic Arabs it denoted the model behaviour set up by the forefathers of a tribe.[2] With the birth of Islam about a millennium and a half ago, this **sunnah** was reformed and modified, and the nascent Muslim community had to adapt itself to the new **sunnah** set up by the Prophet. Another term related to **sunnah** is **Hadīth** whose explanation along with that of **sunnah**, will hopefully make the topic under discussion intelligible.

Hadīth is a unit of that discipline which deals with a saying, doing and approval or disapproval of Muhammad, the pivot in the religious, social and political life of the community. As long as the Prophet was alive, the status of **Hadīth** was informal; people talked informally about what the Prophet said, did, approved of or disapproved of. The community felt no need to write down and thus preserve the utterances of the Prophet. There is some evidence that writing down Prophetic sayings was actually opposed and prohibited by some. One reason for this, given by early authorities, is that the revelation of the Qur'ān was continuous and that the Prophet did not want his community to confuse the Word of God with his own words. However, there is evidence to suggest that the community did, at

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certain times, confuse the word of God with the word of the Prophet.
It is said, for instance, that the famous companion ᶜAbd Allāh ibn
Masᶜūd did not regard the first and the last sūrahs of the Qur'ān to
be part of the Qur'ān. Ibn Qutaybah gives the reason as follows.
Since the Prophet used to recite these two sūrahs over his grandsons
in prayer, and Ibn Masᶜūd saw him doing this, Ibn Masᶜūd concluded
that these sūrahs were not part of the Qur'ān.[3]

With the demise of the Prophet, the community was left only with
the Qur'ān. That 'living commentary', the person of the Prophet, had
disappeared. With this disappearance there increased to an
inestimable extent the honour and veneration of the Prophet over the
next generations.[4] The tiresome, (but not necessarily 'absurd' as
Guillaume calls it) task of **talab al-ᶜilm** or seeking after knowledge
was undertaken.[5] Students made journeys to far-flung places in order
to listen to and collect traditions from the Prophet. Although the
systematic codification of the **Hadīth** canon did not take place until
the middle of the second century Hijrā, the phenomenon of collection
of **Hadīth** is traceable as early as 60 A.H. A cursory glance at the
Hadīth canon reveals the fact that they were compiled under the
influence of certain pressing problems that were confronting the
community at the time.

The difference between **Hadīth** and **Sunnah** is as follows: The
Sunnah is what the Prophet did and the **Hadīth** are the sources of and
knowledge of what the Prophet did. Some have described **Hadīth** as the
vehicle for **Sunnah**.[6] Both **Hadīth** and **Sunnah** derive their authority

from the person of the Prophet. That is, the common characteristic of these two disciplines is that the knowledge of each is rooted in tradition.[7] The following example sheds light on this: ᶜAbd al-Rahmān al-Mandī characterizes the three theological authorities Sufyān al-Thawrī, al-Awzāᶜī and Mālik b. Anas, by saying that the first was an **imām** in **Hadīth** but not in the **sunnah**, i.e., he had collected enough sayings of the Prophet without becoming an authority as to which practical norms concerning the ritual and other matters of the conduct of the community should be derived from these **Hadīths**. The second was an **imām** in the **sunnah** but not in the **Hadīth**, that is, he knew the law without becoming an authority on the traditions of the Prophet. Lastly, Mālik was an authority on both **Hadīth** and **Sunnah**. The same has been said about Qādī Abū Yūsuf, the pupil of Abū Hanīfa.[8]

The Qur'ān speaks about the exemplary conduct of the Prophet which should be followed by the community. As far as authority is concerned, the Qur'ān equals Muhammad with God. That is, obedience to God is followed, in the same breath, by obedience to Muhammad. Believers are told to show absolute and unquestionable obedience to the Prophet. Hypocrites are attacked for not making the Prophet their judge;[9] they are contrasted with those who obey God and the Prophet. Shāfiᶜī confined himself to the argument that obedience to the Prophet was obedience to God. In reply to the question of whether the word revelation could be applied to the sayings of the Prophet, he remained silent.[10]

However the teachings of the Qur'ān were not enough to direct the community in all aspects of individual as well as communal life. For

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this reason, the Muslim community needed a written as well as an oral law. The Qur'ān constituted the written law while the Ḥadīth provided material for an oral law. However, this oral law of Muslims, which was then regarded as the second source of Islamic law, did not remain oral for very long, for by the middle of the second century, it was committed to a neat systematization in the form of the Ḥadīth canon, six of which gained universal acceptance.[11]

On the status of Ḥadīth, whereas the majority of Muslim scholars regard the Ḥadīth literature as embodying the genuine sayings and actions of the Prophet, most Western scholars such as Goldziher, Guillaume and others are not convinced of this.[12] However, they are not alone in their rejection of Ḥadīth; some outspoken Muslim scholars such as Parvēz and others have also shown scepticism about the authenticity of Ḥadīth. As an instance of this scepticism, nothing can be more explicit than the following verdict of Mavlawī Chirāgh ᶜAlī. "The vast flood of traditions soon formed a chaotic sea. Truth and error, fact and fable, mingled together in an undistinguishable confusion. Every religious, social and political system was defended when necessary, to please a Khaliph or an Ameer to serve his purpose, by an appeal to some oral traditions. The name of Muhammad was abused to support all manners of lies and absurdities, or to satisfy the passion, caprice or arbitrary will of the despots, leaving out of consideration the creation of any standard of test."[13] Much has been written about the authenticity of Ḥadīth, the complicated manner of its compilation, and any repetition of this kind will not serve as

useful here. However, we will make a brief mention of the views of a few earlier Muslim authorities on this subject. ^{c}Āsim b. Nabīl (212) and Yahyā b. Sa^{c}īd (d. 192) both of whom lived one century before the compilation of **Hadīth**, are reported to have said, "In nothing do we see pious men more given to falsehood than in traditions."[14] Similarly, "the prevalence of traditions emanating from the East whose authenticity he denied"[15] was the reason for al-Zuhrī's compilation of **Hadīth**. al-Shāfi^{c}ī also said, "I have not seen a traditionist who has not related traditions from reliable and unreliable sources."[16]

The city which was destined to become the **dār al-Sunnah** or the abode of **Sunnah** was Madīnah. It was this city where Muhammad had lived the last part of his life, and there were people there who knew and remembered him. Thus, there was a natural continuation of his way of life and a kind of "living tradition." Therefore, as far as communal life was concerned, Madīnah was an authority on orthodox customs. It is said that the people of this city had demanded that their governors should consult them on the issues which they faced -- a demand which the denizens of other cities did not make.[17]

It was under the ^{c}Abbāsids that the **Sunnah** was codified, i.e., arranged under systematic categories, although most of the Muslim world of that time did not know what the **Sunnah** was. This is borne out by a story related to us by al-Bukhārī in which the great scholar tells us how one Mālik b. Huwayrith instructed the people in Basrah in the postures proper to prayer.[18] The fact that people in Syria used to say **Assalām ^{c}Alā Allāh** instead of **Assalām-o-^{c}Alaykum**, the usual Muslim greeting, reveals that people there were ignorant of this

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simple **Sunnah**.[19] For this reason the traditionists had to devote a chapter in their books to the manner in which the greeting should be said.

II

Bid^cah is the exact opposite of **Sunnah**. As has been shown above, Madīnah was the "abode of Sunnah", and thus any action, doctrine, or way of life contrary to the usage of that city, was termed as **Bid^cah**. The custom of Madīnah was the barometer for ascertaining whether or not a certain action was proper, i.e., according to **Sunnah**. As a matter of fact, the concept of **Sunnah** was formulated in order to check innovations just as the institution of **ijmā^c** or consensus of opinion of the jurists was devised to censure arbitrary individual opinions. The people who showed keen interest in the furtherance of the concept of **Sunnah** called themselves "The people of the **Sunnah** and of the community", a title, polemical in nature, that the followers of this group, which formed (and still does) what may be called the mainstream of Islam, employed with the intention of suppressing all sectarian developments and innovations.

The Prophet is reported to have said, "He who introduces into our cause new things that are not already in essence with it, is reprehensible," or according to another version: "he who does something that is not in accordance with our cause is reprehensible."[23] From this was developed the doctrine, "the worst things of all are innovations."[24] Hassān b. Thābit, an Islamic poet and companion of the Prophet, is reported to have said, "Know that of all the

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attributes the most evil are innovations."[25] Al-Qastallānī
understands by the term **bid^cah** innovations of practice, i.e.,
"anything that is practised without a relevant example from olden
times and more especially in religion, anything that was not practised
in the time of the Prophet."[26]

Nineteenth century Wahhābism, which followed **Sunnah** and shunned
away from anything considered to be **bid^cah** to the extent of
fanaticism, followed the pattern of earlier times in branding as
bid^cah not only that which is against the spirit of **Sunnah** but also
that which cannot be found in it. The ultraconservative circles
opposed every novelty including the usage of tobacco and coffee,
tables, sieves, printing press and artillery, telephones, wireless and
permission of votes for women.[27] The strong pronouncements of
tradition against **bid^cah** originate from such circles. The Prophet was
said to have delivered the following speech at an ^cEīd: "He whom God
leads cannot be misled by anyone; he whom He misleads, no one can set
upon the right path. Verily, the most truthful communication **asdaq**
al- hadīth is the Book of Allāh, the best guidance is that of Muhammad
and the worst of all things is innovation; every innovation is heresy,
every heresy is error, and every error leads to hell."[28] In a later
version of the same **Hadīth**, the same idea was more precisely stated,
"One morning," says a **Hadīth**, "the Prophet said the prayer with his
community and then instructed them. The hearts of the believers were
softened at this admonition. One of them said, 'O Prophet of God this
exhortation is like that of one who is about to depart. Give us,

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therefore, a last instruction. The Prophet replied, "With these parting words I call you to the fear of God (**taqwā**) and to absolute obedience (hearing and obeying), as that of an Ethiopian slave. For those of you who survive me will hear many conflicting opinions. It is your duty to follow my **Sunnah** and the **Sunnah** of just and enlightened Caliphs; bite it (this **Sunnah**) with your teeth (i.e., cling closely to it). I warn you against innovations, as every innovation is an error."[29]

Similar statements have been ascribed to ᶜAbd Allāh b. Masᶜūd, a companion, who is reported to have said, "Obey and do not make willful innovations as you have your sufficiency in the **Sunnah**."[30] The **sāhib al- bidᶜah** or innovator has been held in abhorrence since the beginning of Islam. All the good actions of such a person are invalid if he is guilty of **bidᶜah**.[31] However, there was a distinction between good **bidᶜah** and bad **bidᶜah**, and it was only the latter which was reprehensible as we shall see presently.

If the above strict notion of **bidᶜah** as was shown to exist in the case of the Wahhābīs, had been followed, observes a critic of **Hadīth**, life in different circumstances would have become impossible.[33] Therefore, it was found necessary to make a distinction between a good innovation and a bad one. About this distinction, al-Shāfiᶜī spelled out clear rules. According to him, "An innovation which contradicts the Qur'ān, a **Sunnah**, an **athr** or an **ijmāᶜ** is a heretical **bidᶜah**; if, however, something new is introduced which is not evil in itself and does not contradict the above-mentioned authorities of religious life, then it is a praiseworthy and unobjectionable **bidᶜah**."[34] As an

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example of good innovation in ritual, Mālik b. Anas recounts the remark of ᶜUmar which the latter made when he saw a group of Muslims praying the tarāwīḥ prayer in congregation. He said, "Truly, this is a good innovation."[35]

B. Lewis suggests that since the acceptance or rejection of innovation was determined by the opinion of the community and since that opinion changes, therefore, the bidᶜah of today may be the Sunnah of tomorrow.[36] Thus one can argue that the study of theology and kalāam was an innovation, as were all the subtleties of the Jurists, in the first century after the Hijrāh, but they became Sunnah in the second century and onwards.

