

The Heresies of Indian Wahhābīs as understood by Imām Ahmed Raza Khān Barēlwi, al-Hanafi (1856-1921)

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
PhD by research

The University of Leeds
Leeds Doctoral College

January 2024

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved mother Asiah Bibi, who supported me throughout this process and has always been there for me in my life's journey. It is also dedicated to my late Grandfather Chaudhary Abdul Aziz, my late Uncle Chaudhary Abdul Qayyum, late father Chaudhary Mohammed Aslam and elder brother Chaudhary Khurshid Aslam without whom this journey would not have been possible. Finally, this thesis is also dedicated to my teacher and guide, His Eminence, Hazrat, Allama, Muhammad Habīb ul-Rahmān Sāhib Mahbūbī of Tangrout & Dhāngri Sharīf, Mīrpur (Presently in Pakistani occupied Kashmīr) who taught me to learn, ask questions and seek the truth and not forgetting the late Hazrat, Allāma, Zia-Ullah Qadri of Sialkot, Pakistan, who introduced me to the person of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān Barēlwī.

Acknowledgements

I am heartily thankful to my PhD supervisors, Dr Mustapha Sheikh and Dr Tāj ul-Islam, for their support and guidance they showed me throughout my dissertation writing and Karen priestly, our Doctoral College Officer, always at hand when in need for help and support. I would also like to thank. I am sure it would have not been possible without their guidance and help. I would also offer my gratitude and thanks to my examiners Professor Mustapha Lahlali and Dr Mustafa Baigh on their recommendations and suggestions for improvement of my thesis.

Lastly, I offer my regards and blessings to all of those who supported me in any respect during the completion of the project.

Mohammed Ali

لَتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ، وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُقِرُّوهُ

وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلاً ﴿٩﴾

تاکہ اے لوگو تم اللہ اور اس کے رسول پر ایمان لاؤ اور رسول کی تعظیم و توقیر کرو

اور صبح و شام اللہ کی پاکی بولو (ف ۱۴)

'In order that you, O people may bring faith upon Allah and his Messenger and to honour and revere him and glorify Allah at dawn and in the evening'. (Q. 48:09)

¹ This has been rendered into English from the Urdu Qur'an translation of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān Barēlwi by myself.

Abstract

This study investigates the cause and the effect of the edicts (*Fatāwa*) of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān Barēlwī (d. 1921), which labelled Wahhābīs as heretics and blasphemers. I shall investigate how he came to such conclusions and why he thought it was important to take such steps as a religious figure as he was one of the most respected and honoured theologians of his era.

The edicts of blasphemy form a small part of his renowned collection of his edicts (*Fatāwa*) is comprising of 30 volumes known as ‘*Al-Attāya-al-Nabawiyyah-fil-Fatāwa-al-Razawiyyah*’ which are diverse and cover many different areas, responding to questions from as far as Africa. It is said that Imām Raza always gave preference to his job as a Muftī, rather than spending time travelling, orating, and even writing books. His religious edicts would eventually become compiled as books.

I have examined the Wahhābī movement in South Asia from its founder, Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī, from 1820 to 1945, covering the beginning of the Deobandi, Ahlē Hadīth and the Barēlwī schools to their successors.

I looked at the primary data to deal with the edicts of Imām Raza and the differences sources as well as the historical works detailing the occurrences during that era. I not only looked at the verdicts of Imām Ahmed Raza but also the works and rebuttals of his contemporaries so to get a better picture and understanding of the heresies of the founding fathers of the Deobandi and the Ahlē Hadīth schools. This also involved also looking at the Deobandi claims of Imām Ahmed Raza misinterpreting the original texts of the works in question.

I have attempted to show the bigger picture of the heresy disputes between the Deobandī, Barēlwī and the Ahlē Hadīth schools, providing historical data and the perspectives of these different schools, the confusion, misunderstandings and the possibility of dialogue and unity.

Future research could include an in-depth study of the religious ideas of the like of Shah Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawī and the famous Shah Wali Ullah Dehlawī belonging to the Dehlawī

family, as the Deobandī, Barēlwī and Ahlē Hadīth schools trace their tutelage back to this scholarly family.

Guide to Arabic Transliteration System

The transliteration system adopted is The Library of Congress Transliteration system². The following tables will firstly list Arabic consonants and vowels and then an illustration of some rules will follow.

Arabic Letters

Arabic	Transliteration	Arabic	Transliteration
أ	a	ض	ḍ
ء	’	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	‘
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	ḥ	ق	q
خ	kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ		

² The full version of the Library of Congress Transliteration system for Arabic consonants and vowels is available at: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsa/romanization/arabic.pdf>.

Arabic Short-Long Vowels and Case Endings

Arabic	Transliteration
ا	ā
َ	a
ي	ī
ِ	i
و	ū
ُ	u
ان	an
ين	in
ون	un

Note

al- is pronounced /al/ in front of the following letters: ’ b j ḥ kh ‘ gh f q k m h w y. But it is pronounced as /a/, i.e. the letter /l/ is dropped in pronunciation and is replaced by a geminate of the following sound, in front of the following letters: t th d dh r z s sh ṣ ḍ ṭ ḻ l n.

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0.1. Introduction

To demean or to use words which are deemed as offensive in the religious sphere towards God, His Prophets, Messengers and Angels is a cause of major concern within the Abrahamic religions, as it comes under the religious subject of blasphemy. According to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, blasphemy (*shatm*) Is an act of insult, vilification, defamation, abuse, or revilement³. The term apostasy (*riddah*⁴) is also associated with blasphemy against God (*sabb-Allah*) and the Prophet (*sabb-al-Rasūl*⁵), heresy (*zandaqah*⁶), hypocrisy (*nifāq*⁷) and unbelief (*kufr*⁸)⁹.

