

*Generational Changes in the Leadership of the
Ahl-e Sunnat Movement in North India
during the Twentieth Century*¹

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When A'la Hazrat [Maulana Ahmad Riza Khan] was born, his . . . paternal grandfather put him in his lap and said, 'This [grand]son of mine will be a great 'alim.' . . .

And one day someone knocked on the door. A'la Hazrat, who was then ten years old, opened it and saw an elderly holy man (*faqir*) standing outside. . . . the man put his hand on A'la Hazrat's head and said, 'You are a great scholar.'²

Six months after [Maulana Mustafa Riza's] birth, Nuri Miyan Sahib [Shah Abu'l Husain Ahmad Nuri] came to Bareilly. Putting his finger into [the child's] mouth, [Nuri Miyan] entered him into [his] chain of spiritual authority, and gave him permission (*ijazat*) [to have disciples of his own] and investiture as his successor (*khilafat*), and he predicted that this child would be a great 'alim in his time as well as a perfect saint (*wali*).

When Mutfi-e A'zam-e Hind [Mustafa Riza Khan] was nine years old, his father A'la Hazrat invited all the famous men and 'ulama to Bareilly and announced . . . this son of mine is a wali. Learn from him.³

This is an essay about a father and a son, who were individually revered as 'ulama (scholars) and *pirs* (spiritual preceptors), whose lives together spanned more than a hundred-year period, between 1856 and 1981. Both were leaders of the reform movement known to its followers as the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at (lit., 'people of the [prophetic] way and the [majority] community') and to others as the Barelwi movement.⁴ This movement, although led by men who have

¹ I am grateful to Gregory C. Kozlowski for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. All responsibility for any errors that it may contain is, of course, mine.

² Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, vol. 1 (Karachi: Maktaba Rizwiyya, 1938), p. 22.

³ Sayyid Muhammad Riyasat 'Ali Rizwi Barelwi, *Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind* (Karachi: Idara-e Ahl-e Sunnat, 1980), p. 28.

⁴ The different names for the movement reflect an important point. By referring to themselves as the 'Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at' followers of the movement place themselves within the mainstream of Sunni Muslim thought, for all Sunni Muslims are by definition 'people of the [prophetic] sunna and the majority.' However, opponents of the movement have called it 'Barelwi,' suggesting thereby that it is merely of local import and, by extension, deviant.

seen themselves primarily as scholars ('ulama), blurs the distinction between the 'alim and the sufi to an unusual degree, as Maulana Mustafa Riza Khan's life and career in particular indicates. By examining their lives in this essay I hope to show that one of the ways the Ahl-e Sunnat movement has changed in the course of the twentieth century has been in the leadership's increased emphasis on the role of sufism. Ahmad Riza Khan, whose writings constitute the intellectual basis for the movement, was first and foremost an 'alim. His son, Mustafa Riza Khan, emerges in his followers' accounts as one who was preeminently a pir. I shall try to understand this development in the context of the history of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement itself, as well as to assess whether the movement has in the process undergone a decisive transformation in character. Does it stand closer to 'popular'—and by implication 'unreformed'—Islamic practice in the subcontinent today than it did a hundred years ago? I shall try to deal with this question as well as the evidence permits.

The Nineteenth-Century Background

The Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at movement in British India was greatly shaped by the writings of Maulana Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi (1856–1921).⁵ Ahmad Riza was born into a well-to-do and learned Pathan family in Bareilly in 1856. In the seventeenth century, his ancestors had made their fortune in military service under the Mughals, but in the early nineteenth century Ahmad Riza's grandfather Riza 'Ali Khan (1809–65/66) broke with family tradition by becoming a *faqih* (jurisconsult) and sufi gnostic in the Qadiri order. It is not improbable that the growing British presence in India was making the military less promising as a career to Indians at this time.

By the time Ahmad Riza was born, the 1857 revolt against the British was looming. His family probably took no part, managing to preserve its landed property (villages and farmland in Rampur and Badayun districts, for the most part) in the post-Mutiny reprisals, though like other 'ulama in north India it too had to adjust to the

⁵ I have studied Maulana Ahmad Riza Khan's works and thought in my book, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi and his Movement, 1870–1921* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).

considerable reduction of state patronage under colonial rule. Ahmad Riza's father maintained close ties with Maulana Irshad Husain of Rampur, the spiritual preceptor to Rampur state's Nawab Kalb 'Ali Khan, a Sunni ruler in an otherwise Shi'i ruling family.⁶

The political context of the late nineteenth century, as is well known, led to a period of extraordinary intellectual ferment among north Indian Muslims. The 'ulama, for their part, believed that the Muslims had become politically weak because they had fallen away from their faith (*din*). At Deoband, the 'ulama opened a school (*madrassa*) in the 1860s which emphasized every Muslim's personal accountability to Allah for living an ethical and moral life in the light of the Qur'an and prophetic sunna, as interpreted by the scholars and sufi pirs of Deoband. In the 1870s Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–99) founded the Anglo-Muhammadan College in Aligarh, whose curriculum sought to give Indian Muslims both Western scientific and Islamic learning. In the 1890s the Nadwat al-'Ulama founded their madrasa at Lucknow in yet another attempt to find a balance between a modern Western education and the traditional curriculum of the madrasa.⁷

Ahmad Riza was very much a part of the intellectual climate of his times. Educated at home by his father, Maulana Naqi 'Ali Khan (1831–80), by the 1880s Ahmad Riza was already widely known among the north Indian 'ulama as a gifted scholar with an intellectual bent toward rationalist sciences (*ma'qulat*) such as logic, mathematics, and Islamic law, particularly the latter.⁸ Nevertheless, unlike the reform movements mentioned above, the Ahl-e Sunnat movement that by the 1880s had begun to coalesce around him was not primarily centered on a madrasa (though one was founded in Bareilly in 1904). Its main focus was Ahmad Riza himself.

⁶ Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 296–313, mentions these and other details in a very useful summary of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement.

⁷ The foregoing paragraph is a brief summary of a complex and fascinating aspect of Indian Muslim history in the late nineteenth century. In *Islamic Revival*, *ibid.*, Barbara Metcalf offers a comprehensive survey of the most important renewal movements of the time, as well as their eighteenth-century precursors.

⁸ The *ma'qulat* sciences, or those based on human reasoning, are contrasted to the *manqulat* or 'copied' sciences, most importantly *hadis* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). Study of the latter was a hallmark of the Delhi-based scholar Shah Wali Ullah (d. 1763) and those associated with the Madrasa Rahimiyya, while *ma'qulat* was the specialty of 'ulama based in Rampur, Badayun, Khairabad, and Bareilly.