Lewis further says that, "the gravamen of the charge of bidᶜah levelled against a doctrine was not primarily that it was false or bad, but that it was new -- a breach of habit, custom and tradition, respect for which is rooted deep in the pre-Islamic tribal past, and reinforced by the belief in the finality and perfection of the Muslim revelation."[37]

With this introduction, we are now in a position to direct our attention towards examining the views of Shāh Ismāᶜīl on the present topic. His strong protest against, and his relentless attack on accretions to Islam is symptomatic of the fact that while living in a predominantly Hindu society, the Indian Muslims had gone astray; they had forgotten their religion. Therefore, scholars such as he felt it their duty to remind the Indian Muslims of the need to follow the true path. A few years earlier Shāh Walīullāh had busied himself with a

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similar task; unfortunately he died, apparently during a time of crisis, before fulfilling his ambitions and desires. Isma̅ᶜi̅l took over the cause of reform and championed it, though unsuccessfully; he repeatedly exhorted the community to remain true to the Qur'a̅n and the Prophetic example which alone provided the basis for true religion; these should be followed, he stressed, unquestioningly. However, he emphasized faith more than reason, not only because the scope of reason was limited,[38] but also since "if matters of faith were to be found through mere reason, Socrates and Plato would have been Muslims."[39] Reason should be made subservient to **shari̅ᶜah** but not the other way round.[40] God has perfected religion for Muslims, and the introduction of an accretion, he argues, would imply that some part of it is missing.[41]

According to Isma̅ᶜi̅l an innovation may either be totally new, that is, it was not observed during the time of the Prophet, his companions or successors, or it may not be totally new, i.e., the practise was prevalent in the above-mentioned epochs, but was added to or augmented in the later generations. In either case it will be regarded as innovation[42] and should therefore be held as distasteful. In addition, that thing or action, for which no reward is expected, but which people practise with as much zeal and regularity as if it were a religious obligation, will also be placed in the category of innovation.[43] This is an allusion to those social customs which are observed with attention and enthusiasm, although people do not hope to get any reward for them -- except pleasing a few ignorant people.[44] On the other hand, anything which was done by the Prophet, or was

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approved by him, or done by the majority of the companions, or appeared on the scene during the time of the successors and was not objected to by any noteworthy scholar, or was derived by scholars through **ijtihād**, is included in the **Sunnah**.[45] It is evident from this statement how wide and encompassing the scope of **Sunnah** is.

We have mentioned above the fanaticism of the Wahhābis concerning **Sunnah** and **bid^cah** which led them to disapprove of everything new including even the use of tables and chairs. However, it redounds to the credit of Ismā^cīl that he sees no harm in those things which are outside the province of religion. He says that it is not incumbent upon, or necessary for, Muslims to follow the companions or other religious authorities in non-religious matters; that is, innovations in profane matters are not prohibited.[46] This idea was echoed by Sir Sayyid, the standard-bearer of rational Islam,[47] who preached that the Prophetic example should be followed only in religious matters.[48] In this second category of innovations (the realm of worldly matters) are included such activities as travelling in trains, eating new kinds of dishes or living in houses of modern vintage; all things which are outside the domain of religion.[49]

III

In the previous section, a description of **bid^cah** or innovation has been given. In this section, Shāh Ismā^cīl's criticism will be gone into in greater depth.

To begin with, the true path for him is the one which represents the **Sunnah**. The origin of heresy, he says, is to leave the Qur'ān

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aside and let innovations and customs prevail. According to him, the division of Islam into various sects such as those of the Mu^{c}tazilites, Khārijites, Rāfidites,[50] Nāsibites,[51] Jabarites, Qādarites, and Murji^{c}tes, was a deviation from the true path,[52] for, as we have mentioned above, the true path is the one which is represented by the **Sunnah**, and the orthodoxy of the afore-mentioned groups has not been accepted by the **Sunnah**. In the same category will be placed those people, Ismā^{c}īl points out, who, after growing long hair and getting rid of their eye brows, claim to be 'sūfīs'; then some of them arrogate to themselves the title of **Qādirīs** (i.e., the followers of ^{c}Abdul Qādir Jilānī) of **Naqshbandīs**, of **Chishtīs** and so on.[53] The Qur'ānic injunction, "Be not like those who are divided among themselves and fall into disputations after receiving clear signs . . ."(3:105) which according to tradition is a reference to the schism which existed in the previous religious communities, is interpreted as being applicable not only to the above-mentioned sects but also to any person who introduces innovations into Islam.[54] In the same category of "sects" are placed also the **mullās**, **mawlavīs** and ^{c}**ulamā'** who are frequently criticized and sometimes ridiculed. The authority of these people should be given up, he says, in favour of that of the Prophet who should be made judge in all disputes.[55]

About juristic points Ismā^{c}īl is flexible rather than rigid. This is obvious from his reiteration that one should not be content with his own school of thought, his own custom and tradition; rather, one should continuously search for the truth,[56] for, the truth may not

necessarily exist within one school of law.[57] The findings of a school, he elaborates, should be tallied with the Qur'ān and the Hadīth; the part which is in agreement should be taken and that which does not concur should be discarded.[58] Credit may be given to Ismā'īl for this way of thinking, for the common belief, wrong and erroneous as it was, was that one must stick to one school of law. This outlook of Ismā'īl can be traced to Walīullāh who had adopted a liberal and synthetic attitude towards the legal schools.

Comparing the **Sunnah** of the Prophet with the social practise of Islam in India, Ismā'īl singles out and catalogues the thousands of innovations that had crept into the Muslim society. He speculates as to what went wrong with respect to the Prophet's **Sunnah** that it was abandoned and replaced by so many baseless and superstitious customs. Not only is the Prophetic **Sunnah** forsaken, he laments, but also it is ridiculed. For example, if a marriage ceremony takes place according to **Sunnah**, then some scoundrels will remark, "this was a funeral ceremony."[59]

It will not be inappropriate to give a few examples of these innovations. For instance, slaughtering a goat or firing shots into the air when a male baby is born (but not doing the same for the birth of a female baby); putting the Qur'ān and an arrow near the bed of a woman who has recently given birth to a baby; doing **chattī**;[60] naming the child as "gifted by so and so or the servant of so and so"; fixing a specific age of four years and four months for teaching the **bismillāh** to the child and also having celebrations on that day.[61]

Some of these innovations, he points out, are borrowings from

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Hindu custom while others owe their existence to ignorance and super-
stition. He aspired to eliminate these innovations from the society
by making a strong appeal to the community to follow the **Sunnah**.
However, his opponents found this process of elimination too trite,
and they accused him of many things. As a case in point, one of them
said, "If a **sihrah** (a string of flowers) is tied to the bridegroom,
the 'Wahhabi' Mawlavi is there to give the **fatwa'** of shirk; what is
the connection between **shirk** and wearing a **sihrah?**"[62] Some even went
so far as calling him a **kafir** and devil.[63]

Elsewhere, he combats accretions in a different way. For
example, he says, to neglect prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and **zakat**, or
dues for the poor, is the path of atheists; to show laziness in prayer,
worship according to one's desire, thus accepting certain injunctions
and rejecting others, is the path of hypocrites; to seek the aid of
the dead and make vows to them is the path of the pagans of Quraysh;
to boast of one's race, and to be too ostentatious is the path of the
Majus.[64]

IV

Heresies and innovations in India, says Isma'il, are attributable
to three main causes. First, the existence of irreligious sufi
orders; second, the influence of the **shi'i** community; and third,
corrupt social customs. In order to make this discussion complete, it
will be relevant to look into the above causes given by Shah Isma'il.
To begin with, sufism, as we have mentioned above, played an important
role in the propagation of Islam in India; however, at the popular

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level it became unorthodox and developed many "irreligious orders."
Bē-shar[c] (without the law) was the term used for those ṣūfī orders
which were engaged in a large number of abominations and had no
respect for the external law. For instance, there was one heterodox
off-shoot of the Suhrawardīyah order called Jalālīyah or Māriyah, the
followers of which, we are told, took hashīsh, ate snakes and
scorpions, and whose leader had the right to have intercourse with any
woman in the order he liked.[65] The Qalāndarīyah was another order
whose members used to walk in the nude like Hindu yogis. The poet
Sarmad, a protégé of Dārā Shikōh, who was executed by Aurangzēb for
heresy, walked about naked in ecstasy.[66] It was because of such
practises that Ismāᶜīl reproached these unorthodox ṣūfīs whom he
called 'ṣūfī-like infidels,' that is, infidels in the garb of ṣūfīs
(mulḥidīn-ī ṣūfī shaᶜār). However, it should not be construed, as
some of his opponents did, that Ismāᶜīl was hostile to ṣūfīs in toto;
this was certainly not the case, for, both Ismāᶜīl and his preceptor,
Sayyid Aḥmad were ṣūfīs themselves. But theirs was a kind of ṣūfism
which has been rightly defined by a scholar of the present century as
'neo-ṣūfism' or orthodox ṣūfism[67] which aimed at purging the mystical
tradition and divesting it of accretions.

The greatest obstacle in the path of God, Ismāᶜīl points out are
such ṣūfī shaᶜār mulḥids who are not only not afraid of doing things
contrary to the law but who have also made it their way of life to
oppose the law. These people should be punished accordingly, i.e.,
according to the seriousness of their crime.[68]

Among the heresies which became public due to their association with "heretic sūfīs" are the following.

First is the use of rude and disrespectful language about God. As an instance in point, one of them said, "I have purchased God for a penny."[69] The idea was that at one time he used some water worth one penny for the sake of God, which was accepted; and as a result, the "doors of divine gnosis" were opened to him.[70] Although the meaning or intention is sound, the wording is wrong. That is, a sound idea was put into erroneous words. If he had said, "I was reckoned among the servants of God by spending a penny for his sake," it would have been better.[71]

Second is the involvement of people in the discussion of **tawḥīd-i wujūdī**, a topic which had become commonplace among the laity as well as the scholars.[72] By getting themselves involved in this discussion, these people tended to imitate the real Sūfīs, but as Ismāʿīl claimed these 'pretenders to the knowledge of **waḥdat al-wujūd**', under the pretext of union with God were satisfying sensual lusts, and, misled by insinuation of Satan, considered this conversation of theirs to be part of divine gnosis.[73] The least harm of indulging in such a dispute, Ismāʿīl points out, is the waste of time. Muḥammad did not ask his community to make itself conversant with such issues nor did he say anything concerning them. Had there been any use of it, he adds, the Prophet would have informed us of it.[74]

The third major heresy circulated by the "heretic sūfīs" is concerned with the controversy of **taqdīr** or predestination, which had become a favorite and hotly disputed issue among the generality of

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Muslims. Let it be known, says Isma^{c}īl, that belief in predestination is an integral part of the faith. According to him, since this issue when viewed superficially contravenes **taklīf**[75] (a theological term which is used to denote the necessity that lies upon the creatures of God to believe and act according to the way which He has revealed), the Prophet asked his community to avoid going deeply into the details of it. Therefore, he stressed, it is incumbent upon Muslims to accept the implicit belief contained in the idea of predestination and not to delve into this deep ocean, that is, the complicated and indiscernible details of this problem.[76]

But this is not all. The problem of **taqdīr** has attracted the attention of many a Muslim scholar since the earliest days of Islam. Shāh Isma^{c}īl as well has devoted some attention to discussing the issue. According to him, **taqdīr** or predestination relates to that deterministic estimate which God made prior to the creation of man. Man has not been given knowledge of that deterministic estimate. Nonetheless, he has been granted the knowledge of what is good and what is bad; and it is this last item which makes him responsible for his deeds. Furthermore, Isma^{c}īl points out, there is a difference between the movement of a stone and that of a man; the former is devoid of will and volition whereas the latter is performed with volition. The point is that man is rewarded or punished if he does something good or bad deliberately and intentionally. This is like saying, in the words of Walīullāh, that the poison will show its effect only when it is taken into the stomach.[77]

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Although Ismā⁻ᶜīl warns ordinary Muslims against indulging in discussions on **taqdīr**, yet he deems it necessary to offer some explanation on the subject because, "owing to the association of Muslims with **Rawāfiḍ**, who reject predestination, and infidels, who reject **taklīf**[78] this issue has been confused by the generality of Muslims.[79]

According to Ismāᶜīl, man's actions and thoughts, his utterances, his motion and rest, his knowledge and intentions, his attributes whether good or bad, are all created by God. Some people are created and destined to do some types of actions and others different types of actions. As an example, God put faith in the heart of Abū Bakr and disbelief in the heart of Abū Jahl; this represents or expresses a secret wisdom which cannot be comprehended by anyone save God.[80] He points out that the disparity between the (predetermined) capacities of men is a reflection of that hidden wisdom. According to him, this disparity can be likened to a huge tree which contains different kinds of wood; some of this wood is worthy to be burnt, and of some, planks are made; again some of these planks are used in making the roof of the king's palace, and some are employed in the latrines of prisoners. Khawāja ᶜAbd Allāh Anṣārī al-Harawī has expressed the above comparison in the following short sentence, "What a place of astonishment? Two pieces of iron were excavated from the same mine, one piece was employed in the shoe of a horse, and the other was used in the mirror of the king."[81] The moral which one may get from this story is that men have been created with different spiritual potentialities. This raises the question as to why God did not create men spiritually equal

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or why He did not reform the evil potentialities? Would such a reform

not have been better for them?   Ismāᶜīl's response to these questions

is, briefly that: The kingdom of God would be .incomplete without this

diversity of human beings.   Human society, he adds, cannot function

properly without the setting up of prisons to deal with recalcitrant

elements.   In other words, "Whom would hell burn if there is no Abū

Lahab?"[82]   As for the question as to why infidels and sinners are

punished since the acts of these people are dependent upon, and

derived from, the predetermined 'eternal capacities' which are beyond

their control, it should be known, says Ismāᶜīl, that there are two

kinds of creatures; one, devoid of knowledge and volition such as

stones and trees and another endowed with knowledge and volition. The

creatures of the second category discern their actions.   There is a

difference between the movement of a paralyzed hand and that of a

sound one. In the former case, the person suffering from paralysis

cannot stop the movement of his hand.   Therefore, inasmuch as this

much freedom is given to man, the latter is responsible for his

actions.[83]

The   poetic   verse,

> Each person has been created for a purpose
> the desire of which has been put in his heart,

is used by Ismāᶜīl to express the idea that when God already knew who

is good and who is bad; who is destined for heaven and who for hell,

then what was the use of sending the prophets, revealing sacred Books,

argumentations, setting up a system of punishments and making jihād?