The Blasphemy Laws were intended to protect the honour, rights and lofty status of Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad. This issue has always been the centre of the Islamic faith as the Prophet Muhammad has stated, ‘None of you will have faith till he loves me more than his father, his children and all mankind¹⁰’. His personal, religious, and spiritual practises are at the heart of the Muslim faith. The Islamic law is based around his teachings and

³ Wiederhold L., “*Shatm*”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 06 June 2023 http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_8898 First published online: 2012, First print edition: ISBN: 9789004161214, 1960-2007

⁴ *Riddah* literally means ‘turning back’. A *Murtad*, the active participle from *irtadda* (to turn back, to renounce), means ‘one who turns back’. In Islamic law, *riddah* is understood to be reverting from the religion of Islam to *kufr*, whether by intention, by action that would remove one from Islam, or by a statement, be it in the form or *istihza* (mockery), *inad* (stubbornness) or *I’tiqad* (conviction). Ref: Saeed, A & Saeed, H, Freedom of religion, apostasy and Islam. Ashgate Publishing Company, USA, 2004. p. 36

⁵ In the discussion on apostasy there is a special category in which the jurists explore the use of foul language primarily in regards to the Prophet. This is known as *sabb al-rasul*. Later on this was considered to include the use of foul language with regards to Allah (*sabb Allah*) or any of the angels, other prophets. Ref: Saeed, A & Saeed, H, Freedom of religion, apostasy and Islam. Ashgate Publishing Company, USA, 2004. p. 38

⁶ The term *zindiq* (heretic) is often used in Islamic criminal law to describe *inter alia* a person whose teaching becomes a danger to the state, a crime liable to capital punishment. The term does not exist in the Qur’an, but appears to come to Arabic from Persian in the very early period of Islam. Heresy also includes questioning the fundamentals of Islam and may also include *sabb al-rasul*. Ref: Saeed, A & Saeed, H, Freedom of religion, apostasy and Islam. Ashgate Publishing Company, USA, 2004. p. 38

⁷ *Nifaaq*, understood as religious hypocrisy, dates from the time of the Prophet. In the Madinan period of the Qur’an, there were many references to *munafiqun* (hypocrites) and *nifaaq* (hypocrisy). The Qur’an repeatedly warns Muslims of the danger that these hypocrites posed to their community. Although the Qur’an does not order Muslims to kill them. The jurists justified the death penalty for hypocrites, perhaps on the basis of their understanding that *zandaqah* and *nifaaq* had strong resemblances. It was a difficult to see a significant difference from a legal point of view between a hypocrite and a heretic: both professed their beliefs outwardly and hid their true beliefs inwardly. And it was in this context that many jurists saw a need to equate *nifaaq* and *zandaqah* and impose the punishment of death without differentiating between them. Ref: Saeed, A & Saeed, H, Freedom of religion, apostasy and Islam. Ashgate Publishing Company, USA, 2004. p. 41

⁸ *Kufr* is another term associated with apostasy. At a simple level, *kufr* denotes unbelief, where, for example, a person does not recognise the existence or unity of God, or the Prophethood of Muhammad. This is a rejection of the concept of God or the Prophethood of Muhammad. Ref: Saeed, A & Saeed, H, Freedom of religion, apostasy and Islam. Ashgate Publishing Company, USA, 2004. p. 42

⁹ Saeed, A & Saeed, H, Freedom of religion, apostasy and Islam

¹⁰ Sahīh Bukhārī

commandments, his words are revelation from God, he taught how to pray, his name is the second half of the first article of the Islamic faith. God commands the Muslim in the Qur'ān to respect, follow and obey him in action and word. As the whole religion is based around the Prophet Muhammad, his person has also been enshrined as sacred.

With regards to the importance of the issue of blasphemy, especially the conflict amongst the Sunni Muslims themselves, it is surprising there are still so many gaps in our understanding the differences among scholars on what constitutes blasphemy. Though the boundaries of blasphemy have been clearly defined by early scholarship, the issue still seems to divide the different groups globally.

The issue of blasphemy was seen as so sensitive that even Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328), a proto-salafist theologian, a controversial thinker and a political figure, penned a book namely, '*Al-sārim-al-maslūl-alā-shātim-al-rasūl*' (The drawn sword against those who insult the Messenger) giving a verdict of the death penalty upon anyone who is found guilty of blaspheming the Prophet of Islam¹¹.

Qadī Ayād (d. 1149) was a celebrated scholar and judge in the city of Ceuta of Muslim Spain, he had travelled far and wide for knowledge. He stated in his famous work '*Al-shifa bi ta'rīf huqūq al-Mustapha*' (The remedy by the recognition of the Rights of the Chosen one) about those blasphemed about the Holy Prophet:

Those who insults the Prophet means to harm and contempt him, so his punishment is a must. On the other hand, those who didn't mean to insult the Prophet, those who may say something that is not good about him or deny something of his merits, or claim that he did a sin, or didn't convey his message well, or to doubt about his honour or his knowledge or to disbelieve in what the Prophet told his followers, and if the evidence proves that he has said so unintentionally or in anger or under the effect of drunks, or due to recklessness or foolishness, or not keeping his tongue; in such a case the judgment is compatible with the first one that his punishment is to be death, because there is no excuse if this man is ignorant or his

¹¹ Ibn Taymiyyah. A. *Al-sārim-al-maslūl-alā-Shātim-al-rasūl* (Urdu). Nūriyyah, Rizwiyyah Publications, Lahore, Pakistan. (2010)

tongue slipped, unless he has been forced to say so, though his heart is full of faith¹².