In social terms, those who identified themselves as followers of Ahmad Riza Khan and therefore as 'Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at' in the 1880s were primarily landed elites in the countryside and towns of U.P., some landed pirs in the Panjab, and a small number of government-employed educated urban men in Patna (Bihar) and a handful of other towns. Collectively, they were thus part of the *ashraf*, or Muslim elite, whose economic wealth was based on a combination of agricultural landholding, trade, teaching, and exceptionally, government employment. Additionally, some leaders (as, for example, Ahmad Riza) enjoyed social standing on account of their ancestral lineage and religious learning. As we shall see in the course of this paper, their privileged social standing corresponded to a religious style that favored a hierarchical conception of authority. This aspect of Ahl-e Sunnat thinking emerges with particular clarity in the sufi dimensions of the movement.

Ahmad Riza, while on the one hand an 'alim, was also a *murid* (sufi disciple) and *khalifa* (inheritor of the entire spiritual wealth or power of one's pir) to Shah Al-e Rasul (1794–1879), of the family of Barkatiyya Sayyids of Marahra (in Etah district, southwest of Bareilly). The tie between the two families was an extremely close and long-lasting one, for it went backwards in time to Ahmad Riza's father, and forwards to his son Mustafa Riza Khan, as we shall presently see. The main sufi affiliation of the Barkatiyya family being to the Qadiri order, the full list of Ahmad Riza's *nisba* names (i.e., adjectives of connection) was 'Muhammad Ahmad Riza Khan Qadiri Barkati Barelwi.' Having been given permission by his pir, Shah Al-e Rasul, to make disciples, Ahmad Riza was in turn pir to a circle of sufi aspirants. Beyond this select circle, Ahmad Riza also regularly gave words of advice and amulets (*ta'wiz*) to a wide following of people who came to him for help in coping with daily problems.

The two complementary, but nonetheless distinct, identities of 'alim and sufi were in practice brought together in Ahmad Riza's life by his deep personal commitment to 'love of the Prophet [Muhammad]' (*ishq-e rasul*). No matter how faithfully a Muslim observed the precepts of his (or her) faith, Ahmad Riza believed, his acts were worthless if he did not also personally love and revere the Prophet. This belief is frequently reiterated in Ahmad Riza's writings, whether they be *fatawa* (jurisprudential writings), *malfuzat* (orally transmitted teachings of a sufi pir), or poetry. In his *Malfuzat*, for instance, is the following statement:

The true servant of Allah (*'abd allah*) is he who is the servant of the Prophet (*'abd mustafa*); if not he will be the servant of Satan (*'abd shaitan*).⁹

While few nineteenth-century 'ulama in India would have contested the centrality of devotion to the Prophet (like him, they too for the most part were sufis and 'ulama simultaneously, and regarded the Prophet as the perfect exemplar of Muslim belief and practice), Ahmad Riza held to a number of beliefs about the Prophet which were deeply controversial in his time. In fact, it was beliefs about the Prophet which most clearly set the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at apart from other Sunni Muslims (or, to put this in their own terms, which cast those who did not identify with the Ahl-e Sunnat perspective outside the Sunni mainstream). It is necessary, therefore, to understand the nature of Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology as set out in Ahmad Riza's fatawa and elsewhere in order to understand the movement and its leadership.

Ahmad Riza on the Prophet Muhammad

Ahmad Riza's beliefs about the Prophet Muhammad, as expounded in his numerous works (said by some to number a thousand), developed in the context of debate in the nineteenth century about (among other things) Allah's omnipotence and Muhammad's humanity. One subject of debate was *imkan-e nazir* (lit., 'the possibility of an equal'), whether Allah could create another prophet in the likeness of the Prophet Muhammad should He so desire. Some, such as Shah Muhammad Isma'il (1781–1831), a leader of the Delhi-based reformist Tariqa-e Muhammadiyya¹⁰ movement, argued—in his influential book *Taqwiyat al-Iman* (Strengthening the Faith)¹¹—

⁹ *Malfuzat-e A'la Hazrat* (Gujarat, Pakistan: Fazl-e Nur Academy, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 58.

¹⁰ The term 'Tariqa' in the movement's name should not mislead us into thinking of this as a sufi order. The purpose of the movement, as Otto Pearson writes, was to reform the existing order by trying to 'restore and revise the original purity of Muhammad's community.' See Otto Pearson, 'Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth Century India: the *Tariqah-i Muhammadiyyah*,' Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, Duke University, 1979, p. 46. For a general discussion, also see Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, chapter II.

¹¹ Originally written in Arabic, but soon translated into Urdu, this work was written sometime in the 1820s. An English translation by Mir Shahamat 'Ali appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London), vol. 13, pp. 310–72, in 1852.

that Allah's omnipotence being unlimited, this was indeed possible. Correspondingly Muhammad Isma'il sought to promote the vision of Muhammad as a perfect but essentially human model for emulation, comparing him on one occasion to 'an elder brother.' And in an extended discussion of the different kinds of *shirk* (polytheism) then being committed in his view by his fellow-Muslims in India, Muhammad Isma'il spoke disparagingly of the veneration of saints' tombs and relics, and belief in the intercession of saints. All were equal before Allah, in short, the Prophet being no more than first among equals. Although the Tariqa-e Muhammadiyya was not anti-sufi (indeed, its leader Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi was a *pir* to his many followers) it discouraged popular forms of veneration, comparing them to the idol-worship of Hindus.¹² Later Muslim reformers, such as the Deoband 'ulama, held beliefs in line with those outlined by Muhammad Isma'il, though they were perhaps more sympathetic toward the concept of saintly intercession.

Arguing against 'ulama such as Muhammad Isma'il in the early nineteenth century had been Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi (1797–1861).¹³ On one occasion, the two men held a celebrated debate in Delhi on *imkan-e nazir*. Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi's position was later reiterated by other 'ulama whom Ahmad Riza saw as intellectual and spiritual forebears of the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at movement. Among them were Maulana Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni (1798/99–1872),¹⁴ who in 1854 wrote a work on 'aqa'id (religious tenets)

¹² See, for example, *Taqwiyat al-Iman* (Mir Shahamat 'Ali trans.), pp. 319–20.