In reply to this question, Ismāᶜīl seems to revert to the old theory

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of cause and effect. For example, though the sun and its light have been created by God, He has created some connection between these two entities, and because of that connection, the sun is called the 'cause' and the light is called the 'effect.' He points out that this analogy can be extended to the topic under discussion. Thus, albeit God is the creator of the 'deeds' as well as the 'intentions' of men, He has created out of his wisdom a connection of cause and 'effect' between the sending of the prophets and the intentions of men. For instance, you can say that the intention to commit good deeds which is ingrained in the heart of the obedient is the effect of the guidance from the Prophet and the instructions of the ʿulamāʾ. Or, conversely, abstention from idolatry and drinking is the effect of the fear of jihād and the imposition of punishment.[84]

The fourth major heresy which gained popularity in India because of the influence of the 'heretic Sūfis' was the excessive respect being shown to religious guides and all elders for that matter, a custom which, according to Shāh Ismāʿīl, owes its existence to the pre-Islamic Persian influence on Indian Islam. Prior to his coming into contact with Sayyid Ahmad, Ismāʿīl opined that discipleship of a certain **murshid** or religious guide was not a necessary part of religion.[85] However, after meeting with the Sayyid, he changed his mind and maintained that "real salvation was not possible without a **murshid** who must be looked for before one begins to strive for salvation."[86] Again, "it is difficult to find a path without a leader."[87] Although he conceded the idea of a 'leader,' he appointed

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certain conditions and qualifications for him. He said, for instance, that a person who is looking for a **murshid** must make sure that he chooses one who is the type of person whose actions are not contrary to the **shari͞c ah**, and who is a strict follower of the Qur'ān and the **Sunnah.** In addition, the disciple should not follow his **murshid** blindly and in all circumstances, for, such a blind and unconditional following is due only to God and the Prophet; the **murshid** should be obeyed insofar as his instructions are in conformity with the **shari͞c ah.**[88] If the murshid does not conform to the above-mentioned conditions, then no heed should be given to him, because, Muhammad said, "One should not please a person at the expense of displeasing God."[89] What this may mean is that the love of the **murshid** should not lead to disobedience to God.

Indulgence in heretical activities at the shrines of saints, such as seeking succor from the dwellers in these shrines; or making long journeys to them which involve hardship and the waste of time,[90] are also heresies which Shāh Ismā͞c īl has attributed to the 'sụfī-like infidels.'[91] He says that the makers of long journeys to shrines wrongly consider their act to be more meritorious than, and superior to, pilgrimage to Mecca; they emulate the pilgrims to Mecca by dressing like them, thereby committing another bi^c dah.[92] He points out that these journeys are void, baseless and futile because Muhammad said, "Make journeys only to three mosques, the mosque at Mecca, the mosque at Jerusalem and this mosque, i.e., the mosque at Madīnah."[93] From this it follows that journeys to Ajmīr, Baghdād, Karbalā' and Najaf Ashraf are prohibited.[94] Similarly, decorating tombs, eg.,

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covering them with nice sheets; making them of bricks and mortar; writing verses of the Qur'ān or verses of poetry on them; writing upon them dates to indicate when the person died; ascribing certain powers to them such as those possessed by living human beings; or expecting any benefit from them or entertaining the belief that the pīr watches his disciples from his grave, are also among the innovations condemned by Ismā`īl.[95] However, according to him, there is one good aspect of visiting tombs which is that it reminds the visitor of the ephemeral nature of life. But, since this purpose can be obtained by looking at any tomb whether it is that of a Muslim or a non-Muslim, he argues that there is no reason for anyone to visit a specific shrine at any specific time. Ismā`īl also inveighed against, and was highly critical of, **mawlūd** meetings, which constitute another innovation. These meetings are often characterized by certain superstitious practises such as getting up when the name of the Prophet is mentioned or putting perfume or water on the place where his name is mentioned; this is done out of respect, for these people believe that the soul of the Prophet appears in these meetings when his name is mentioned.

The consecration of food also belongs to the same category of innovations. For example, a certain dish called **sahnak** is prepared in the name of Fātimah, the daughter of the Prophet; then, restrictions as to who should consume it are specified. Thus a woman who has remarried is not allowed to partake of this dish; nor is a man who chews tobacco, and so on.[96] It is said that this custom was being practised in the family of Shāh `Abdul `Azīz, the celebrated

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traditionist, and teacher of Sayyid Aḥmad, and it was the latter who

reminded ᶜAbdul ᶜAzīz of the superstitious nature of this custom, just

as he reminded him of a number of other things including the proper

way of greeting and the idolatrous nature of the practise of **tasawwur-

i shaykh**.[97] Similarly offerings are made in the name of ᶜAbdul Qādir

Jilānī and other saints in order to obtain their favours. Such

consecration of food, Ismāᶜīl points out, does not reveal anything but

shows a similarity to the Hindu practise of worshipping cereals and

grains.[98]

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So far we have discussed the criticism which Shāh Ismāᶜīl raised

against those un-Islamic practises that owe their origin to the exis-

tence of the so-called heretical or unorthodox sūfīs. We will now

direct our attention to the second and third objects of his criticism,

namely, the ritualistic practises of the **shīᶜah** community as well as

corrupt social customs.

The most significant of the practises of the **shīᶜah** are the

Muḥarram celebrations which take place in the first ten days of

Muḥarram, the first month of the lunar or Islamic calendar. The

Indian version of these ceremonies consists of many innovations.

Firstly, Ismāᶜīl says, there is the construction of **taᶜziyahs** which

are tomb-shaped structures supposed to resemble the tomb of Ḥusayn at

Karbalā.[99] The **taᶜziyahs**, accompanied by banners and a flag, are

carried in the Muḥarram processions. These innovations, i.e., making

a model of Ḥusayn's tomb, his flag and banner, according to Ismāᶜīl,

constitute idol making and idol worshipping.[100] When idolatry occurs,

he says, a structure of stone or wood is made, it is named after a

certain holy man, and then this artificial structure is treated as if

it were the real man.[101] According to him this is precisely what is

being done with ta^{c}ziyahs. People worship them and make circum-

ambulation around them. The true servant of God, he says, should

strive his best to break these ta^{c}ziyahs and consider such breakage or

destruction as constituting a most meritorious act, as is the breaking

of idols.[102] If he cannot use his hand, he should use his tongue, and

if he cannot do that, he should regard it as repugnant in his

heart.[103]

Secondly, self-flagellation, tearing the clothes and wailing are

among other common innovations that can be seen in Muharram.

According to him, such self-flagellation and mourning are absolutely

forbidden, and no one is allowed to do such things upon the death of

any person.[104]

Thirdly, the ceremonies of mourning in which certain usual and

permissible things are given up in order to express grief over the

death of someone. For instance, during Muharram, according to the

custom, a man is not supposed to comb his hair, wear new clothes, put

on perfume, or sleep in bed. Similarly, a woman is not supposed to

wear ornaments or put on any make up.[105] The Islamic way is to mourn

for three days after which one should resume normal life. However, in

the case of a woman whose husband has died, it is imperative, Isma^{c}il

says, that she mourn for four months and ten days, because such is the

injunction of the Qur'an. If she does not abide by this rule, she

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will be committing a sin.[106] Apart from these two cases, i.e., the Islamic way of mourning for three days and the case of a woman who has become a widow, every kind of mourning and lamentation is forbidden, be it on the death of a saint, a martyr or the Prophet, for that matter.[107] Therefore, for example, since Husayn died in Karbalā' many centuries ago, there is no reason why Muslims should mourn each year the day of his death and thus keep alive the memory of this tragedy. And if they must commemorate the occasion, they should do so without imposing upon themselves certain hardships and self-invented restraints such as the avoidance of luxuries.

The holding of **majālis-i** **ᶜuzzā'** meetings is another innovation of the **shīᶜah**. In these meetings, a **mullā** chants with explanation and commentary, the story of the martyrdom of Husayn in such a way as to make the audience full of grief. For Ismāᶜīl, this is a hateful thing to do, because Muslims are asked to bear with fortitude and patience any kind of calamity and not deliberately make themselves sad.[108] Likewise, the money which people spend in this month in order to 'please Husayn' actually goes to the credit of Satan. For, if these people really love Husayn and want to please him, why not, Shāh Ismāᶜīl asks, spend this money on Sayyids? The excuse of not recognizing the true Sayyids cannot be accepted, he says, for there are many true Sayyids who are starving, and these false claimants of the love of Husayn do not care as much for them as they would care for their dogs.[109]

The third category of Ismāᶜīl's criticism includes those

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innovations which are related to various other social customs. It mostly concerns the extravagance and the ostentation shown at marriages and on other occasions. According to him, certain practises are observed to the neglect of the essential obligations of religion. For example, he laments that if a person does not pray or fast, he is not blamed, but if he lags behind in a certain social custom, he becomes the target of people's criticism and is treated as though he had committed a sin.[110] By involving themselves in ruinous customs, people make themselves miserable and also neglect the essential religious duties. He points out, for example, that so much effort and time go into the preparation for the ceremony of circumcision that sometimes the boy reaches adulthood before he is actually circumcized. In such a case the matter becomes a source of shame for the family; sometimes this important ritual remains unfulfilled for the whole life of the man.[111] Similarly, postponements are made in marriage as a result of which the young man ends up committing repugnant things.[112] About the extravagance shown at the time of marriages and its consequences, a certain Mrs. Meer Hasan ᶜAlī writes:

> There is certainly too much ostentation evinced on these occasions; but custom, prided custom, bids defiance to every better argument; and thus the mother, full of solicitude that her daughter should carry with her evident marks of parental affection, and be able to sustain her rank in life, loads her child with a profusion of worldly goods. The poorest people, in this instance, imitate their superiors with a blameable disregard to the consequences. Many parents among the lower orders incur heavy debts to enable them to make a parade at their children's wedding, which proves a source of misery as long as they live.[113]

Similarly, on the occasion of someone's death, his relatives trouble

themselves, as the custom demands, to prepare large amounts of food either on the first, the third, or the seventh day; this ritual must be performed even if the relatives have to borrow money on interest.[114]

Isma⁻ᶜīl pointed out that certain repugnant practises had become so much in vogue that Indian Muslims do not consider them as repugnant. In other words, the fact that a certain custom has gained popular acceptance in society, becomes the licence for the permissibility of that custom, no matter how hideous it may be. Thus if one eats pork or dogmeat, he is blamed; but if he drinks wine, takes interest and receives bribes, he is not blamed. This happens because the latter has become part of custom whereas the former has not, when both are in the same category of forbidden things. Similarly, a Muslim is blamed for celebrating Christmas, but he is not blamed for celebrating mawlūd whereas in fact both actions are in the same category.[115] Another attitude which resulted from the inconsistency brought about by this process is that a woman would be faulted for having illicit sex with a male lover, while the man was not blamed for an illicit relationship, even though both are equally at fault.[116]

According to Isma⁻ᶜīl, Muslims follow the customs of their forefathers just as the pagans of the time of the Prophet did. In our estimation this happens because Muslims in India had to retain some customs and traditions of the pre-Islamic culture. When a father becomes attached to a sincere or saintly religious leader or becomes his disciple, his children will also become the disciples of the same

religious family even if the descendants of that family are corrupt or fraudulent.[117] Some of them have gone so far as to say that it is not proper for them to teach the Qur'ān and other religious truths to their girls because their forefathers had not done so. This is precisely what the Hindus say, as, according to them, women are forbidden to have religious education.[118] And strangely enough, some say that building a mosque has been a bad omen in their family; that is, if they build a mosque, some calamity will visit them. How can this be when these people claim to be Muslims?[119]

In the preceding pages, Ismā'īl's views on **Sunnah** and **Bid'ah** have been discussed. However, this discussion does not exhaust the vast scope of this subject. If we were to epitomize his views, which exemplify the orthodox viewpoint, we should say that his concept of **Sunnah** is very broad and not confined to the sayings and actions of the Prophet. **Bid'ah** is the exact opposite of **Sunnah**. The criterion or the rule for the permissibility of a thing is whether that thing was expressly declared by the Qur'ān and the **Sunnah** to be permissible. However, the modernist position is that permissibility is the basic principle, that is, what is not expressly forbidden by Islam is permissible.[120] The innovations and heresies which gained the upper hand in India, are attributable to three causes. These are: the existence of the 'irreligious or unorthodox Sūfīs'; the practises of the **Shī'ah** community, especially those practises observed on the occasion of Muḥarram; and local customs, particularly those borrowed from, and shared with, Hindus. The social life of the community has

been singled out for criticism by Isma‾ᶜī‾l. Time and again, he urges Muslims to give up the customs of their forefathers and to let the way of Muhammad be the model for their lives. Such activities as listening to music, boasting about one's ancestry, showing excessive respect to saints, believing in good or bad omens, fixing large sums for dowries, preventing a widow from remarrying and overindulging in mourning and lamentation, are but a few examples of those customs which Sha‾h Isma‾ᶜī‾l has stigmatized as innovations.