To respect and honour the Holy Prophet has been seen as a duty upon the believers and to do otherwise intentionally or unintentionally has been seen as a criminal offence punishable under the religious law. I shall discuss the theological nuances shaping the matter within South Asia in later chapters which was the basis of the fatwa of Imām Ahmed Raza upon his opponents whom he saw as being in contempt of this serious offence in Islam.

Sanyal, leading expert on the Barēlwī school, has only touched on the issue that divided the Muslims of India.¹³ The same can also be said about Metcalf, who had researched about the Deobandi movement, she states:

The Barēlwī Ullama did not emerge out of a desire to transform standards of practice and belief but rather out of opposition to the other two groups (i.e., the Deobandīs and Ahlē Hadīth).¹⁴ They held fast to the Hanafī law, broadly interpreted, and to a custom – laden style of Sufism.

Metcalf is of course an expert on Deobandism who like Sanyal has summarised the differences between the Barēlwī, Deobandī and Ahlē Hadīth schools and the edict of Imām Ahmed¹⁵ Raza and the rebuttals by the other to above mentioned schools.¹⁶ Sirriyyah, writer of ‘*Sufis and anti-Sufis*’, on the other hand mentions nothing of the major differences between the Deobandis and Barēlwī except that the Barēwlīs were defenders of traditional medieval Sufism.¹⁷ Pearson, researcher of the movement of Syed Ahmed Barēwlī and Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī briefly mentions some important issues like that of the spiritual presence of Prophet Muhammad with his knowledge known as *Hāzir-o-Nāzir*¹⁸ and polytheism (*Shirk*) and the major opponent of

¹² Ayadh, Musa. *Al-shifa bi ta'rīf huqūq al-Mustapha* (English trans by. Gehan Abdul Rauf), Dār-ul-Kutub, Ilmiyyah, Beirut, Lebanon. (2009). P. 732

¹³ Sanyal, U. Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi in the path of the Prophet. One world publication, Oxford, UK, p. 106

¹⁴ Metcalf, B. *Islamic Revival in British India: Deobandi, 1860-1900*. Princeton University Press. United Kingdom. 1982, p. 265

¹⁵ The transliteration used here for the name Ahmad is Ahmed and for his surname, Rida, the name Raza is written as this is how it is pronounced as in the Urdu language there is no 'Daad sound and the same letter is pronounced a 'Zaa' and this is why it is spoken as Raza.

¹⁶ Metcalf, B, p. 309

¹⁷ Sirriyeh. E. *Sufis and anti-Sufis: The defense, rethinking and rejection of Sufism in the modern world*. RoutledgeCurzon, London, UK. P. 49

¹⁸ The concept of *Hāzir-o-Nāzir* is used by the Barēlwi school to mean the Prophet Muhammad views the actions of the believers of his Ummah whilst he is in his grave. He can go from his grave to other places as he likes spiritually, and He also prays for the believers. *Hāzir-o-Nāzir* does not mean that he is physically present.

Maulāna Fazlē Haq Khairabādi¹⁹. Tareen, the author of *Defending Muhammad in Modernity* has also but summarised some of the major themes between the Deobandis and the Barēlwīs.²⁰ Like other researchers before on South Asian polemics, he does not explore the theological debates and the divide this has created within the Muslim community. Though, the above-mentioned researchers have briefly mentioned the differences between the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs, there is no detailed research which analyses the works and differences of these two groups within their historical and theological contexts. Dr Tāj-ul-Islam has discussed the intra-Sunni issues between the Deobandī, Barēlwī and Ahlē-Hadīth movements and their differences and also providing insight into the religious polemics between these schools of thought in his thesis²¹.

Metcalf has mentioned that Imām Ahmed Raza claimed that his opponents were not Muslims but Kāfir. In his pamphlet, Ahmed Raza specifically denounced the Ahmediyyah and the three kinds of Wahhābīs as Kāfir²². Metcalf also interestingly mentions that the Deobandīs claimed that the Meccan and Medinan scholars who affixed their signatures were misled by the pamphlets and wholly uninformed about the nature of Deobandī beliefs²³ and also mentioned that the degree to which the beliefs of Ahmed Raza represented an orientation amongst other Sunni Ullama in the late nineteenth century is not clear, writers focus on Ahmed Raza himself, not on his links to educational centres or – as one assumes may well have existed – to Sufi shrines²⁴.

Metcalf has stated several matters regarding Imām Ahmed Raza:

1. He claimed that the Ahmedi's were not Muslims but Kāfir.
2. He denounced the Deobandī's/Wahhābī's as Kāfir.
3. He had misled the Meccan and Medinnan Scholars about the correct beliefs of the scholars of Deoband.
4. Writers have merely focused on the person of Imām Ahmed Raza.

¹⁹ Pearson. O. H. *Islamic reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah Muhammadiyyah*. Yoda Press, India (2008). P. 67

²⁰ Tareen. S. *Defending Muhammad in Modernity*. University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana (2020),p. 276

²¹ Islām. T, *Scholastic Traditional Minimalism: A critical analysis of Intra-Sunni sectarian polemics* (2015). < IslamT.pdf (exeter.ac.uk) > [Accessed 04.09.2023 00:49]

²² Metcalf. B, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deobandi, 1860-1900*. P. 309

²³ Ibid, p. 310

²⁴ Ibid, p. 311

5. The need for clarity to what degree the beliefs of Ahmed Raza represented an orientation amongst other Sunni Ullama in the late nineteenth century.