¹³ A noted scholar of the rationalist (*ma'qulat*) sciences in his day, among them logic, philosophy, *kalam* (disputation), and *usul al-fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence), Maulana Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi had a large number of students from around the country. He served as *peshkar* (assistant) to the Commissioner of Delhi under the East India Company, and also worked in various capacities for the chiefs of Jhajhar, Alwar, Tonk, and Rampur. In 1857, he played a leading part in the anti-British revolt, for which he was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment in the Andamans. He died there in 1862. See A. S. Bazmee Ansari, 'Fadl-i Hakk,' in *EI2*, pp. 735–6; Rahman 'Ali, *Tazkira-e 'Ulama-e Hind* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), pp. 382–4.

¹⁴ Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni studied under Maulana Nur ul-Haqq Firangi Mahali at Lucknow, then returned to teach at his family's Madrasa Qadiriyya at Badayun. He was widely travelled in India and in Turkey, where he stayed at the Sultan's court. Although he served under the British East India Company as *sar-rishtedar* (a revenue collecting official) at Sahaswan, the then district capital of Badayun, during the revolt of 1857 he was active in the anti-British resistance in Badayun. See Mahmud Ahmad Qadiri, *Tazkira-e 'Ulama-e Ahl-e Sunnat* (Muzaffarpur, Bihar: Khankah Qadiriyya Ashrafiyya Islamabad Bhawanipur, 1971/72), pp. 208–10; Rahman 'Ali, *Tazkira-e 'Ulama-e Hind*, pp. 380–2.

entitled *Al-Mu'tamad al-Muntaqad*, 'Trusted and Tested [Work],' which dealt with the properties and characteristics of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. In it, he explicitly attributed Muhammad Isma'il's beliefs to the 'Nejdis' (the Muwahhidun, or 'monotheists,' commonly referred to as 'Wahhabis').¹⁵

Although the connection between the 'Wahhabis' and the Tariqa-e Muhammadiyya—or even with Shah Wali Ullah, the source of the Tariqa's intellectual inspiration—has never been established, the impression was pervasive in the nineteenth century that the leaders¹⁶ of the Tariqa-e Muhammadiyya had been inspired by the Arabian Muwahhidun. That the British themselves thought so is clear from the so-called 'Wahhabi trials' conducted by them in the late nineteenth century against alleged ringleaders of the 1857 revolt.¹⁷

Ahl-e Sunnat beliefs about the Prophet Muhammad, based on the writings of nineteenth-century 'ulama such as Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni (who, in turn, defended his views by citing previous scholarship), and extensively developed by Ahmad Riza Khan, embraced a number of controversial aspects. In addition to the issue of imkan-e nazir, for instance, were questions such as: Did the Prophet Muhammad have knowledge of the unseen (*ilm-e ghaib*), in particular of the five things widely believed by Muslims to have been known to Allah alone?¹⁸ Ahmad Riza argued that over time Allah had gifted the Prophet with immense knowledge, including knowledge of the Last Day and the hour of resurrection which he was commanded not to reveal.¹⁹ Ahmad Riza also believed that the Prophet was made of light and had no shadow; that he was infallible; that Allah can only

¹⁵ On the teachings of the Muwahhidun movement of eighteenth-century Arabia, see John Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 61 ff.

¹⁶ Particularly Muhammad Isma'il and Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (d. 1831), who led the *jihad* (holy war) against the Sikhs in the late 1820s and was pir to Muhammad Isma'il and 'Abd ul-Hayy (d. 1828); see Pearson, 'Islamic Reform,' and Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, pp. 52–7.

¹⁷ Important differences between the Tariqa leadership and the Muwahhidun existed, however, most notably the Muwahhidun movement's complete rejection of sufism in any form, unlike the Tariqa-e Muhammadiyya's espousal of a reformed 'sober' sufism.

¹⁸ A reference to Qur'an 31:34: 'Lo! Allah! With Him is knowledge of the Hour [of resurrection]. He sendeth down the rain, and knoweth that which is in the wombs. No soul knoweth what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knoweth in which land it will die. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware.' (Pickthall trans.)

¹⁹ Ahmad Riza's views on the subject of '*ilm-e ghaib*' are expounded in his work *Daulat al-Makkiyya bi'l Madat al-Ghaibiyya* (Karachi: Maktaba Rizwiyya, n.d.), pp. 119–35, 175–91.

be approached through the intermediacy of Muhammad and no other; and that, because the Prophet lives on in corporeal as well as spiritual form in his grave at Medina, he continues to ‘exist’ and to be. For this reason, all references to the Prophet Muhammad in Ahmad Riza’s writings were made in the present tense. In prayer ritual, Ahmad Riza defended the distinctive practice of kissing the thumbs of both hands and touching them to the eyes at designated moments when the Prophet was mentioned. It was Ahmad Riza who made the exclamation ‘Ya rasul Allah’ (O, Prophet of Allah) a distinctive mark of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement, a feature that continues to identify those who call themselves the ‘Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama‘at.’

It is here, again, that we find the continuing interplay in the movement between scholarly and sufi approaches to the faith: by calling out ‘Ya rasul Allah’ the believer is addressing the Prophet in his role as intercessor with Allah. The Prophet alone has direct access to Allah, Ahmad Riza wrote, and this intercessionary role has been in no way diminished by his physical death. The Prophet hears those who call upon him for help, and has the ability to go anywhere anytime—spiritually, but also in corporeal form, if he desires. It is out of respect for his presence in the assembly of believers that the Ahl-e Sunnat stand up when the *salat o salam* (prayer calling down Allah’s blessings on the Prophet) is read.

Ahmad Riza’s Personal Style

Enough has been said perhaps to indicate the centrality of beliefs about the Prophet Muhammad in Ahl-e Sunnat belief, as well as their controversial nature among nineteenth-century ‘ulama. It is important, given the above brief account, to emphasize that Ahmad Riza saw himself—and was seen by his followers—as primarily an ‘alim, whose views were defended and based on the textual sources of Islamic scholarship, namely Qur’an, hadis, fiqh, and medieval commentaries thereon. In recognition of his scholarship and attentiveness to the sunna in his personal life, Ahmad Riza’s followers referred to him as ‘A‘la Hazrat’ ([his] exalted presence). Indeed, after 1900 he came to be known among them as the *mujaddid* (renewer) of the fourteenth Hijri century.²⁰

²⁰ On the significance of the concept of *tajdid* (renewal) and the *mujaddid* (the renewer) in Muslim history, see, for instance, Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continu-*