Notes to Chapter Two

[1] **Lane's Arabic English Lexicon**, vols. 3 and 4, p. 1438; D.S. Margoliouth, **The Early Developments of Mohammadenism** (London, 1914), p. 69; see also Fazlur Rahmān, **Islām** (New York, 1966), p. 58.

[2] Fazlur Rahmān, **Islām**, p. 5.

[3] Ibid., p. 55.

[4] Sir William Muir, **The Life of Muḥammad** (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1912), p. xxx; see also Alfred Guillaume, **The Traditions of Islam** (Oxford, 1924), p. 13.

[5] About this "seeking after knowledge" A. Guillaume writes, "The feverish desire to know what he had said and done, which is well marked in the second generation, increased in intensity until it reached its height in the absurdities of the exercise known as Ṭalabu-l-ᶜilm." (**Traditions**, p. 12.)

[6] H.A.R. Gibb, **Mohammedanism**, 2nd. ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), p. 51.

[7] I. Goldziher, **Muslim Studies** (Muhammedanische Studien), vol. 2 (New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1971), p. 25.

[8] Ibid., p. 25.

[9] D.S. Margoliouth, p. 72.

[10] Ibid.

[11] There were, however, some individual deviations from this consensus. For example, Ibn Khaldūn did not accept the authenticity of **Ibn Majā'**. See **The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History** (Eng. trans. by Franz Rosenthal), vol. 2 (London, 1958), p. 455. Similarly, Shāh Walīullāh prefers, against the consensus, the **Mu'watṭa'** of Malik b. Anas to the **Saḥīh** of al-Bukharī. See **Ḥujjat Allāh-balighah**, vol. 1 (Karachi, 1302/1884), p. 296.

[12] See Guillaume, p. 19; Goldziher, M.S., vol. 2, p. 19.

[13] Chirāgh ᶜAlī, **The proposed political ... reforms in the Ottoman Empire and other Mohammadan States** (Bombay, 1883), pp. XVIII, XIX.

[14] Guillaume, p. 78.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Shāfiᶜī, **Kitābu-r-Risālah** (Urdu trans. by Amjad ᶜAlī) (Karachi, 1968), p. 227.

[17] Margoliouth, p. 73.

[18] Guillaume, p. 43.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Goldziher, p.31.

[21] Ibid., p. 32.

[22] **Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islām**, p. 553.

[23] Goldziher, p. 28.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., p. 34.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid. See also B. Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," **Studia Islamica**, I, p. 52; Ismāᶜīl, **Īzāhul Haqq** (Delhi, n.d.), p. 15.

[29] Goldziher, p. 35.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p.27.

[33] Ibid., p. 36.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] B. Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy...," p. 52.

[37] Ibid., p. 53.

[38] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Tadhkīr-ul- Ikhwān**, reprint (Lahore: Iqbal

Academy, 1948), p. 112.

[39] Ibid., p. 62. This down-playing of the value of reason is visible throughout the "Wahhabī" literature. For example, a certain Khurram ^cAlī, one of the caliphs of Sayyid Aḥmad, says in his **Naṣīhat-ul-Muslimīn** (Admonition to Muslims), "If human reason were enough (for the direction of human beings) then, what need was there for the Prophets?" See **Majmu^cah taqwiyat-ul-Īmān ma^ca Tadhkīr-ul- Ikhwān wa Naṣihat-ul-Muslimin** (Karachi, n.d.), p. 510. Mawlana Muhammad Qāsim Nanotawī, the founder of the Deoband School, also argued for the sub-ordination of reason to the Prophetic tradition. See Peter Hardy, **Muslims of British India** (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1972), p. 171. However, it was totally different with Walīullāh, who had devoted a considerable amount of his energy to the 'rationalization' of Islamic doctrines and practices, and also to discovering the 'secrets' of these doctrines and practices.

[40] Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Tadhkīr-ul-Ikhwān**, p. 62.

[41] Ibid., p. 33

[42] Ibid., p. 8.

[43] Ibid., pp. 8,9.

[44] Ibid., p. 386. For example, preparing delicious dishes on wedding occasions which is done solely for pleasing people.

[45] Ibid., p. 9.

[46] Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Īdhāhul Haqq**, p. 16.

[47] Sir Sayyid gauged things (here religious) through the yard-stick of reason. For him anything which was against reason was not Islamic. Let us illustrate this point by an example. In the field of Prophetic traditions, unlike the consensus, his rule for ascertaining the genuineness of a **Hadīth**, was not whether that **Hadīth** was reported by al-Bukhārī or Muslim or whoever, but whether it was in conjunction with the spirit and letter of the Qur'ān and also reason or common sense. For details see his **Tafsīr-al-Qur'ān**.

[48] Bashīr Ahmad Dār, **The Religious Thought of Sayyid Ahmad Khān** (Lahore, 1957), p. 246.

[49] Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Īdhāhul Haqq**, p. 25.

[50] Literally it means 'forsakers.' This denomination was used for those **Shi^cah** who rejected or forsook the **Imamat** of Abū Bakr and ^cUmar. However, this has become an insulting title which is used for any sect of **Shi^cah**. Cf Hughes, **Dictionary of Islam**, (New Delhī, 1976), p. 532; **Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam**, p. 466; also Edward

Rehatsek, "The History of the Wahhabys in Arabia and in India," **Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,** Bombay branch, vol. XIV, 1878-1880, p. 391.

[51] Nasibīs were those **Shi^cah** who had displayed enmity towards ^cAlī. Cf **Tadhkīr-ul-Ikhwan,** p. 12.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p. 13.

[54] Ibid., p. 11.

[55] Ibid., p. 24.

[56] Ibid., p. 17. The "truth" here is of juristic import only. That is, in a given problem a person should not rigidly adhere to the opinion of a certain legal school, but he should strive and find out for himself the opinions of other schools on that problem. He may choose the one which is more sound, and closer to the Qur'ān and the **Sunnah.**

[57] Ibid., p. 57.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid., pp. 328 and 61.

[60] The sixth day after childbirth on which are performed the rites of cleaning out the house, fasting and giving a name to the child.

[61] Shāh Isma^cīl, **Tadkhīr-ul-Ikhwan,** p. 25. The list of innovations continues on pages 26, 27, 28, 36, 51, 52 of the same book. Khurram ^cAlī, whom we have mentioned earlier, has also in his treatise **Nasīhat-ul-Muslimīn** combatted innovations. He mentions, for instance, the innovations of consulting the astrologers and pandits (Hindu priests) about the events of the future; reading **mantras** (spells or incantations) in which the names of Hindu deities and magicians are repeated; slaughtering animals in honour of saints; tying the **paisa** or coin of Imam Zamin (the protecting or guarantor Imam) on the arm (so that it may protect the person undertaking a journey from any calamity or inconvenience that may befall him while he is travelling); and avoiding cow meat. Cf **Majmu^cah taqwiyat-ul-Iman,** pp. 507-508.

[62] Mushtāq Ahmad, Nizāmī, **Khon kē Anso** (Lahore, n.d.), p. 19.

[63] Ahmad Razā Khān, Barelwī, **al-Kawkabat al-Shahabīyah fī kufriyat abī wahhabīyah** (Lahore, n.d.), p. 60. Ahmad Raza Khan was one of the bitterest opponents of Shāh Isma^cīl. He has written a number of anti- Wahhabi books in which he has criticized the Wahhabis

in general and Shāh Ismā°īl and other °ulamā' regarded as "Wahhābīs" in particular. His books written against Ismā°īl, in addition to the one mentioned above, are: al-Istimdād °alā Ajyāl al-Irtidād; Sijn-as-Sabūḥ °an °ayb kizb al-maqbūḥ, etc.

[64] Ismā°īl, **Tadhkīr-ul-Ikhwān**, p. 20.

[65] °Azīz Aḥmad, **An Intellectual History of Islām in India** (Edinburgh, 1969), p. 44.

[66] Ibid., p. 45. Many mysteries surround the person of Sarmad about whose early life very little is known. Fahmī, Shāwkat °Alī, the author of **Hind awr Pakistan kī Aulīyā'** (Delhi, 1953), has included him in the list of saints. He surmises that another reason for Aurangzēb executing Sarmad was that Sarmad associated himself with Dārā Shikōh, the brother of Aurangzēb, who was also executed by Aurangzēb for heresy. Cf. S.A., Fahmī, **Hind awr Pakistan kē Auliyā'**, p. 188.

[67] Fazlur Rahmān, **Islām** (Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1966), p. 206 as quoted by Mu'in-ud-Din, Ahmad Khān, "Tarīqah-i Muḥammadīyah Movement," **Islamic Studies**, vol. 6 (1966), p. 376.

[68] Shāh Ismā°īl, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm** (Lahore, n.d.), p. 112.

[69] Ibid., p. 113.

[70] Ibid. This may mean that he attained communion with God and thus became a saint.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid., p. 114. The two philosophic theories of **Waḥdat al-Wujūd** and **Waḥdat al-Shuhūd** are related to, and concerned with the relationship of God to his creatures or creation. The former theory was taught by Ibn al-°Arabī and the latter by Sirhindī. According to the author of **Tazkirah Ghauṣīyah**, a famous book on ṣūfism, the difference between these theories or doctrines is as follows: **Wujūd** (Being or Existence i.e. God) is one. However, there is the External Existence and Internal Existence. (That is, Existence has two aspects. The Internal Being or Existence is a light which is like the soul for the Universe. Whatever there is in the Universe, is a **partau** or a faint reflection of that internal Light which is the source or origin of everything. (Although) there is multiplicity (in the universe), the cause of this multiplicity in reality, is that Unity. It is like the waves of an ocean, the waves are many but they are the essence of one ocean. In short the creation is a manifestation of God.
    In **Waḥdat al-Shuhūd**, the creation is the zill or shadow of the Essence and Attributes of God, which is reflected in °adam (Not-being or nothingness.) This shadow is not the real Being of the shadow but a faint reflection of it. Gul, Hasan, **Tazkirah Ghauṣīyah**, 7th ed.

(Lahore, 1955), p. 147. It is very difficult to find one's way in the labyrinth of these two philosophical theories which represent two different and contradictory mental attitudes. Shah Isma⁻ᶜ⁻il has discussed these two theories in detail in his ᶜAbqa⁻t.

A certain Sir Ahmad Husayn Niza⁻m Jang has, in his book **Falsafah-i Fuqara⁻'**, made a distinction between these theories through the help of a map:

Wahdat al-Wuju⁻d	**Wahdat al-Shuhu⁻d**
He is all.	He is the Guide.
Everything is He or everything is in Him.	Everything is from Him.
I and He are not different. (If He is a river, then I am a drop.)	I am with Him and He is with me.
Union	Love
Who am I? I am Truth.	Who am I? I am His servant.

S.M. Ikra⁻m, **Ru⁻d-i Kausar**, 4th ed. (Lahore, 1968), p. 312.

[73] **Sira⁻t-i Mustaqi⁻m**, p. 114.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., p. 115.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Sha⁻h Wali⁻ulla⁻h, **Hujjat Alla⁻h**, p. 47.

[78] All sane human beings are supposed to believe in God and act according to his will. This is called **takli⁻f**. Children and insane people are exempted from **takli⁻f**.

[79] Sha⁻h Isma⁻ᶜi⁻l, **Sira⁻t-i Mustaqi⁻m**, p. 116.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid., p. 117.

[82] Ibid., p. 120.

[83] Sha⁻h Isma⁻ᶜi⁻l, **Tadhki⁻r-ul-Ikhwa⁻n**, p. 110.