This thesis sets out the context of the dispute between Imām Ahmed and the scholars of these Schools and in doing so, is the first of its kind to unpack the nuanced theological and socio-political context in which the dispute unfolded. In doing so, the thesis will highlight the importance of the issue of blasphemy and the concerns of Imām Ahmed Raza, the continuous carelessness of the elders of Deoband in using words and terms deemed offensive towards God and his bondsmen. By way of close textual analysis of Imām Raza's key works against these schools, the thesis will provide a clear account as to why the Imām could never relinquish a position rooted in his principles and values. In short, the honour of God and His Prophet was of utmost importance for Imām Raza, and this is what will be brought out in the chapters of this study. And to investigate why the Deobandis believed Imām Ahmed Raza had misinterpreted their beliefs and what do the Deobandis believe and was Imām Ahmed Raza misinformed regarding Deoband and their beliefs. One of the most important issues is knowing the representation of Imām Ahmed Raza amongst other Scholars, educational centres and people in general and this can give us a better understanding of the wider effects of his edicts and who did he really represent in India during the nineteenth century.

The contributions of Imām Ahmed Raza have for long been ignored within academic circles, his contributions to the Islamic sciences are little known outside the sub-continent; it is for this reason that I have decided to bring his contribution to the intellectual tradition to the surface, with a specific focus on the heresies of Indian Wahhābīs as understood by him with reference to historical, religious, and political context.

The following is a study of Imām Ahmed Raza's *Fatāwa*, specifically in connection with his theological positions and his understanding of blasphemy. This shall serve as a basis for comparison between the edicts of blasphemy by Imām Ahmed Raza and the works and rebuttals of the Deobandī school. The objective of this research is to analyse the grounds for the edict (*fatwa*) of Imām Ahmed Raza upon the Indian Wahhābīs and their objectionable statements, their contexts and purpose of such offensive words which not only caused division and discord amongst the Sunnis of South Asia but lead to serious charges of blasphemy upon the founding fathers of Indian Wahhābīs.

1)

It has been a mammoth task trying to bring not only the edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza but the actual books of the opponents, the actual texts and writings of earlier scholars and how Imām Ahmed Raza came to his conclusions based upon his understanding of traditional Sunni Islam and orthodoxy and how he understood the texts of fellow Muslims to be blasphemous is not easy to comprehend for any Muslim.

To understand the Fatwas of Imām Raza it is important to read and analyse his works and his reasoning based on the religious sources he presents to argue his case and then the works of the Deobandī school and their responses and rebuttals to the Barēlwī fatwa. It is interesting to know that both the Deobandī and Barēlwī schools have debated these issues for over a century with no real outcome. It is my intention to bring the fatāwa of Imām Ahmed Raza and those of the opponents and to research and analyse the actual cause of the fatwa and the many layers of conflicting information on both sides and find what really divided the Sunnis in South Asia and caused Imām Ahmed Raza to call his fellow Muslims as heretics.

I begin by introducing the books written by the persons accused of blasphemy by Imām Ahmed Raza and the texts in questions to get a better understanding of what was seen as blasphemous in these books beginning with *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, Maulāna Abul Kalām Āzad has that stated when Ismaīl had written the book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, the Scholars (*Ullama*) were alarmed by his writing, a great debate took place at the central Mosque of Delhi, on one side there was Shah Ismaīl and Maulāna Abdul Hāy and on the opposite side there was Maulāna Munawar Uddīn and the rest of the scholars of Delhi.²⁵ It is possible to see that the Sunni leadership and all but Shah Ismaīl and Abdul Hāy were on the opposite side. This movement started with a few followers under the leadership of Syed Ahmed Barēlwī.

Secondly, the *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* was written by Maulāna Qāsim Nanōtawī was completed in the year 1290 AH (1873 AD) and a rebuttal was written in 1291 AH by Muftī, Hāfiz Baksh Badayūnī called ‘*Tanbīh-ul-Juhāl bi-ahlāmīl-basasatul-mutāl*²⁶ labelling Maulāna Nanōtawī a heretic (*kāfir*)²⁷ and another was written by Maulana Fasīh Uddīn Badayūni who is said to have written the work *Qaul ul-Fasīh* in refutation of Nanōtawī. Maulāna Anwārullah Farūqī (d.

²⁵ Ahmed. G.M. *Azad ki Kahānī khud Azad ki Zubānī* (Urdu), Unain Printing Press, Delhi, India (1958). p. 55

²⁶ Bahsh. B. *Tanbīh-ul-Juhāl bi-ahlāmīl-basasatul-mutāl* (Urdu). <<https://archive.org/details/TanbeehUJuhālRadETakhzeerUnNaas/mode/2up>> [22.06.23. 14:21]> [22.06.23. 14:21]

²⁷ Baksh. B. *Abtāl Aghlāt Qāsimiyyah* (Urdu). Ref: <<https://archive.org/details/AbtalEAglatQasmiya/mode/2up>> [accessed on 08.08.2022 14:56]

1917), a deputy (*Khalīfah*) of Hājī Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī also wrote in a refutation of the *Tahzīr ul-Nās* called *Anwār-ul-Ahmedī*²⁸. All the above-mentioned works were written prior to the edict of Imām Ahmed Raza. It is possible to see that the Sunni leadership before Imām Ahmed Raza had already started to refute the Deobandīs from as early as 1873 for *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* and *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* of Shah Ismāīl as early as 1825.