It is important to note as well the kinds of stories his followers told about him, for these reveal how he was perceived. As the first quotation at the outset of this paper shows, they call attention to his greatness as a scholar. They dwell among other things on his precociousness as a child: how he had completed reading the Qur'an by the age of four, and had addressed an audience from the pulpit (*minbar*) of a mosque at age six. His mathematical skill was reputed to be such that he solved in a matter of minutes a complex puzzle that a mathematics professor at the MAO College (Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, later Aligarh University) had been unable to solve. Fortunately, someone had suggested to the professor that he take it to Ahmad Riza first, before embarking for Europe for an answer. Most importantly, the story is told about how he was entrusted with the task of fatwa-writing by his father at the tender age of thirteen or fourteen.²¹

Fatwa-writing was to be Ahmad Riza's single most important scholarly activity, and the primary means by which he established his scholarly reputation among the 'ulama, while also expanding the scope of his influence among ordinary Muslims throughout British India. So great was the volume of questions (*istifta*) received, he once commented, that the fatawa he wrote exceeded the work of ten muftis. At any given time, there could be up to five hundred queries to be answered through the mail.²²

Ahmad Riza's life, in short, was that of a scholar. By and large, he lived in the quiet solitude of his personal library, writing, receiving other 'ulama, or in the company of a small circle of close followers. Toward evening, a few hours were set aside daily for meetings with visitors, devotees, and other followers. However, he delegated tasks which called for travel or regular contact with large audiences to his murids and khalifas. Thus, teaching or engaging in oral debate (both of which could involve extended travel) were undertaken by trusted followers rather than by him.

Periodically, this quiet routine was interrupted by an 'urs (sufi saint's death anniversary) celebration, requiring Ahmad Riza to travel to places such as Marahra, home of the Barkatiyya family where his pir

ous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and its Medieval Background (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 94–101.

²¹ Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 11, 32–3, 151.

²² These comments are based on Hasnain Riza Khan, *Wasaya Sharif*, p. 5, in *Rasa'il-e Rizwiyya*, vol. 5 (Faisalabad: Nuri Book Depot, 1982); Ahmad Riza Khan, *Fatawa-e Rizwiyya*, vol. 4, problem 123 (Rampur, Nainital: Riza Dar al-Isha'at, 1986), p. 149; Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 36–7, 68 ff.

Shah Al-e Rasul lived. After the latter's death in 1879, Ahmad Riza developed a close relationship with Shah Abu'l Husain 'Nuri Miyan' (1839–1906), Shah Al-e Rasul's grandson and *sajjada-nishin* (successor as pir). The family was of Sayyid descent, and had settled in Marahra in the seventeenth century around the hospice (*dargah*) founded by Shah Barkat Ullah (1660–1729).²³ Each year, the death anniversaries of family ancestors were marked by a three- to five-day 'urs. The Barkatiyya sufis, mindful that the shari'a be followed at all times, observed the occasion by the restrained piety of night-long Qur'an reading, sermons by the 'ulama, *na't-khwani* (recitation of verses in praise of the Prophet) and *qasida-khwani* (praise verse in honor of religious figures generally). There was also a pilgrimage to the prized relics of the Prophet, Hasan and Husain, and Shaikh 'Abd ul-Qadir Jilani, founder of the Qadiri order, and, on the last day, a ceremonial washing of the tomb (*ghusl*).²⁴ Unlike many other sufis at the time, the Barkatiyya Sayyids generally discouraged *sama'* (music) and *qawwali* (sufi devotional singing), as well as the participation of women.

To sum up, then, Ahmad Riza Khan was both an 'alim and a pir, though his lifestyle was primarily that of an 'alim. Living in relatively quiet solitude, he nevertheless influenced a large number of Muslims in India through his writings. So great was his influence, indeed, that—in contradistinction to the view of the movement itself—he has come to be identified by outsiders as the 'founder' of the Ahle-Sunnat wa Jama'at in the late nineteenth century.

Leadership of the Movement after Ahmad Riza

Ahmad Riza Khan died in 1921, in the wake of the Khilafat movement and at a time of heightened political activism for the Indian 'ulama. He had opposed Muslim participation in the non-cooperation movement led by Gandhi, and had been negative about the Khilafat movement as well.²⁵ There appears to have been a diffusion of lead-

²³ There is a family history of the Barkatiyya family by Maulana Aulad-e Rasul 'Muhammad Miyan' Qadiri, entitled *Khandan-e Barakat*. It was written c. 1927. Unfortunately, I have no publication details.

²⁴ These brief comments are based on a number of scattered sources. Among them, see *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 51: 29 (June 7, 1915), 6–7; 57: 29 (April 4, 1921), 4. The *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* was a weekly newspaper published in Rampur state.

²⁵ On both issues, his position had been argued from the perspective of shari'a as he interpreted it. I have attempted to understand and analyze his thinking on these questions in my book.

ership after Ahmad Riza's death. His strong personality and authoritative stature within the movement had been a unifying factor. Ignoring the leadership of important men such as Maulana Na'im ud-Din Muradabadi after Ahmad Riza's death, however, I wish to follow through on developments in Bareilly itself, under the guidance of Ahmad Riza's two sons, Hamid Riza Khan (1875–1943) and Mustafa Riza Khan.

The most significant event following Ahmad Riza's death was the transformation of his tomb into a shrine, a place of pilgrimage for all those who revered his memory. His death anniversary became the occasion for annual 'urs celebrations in Bareilly, which appear to have grown larger and more elaborate as the years have gone by.²⁶ This important event had been presaged during Ahmad Riza's own lifetime, however, as he had founded a new sufi *silsila* (chain of discipleship) and in 1915 had appointed his elder son Hamid Riza Khan as his *sajjada-nishin*.²⁷

At the time of his father's death, Mustafa Riza was a young man in his late twenties. Hamid Riza Khan (referred to by Ahl-e Sunnat 'ulama as 'Hujjat al-Islam'), Mustafa Riza's elder by eighteen years, was the *muhtamim* (manager and chief administrator) of the Madrasa Manzar al-Islam, established in the early 1990s, as well as the caretaker of his father's shrine. As Ahmad Riza's successor, he was head of the Khanqah-e 'Aliyya Rizwiyya, centered on Ahmad Riza's former living quarters.

Mustafa Riza was also active in advancing the Ahl-e Sunnat point of view. Already in the teens of this century, he was the *muhtamim* of the Dar al-Ifta (Office for the issuance of Fatawa) attached to Ahmad Riza's house and was taking a public role in garnering support for his father on controversial matters.²⁸ In the early twenties,

²⁶ I was in Bareilly in October 1987 during the annual 'urs for Ahmad Riza, and saw newspaper reports that tens of thousands of people had come to attend from different parts of the country. Chartered buses filled the *maidan* (playing fields and flat open spaces) attached to a local college, where the visitors were housed for the three days of the 'urs.