[84] Sha⁻h Isma⁻ᶜi⁻l, **Sira⁻t-i Mustaqi⁻m**, p. 122. It may be pointed out that Isma⁻ᶜi⁻l's understanding of **taqdi⁻r** is based on those traditions which tend to foster the notion of predestination as it is popularly understood, and is sometimes called **Qismat**, or fate. However, this concept of fate is foreign to Islam. Although the Qur'a⁻n mentions both free will and predestination, on the whole it lays emphasis on human responsibility. If a person knows that his actions are

predetermined, he has little incentive to do anything. The Qur'ānic **taqdīr**, which simply means "measuring out," should, therefore, be interpreted in terms of potentialities which are invested in men at the time of their creation. As for those verses which speak about the "sealing of the hearts" and "deafening of the ears" etc., according to Fazlur Raḥmān, they refer to a certain psychological law, according to which, "whenever a man does an evil act, his chances of repeating that kind of act increase and the chances of doing good decrease proportionately until a time comes when, by constantly practising evil, he apparently reaches a point of no return." However, this process of "sealing the hearts" should not be taken in the absolute sense as the traditionists want us to do. For further information, see Fazlur Raḥmān, "The Qur'ānic Concept of God, the Universe and Man," **Islamic Studies**, vol. 6 (1967), pp.1-19, especially p. 4.

[85] Shāh Ismāʿīl, **Īdhāḥul Ḥaqq**, p. 92.

[86] Shāh Ismāʿīl, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 124.

[87] Ibid. Here 'leader' means a religious guide.

[88] Ibid. Walīullāh had also put similar conditions for a religious guide. In his **Waṣīyat Nāmah**, the third **waṣīyat** runs: "Do not give your hands of allegiance to the Ṣūfīs of this age who have succumbed to many innovations. You should never give them allegiance...". Ikrām, S.M., **Rūd-i Kausar**, p. 363.

[89] Ibid., p. 124.

[90] Ingham, **Reformers in India** (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1956), p. 35.

[91] Shāh Ismāʿīl, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 126.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Shāh Ismāʿīl, **Tadhkīr-ul-Ikhwān**, p. 278.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid., p. 278.

[96] Shāh Ismāʿīl, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 137.

[97] Thānwī, **Arwāḥ-i Thalātha or Amīrur Rawayāt**, 3rd. ed. (Saharanpur [U.P.], 1150), p. 122; Muḥammad Jaʿfar Thānēsarī, **Hayat-i Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd**, (Karachi: Nafīs Academy, 1968), pp. 61 and 81; Ghulām Rasūl, Mihr, **Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd** (Lahore: Kitāb Manzal, 1952), p. 76.

[98] Shāh Ismāʿīl, **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 136.

[99] Ibid., p. 144.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Ibid., p.145.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid., p. 146.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Ibid., p. 147. It may be pointed out that this period of four months and ten days was basically fixed in order to determine whether the woman was pregnant or not.

[107] Ibid., p. 147.

[108] Ibid., p. 149.

[109] Ibid., p. 151.

[110] Ibid., p.153; **Tadhkīr**, pp. 114, 115.

[111] **Ṣirāt-i Mustaqīm**, p. 53.

[112] Ibid.

[113] Mrs. Meer Ḥasan ᶜAlī, **Observations of the Musulmans of India.** (Oxford Univ. Press, 1917), p. 198.

[114] **Tadhkīr-ul-Ikhwān**, p. 314.

[115] Ibid., p. 317.

[116] Ibid., p. 318.

[117] Ibid., p. 322.

[118] Ibid., p. 323.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Khalīfah, ᶜAbdul Ḥakīm, **Islamic Ideology** (Lahore, 1951), p. 229.

Chapter Three

Ijtihād and Taqlīd

In the previous chapter we discussed Shāh Ismāʿīl's ideas about Sunnah and bidᶜah, which aimed at the social and moral reformation of the then decadent Muslim society. One cause for this decadence was a rigid adherence to the opinions of certain "religious authorities" against whom both Shāh Ismāʿīl and his religious preceptor Sayyid Ahmad of Rā'ē Barēlī initiated a reformist campaign. This campaign, which also denounced religious abuses in general, assumed the form of a sūfī order or organization called the Tarīqah-i Muhammadīyah (The Path of Muhammad). The Tarīqah-i Muhammadīyah was well-known for stressing the use of ijtihād[1] and rejecting taqlīd (the uncritical acceptance of authority). This chapter will be devoted to discussing Shāh Ismāʿīl's ideas on this subject.

I

The trenchant attack on authority, be it that of a mujtahid, imām, ghauth, qutb, mawlavī, shaykh . . . as it appears in the Taq- wīyat al-Īmān of Shāh Ismāʿīl, is an indication of his exaggerated protest against the existing traditional system which he so strongly criticized. The allegiance shown to these 'authorities' reminded the Shāh of what "the Hindus do to their deities."[2] He wanted to weaken the monopoly of these 'authorities' and attract the attention of Muslims towards a threefold form of authority, namely that of God, the

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Prophet and the **ijmā⁻ᶜ** or consensus which can be replaced by the authority of the **Imām** or Caliph as we shall see at the end of this chapter.

The Shāh, as a preacher and reformer, emphasized the idea of 'going back to the Qur'ān' and Traditions which alone should be followed; all other authorities, except that of the **imām** as mentioned above, were considered false by Ismāᶜīl and therefore did not deserve any recognition. In order to understand the Qur'ān or **Hadīth**, no formal training was necessary, for God has conveyed his message in plain, easy to understand words.[3] About the phenomenon of Muslims following different authorities, the Shāh complains that, "in the present age, people follow many ways. Some uphold the customs of their ancestors as precedents; others look to the stories of pious men (Buzurgān) for their guides; while, again, some follow the sayings invented by the **Mawlavīs** from the ingenuity of their own minds; and others allow their own judgement to interfere; . . . but the best of all ways is to have for principles the words of Allāh, and his Apostle; to hold them alone as precedents, and not to allow their own opinion to be exercised."[4]

Traditionally, **ijtihād** had always been an expression of opinion about the meaning of the Qur'ān and the **Hadīth**, but most 19th century thinkers saw it in a different light. Thus the purpose of Shāh Ismāᶜī's **ijtihād** was to disregard any extra-Qur'ānic and extra-Prophetic authority and to make a direct approach to the Qur'ān and **Hadīth**. This is not to say, however, that he totally ignored the

systematization of the early Jurists or that he gave them no credit; in general, he appears to be suggesting that the opinions of the Jurists should be compared with the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions. If the new **mujtahid** finds agreement between the opinions of the Jurists and the Prophetic Traditions, he should accept them; if this is not the case, he should strive to make a sound interpretation himself.[5]

It may be pointed out that the Shāh's extreme insistence on the primacy of the Qur'ān and Traditions and his deprecation of the opinions of the Jurists can in a large part be attributed to the influence of his religious guide, Sayyid Ahmad who, although not well-versed in Islamic Jurisprudence, had a general inclination towards Traditions. According to him, to follow any of the four schools in religious matters was fine, but at the same time he warned that Prophetic knowledge should not be regarded as consisting of the knowledge of one jurist only, however learned he may be. Rather, he stressed, Prophetic knowledge had spread and was accessible to Muslims, and according to the needs of his particular time, every **mujtahid** has received a share of it.[6] When the period of the early jurists was over, it was followed by the era of the compilations of books of Traditions such as those of **Bukhārī** and **Muslim**, and Prophetic knowledge or the knowledge of Traditions was thus made available in its entirety. Therefore, he concludes, if an authentic unabrogated **Hadīth** is available on a certain issue, it should be followed without any hesitation; it is not necessary to follow the opinion of a **mujtahid**; the **Ahl-i Hadīth** (the transmitters of **Hadīth**) and not the **mujtahid**,

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should be taken as the authority on that point.[7] This attitude of the Sayyid, held also by his disciple Shāh Ismāᶜīl, led a class of **mawlavīs** of Hindustān to accuse the Sayyid of creating a new religion;[8] in addition, he and his followers were regarded as **lā-azhab**[9] (not belonging to any of the canonical schools); the Sayyid, however, in one of his letters defended himself against this attack saying that he and his family were not unknown in India; that thousands of people knew him and knew also that he was raised as a **Hanafī**. He further pointed out that in every school the approach of the **muhaqqiqīn** (investigators) was different from that of non-**muhaqqiqīn**. It had always been customary among scholars of old that they prefer one tradition over another because of its greater strength and reconcile various issues in different ways. Therefore, he argued, such variation in approach is (or the above are) not reason enough to oust a person from a **mazhab**.[10]

The Sayyid's stress on the importance of the accessibility of Traditions according to the "need of a particular time," proved a source of insight for later modernist reformers. The above opinion of the Sayyid probably had some traditional meaning for him, but it gave an incentive to later modernists to come up with bold theories and to interpret the Qur'ān in a more liberal way. For example, the first great modernist, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān, who was a disciple of Shāh Ismāᶜīl for some time,[11] and who speaks very highly of him in his **Āthār-us-Sanādīd**,[12] formulated notably liberal views. Using the principle of **ijtihād**, which he regarded as the birthright of every

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Muslim,[13] he (Sir Sayyid) asserted that the sharī^{c}ah consisted of immutable and mutable constituents. The immutable or eternal aspects of sharī^{c}ah dealt with such issues as the Unity of God, and matters related to the hereafter, whereas the mutable part related to the social aspects of the sharī^{c}ah which, he said, were modifiable. He rejected the idea that the entire sharī^{c}ah was divine. Of the systematization and formulations of the early Jurists he said, "Mujtahidīn may be right or wrong; we follow Islām and not the opinions of X,Y and Z."[14] About the rejection of taqlīd, Sir Sayyid wrote, "If people do not shun blind adherence, if they do not seek that Light which can be found in the Qur'ān and the indisputable Hadīth and do not adjust religion and the science of today, Islām will become extinct in India."[15]

It is generally asserted that Sir Sayyid drew his inspiration from Shāh Walīullāh, but since he (Sir Sayyid) used to attend the lectures of Shāh Ismā^{c}īl[16] and since the reform movement of Sayyid Ahmad was a continuation of the reform career of Shāh Wallīullāh, as Mawdūdī maintains,[17] it is probable that Sir Sayyid was also inspired by the reformist ideas of Sayyid Ahmad. This view is further strengthened by the fact that Sir Sayyid sometimes labelled himself as a "Wahhābī," a title which had been applied to Sayyid Ahmad and his followers as we saw earlier.

Shāh Ismā^{c}īl's attack upon extra-Qur'ānic and extra-Prophetic authorities and his call to Muslims to follow the Prophetic authority seems to be related to his ideas on egalitarianism. These ideas, however, he acquired from the teachings of Sayyid Ahmad who stressed

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the doctrines of the Unity of God, the equality of men[18] and strict adherence to the **sharī^cah**, without which, he said, spiritual progress was not possible.[19] In addition, it seems that in general he would emphasize the major religious duties while paying little attention to the less important ones. We have discussed in the previous chapter Shāh Ismā^cīl's criticism of the social and religious life of Indian Muslims for 'doing things the wrong way.' Both Sayyid Ahmad and Shāh Ismā^cīl seem to have had fairly short range and eminently practical purposes in mind. They were not intellectuals dealing only with ideas or concerned exclusively with abstract formulations. They had realized that there was something wrong with the religious life of Muslim India. It appears therefore that the rectifying ideas of these two reformers were aimed at improving the practical morality of their community, a phenomenon which appears very prominently in the ideas put forth in the **Tarīqah-i Muhammadīyah**.[20]

II

In this section we will examine the views of Shāh Ismā^cīl in the capacity of a **mujtahid**. It should be pointed out at the outset that the Shāh did not himself claim to be a **mujtahid**, though he had the qualifications to become one. Basically he was a preacher and a reformer, although during earlier times he had engaged in discussions of matters related to the principles of Jurisprudence as part of his academic pursuits.

Despite his emphasis on the sufficiency of the Qur'ān and Traditions, he continually refers to all the four sources of Islamic

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law, the Qur'ān, Traditions, ijmāᶜ or consensus of opinion and Qiyās (the principle of analogy). This matter deserves a brief treatment.