Thirdly, *Barāhein-ul-Qā'tia* was written by Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī as a rebuttal to the book *Anwār-ē-Sātia* of Maulāna Muhammad Abdul Samī who was educated by the scholars of Deoband and was also a disciple of Hājī Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī, the shaykh of the Deobandīs. The *Barāhein-ul-Qā'tia* was written as a response to *Anwār-ē-Sātia* of Maulāna Muhammad Abdul Samī and then another work written after a debate between Maulāna Khalīl Ahmed Ambētawī and Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr Qusūrī named *Taqdīs-ul-Wakīl anil Hayānatil-Rashīd-wal-Khalīl*. a copy of the book *Anwār-ē-Sātia* reached Hājī Imdādullah in 1886, Hājī Imdādullah wrote to Maulāna Abdul Samī personally stating, 'This book is in accordance with the beliefs of this servant (faqīr) and that of our elders, you have written well, may Allah reward you²⁹'.

Fourthly, *Hifz ul-Imān* was written by Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvī in 1901 and caused further objections as he compared the knowledge of the Holy Prophet with that of lower animals causing further issues of discontent amongst the Sunni orthodoxy. The reason why Imām Ahmed Raza is mentioned and remembered compared to those who had issued individual edicts against the Deobandīs before him, is that he compiled the previous objectionable statements and put them together showing that the elders of this school had caused so many controversies within the Sunni community in India. In the year 1906 when the fatwa *Husām-ul-Haramayn* was written and presented to the Ullama of Mecca by Imām Ahmed Raza, surprisingly Maulāna Khalīl Ahmed Ambētawī was also present, and he left after two weeks as others objected to his visit³⁰.

Fifthly, *The God and the Prophets of Deoband* comprises of the works from the founding fathers of Deoband where they have used words which have previously only been used for Prophets and where their praises have been elevated to that of angels and Prophets and questionable statements have been made about Allah.

²⁸ Anwārullah. M. *Anwār-ē-Ahmedī* (Urdu). Maktaba Jām-ē-Nūr, New Delhi, India

²⁹ This letter of Hājī Imdādullah is printed in the old, published version in Persian'. Ref: Abdul. M. *Anwār-ē-Sātia dar bayān Maulūd-o-Fātia* (Urdu) Published by Idārah Furūgh-ē-Islām, U.P. India.

³⁰ Metcalf. B, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deobandi*, p. 310.

Sixthly, The *Husān-ul-Haramāyn ala-Munharil Kufrē-wal-Māin* (The sword of the Two Holy Mosques to the throats of the non-believers) was the collections of the *Fatāwas*, attestations and the epilogues of the scholars of the two holiest cities for the Muslims, Makkah and Madīnah in 1906 affirming the *Fatāwa* of Imām named *Al-Mustanad al-Mutamad bināl-Najāh-til-Abad* (The Reliable Proofs: A Foundation for Everlasting Salvation) against the heresies of the Deobandīs by Imām Ahmed Raza which was written in 1905. The *Al-Mustanad* is marginalia to the book *Al-Mutaqad al-Muntaqad* by Shah Fazlē-Rasūl Badayūni (1798-1872), who was one of the teachers of Imām Ahmed Raza.

0.2. The Life and influences of Imām Ahmed Raza

To get a closer look at Imām Ahmed Raza, it is important to understand how he has changed the landscape of Sunni Islam during the colonial British rule in India. It is a known fact that the forefathers of Imām Ahmed Raza had migrated to India from Afghanistan and settled in the town of Bareilly during the Mughal era. Professor Masūd Ahmed has stated:

Imām Ahmed Raza was originally a Pastoon, who followed the Hanafī school of thought and the Qādri Sūfī Order (*tarīqah*). His father Maulāna Muhammad Naqī Ali Khān (d. 1880) and his grandfather Maulāna Muhammad Raza Ali Khān (d. 1866) were known amongst the great scholars and sages (*Sūfiyyah*) of their era³¹.

From amongst his teacher of religious sciences and those whom he gained permission in *Hadīth* and *Fiqh* are mentioned as follows:

Shah Āale Rasūl Marhārwi (d. 1879), Maulāna Naqī Ali Khān (d. 1880), Shaykh Ahmed b. Zāyn Dahlān Makkī (d. 1881), Shaykh Abdul Rahmān Sirāj Makkī (d. 1883), Shaykh Hussāin b. Sāleh (d. 1885), Shāh Abul Hussāin Ahmed al-Nūri (d.

³¹ Ahmed. M, M. *Hayat-e-Imam Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilwi* (Urdu). Nazir Publishers, Lahore, Pakistan (1981). P.

1906), Mirza Ghulām Qādir Baig³² (d. 1883), Maulāna Abdul Ali Rāmpurī (d. 1885)³³

Imām Ahmed Raza well known for his writing of religious fatwas, to which he dedicated a lot of time besides teaching. He saw this as a religious duty to help people with their religious enquiries and to help them understand their religious beliefs and duty to God.

To understand the edicts and works of Imām Raza it is important to analyse his works and how he has tried to detach himself from becoming personal in his religious edicts and works. When reading through his works you will find hundreds of references to religious texts from the Qur’ān, Sunnah, Āhadīth literature, books of jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and his knowledge of various subjects from religious to secular, he used references from earlier scholars and referred to traditional sources to establish any points he mentioned, examples of which can be found in later chapters. You will find Imām Ahmed Raza a staunch Hanafite scholar and follower of the Maturīdī Sunni School. From all this it is only fair to assume that the blame and propaganda against this great religious personality has been due to his religious edicts against the elders of his opposition which according to Imām Raza were based upon theology and were by no means personal in any way as I shall discuss this in detail in this thesis.