²⁷ In making the latter statement I am contradicting most current accounts of the Ahl-e Sunnat, which maintain that Mustafa Riza Khan had been chosen as Ahmad Riza's *sajjada-nishin*. I base my statement on a newspaper report in the Rampur weekly *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 51: 51 (November 8, 1915), p. 3.

²⁸ For instance, in 1914–16, when a major debate was under way among the 'ulama of Bareilly, Rampur, and other north Indian towns on a question related to the second call to prayer (*azan*) during the Friday midday congregational prayer, Mustafa Riza Khan issued an appeal in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, asking for written support for his father's position. See *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 50: 9 (January 26, 1914), pp. 4–5.

he took a prominent part in anti-Khilafat activities, and was an Ahl-e Sunnat representative in talks with Maulana ‘Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahali.²⁹ He was also one of the leaders of the Ansar al-Islam, an Ahl-e Sunnat organization created in 1920–21 to protect the Muslim holy sites against Allied encroachment and to help the Turks,³⁰ and the Jama‘at-e Riza-e Mustafa, the purpose of which was to counter the Arya Samaj’s conversion of Muslims to Hinduism under its Shuddhi campaign.

The political and religious activism of Mustafa Riza Khan in the twenties was a logical extension of the guidelines laid down by his father in his writings. He was a scholar as well: he is said to have published almost thirty works, among them a collection of fatawa entitled *Fatawa-e Mustafwiyya*.³¹ He did a great deal to collect and publish his father’s works: both Ahmad Riza’s *Mal‘uzat* and the currently nine-volume *Fatawa al-Rizwiyya* (expected to be twelve volumes when fully published) were published at Mustafa Riza’s initiative.³² In the late 1930s, he also began a small school in Bareilly, known as the Madrasa Mazhar al-Islam, which is still functioning today.³³

Despite these many scholarly and activist interests, however, what Mustafa Riza Khan came most to be revered for in the course of his long life (he lived to be about ninety) was as a sufi pir. Perhaps this perception of him belongs to the second half of his life, for it is ironic that after his brother’s death in 1943 his followers called him by the honorific title ‘Mufti-e A‘zam-e Hind’ (Great Jurisconsult of India),

²⁹ In 1920, Mustafa Riza published Ahmad Riza’s correspondence with ‘Abd ul-Bari on the Khilafat issue in *Al-Tari al-Dari li Hafazat ‘Abd ul-Bari* (Bareilly: Sunni Press, 1339/1920–21).

³⁰ As these goals indicate, the Ansar al-Islam was the Ahl-e Sunnat’s answer to the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Ka‘aba formed by Maulana ‘Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahali, the ‘Ali brothers, and others, in 1913. Not surprisingly, the Khilafat Committee was opposed to the Ansar al-Islam. See *Al-Sawad al-A‘zam* (Muradabad), 2: 5 (Sha‘ban 1339/April/May 1921), pp. 2–8.

³¹ A list of his writings appears in Muhammad Iqbal Ahmad Qadiri Akhtari, *Tajalliyat-e Nuri* (Sadiqabad: Riza International Academy, 1990), p. 31.

³² The work of publishing Ahmad Riza’s fatawa was begun at the Dar al-‘Ulum Ashrafiyya at Mubarakpur in the 1950s. See Introduction to *Al-‘Ataya li-Nabawiyya fi’l Fatawa al-Rizwiyya*, vol. 7 (Mubarakpur, Azamgarh: Sunni Dar al-Isha‘at, 1987), for details.

³³ Although I have no certain evidence of this, I have the impression that the founding of this school was the result of a rift between the two brothers. Supervision of the Madrasa Manzar al-Islam, which was initially under Hamid Riza Khan, passed after his death (in 1943) to his eldest son Ibrahim Riza Khan, and has continued to be under the control of that branch of the family.

rather than by a title honoring him as a sufi. In the remaining part of this essay I would like to dwell on the portrait that emerges from recent writings about Mustafa Riza, and to attempt to make some general comments on the Ahl-e Sunnat movement as a whole on the basis of a comparison of his life (as seen through a sample of biographies about him) with that of his father.

Portrayal of Mustafa Riza Khan in Current Accounts

In a work entitled *Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind*, Sayyid Riyasat 'Ali Qadiri begins his study of Mustafa Riza Khan by giving his full sufi genealogy, going back to the Prophet Muhammad. This spiritual family tree is traced from the Prophet through the first eight Shi'i imams,³⁴ on to Junaid Baghdadi (d. 910), on to Shaikh 'Abd ul-Qadir Jilani (d. 1166), and eventually to the ancestor of the Barkatiyya Sayyids of Marahra, Shah Barkat Ullah (d. 1729).³⁵ The second last link in the chain before it ends in Mustafa Riza is Shah Abu'l Husain³⁶ 'Nuri Miyan' who, it may be recalled, had been Shah Al-e Rasul's sajjadanishin and a close advisor and associate of Ahmad Riza. The very last name is that of Ahmad Riza. Mustafa Riza, thus, was disciplined to (*bai'a*) his father.

The close relationship between Mustafa Riza and the Barkatiyya Sayyids is emphasized in stories told about Mustafa Riza's birth and childhood. Thus, it is said that at the moment of his birth, Ahmad Riza was in Marahra. Nuri Miyan, who knew of the birth by spiritual insight, told Ahmad Riza about it and instructed him to name the child 'Al-e Rahman.' Six months later, as the second quotation at the beginning of this paper tells us, Nuri Miyan came to Bareilly and admitted him into all the sufi orders, predicting at the same time that Mustafa Riza would become a great 'alim and a 'perfect wali' (*wali kamil*) when he grew up.³⁷

³⁴ However, the name of Hasan, the second Shi'i imam, is not included. See *Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind*, pp. 21–5.

³⁵ On Barkat Ullah, see *Khandan-e Barakat*, pp. 2, 25, 28 ff.

³⁶ Sayyid Riyasat 'Ali incorrectly gives Nuri Miyan's name as Shah Abu'l Hasan on p. 23.

³⁷ These stories about Mustafa Riza Khan are told in all the accounts about him. See, for example, Sayyid Al-e Rasul Hasnain Miyan, *Mustafa se Mustafa Riza Tak* (Bombay: Riza Academy, n.d.), pp. 53–4; 'Abd ul-Na'im 'Azizi, *Zamima-e Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind* (Bareilly: Akhtar Riza Book Depot, n.d.), pp. 9–10.