The significance Ismāᶜīl gives to the Qur'ān and Hadīth as sources of guidance both in religious and temporal matters has already been indicated. Next in importance to these is ijmāᶜ which for Shāh Ismāᶜīl refers to the ijmāᶜ of the Companions, for it is their ijmāᶜ which the Hadīth literature seeks to impress upon Muslims. Nevertheless, the consensus of the Companions is claimed to be inferior to a wording of the Qur'ān or Hadīth, because, he points out, the Companions were not infallible.[21] This is in fact a rather radical opinion since all of the Hadīth and information about the early community including knowledge of the Qur'ān itself, comes through the Companions. As regards ijmāᶜ, the Shāh's opinion agrees with that of the Hanbalīs and Wahhābīs who accepted only the ijmāᶜ of the Companions,[22] but this view of the Shāh is not in accord with the early opinion that ijmāᶜ was not necessarily confined to the Prophetic era or to the opinion of the Companions. It may be pointed out that there was no general unanimity on the question of ijmāᶜ among ancient Jurists; the most widespread opinion on this issue was the one which was developed by later Hanafī Jurists who asserted that ijmāᶜ was "the agreement of the mujtahids of the people of Muhammad in any age, in any legal matter."[23]

In spite of its secondary nature, ijmāᶜ has been given such power that, according to Shāh Ismāᶜīl, it can even abrogate a Qur'ānic verse.[24] He cites, for example, the verse which concerns "those whose

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hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth)," claiming it to have been nullified by an ijmā^c achieved during the time of ^{c}Umar.[25] The abrogation of a Qur'ānic verse by ijmā^c means, as Shāh Ismā^{c}īl says, that it is not the mere words of the Qur'ān which matter but their interpretation also.

According to Shāh Ismā^{c}īl, the fourth and the weakest of all the sources of Islamic law is qiyās whose legal status derives its authority from the following verse of the Qur'ān: "Take warning then, O ye with eyes (to see)."[26] Qiyās literally means speculation, in the sense of reasoning and comparing. Technically, it is the analogical reasoning of Jurists about those matters which have not been settled in the Qur'ān, the Hadīth, or the collective opinion of Jurists, the ijmā^c. In the Shāh's opinion, the qiyās of every individual is not acceptable; only the qiyās of those Jurists is valid whose ijtihād has been recognized by the majority of Muslims, as in the case of the Jurists who founded the four canonical schools, namely, Abū Hanīfa, al-Shāfi^{c}ī, Mālik B. Anas and Ahmad B. Hanbal.[27] In addition, the qiyās should be sound, meaning that it should not contradict the Qur'ān, the Hadīth and the ijmā^c; however, it can contradict a weak tradition.[28]

After acquiring knowledge of the above four rules and also mastering the exegesis of the Qur'ān, and the Hadīth as well as the Arabic language and its syntax, a person is entitled to become a mujtahid. Such a person is not bound to follow anything else -- only his own itmīnān al-qalb (satisfaction of the heart).[29] The opinions of Juristic authorities are to be followed by those people who do not

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possess a full understanding of the Qur'ān and Hadīth;[30] a **mujtahid**, on the other hand, is exempted from following such juristic opinions or the decisions of Jurists. But, since a person may not be able to become an authority on all religious matters, it is possible that he may be a **mujtahid** in one aspect and a follower in another; this is so because **ijtihād** can be divided into parts (**yatajazzā'**).[31]

According to Islamic Jurisprudence, there are three classes of **mujtahids**: 1) permanent, independent **mujtahid** (**mujtahid al-Mutlaq al-mustaqill**); 2) **al-mujtahid fī al-mazhab** (relative **mujtahid**); and 3) **al-mujtahid fi al-masā'il** (special **mujtahid**). Concerning the first category of **mujtahids**, Shāh Ismāᶜīl says that they are like **al-Kibrīt al-ahmar** (red sulphur) that is, they are found very rarely, while the two last-mentioned categories are more numerous.[32]

In his ideas of **ijtihād**, Shāh Ismāᶜīl was influenced by Shāh Walīullāh, who, apparently, had a knack for synthesizing different ideas. According to Walīullāh, one of the ills of the Muslim society was its rigid conformity to religious interpretations made in medieval times. He, therefore, protested against this attitude and emphasized the need for fresh **ijtihād** in each age to harmonize the law with the existing conditions. He emphasized that growth and change were essential for a healthy society; thus his emphasis on individual **ijtihād** and his severe condemnation of **taqlid**. He wrote in his **Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah** (The excellent Proof of God) that on those issues on which clear injunctions have been spelled out in the Qur'ān and Hadīth, he would willingly follow the previous Jurists. However, if

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there was no direct guidance either in the Qur'ān or **Hadīth**, he may
disagree with the opinions of early Jurists, who were, after all, as
fallible as he was. Walīullāh's emphasis on **ijtihād** seems to arise
from his awareness of the diversity of problems in a newly expanded
human society. According to him truth lies between two extremes, and
therefore a broad outlook, not narrow-minded rigidity, is necessary in
religious matters.[33]

For the last two hundred years from the time of Walīullāh to the
time of Iqbāl, Indian thinkers have stressed the need for **ijtihād**.[34]
Nevertheless, whatever has been said by Walīullāh and others on this
subject has remained theoretical. Although in theory **mujtahids** of the
first rank can arise in every age, in practise this does not happen.
The contribution of Walīullāh in the elaboration or revision of the
holy law is considerable; at the practical level, however, his ideas
were not followed, as, shortly after his death, the British took over.
In Iqbāl's time, when there were struggles for a separate Muslim
state, the question of **ijtihād** was raised again. Iqbāl dwelt upon
this issue and endeavoured to prove that the law of Islam was capable
of evolution. According to him, the four ancient schools of law were
based on the individual opinions of scholars, who never claimed final
authority for their decisions. The causes of the closing of the gates
of **ijtihād** about a millennium ago have been linked by Iqbāl with three
events. According to him, these were the Mu tazilite movement against
which the Orthodox had to make their decisions as rigorously as
possible; the introduction of asceticism, which was attracting the
best minds in Islamic lands and which was spreading doctrines contrary

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to the orthodox opinions; and finally, the destruction of Baghdād, which put an end to the ^cAbbāsid Caliphate. It was at that stage, Iqbāl points out, that the ^cUlamā' closed the gates of **ijtihād** and recommended rigid adherence to the decisions of the four Orthodox schools in an effort to prevent the community from lapsing into further disintegration. In other words, the ^cUlamā' thought that stability lay in rigidity. However, "since things have changed," Iqbāl wrote,

> and the world of Islam is today confronted and affected by new forces, set free by the extraordinary development of human thought in all its direction I see no reason why this attitude should be maintained any longer. Did the founders of our schools ever claim finality for their reasoning and interpretations? Never. The claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to re-interpret the foundational legal principles, in the light of their own experience and the altered condition of modern life, is, in my opinion, perfectly justified.[35]

Thus Ismā^cīl's stress on the importance of **ijtihād** came to be of concern once again and was added to by this 20th century scholar.

III

In this section, we will concentrate on Shāh Ismā^cīl's criticism of **Taqlīd**. **Taqlīd** literally means 'blind imitation'; in the terminology of Jurists it means associating oneself with one of the four schools of law. Shāh Ismā^cīl considers such an association as one of the real innovations **bid^cat-i haqiqī**;[36] he enjoins upon Muslims not to describe themselves as **hanafīs** or **shāfi^cīs**; they should rather describe themselves as Muslims and Sunnīs.[37] It appears that his condemnation of **Taqlīd** arises from his tenet that following something

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other than what God has ordained constitutes **shirk**. According to the Shāh, God is the real **Hākim** (arbiter), and Muhammad is only a news-bringer or messenger from Him; therefore, if a person regards the sharī^cah as originating from Muhammad, he is also guilty of **shirk**.^{38.}

It seems that the question of **Taqlīd-i Shakhsī** and **Iltizām bil mazhab al-mu^cayyin** (obligating oneself to follow one school only) was a very important one during the Shāh's time. He refuted both very strongly.   The significance of this question is clear from the fact that the ^c**Ulamā'** wrote treatises defending their particular schools, and conferring upon their **imāms** an almost divine status. For example, it is written in **Durr-i Mukhtār** (The Chosen Pearl), that the school of Abū Hanīfah is so superior that at the end of the world when Christ descends to the earth, he will follow the school of Abū Hanīfah.³⁹ The Shāh condemned this idea and maintained that there was nothing divine in those schools; an **imām**, he said, can be followed inasmuch as his opinion agrees with a Qur'ānic verse or a Tradition; if anyone regards the authority of an **imām** or **mujtahid** as higher than the Prophetic authority, he is guilty of **shirk**.⁴⁰ In refutation of **taqlīd-i shakhsī** he wrote, "I wish I knew (**lata sha^crī**) how following one person can be permissible when there are Prophetic Traditions which can be resorted to, and which are contrary to the opinion of the **imām**? If the **muqallid** (follower) does not give up following the views of the **imām**, there is a miniature **shirk** in this action of his as the following **Hadīth** narrated by al-Tirmidhī shows.   ^c**Adī** b. **Hātim** asked the Prophet about the meaning of this Qur'ānic verse: "They take their

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priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of God,
and (they take as their lord) Christ, the son of Mary; . . . "(9:31)
^cAdī said, "O Prophet of God, we did not take our priests and
anchorites to be our lords," whereupon the Prophet said, "**Innakum
halaltum mā ahallū wa harrumtum mā harramū**. [You permitted what they
declared permissible and you forbade what they declared forbidden.]"
The Shāh says that **taqlīd** in this verse does not refer to matters of
belief, for, the words 'permissible' and 'forbidden' are related to
actions; neither does it refer to **taqlīd-i mutlaq** (absolute **taqlīd**)
because that would imply that every illiterate man has been commanded
to make **ijtihād**, which is not the case. Rather, **taqlīd** here means
interpreting the holy laws according to the opinions of their
priests.[41]

The exaggerated reliance upon **taqlīd** and turning to the following
of one person fanatically, has been compared by Shāh Ismā^cīl to the
Shī^cah doctrine of following the **imām**. Just as the one **Shī^cah imām** is
blindly followed by his followers, similarly the supporters of **taqlīd
shakhsī** follow one person to the extent that they have prohibited
ijtihād and have forbidden the **taqlīd** of anyone except that one
person.[42] According to the Shāh this disease has destroyed the
Shī^cah, that is, they became heretics for this reason. However, the
difference between the **Shī^cah** and those who approve of **taqlīd shakhsī**
is that whereas the former reached the extreme of rejecting the **nuṣuṣ**
(sacred texts) in favour of the opinions of the **imām**, the latter have
interpreted famous traditions in such a way as to mould them according
to the opinions of their **imāms**.[43] The Shāh holds that, like **ijtihād**,

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taqlīd can also be divided (tajazzā'); what this leads to is that a person can follow different Jurists. On the last point, Shāh Ismāᶜīl points out that it has not been reported about the Companions, or the Successors, or any of the early Muslims, that they obligated them-selves to follow one specific person; on the contrary their wont in investigating an issue was to enquire of their different Jurists,[44] and thus for them, there was no one fixed authority as the supporters of taqlīd-i shakhsī assert.

It is appropriate to quote Shāh Walīullāh on the issue under discussion. According to Walīullāh, following the four canonical schools is not divinely ordained; it was two hundred years after the death of the Prophet that Muslims started following the rules of specific schools. Before that time, religious issues were simple: when the Prophet was alive, Muslims practised religious duties as they saw the Prophet doing them; after his death the Companions and Successors acted on Traditions without putting any condition upon them.[45] During the entire life of the Prophet, Muslims asked only thirteen questions which have been mentioned in the Qur'ān.[46] The reference is those verses which begin with the prefix wa yas' alūnaka (they ask you such and such).

Shāh Ismāᶜīl asked, if commitment to a certain school is to be permitted, then should that school be followed continuously or not? Some answered this question in the affirmative; others said it was not necessary, reasoning that nothing was obligatory unless it was made obligatory by God. Taqīuddīn, a Shāfiᶜī Jurist expressed such an

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opinion.[47]

It may be pointed out that in India allegiance to one of the four schools was strictly essential as is clear from the following statement of the author of **Tafsīr-i Aḥmadī**, "to follow any other than the four schools is unlawful."[48] This attitude seems to have been weakened first through the teachings of Walīullāh, and then through those of Shāh Ismāᶜīl. Although, for all practical purposes, Walīullāh was a **Ḥanafī**, he maintained that the four schools of law should be placed on an equal footing, and exclusive attention should not be given to any one of them.[49] In response to the question as to which school he belonged, Walīullāh said, "I try my best to combine all the points of agreement in all schools, and in matters of variance, I adhere to what is proved by genuine **Ḥadīth** -- which thanks to God, I can do. If anybody asks me for a **fatwā'**, I give it according to whatever school he belongs to."[50] In **Anfās al- ᶜĀrifīn** (The Souls of Gnostics) he said, "In most of the cases I decide things according to the Ḥanafī law; however, in some matters, following the Traditions and my own **wijdān** (intuition), I decide things according to other schools."[51]

But the teachings of Shāh Ismāᶜīl, and his emphasis on Traditions, brought about some schismatic effects. For example, it is generally asserted that his teachings encouraged the emergence of the sect of **Ahl-i Ḥadīth** (The People of Traditions) in India.[52] However, the views of the present **Ahl-i Ḥadīth** differ from those of Shāh Ismāᶜīl as Sulaymān Nadwī points out: "There is a movement of **Ahl-i Ḥadīth** in this country [India] today; but truly speaking it is not a

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footstep but the print of a foot-step; the movement started by Mawlānā Ismā‘īl was not related to a few issues of **Fiqh**, rather it was concerned with **imāmat-i kubrā’**, **tawḥīd-i khāliṣ** and the basic teachings of following the Prophetic path. Alas, the flood went away and whatever is left, is only the line of the receding water."[53]

The **Ahl-i Ḥadith** is a sect of Muslims in India and Pakistan who profess views similar to those of the early aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth. As the title indicates, they advocate recourse to Ḥadīth as the main source of guidance. They accept the six canonical collections of Ḥadīth and mould their lives in the light of these dicta.[54] They are sometimes called Wahhābīs and **ghayr muqallids** (non-confirmists) though they dislike these titles. The **Ahl-i Ḥadith** reject the notion that the **ijtihād** of the four canonical schools has a final authority, and they maintain that every Muslim has the right to make his own interpretation, provided he has sufficient knowledge of the Qur’ān and traditions.[55] They stress that all guidance and knowledge should be directly acquired from these two sources, and it is not necessary to follow any other authority. It is for this reason that they do not give allegiance to any of the four canonical schools. In addition, they do not regard the **ijmā‘** of the early generation of Muslims as binding. They are regarded by some as "the representatives of the Wahhābīs of the time of Sayyid Ahmad Barēlwī."[56] The **Ahl-i Ḥadith** in Pakistan number two million;[57] they build their own mosques and set up their own religious schools where preachers are trained. On the whole, their influence upon Sunnī Islam is negligible.