0.3. The Prophetology of Imam Ahmed Raza

Prophetology plays a major role in the life and works of Imām Ahmad Raza. This was due, in part, to his attempt to respond to what he saw as challenges from movements like that of Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb and his later interpreters, who were clearly a threat to the creedal system of the Ash’arīs and Māturīdīs. In particular, it was what Imām Raza considered to be the open attacks on the Prophetic personality, character and the esteemed station (*khasā’is al-*

³² Ehsan Elahi Zaheer Salafi (d. 1987) in his book *Bareilwis: History and Beliefs* and also other Deobandi and Wahhābis have used the name of a teacher of Imām Raza and said that he was the brother of Mirza Ghulām Ahmed because the name was matching, and this was used to further attribute lies towards Imām Ahmed Raza. The name of the teacher of Imām Raza was Mriza Ghulām Qādir Baigh about whom Shaykh Abdul Hakīm Sharf Qadri (d. 2008) stated, ‘*the brother of Ghulam Ahmed Mirza Qadiani died in the year 1883 whereas Mirza Ghulām Qādir Baigh was still alive and living in Kalkata (a city in India) in the year 1897*’. Ref: Sharf. A. M. *Ehsan Ilāhī Zahīr ki kitab al-Bareilwiyyah ka Tahqīqī aur tanqīdī jā’iza* (Urdu). Raza Dār-ul-Ishā’at, Lahore, Pakistan. 1995. P. 66

³³ Ahmed. M, M. *Hayat-e-Imam Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilwi* (Urdu). p. 95

nabuwa) by the Wahhābīs,³⁴ a central and fundamental pillar of the Islamic faith in the view of Imām Raza that led him to take up the pen in response. Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī (1779-1831) had already aroused much tension³⁵ through his controversial book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* in which he accused the majority of Muslims of polytheism (*shirk*).³⁶ In the same book he made derogatory statements about God and the Prophet Muhammad some of which would have significant theological repercussions. At one point, Shah Ismaīl said, ‘the power of this King (God) of Kings, is so great, that in a twinkling [...] he can, if He likes, create thousands of apostles, saints, jinns, and angels, of similar ranks with Gabriel and Muhammad.’³⁷ This statement created two theological problems: - the first was termed the issue of *Imkān-ē-Nazīr*, the possibility that God could create another like the ‘Seal of the Prophets’, after stating that Muhammad is the last Prophet until the Last Day; the corollary of this problem is that God, if he were to contradict His own words would be essentially lying. This second theological problem was termed *Imkān-ē-Kizb*, the possibility that God can lie.³⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah who was the leading figure of such a critique whom both Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī revered said, ‘The angels do not help anybody in *shirk* neither in life or after death, but the Satan does by appearing in the form of a human being claiming that he is Abraham, Jesus, Muhammad, Khidr, Abū Bakr, Umr, Uthmān or Ali.’³⁹

Alongside the rise of the Ahl-ḥadīth movement which rejected as binding the adherence to any of the four Sunni schools, a new form of Wahhābism arose in the guise of the Hanafī School of Law, yet following some of the central ideas of Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb in

³⁴ Imām Ahmad Raza loosely uses the term Wahhābī in reference to those who agree with the ideas of Mohammed b. Abdul Wahhāb, may they be Ahl-ḥadīth, Deobandī or Nadvī. Another reason could be due to the fact that Imām Raza did not see this group as a new sect.

³⁵ Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi has related that Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī said upon writing *Taqwiyyat al-Imān*, ‘I have written this book and I am aware that I have at times used strong and aggressive words, for example, those matters which were *shirk-e-khaff* (inconspicuous polytheism) I have said them to be *shirk-ē-Jallī* (open polytheism). I suspect due to these matters there will be much commotion due to its publication [...] I have written this book in spite the commotion it will cause, but I hope that after the discord and friction, the matter will be resolved, this is what I think.’ Ashraf, Ali, *Arwāḥ-ḥ-Thallātha* (Karachi: Dar ul-Isha’at) p. 74.

³⁶ Ismail, Mohammed, *Taqwiyyat al-Imān* trans. by Badar Azimabadi (Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors 1995) p. 1.

³⁷ Harlon O. Pearson, *Islamic Reform and revival in the nineteenth century India; The Tariqah-e-Muhammadiyah* (New Delhi: Yoda Press 2008) p. 67.

³⁸ This argument may seem to resemble the argument between the Mu’tazzilites and the Ash’arites on the justice of God, but when looked upon in detail it is possible to see the differences. Here the problem is not justice but making derogatory statements towards Allah and His Prophet by making such statements about the Prophet, there being a possibility God creating another like Prophet Muhammad, thus helping to make way for people like Ghulām Ahmad Mirzā of Qāḍian to proclaim their Prophethood.

³⁹ Ibn Taymiyya. *Al-Wasīla* trans by. Ihsān Ilāhī Zahīr (Lahore: Idara Tarjuman al-Sunnah) p. 41.

creedal matters (*aqā'id*), the movement would come to be known as the Deobandī school of thought. Barbara D. Metcalf wrote,

The Deobandīs, for example, deplored a range of customary celebrations and practices, including what they regarded as excesses at saints' tombs, elaborate lifecycle celebrations, and practices attributed to the influence of the Shī'a. There were rival Islamic reformist schools in the quest for true Islamic practice. One group, the Ahlē-Hadīth, for example, in their extreme opposition to such practices as visiting the Prophet's grave, rivalled that of the Arabians typically labelled 'Wahhābī'. The 'Wahhābīs' were followers of an iconoclastic late 18th-century reform movement associated with tribal unification who were to find renewed vigour in internal political competition within Arabia in the 1920s. From colonial times until today, it is worth noting, the label 'Wahhābī' is often used to discredit any reformist or politically active Islamic group. Another group that emerged in these same years was popularly known as 'Barēlwī', and although engaged in the same process of measuring current practice against hadīth, it was more open to many customary practices. They called the others 'Wahhābī'⁴⁰.