The relationship between Mustafa Riza Khan and the Barkatiyya family was by

Our accounts do not dwell on Mustafa Riza's life in terms of chronological personal history: their purpose is to glorify him as an exemplar of shar'i behavior, and in particular as a sufi master. Having dwelt on his genealogy, both spiritual and biological, and on the predictions of revered elders, they go on to tell the reader that he had more than ten million (one crore) disciples (murids)³⁸ scattered throughout the world and more khulafa than most great pirs had. These included some in the Haramain (Mecca and Medina).³⁹ Although he never went to Pakistan himself (according to one writer, because the Pakistan government insisted on a photograph in order to issue a visa), he is said to have had a considerable following there as well.⁴⁰

It comes as no surprise to learn that as a pir, Mustafa Riza reportedly instructed his disciples never to transgress the boundaries imposed by the shari'a: for the last hundred years or more it had been a matter of pride for all those who called themselves the 'Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at' that *tariqat* (gnosticism) had to be subservient to shari'at. Specifically, following the shari'a at all times meant that the disciple would agree to remain true to the beliefs (*mazhab*) of the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at and to fulfil the five 'pillars' of Islam. He would perform prayers and fasts that had been missed as soon as possible, would give zakat and make up for previous years in which this had not been done, would perform the duty of *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) if sufficient means were available to do so, and finally, would refrain from antisocial behavior of any kind—from lies, slander, breach of trust, adultery, etc.⁴¹ Mustafa Riza also made his disciples promise that they would not fail to perform any act that under shari'a was classified as either *farz* (obligatory), *wajib* (necessary, a category slightly less binding than farz), or *sunnat* (commendable).

no means confined to sufi-related matters. During the 1930s, when the Ahl-e Sunnat 'ulama were divided on whether or not they should support the controversial idea of a separate Muslim homeland and of Partition, Mustafa Riza supported the stand taken by the Barkatiyya Sayyids (against that of Na'im ud-Din Muradabadi and his organization, the All-India Sunni Conference, formed in 1925). Like them, he argued against the creation of a separate Muslim state on the grounds that it would lead to the abandonment by the departing *muhajirs* (emigres) of their shrines, mosques, and other buildings. Interview with Maulana Tahsin Riza Khan, April 18, 1987, at Bareilly.

³⁸ A figure which should be understood to stand for a large number, rather than literally.

³⁹ 'Abd ul-Na'im 'Azizi, *Zamima-e Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind*, p. 14.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Iqbal Ahmad Qadiri Akhtari, *Tajalliyat-e Nuri*, p. 20.

⁴¹ Sayyid Riyasat 'Ali Qadiri, *Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind*, pp. 124–5.

Then, taking the disciple's hand in his own, he would ask him to say, 'I have put my hand in the hand of Shaikh 'Abd ul-Qadir Jilani.' For this, he assured his disciples, was the meaning of bai'a: he, Mustafa Riza, was an intermediary between them and the Shaikh, who would henceforth take them under his protection.

To his followers, however, it is clear from the biographical accounts that he was more to them than just a link in a chain. To them he was many things: in appearance and in his love of the Prophet and of Shaikh 'Abd ul-Qadir Jilani he was (to those who had known Ahmad Riza) a living image of his father. Like Ahmad Riza, he would tell his followers that worship (*ibadat*) of Allah that did not include love of the Prophet was no worship.⁴² Like Ahmad Riza, he too wrote na't verse in praise of the Prophet (his *takhallus*, or pen name, was 'Nuri'), and went to great lengths to honor all Sayyids by virtue of their descent from the Prophet: when a young man who was a descendant of Shaikh 'Abd ul-Qadir Jilani visited Bareilly, Mustafa Riza Khan is reported to have walked behind him barefoot in the streets 'the way a servant (*khadim*) walks behind his master (*aqā*).'⁴³

One aspect of the classic ideal of a true sufi is that of a man of few wants, compassion for the poor and the needy, and a corresponding disdain for the wealthy and the powerful. This picture is lovingly depicted in the accounts of Mustafa Riza:

He goes to everybody great and small (*har kas o na-kas*) and speaks to them with infinite gentleness and love. He asks after the sick, meets the needs of the needy, takes the lead in greeting people and extends his hands toward them with pleasure. There is modesty in his look. . . .⁴⁴

He is always engaged in prayer, reading the *durud* [calling down blessings on the Prophet] and *waza'if* [extra prostrations after the five daily prayers, technically *sunna*]. But if someone should come to visit him, he will put aside his prayers, for, as Sa'di says, 'To take care of the needy is better than (*afzal*) *durud* and *waza'if*.'⁴⁵

This is an interesting statement, showing Mustafa Riza's total engagement in the 'healing' role of the sufi pir.

Conversely, Mustafa Riza's contempt for the wealthy and the powerful is also well attested, as in his reported fearlessness of government authority. On his second hajj (sometime before 1947), for

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

instance, he wrote a book opposing the Saudi government's imposition of a hajj tax, although the punishment for such opposition was most severe: government policy toward such a person was to abandon him in a small, dark underground cave deep in the desert from which he could not escape, providing him the barest minimum in food and water until he died of hunger and thirst.⁴⁶ Mustafa Riza fearlessly opposed the tax nevertheless, without suffering the slightest harm. During Ayub Khan's regime in Pakistan (1958–69), he wrote a fatwa opposing the use of an aeroplane by the government *ru'yyat* (sighting) committee to determine the appearance of the new moon at the end of Ramadan, when all other muftis had written fatawa in support of the government regulation.⁴⁷ And in 1975–76, he wrote a fatwa against the compulsory sterilization campaign launched by the Indian government under the Emergency, at a time when all 'the great leaders, reformers, and famous 'ulama had sewn their tongues, so great was their fear of the government.'⁴⁸

The accounts on which I draw make no distinction (as I have done) between Mustafa Riza's brave acts of defiance in the wider world of current affairs and his acts of kindness toward his followers which frequently border on the magical or miraculous. Juxtaposed with the above, and far outnumbering in frequency such references to the 'real world' outside, are endless stories of the miraculous events surrounding him. In these stories, the kinds of people that Mustafa Riza helped include men wrongly accused of murder, destitute women, and helpless and poor people in different walks of life. For instance, a story is told of how a poor disciple of his in Kanpur invited him home for a meal. When Mustafa Riza came, however, the disciple was dismayed to see that he was accompanied by seventy-five people—whereas the disciple had expected fifteen! But the problem was soon solved:

⁴⁶ 'Abd ul-Na'im 'Azizi, *Zamima-e Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind*, pp. 13–14. I should add that because the Ahl-e Sunnat disapprove of the Saudi regime, their leadership frequently faces difficulty in securing permission to travel to Saudi Arabia. Personal communication, Maulana Yasin Akhtar Misbahi, 1987.