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Before discussing Shāh Ismā⁻ᶜīl's ideas about the role of an **imām** or Caliph as a **mujtahid**, it will be appropriate to give his views concerning the **imām**.

According to Shāh Ismā⁻ᶜīl, the **imām** or the rightly-guided Caliph is "a person who is the possessor of the rank of **imāmat** and who displays ability in **siyāsat-i Imānī** (religiously oriented politics and administration); whoever, he continues, has this rank, he is the **Khalīfah Rāshid**, whether he appeared in ancient times or at the present time; whether he lived in the beginning of the Muslim **ummah** (community) or at its end; whether he belongs to the clan of **Faṭimids** or **Hāshimites**; whether he be a descendent from the clan of **Qussī** or of **Quraish**. The word **Khalīfah** should not be treated like (the titles) of Khalīl Allāh,[58] Kalīm Allāh,[59] Rūh Allāh,[60] Habīb Allāh,[61] Siddīq Akbar or Fārūq ᶜAzam, etc., because these titles refer to certain people. Rather the title **Khalīfah** should be treated like (the titles of) Walīullāh (the friend of God), ᶜĀlim (scholar), ᶜĀbid (worshipper), Zāhid (saint), Faqīh (jurisprudent), **Muhaddith** (traditionist), etc.[62] He goes on to say that, "It should not be thought that the righteous Caliphate was confined to the first four Caliphs or to the appearance of the **Mahdī** at the end of the world, and that no righteous Caliph will appear during the middle time. The majority of the successors regarded the Caliphate of ᶜUmar B. ᶜAbdul ᶜAzīz as a righteous one."[63] Contrary to this view, however, most Muslim jurists and theologians hold that the era of the **Khilāfat-i**

Rāshidah was limited to the first few decades of the Muslim era. The above notwithstanding, the Shāh was hopeful about the appearance of another **Khalīfah-i Rāshid**. Shāh Ismā⁻ᶜīl argues that since the **imām** (whose qualifications have been mentioned above) is like a spiritual son of the Prophet, his command carries the weight of a divine law, although this divine law is secondary in nature. Just as the speculations of Jurists are futile when they contradict a clear Qur'ānic injunction or Prophetic Tradition, in the same way they carry no significance if they contravene the opinion of the **imām**.[64] This means that the **ijtihād** of the **imām** nullifies all other **ijtihāds**; in the presence of a judgement from the **imām**, it is imperative that everyone, whether a **mujtahid** or a follower, a scholar or a commoner, a sūfī or a non-sūfī follow that judgement.[65]

According to the Shāh, the rightly-guided Caliph is like a Prophet[66] as far as authority is concerned. For that reason, his commands are absolute, and opposition to him constitutes rebellion. His speech forms one of the principles of **sharī⁻ᶜah** and is superior to sound **qiyās**.[67] The community should entrust its matters to the **imām**, who should not be disputed with in any way.

In the previous section we saw that Shāh Ismā⁻ᶜīl criticized the **Shī⁻ᶜah** for following one person, the **Shī⁻ᶜah imām**. Nevertheless, he gives the same authority to the Sunnī **imām**. Shāh Ismā⁻ᶜīl admits this divine authority because it was a matter of immediate personal relevance. For the whole enterprise of the **mujāhidīn** was rendered futile by the squabbling among the Pathān tribesmen. Such a doctrine would certainly be capable of being used to support the position of

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someone such as Sayyid Ahmad.

Shāh Ismā‘īl's description of the **imām** led some scholars to suggest that the Shāh wanted to include his preceptor Sayyid Ahmad in the list of legitimate Caliphs. In fact, it has been said that the purpose of writing **Manṣab-i Imāmat**, from which the above quotations concerning the **imām** or Caliph have been taken, was to prove the **imāmat** of Sayyid Ahmad.[68] Be that as it may, nowhere is the Sayyid's name mentioned in the book. However, there is a story that when the **mujāhidīn** were defeated during the first anti-Sikh offensives, the **mujāhidīn**, due to their poor organization and the absence of a leader who would be followed by all, appointed the Sayyid as the **Amīr al-mu'minīn**.[69] Therefore it is possible that for the sake of expediency Shāh Ismā‘īl might have emphasized the **imāmat** of Sayyid Ahmad.

In this chapter we have enunciated the views of Shāh Ismā‘īl as a preacher and reformer. During his early life, he engaged in discussions of matters related to **ijtihād** and **taqlīd** as part of his scholastic pursuits. However, later on, when he came under the discipleship of Sayyid Ahmad, he was transformed into a reformer. His uncompromising insistence on Traditions which, he said, should be used as the basis for **ijtihād** was a part of his attempt to make Muslims pure Unitarians -- **muwaḥḥidūn**. He claimed that all authorities were false except the authority of God and Muhammad; the latter was only the conveyer of revelation and not the lawgiver.[70] The next indisputable authority, according to the Shāh, is the **imām** or Caliph who is the representative of the Prophet. A word of the **imām**, he says, is

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tantamount to a rule of the law. The **imām** is totalitarian in his role
as ruler, and his **ijtihād** annuls all other **ijtihāds**. His discussion
of the **imāmat** and **khilāfah** may be regarded as a part of his idealistic
academic endeavours, but it led some scholars to suggest that the Shāh
wanted to pave the way for the leadership of his mentor Sayyid Ahmad
whose leadership, it seems, was at risk without Shāh Ismā'īl's
support. More importantly, the whole **jihād** movement depended on
maintaining discipline and unity among the **mujāhidīn**. Strict
obedience to a single leader would have overcome much of the problem
that was otherwise posed.

Notes to Chapter Three

[1] **Ijtihād** literally means 'exertion', 'effort'; in the framework of Islamic law it means to exert oneself in order to find out the applicability of a certain Qur'ānic injunction to a given problem. Another definition of this word is 'individual reasoning.' The word has presumably been taken from the following Qur'ānic verse, "And to those who exert, We show our path" (69:29). The Prophet is reported to have encouraged 'individual reasoning' and 'exertion', as the **Hadīth** of Ma°adh b. Jabal shows: When the Prophet sent Ma°adh to Yemen as a governor of that area, the Prophet asked Ma°adh, "How would you decide matters?" He replied, "According to the Qur'ān." "What if you cannot find guidance from the Qur'ān?" the Prophet asked. Ma°adh replied, "I will follow the **Sunnah** of the Prophet." The Prophet asked him again, "But if you don't find the solution in the **Sunnah**, then, how would you decide?" Ma°adh said, "I will use individual reasoning." (Iqbāl, **Reconstruction**, p. 148.) Since then, this **Hadīth** has been regarded as the main **locus probans** for ijtihād.

The person who uses his 'individual reasoning' is called a **mujtahid**. (For the different categories of **mujtahids**, see p. 98, above)

It should be pointed out that the early Muslims enjoyed much freedom in using their 'individual reasoning'. The emergence of 200 different legal and theological schools in the formative period of Islam is a testimony to this. However, by the middle of the third century after Hijrah, "the principle of Movement in Islam" -- a term used equivalently with **ijtihād** by Iqbāl -- was discontinued and instead transformed into **taqlīd** (blind imitation of one of the four medieval schools). Walīullāh points out that during the early times when one Jurist would express his opinion on a certain issue, another would come up with a different opinion and thus contradict the first Jurist; in order to resolve the matter, the first Jurist would then quote one of the early authorities. In this way, the transition from **ijtihād** to **taqlīd** occurred. (Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah, p. 358.) For the causes of the closing of the gates of **ijtihād**, see p. 99, above.

[2] Shāh Ismā°īl, **Taqwiyat-ul-Īmān** (Lahore, 1956), p. 15.

[3] Ibid., p. 12.

[4] Shāh Ismā°īl, **Support of the Faith**, Eng. trans. of **Taqwiyat al-Īmān** (Lahore: Sheikh Muḥammad Ashraf, 1969), p. XXIV.

[5] Shāh Ismā°īl, **Majmū°ah Taqwiyat-ul-Īmān ma°a Tadhkīr-ul-Ikhwān** (Karachi, n.d.), p. 224.

[6] Shāh Ismā°īl, **Ṣirāt -i Mustaqīm** (Lahore: Sheikh Muḥammad

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Ashraf, n.d.), p. 165; Muhammad Ja^cfar Thānēsarī, **Hayāt Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd** (Karachi: Nafīs Academy, 1968), p. 194.

[7] Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Sirāt**, p. 165; Ja^cfar Thānēsarī, **Hayāt**, p. 194.

[8] Sayyid Abul Hasan ^cAlī Nadwī, **Sīrat-i Sayyid Ahmad Shahīd**, 1st. ed., Vol. 2 (Karachi: Adab Manzil, Pakistan Chowk, 1974), p. 307.

[9] Ibid., p. 324.

[10] Ibid., p. 326.

[11] Y.V. Gankovsky, **A History of Pakistan** (Moscow: "Nauka" Publishing House, 1964), p. 13; Jamīl Ahmad, **Hundred Great Muslims** (Lahore: Ferozsons Ltd., 1971), p. 444.

[12] Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān, **Āthār-us-Sanādīd** (Delhī: Matba^cah Nawl Kishwar, n.d.), p. 57; Jamīl Ahmad, **Hundred Great**, p. 444.

[13] Joseph Schacht, **The Legacy of Islam**, 2nd. ed. (Oxford, 1974), p. 139.

[14] Lini S. May, **Muslim Thought and Politics After 1857.** PhD dissertation Columbia University 1970, p. 154.

[15] Hedāyatullāh, "Sayyid Ahmad". M.A. thesis McGill University 1968, p. 114.

[16] Jamīl Ahmad, **Hundred Great**, p. 444; S.M. Ikrām, **Mawj-i Kauthar** (Lahore: Urdu Bookstall), p. 30.

[17] S.M. Ikrām, **Muslim Rule in India and Pakistan** 1st ed. (Lahore, 1961), p. 440; Mawdūdī, **Tajdīd-o-ihyāy-i Dīn** (Lahore, 1966), p. 115.

[18] W.W. Hunter, **The Indian Musulmans** (Delhī: Indological Book House, 1969), p. 51.

[19] Piyām Shāhjahān Purī, **Shahādat gāh-i Bālākōt** (Lahore: Idāra Tārīkh-o-Tahqīq, 1971), p. 275.

[20] The whole of **Sirāt-i Mustaqīm** which the Sayyid wrote in collaboration with his two learned disciples, Shāh Ismā^cīl and ^cAbdul Hayy, deals with points of practical morality. When a certain Miyān Muqim asked the Sayyid what the difference was between the **Tariqah-i Muhammadīyah** and other **Turuq** (sufi orders) such as the Chishtīyah, **Qādirīyah** and **Naqshbandīyah**, the Sayyid replied, "The **shuyūkh** of these orders teach their disciples how to make **dhikr** (remembrance); how to make **zarb** [a sufi ecstasy]; whether the **dhikr** should be made loudly or silently, and so on; whereas the teachings of the **Tariqah-i Muhammadīyah** are like this: "eat with this purpose; dress with this

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purpose; engage in agriculture and trade with this purpose and so on."
(Nadwī, Sīrat-i Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd vol. 2., p. 512.) This shows the
practical aspects of Ṭarīqah-i Muḥammadiyah. It should also be
pointed out that when the mujāhidīn, under the leadership of Sayyid
Aḥmad, succeeded in establishing a small theocratic principality at
Peshawar (which, however, lasted for only a few months), the Sayyid
introduced strict sharīᶜah laws in order to improve the morality of
the Muslims. A certain Qāzī Habbān was appointed as the Chief Justice
of Amb and local qāḍīs, muftīs, and muḥtasibs (moral censors and
supervisors) were appointed. People were punished for neglecting the
daily prayers. There was also a fine for damaging the crops (Nadwī,
Sīrat, p. 212). The Sayyid is reported to have himself flogged two
women, one of whom had pretended to be a widow, while the other had
neglected her religious duties (Ḥafeez Malik, Moslem Nationalism,
p. 175).