Imām Raza would refer to them as Wahhābīs on account of their austere approach and their harsh condemnation of many of the popular *sūfī* practises in India.⁴¹ According to Imām Raza several eminent Deobandī scholars had made statements which were of a derogatory nature about the Prophet's knowledge.⁴²

According to Imām Ahmad Raza Wahhābīs could be categorised into two groups: The *Muqqalid* (imitators) Wahhabis (i.e., the Deobandīs) and those that were *Ghayr Muqqalids*

⁴⁰ Metcalf, Barbara D. 'Traditionalist 'Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs' (Netherlands: ISIM 2002) 29 September 2010 <https://www.openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/1887/10068/1/>

⁴¹ Elizabeth, Sirriyeh, *Sufis and anti Sufis* (London: Routledge Curzon 2003) p. 48.

⁴² Eminent Deobandi scholar Shaykh Khalīl Ahmad Anbēthvī (d. 1927) and approved by Shaykh Rashīd Ahmad Ghangohī wrote in his book, '*Barāhînê-Qâtia*' on page 123, "The extensive knowledge of Satan and the angel of death are evident from the Qur'an and Sunnah, but no such proof exists in regards to the Prophet's knowledge, that we should not acknowledge authentic evidence and instead prove something (i.e. extensive knowledge for the Prophet) that is Shirk." And Shaykh Ashraf Ali Thanvi wrote in his book, 'Hifz al-Imân' on page 15, "For the Prophet, is the knowledge of totality or partial? Of totality, this is impossible and if it is partial, then every child, mad men, animal and four legged creatures possesses this type of partial knowledge, in that, what is the speciality of the Prophet."

(i.e., The Ahl̄-Hadīth who are non imitators)⁴³ possibly because both groups agreed on creed and only disagreed on minor issues of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) as I will discuss further in the coming chapters.

Other challenges included the Qādiānī's who believed that Mirza Ghulām Ahmad (d. 1908) was a Prophet. Surprisingly, they drew upon Deobandī arguments⁴⁴ to prove their case that it was possible for another prophet to come after the Prophet Muhammad. There was also Sir Syed Ahmad Khān (d. 1898), founder of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College of Aligarh (later named as Aligarh Muslim University), a liberal- rationalist scholar who denied the possibility of miracles, interpreted beliefs in angels metaphorically rather than literally and was critical of Hadīth literature, dismissing it as being inauthentic.⁴⁵ The other major group were those referred to as the pluralists (*Sulla Kullīs*) such as the scholars of *Nadwat-tul-Ulamā* (Council of Ulama) who were accepting of other Muslim schools of thought without any prejudice.⁴⁶ These were only some of the factions which were prevalent in British India with whom Imām Ahmad Raza wrestled through his refutations in his writings. His main confrontation, however, would always be Wahhābism and its factions.

The late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries saw increasing differences amongst the scholars of different sects, groups and reformist movements in India, but Imām Raza saw the most offensive against the Ahl̄-Sunnat movement⁴⁷ being the Ahl̄-Hadīth and Deobandī movements criticising the Prophetic personality in respect of his attributed knowledge of the Unseen, his miracles, his Prophetic rights and his role as a Prophet were all dismissed, thus leaving the Prophet but as a heroic figure of history, with no religious significance.⁴⁸

⁴³ Allah, Buksh, *The Ahl̄ Sunnat Movement in British India 1880-1921* (Lahore: Islamic propagation centre) p. 225.

⁴⁴ Shaykh Muhammad Qāsim Nanōtawai (1852-1901) has stated in his book, '*Tahzīr al-Nās*', "If a Prophet was born after the time of Prophet Muhammad, it would thus not affect the finality of the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad", page-43. This is also related in the Urdu Qādiānī works, '*Ayat Khatam-an-Nabiyīn aur Jamāte-Ahmediyyah ka Maslak*.' p. 23.

⁴⁵ *Ahmed Riza Khan Barelwi; In the footsteps of the Prophet*, p. 43.

⁴⁶ The Nadwat al-Ulama (Council of Ulama, known as Nadwah, for short) was founded in the 1890's in the hope of bringing Sunni Shi'i differences together on a single platform, despite their differences of opinion'. (This extract taken from Ahmed Riza Khan Barelwi; *In the Path of the Prophet* by Usha Sanyal, p. 39.)

⁴⁷In the Subcontinent the Barelwis ascribe themselves with the title of Ahl̄-Sunnat or Ahl-us-Sunnāh-wal-Jammā, showing their belonging to the wider Sunni majority of the Muslim world. The Barelwis differentiate themselves from the Deobandis and the Ahle-Hadith movements as Wahhabis and do not recognise them as mainstream Ahl-us-Sunna.

⁴⁸ Shah Ismail Dehlawi writes in *Taqwiyyah-tul-Imān*, 'All the Prophets. Saints and Friends of Allah are lesser than the smallest of the particles in the sight of Allah', (p. 74.) and, 'one should be cautious in eulogizing a respectful

Imām Ahmad Raza saw it as his duty to dispel what he considered as false propaganda and replying to the Deobandīs on theological issues while dealing with the Ahlē-Hadīth on issues of both theology and law, the Qadianī's on theology and his economical strategies for the survival of Muslims under non-Muslim rule. On the one hand Imām Ahmad Raza spent most of his time writing edicts, continuing a long family tradition, which would at times result in the authorship of entire monographs.