⁴⁷ The reason for his opposition to this practice was that the moon sets (*ghurub*), but does not cease (*fana*) to exist. Therefore, in some places it can be sighted on the 30th, and elsewhere on the 29th. If one were to follow the course of the moon far enough by aeroplane, one would even be able to see it on the 27th or the 28th. But this would provide no shar'i justification for declaring the sighting of the moon. Only when observed from the ground would it be valid according to the shari'a. Sayyid Riyasat 'Ali Qadiri, *Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind*, p. 41.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32–3.

Hazrat [Mustafa Riza Khan] went in[to the kitchen] and sat in front of the cooked rice. After saying the Fatiha of Shaikh ‘Abd ul-Qadir Jilani over it, he said, ‘Without looking into this pot of rice, keep ladling out portions for everyone and sending them out.’

Miraculously, the rice pot stayed full no matter how much rice was served.⁴⁹

Indeed, the miracles (*karamat*) that Mustafa Riza Khan is reputed to have performed for his followers are legion, and to ignore them here would be to miss an important dimension of the popular perception of him. In the following story, Mustafa Riza helped a Hindu. It is noteworthy that at no time did he directly apply any pressure on him to convert to Islam, though at the conclusion of the story the man did so voluntarily:

Huzoor Mufti-e A‘zam-e Hind [Mustafa Riza] was staying in a masjid in Jhansi. Day and night crowds of people came to see him. One of them was an elderly Hindu who came to tell him his story: ‘My daughter,’ he said, ‘has been married off to a bad man who beats her, and is a drunkard. My daughter has reached such a pass that she doesn’t want to return to him. Tomorrow her case is coming before the magistrate.’ Hazrat said, ‘Your daughter should tell the magistrate that this is not my husband because in your faith a vow is valid only if taken before a fire.’ The man said, ‘Hazrat, her husband’s name has been branded on her hand.’ Hazrat said, ‘This is forbidden (*haram*), though you do not regard it so. Go. When your daughter denies her husband and the magistrate orders her to show her hand, his name will not be on it.’⁵⁰

This was exactly what transpired the next day, to everyone’s great astonishment. The Hindu (converted and) became Mustafa Riza’s disciple.

A last example, which to my mind epitomizes how Mustafa Riza’s followers viewed him, is about an event that took place shortly after his death in November 1981, during the ceremonial washing of his body:

When Hazrat’s corpse was being bathed, inadvertently the sheet [covering the body] was moved, exposing the thigh. Immediately, the fingers of Hazrat’s hand caught hold of the sheet and covered it. People thought the fingers had got caught. They tried to forcibly prize them loose, but the fingers would not let go of the sheet. It was Hazrat Allama Akhtar [? text cut off here] Riza Khan Sahib who first noticed that the fingers continued to hold on to the sheet until it had been properly adjusted over the leg. Allahu Akbar!⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵¹ ‘Abd ul-Na‘im ‘Azizi, *Zamima-e Mufti-e A‘zam-e Hind*, pp. 30–1.

This story tells us a great deal not just about what Mustafa Riza's followers thought about him personally (his sense of modesty being powerfully exemplified in this incident), but also about the sufi pir's transcendence of death itself. As the writer comments, 'Allah's friends (*wali*) don't really die. They merely become invisible to our eyes.'

It is entirely in keeping with this identity as a sufi pir, I believe, that (in strong contrast to Ahmad Riza Khan) Mustafa Riza's life was characterized by frequent travel throughout the country. Although the texts do not give us any indication of any pattern followed, they make it clear that travel was an important part of his life:

Travel brings lustre to a person's being, and many truths are revealed to one in the course of it. This was why Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind, in his quest for truth and for that which is pleasing to Allah, liked to travel, no matter how great the sacrifice.⁵²

His enormous physical energy, even in old age, is commented about in numerous stories. According to one, when he went on hajj for the third time (in 1971) he climbed Mount Hira (where the Prophet had received the earliest Qur'anic revelations) in three hours, which feat was beyond even a healthy young person to perform.⁵³ He kept up his demanding schedule to the end of his life, despite illness and old age.

Travel fulfilled several purposes: one, an internal spiritual one, for one learned patience (*sabr*) by leaving one's home, friends and loved ones and enduring the hardships of separation. It was undertaken also for the sake of others, for all those Mustafa Riza met on his journeys were blessed by the experience. Most importantly, however, the purpose of *tabligh*, spreading the message of the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at among both Muslims and non-Muslims, was served. Indeed, this was at the heart of Mustafa Riza's purpose in travelling, one may say, for in spreading the Ahl-e Sunnat message, he carried the teachings of his scholarly father Ahmad Riza to an ever larger audience.

I would like to end this sketch of Mustafa Riza with excerpts from an eye-witness account of his last journey, that to his grave on November 13, 1981. The details of the funeral procession are vivid and

⁵² Sayyid Riyasat 'Ali Qadiri, *Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind*, p. 122.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

the images evoked remind us once again of Mustafa Riza's stature as a *pir*:

As morning dawned [on November 13, 1981] traffic had been halted on every street, every lane and every bazaar in Bareilly. The procession was preceded by a rickshaw bearing a loudspeaker, from which blared the *na'ra-e takbir* [the call, 'Allah is great'], the *na'ra-e risalat* [the call, 'Muhammad is His Prophet'], the *na'ra-e ghausiyyat* [the call, 'Shaikh 'Abd ul-Qadir Jilani is His *Ghaus* (helper)'], and the cry 'Mufti-e A'zam.' At every step, the *na't* and *milad* reciters called out praises [of the Prophet, 'Abd ul-Qadir, and Mustafa Riza]. . . . It was as if every tongue was lamenting, every eye weeping, every heart broken . . . [But the atmosphere created by all the praise reciters and others was such that] it seemed as if the bridegroom's luminous marriage procession (*barat*) was passing by. Yes! This was the most luminous of luminous funeral processions, it was the procession of the lover of the Prophet (*ashiq-e mustafa*).⁵⁴

With the body carried on a motor car, the procession slowly wound its way through the crowded lanes of the commercial heart of the city, watched by 'hundreds of thousands' (*lakhs*) of Muslims and non-Muslims, who lined the rooftops, balconies, and windows of the buildings overlooking the streets. For, writes the author, 'everybody desires to see the *qutb-e waqt* (the pivot of the world of each age), the *shahanshah-e waqt* (the emperor of his time).'⁵⁵

Indeed, 'witnessing' and 'seeing' the body were the very purpose of the procession. It proceeded gradually to the open grounds (*maidan*) of the Islamiyya College, where a platform had been set up on which the body was laid. Policemen stood by to manage the crowds while, aided by a microphone to carry his voice to the people, Sayyid Mukhtar Ashraf of Kachhochha, a revered elder, began the funeral prayer. The procession had set out in the morning: it was now half-past three in the afternoon.