[21] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, Majmūᶜah, p. 219.

[22] F.A. Klein, The Religion of Islam, New ed. (London, 1971),
p. 30.

[23] J.N.D. Anderson, "Developments in Sharīᶜah Law," M.W., 40
(1950), p. 252.

[24] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, Uṣūl al-Fiqh (Delhi: Maṭbaᶜ mujtabāī, 1895),
p. 14.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Shāh Ismīᶜīl, Majmūᶜah, p. 219.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, Uṣūl, p. 30.

[29] Ibid., p. 34.

[30] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, Majmūᶜah, p. 224.

[31] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, Uṣūl, p. 34.

[32] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, Tanwīr al-ᶜaynayn (Lahore, 1955), p. 24. This
was perhaps because high qualifications were required of that category
of mujtahid. For example, it is reported about Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal that
somebody asked him how many traditions a person should know if he
wanted to become a mujtahid. Were one hundred thousand traditions
enough, the petitioner asked? The Imām said, "No." Then the
petitioner asked, "How about two hundred thousand?" The Imām said
again, "Not enough." When for the third time, the petitioner
suggested the number of five hundred thousand, Aḥmad replied, "I think
that will be enough." Shāh Walīullāh, Hujjat Allāh al- Bālighah,

vol. 1 (Karachi, 1302/1884), p. 349.

[33] ᶜAzīz Aḥmad, "Political and Religious Ideas of Shāh Walīullāh Dihlawī," M.W., LII (1962), p. 25.

[34] ᶜAbid Husayn Sayyid, **Destiny of Indian Muslims** (London: Asia Publishing House, 1965), p. 208.

[35] Iqbāl, **The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam** (Lahore, 1951), p. 168.

[36] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Īzāḥ al-Ḥaqq al-Ṣarīh fī Ahkām al-Mayyit wal Zarīḥ** (Delhi, n.d.), p. 51.

[37] Ibid., pp. 92-93.

[38] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Majmūᶜah**, p. 48.

[39] Sayyid Nazīr Husayn, **Miᶜyār al-Ḥaqq** (Delhī: Matbaᶜah Rahmānī, 1919), p. 7.

[40] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Majmūᶜah**, p. 48.

[41] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Tanwīr**, p. 27.

[42] Ibid., p. 25.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Shāh Walīullāh, **al-Inṣāf fī bayān sabab al-Ikhtilāf** (Lucknow, 1304/1886), p. 60.

[46] Shāh Walīullāh, **Hujjat Allāh**, p. 317.

[47] Shāh Ismāᶜīl, **Tanwīr**, p. 25.

[48] Sell, **The Faith of Islam** (Madras: S.P.C.K. Press, 1907), p. 45.

[49] Freeland Abbot, **Islam and Pakistan** (New York: Cornell Univ., 1968) p. 85.

[50] **E.I.**, New ed., p. 431; Shāh Walīullāh, **Hujjat Allāh**, p. 7.

[51] Shāh Walīullāh, **Hujjat Allāh**, p. 8; Sindhī, **Shah Walīullāh awr unki siyasi Taḥrik**, p. 103.

[52] Masᶜud ᶜĀlam Nadwī, **Hindustān kī pahlī Islāmī Taḥrīk**, 2nd. ed. (Rāwalpindī: Maktabah Millīyah, 1368/1948), p. 29.

[53] Abū Yaḥyā Imām Khān Nausharawī, **Tarājim** ^cUlamā'-i Ḥadīth-i **Hind**, vol. 1 (Delhi: Jayyid Press, 1938), p. 30.

[54] A.L. Basham, **Cultural History of India** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 389.

[55] **E.I.**, New ed., p. 259.

[56] H. Kramer, "Islam in India Today," **M.W.** (1931), p. 166.

[57] Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Tanwīr**, p. 8.

[58] Ancient name for Abraham.

[59] Ancient name for Moses.

[60] Ancient name for Jesus.

[61] Ancient name for Muḥammad.

[62] Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Manṣab-i Imāmat** (Lahore, 1949), p. 82.

[63] Ibid., p. 85.

[64] Ibid., p. 89.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid., p. 87.

[67] Ibid., p. 91.

[68] Cited from W.W. Hunter, **Indian Musulmans** in Mirzā Ḥayrat, **Ḥayāt-i Ṭayyibah** (Amratsar: Thanā'ī Barqī Press, 1933), p. 274; Hafeez Malik, **Moslem Nationalism**, p. 158; Abul Ḥasan ^cAlī Nadwī, **Sīrat**, vol. 2, p. 112; S.A.A. Rizvī, p. 100.

[69] Hafeez Malik, p. 158.

[70] Shāh Ismā^cīl, **Majmū^cah**, p. 48.

Conclusion

This study has examined some aspects of Shāh Ismāᶜīl's religious thought and factors that contributed to its evolution. We have emphasized the fact that his religious mission, without which his importance in Indian Islam would not be assured, was validated by his participation or involvement in a **Jihād** campaign initiated by his religious mentor, Sayyid Aḥmad of Rā'ē Barēlī. The **Jihād** was the culmination of his attempts to bring about religious change in India. The **Jihād** campaign was a failure, and in the end both Sayyid Aḥmad and Shāh Ismāᶜīl became casualties of it.

We have presented a brief narrative of Shāh Ismāᶜīl's life and his religious activities as a context for understanding his many pursuits in his, at times, stormy religious career. We have argued that both Sayyid Aḥmad and Shāh Ismāᶜīl had a clear and practical purpose in mind. They had realized that something was wrong in the religious life of the Muslim community and that the situation could be improved by infusing religious dynamism into Muslim social and religious life. In order to institute this objective, Sayyid Aḥmad founded a sūfī order called the **Tarīqah-i Muhammadīyah** or 'the order of Muhammad.' The **Tarīqah-i Muhammadīyah** was not, however, a totally new development, for it had a history of its own. The religious reformers before Sayyid Aḥmad had also claimed this title for their orders; however, the distinguishing character of the **Tarīqah-i Muhammadīyah** of Sayyid Aḥmad was that it emphasized the practical

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aspects of life while at the same time it maintained the sūfī practises.

Shāh Ismāᶜīl's ideas on a multiplicity of subjects such as **tawḥīd** and **shirk**, **sunnah** and **bidᶜah**, and **ijtihād** and **taqlīd**, which we have treated, grew out of a concern to bring about far-reaching reforms. He called for a return to the Qur'ān and the **Sunnah**, that is, to a form of Islam that was free of foreign accretions. He attacked popular Islam, with its emphasis on the veneration of saints and their supposed intercession in human affairs, which he thought was respon- sible, at least partly, for the stagnation of Muslims in India. Naturally, the religious establishment which was reared in a sūfī tradition and was immersed in the customs of the day, opposed him vehemently. Despite this opposition, his religious message filtered through to the lower classes who were sympathetic to his message and gradually came to form the backbone of the **Jihād** movement.

On the socio-political side, his rectifying movement represented the crystallization of Muslim efforts to check decadence in the Indian Muslim society. By this time, the Mughal empire had become a shadow of its former self. The Mughal rulers were too weak and politically too impotent to effect any meaningful change. It was left to religious leaders such as Shāh Ismāᶜīl to diagnose the malaise of the 19th century Indian Muslim society. Like many Muslim religious leaders of his time, Shāh Ismāᶜīl sought the solution in a religious basis or direction. Changes could be brought if Muslims reformed their ways and returned to pristine Islam. This type of thinking,

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once radicalized, has far-reaching implications. It provides the logical leap in the direction of Jihād which, circumstances being right, becomes its outgrowth.

The Jihād spearheaded by Sayyid Aḥmad and in which Shāh Ismāᶜīl took part, grew out of this type of thinking. Its aim was to purify Islam from accretions from without. The Jihād which began with a call to reform (Jihād of the mouth) ended in military campaign (Jihād of the arms) which soon involved the Sikhs. As long as Sayyid Aḥmad lived, the purview of the Jihād did not include fighting the British. This fact has given cause to different interpretations by various scholars. Some claim that the Sayyid was pro-British while others hold that the British were too powerful for the Sayyid, and that therefore he decided to deal first with the Sikhs whom he regarded as the weaker of the two enemies. In any case, we have not heard the last word on the matter.

As to the failure of the movement, this has been attributed to a number of factors. Mawdūdī, for one, accounts for this failure by arguing thus: first, the continuation of 'morbid attachment to Tasawwuf' by Sayyid Aḥmad and his followers, and, second, lack of preparation of the people mentally for the 'Islamic state' which Sayyid Aḥmad wanted to establish in the Frontier are the two main causes.[1] ᶜUbayd Allāh Sindhī, a famous Indian Muslim nationalist, seeks the cause of the failure in the 'dictatorship' of the Sayyid. According to him,

> It is difficult to find a man possessing so many good
> qualities as Sayyid Ahmad. However, we see how a good
> movement was destroyed by his claim of being a Mahdī.

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> When the **mujāhidīn** captured Peshawar, the party wished that the city should not be given back to its previous ruler. But Sayyid Ahmad did not accept this suggestion.[2]

Sir Sayyid maintained that certain differences in ritual such as **raf^{c}al-Yadayn** (the mechanical lifting of hands in prayer) and **āmin bil jahr** (pronouncing āmin loudly) -- some followers of Sayyid Ahmad were in the habit of following such practises -- was also a source of trouble for Sayyid Ahmad.[3] To these may be added another factor, that is, the absence of a viable economic system which would have enabled the **mujāhidīn** to carry on the **Jihād** campaign smoothly or for a sustained period of time.

With the above discussion in mind, we are now in a position to tackle the thorny issue of whether or not the reform movement was nationalist in nature as most of the post-1947 biographers of the Sayyid claim. It would seem to us according to our reading of the sources that Sayyid Ahmad had no concept of 'nationalism' or the 'forging of a nation' as we understand these words today. He was a reformer imbued with sūfī ideas and whose aim was to improve the condition of religious life or practise in Muslim India along the lines of pristine Islam. It appears that in their (Shāh Ismā^{c}īl and Sayyid Ahmad) scheme of things, stress was placed on the morality of Muslims who needed direction on the road to genuine Islam as practised during the early times (the period of the Prophet and his successors). They were more concerned with creating a 'Kingdom of God' on this earth than with forging states committed to purely national or territorial objectives as nationalist-oriented writers would make us

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believe.   Their concern was not nationalism.   In fact, it would seem erroneous to speak about nationalism in the Indian context before the 1920s.   It is evident that the post-1947 biographers of the Sayyid, who attach nationalistic aims to the **Jihād** movement have been affected by concepts associated with the creation of Pakistan as a separate nation and are therefore projecting their ideas into history.

Regarding the alleged connection between the so-called Wahhābism of India (there is an oft-repeated story that during his pilgrimage to Mecca, Sayyid Ahmad had come in contact with Wahhābī teachers from whom he learnt the tenets of Wahhābism) and original Wahhābism in its homeland in Arabia, there is no definite historical evidence. We have argued above that the Sayyid's movement was indigenous in character and that the similarities between the two movements occurred because of their common origins, namely, the Qur'ān and the **Hadīth**.   At the same time, there were dissimilarities.   For example, Shāh Ismā°īl considered **shirk-i Asghar** or small associationism as pardonable whereas according to the tenets of Muhammad b. °Abdul Wahhāb, such a **shirk** constituted a serious religious offense and was therefore unpardonable.[4]

The real intentions of Sayyid Ahmad and Shāh Ismā°īl are still covered in obscurity as unfortunately most of the manuscripts dealing with their ideas have not been published. Despite this, later writers on Sayyid Ahmad have not shown caution; on the contrary, they have had a tendency to read their ideas into his writings.

Notes to Conclusion

[1] Mawdūdī, **Tajdīd-o-Iḥyā-i Dīn**, 14th ed. (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1977), pp. 119-123.

[2] Muhammad Sarwar, **Ifadhāt-o-malfuzāt-i Hazrat Mawlanā ᶜUbayd Allāh Sindhī**, 1st ed. (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1972), pp. 349, 350.

[3] Sir Sayyid, **Review**, p. 12.

[4] Sindhī, **Shāh Walīullāh awr unkī siyāsi taḥrīk**, p. 232.

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