The prayer over, the people viewed the dearly loved face of their departed *pir*. Then the body was lifted back on to the car, and the procession regrouped. Returning once again through the streets of the city (though by a slightly different route, to enable those who had been unable to set their eyes on the body before to do so now), the mourners made their way to the Khanqah Rizwiyya. On the way they paused in front of the Riza Masjid, allowing people a chance

⁵⁴ 'Abd ul-Na'im 'Azizi, *Zamima-e Mufti-e A'zam-e Hind*, p. 32.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23. The concept of 'seeing' a great man and being blessed by the sight reminds one strongly of the centrality of *darshan* (sight) in Hinduism. On the latter, see Diana L. Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1985).

to come up to the bier and kiss it. After controlling the crowd with great difficulty, at 4.30 p.m. the body was finally lowered into the grave. As this was done, the face turned of its own accord toward the *qibla* (in the direction of Mecca).

Thereafter, until well into the night, there was continuous recitation of the *salat o salam* and *Fatiha*, while mourners filed past the grave strewing it with fragrant flower petals.⁵⁶

Comments and Conclusions

The Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at movement has always regarded both shari'at and tariqat as necessary and complementary means of reaching Allah. The former sets the limits for the practice of the latter. Consequently, both Ahmad Riza and Mustafa Riza were simultaneously 'ulama and pirs, scholars and sufis. However, as this essay has tried to indicate, the emphasis and balance of the two roles was different in the two men's lives. While Ahmad Riza tended to live the life primarily of a scholar, Mustafa Riza appears in his latter years, if not his younger ones, to have been viewed primarily as a pir by his followers.

From the point of view of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement itself, this development would seem to be attributable to two factors in particular. First, while acknowledging that the movement does not view Ahmad Riza as its 'founder'—as, in its perspective, he was merely restating earlier truths, and urging all Muslims to follow the prophetic sunna—I believe that his very restatement of what was implied by the term 'sunna' became the basis for the self-definition of the 'Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at,' a group that came in the late nineteenth century to stand in opposition to a number of existing Sunni Muslim schools of thought. His extensive writings became, during his lifetime and after, the intellectual ground around which group identify was formed. It followed, therefore, that the task before the generation that succeeded him was to spread the message contained in his writings, taking it beyond the narrow circle of fellow-'ulama within which he had moved.

Mustafa Riza's life well exemplifies this task and goal. In all he did in the course of his long life, Mustafa Riza was in a sense doing

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–6.

nothing more than taking the Ahl-e Sunnat message as formulated by his father to his Muslim brothers and sisters. He did this by being accessible to them, and above all by being inclusive where his father had been exclusive. The texts speak of Mustafa Riza's gentleness and kindness to all, and of his willingness to help even Hindus. In contrast to Mustafa Riza's irenic personality, his father Ahmad Riza had been a stern judge of his fellow-*'ulama* in order to determine whether they were 'true' Sunnis or not. In this sense Ahmad Riza had excluded rather than included others from his purview.

In this too one may see a logical development. Perhaps, the task of self-definition having been completed, it was no longer necessary to emphasize one's difference from one's fellow-Muslims to quite the same degree (though Mustafa Riza never failed to warn the Ahl-e Sunnat against the 'Wahhabis'). The *pir*, in his role as healer, helper, and guide to the community of believers, is by definition more accessible to people around him than is the scholar, though the latter too, of course, serves his community through his scholarship.

Another factor that has favored an increased emphasis on the *pir*'s role as against the *'alim*'s in the Ahl-e Sunnat movement has been the importance attached to the person of the leader since Ahmad Riza's time. While contemporary nineteenth-century movements such as the Deobandis created a *Dar al-'Ulum*, an institutional center to which all the great scholars came, and to which students were in turn attracted, the Ahl-e Sunnat movement in the late nineteenth century was shaped by personal loyalty to Ahmad Riza himself.⁵⁷ Madrasas were certainly founded, both in Bareilly and elsewhere, but they never attained the status of a *Dar al-'Ulum*. When, after Ahmad Riza died, his home was transformed into a hospice and his grave into a pilgrimage site, the trend toward sufism was given a powerful impetus. His elder son, Hamid Riza Khan, became his *sajjada-nishin*, and Bareilly became a holy place. The role of *'alim* became, it seems, secondary to that of the *pir*. In fact, even the management and control of the *Manzar-e Islam* in Bareilly, which had been established in the early 1990s, became hereditary, passing from father to son rather than being based on individual scholarly or managerial abilities.⁵⁸

Does this mean that the Ahl-e Sunnat movement has changed irrevocably in character, and that by becoming 'popular,' it has also

⁵⁷ Barbara Metcalf points to this as well. See *Islamic Revival*, pp. 311–12.

⁵⁸ Its management was in the hands of Hamid Riza and then of his eldest son; Mustafa Riza never apparently had any role in controlling it.

become 'unreformist'? Mustafa Riza's life does not bear out this judgment, for he himself (to the best of my knowledge) exemplified in word and deed the ideal of a true 'Sunni' as understood by the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at. But popular *perception* of him within the movement appears on the evidence to have equated his restrained and unostentatious piety with heavenly sanction and, by extension, with the power of the miraculous. The distinction between the 'Sunni' 'alim and the miracle-performing pir appears not to be made in the accounts of Mustafa Riza's life that I have read and from which I have drawn here.

Fortunately, efforts have begun to be made since the 1970s to rediscover, edit, and publish Ahmad Riza's fatawa. Efforts are also under way to open madrasas and educate and train young men in accordance with Ahl-e Sunnat beliefs, both in India and in Pakistan. It remains to be seen, however, whether the 'ulama who emerge from these institutions can go beyond a mere reverence of Ahmad Riza's personal achievements, and contribute to a revival of the high level of scholarship of their nineteenth-century predecessors, while simultaneously guiding the Muslim community in the practice of 'good' and moral Muslim lives according to the Ahl-e Sunnat perspective.