0.4. The critics of Imām Ahmed Raza

The people who have criticised Imām Ahmed Raza by making personal attacks on him in their works. He was said to have raised the alarm in India and replied to the opposition through religious journals academically instead of making personal attacks but the followers of these other groups who he opposed have always tried to belittle him by stating that he was a British agent and made mockery of his person rather than using religious arguments, as I shall discuss below:

Hussain mentions in his master's research:

An important point needs to be mentioned, Ahmed Riḍa seems much more lenient towards the Christian missionaries than he was towards the different sects in Islām during this time, was it that he did not see them as much of a threat or was it because that the missionaries held similar beliefs to him as opposed to the Deobandis and Wahhābīs who were against shrine and saint worship?⁴⁹

The question raised by Hussain is based on his possible lack of understanding of the methodology of Imām Ahmed Raza, as he was dedicated to his job as a Muftī in writing edicts, upon studying his biographies and his writings one can gather that his works are based on the questions sent to him and he answered these accordingly, being brief or in length sometimes

person (i.e. including Prophets, saints etc.) and thus praise him as of his human worth and even reduce this', p. 101.

⁴⁹ H. Nouman, BARELVI'ISM AND CHRISTIANITY: SIMILARITIES AND THE POSSIBLE REASONS WHY, Department of Theology & Religion, College of Arts and Law, University of Birmingham, November 2017. Internet link: <https://etheses.bham.ac.uk/id/eprint/8218/1/Hussain2018MAbyRes.pdf> [28.08.2019 10:34] p-56

becoming books in themselves. Leniency can only be shown if there is mention of a group, so how can one determine an action without knowing or being biased in his research without any evidence or concluding when there are no sources to show otherwise. Hussain also mentions that Wahhābīs and the Deobandīs were against saint and shrine worship. Using such terminology would imply that the Barēlwī's worshipped saints and shrines whereas no such matter can be found in the works of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān Barēlwī.

Hussain stated:

The answers would lie within either the diaries of Christian missionaries or in the biographies of Ahmed Riḍa; however, neither source gives this impression that both had met once in their lives and engaged in friendly discussions, research into the Urdu sources are also silent leading us to conclude that these encounters are non-existent. Zafar ud Dīn, his disciple, who has written the most comprehensive and popular biography of Ahmed Riḍa in the Urdu medium, has no mention of encounters with Christian Missionaries, this is neither mentioned in Sanyal's work. Looking at the work of Zaheer, one would be sure to find some reference to any Christian Missionaries if there were any encounters, however this source mentions nothing of the sort. It is strange, in fact, that Ahmed Riḍa gave importance to declaring his fellow Muslim citizens as disbelievers while never once engaging in polemics with the Christian missionaries⁵⁰.

It does seem Hussain had not researched the life and works of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān in depth or looked at this methodology of writing or looked at his books. Hussain mentions as a hypothesis and blamed Imām Ahmed Raza on declaring Muslims of other sects as disbelievers yet not engaging in polemics with Christian missionaries. Hussain has possibly not encountered Imām Ahmed Raza's *Fatāwa Afrīqīyyah*⁵¹ which is a compilation of edicts from people from Africa which Imām Ahmed Raza deals with issues of marriage with Christians and also deals with the British Rāj and Christianity because these were questions sent to him which he had answered. Secondly Imām Ahmed Raza was never sent a question on Christian missionary or their activities, had this been the case Imām Ahmed Raza would have most certainly mentioned this. Regarding missionary activities, the Delhi Christian mission was set on in 1850, also, only

⁵⁰ Ibid, p-56

⁵¹ Khan. A. R. *Fatawat Afriqiyyah* (Urdu). Sunni Dar-ul-Isha'at, Faizalabad, Pakistan 1996

a month prior to the Delhi missionaries arriving to work at the mission, the Molvīs of Delhi, including Maulāna Rahmatullāh Kairanāwi (d. 1891) had published a book entitled *kashf Al Shabuhāt* (The Remover of Doubts). The book was clearly written to counter the effects of missionary activity, as the Maulāna himself indicated:

For a time, the ordinary Muslims shrank from listening to the preaching [of the missionaries] and from studying their books and pamphlets, therefore none of the Indian Ullama paid any attention to the refutation of these pamphlets. But after some time had passed there began to be a weakening in some of the people, and some of the illiterate [Muslims] were in danger of stumbling. Therefore, some of us scholars of Islam turned their attention to their refutation⁵².

We do learn from the scholars themselves is that Christian missionaries were not a big issue for Muslims who paid scant attention to the Christian mission as it did not affect Muslims to the extent Hussain has exaggerated in his writing. We find that even as late as 1845, there was not a single Hindustani copy of the Prayer Book⁵³ and Mary Weitbrecht (CMS missionary) felt that the Muslims were less inclined to convert than the Hindus⁵⁴. We also find that conversions in India remained small in number, and many missionaries themselves admitted that their attempts to convert on evangelical tours produced nothing that we know of, or next to nothing⁵⁵.

Hussain questions why Imām Raza did not speak against the building of Roman cathedrals in 1870s and another in 1868, but it seems Hussain was not aware that Imām Ahmed Raza was born in 1856 and would have been a young man in the 1870s and as we find from Christian testimony this was not a major concern of Muslims as the missionary activities of Christian evangelists did not manage to convert very many Muslims, if any. Hussain argues on his assumptions:

⁵² B. Nagina. The Impact of British Christian Missionaries on Indian religious, social and cultural life between 1800 and 1857. With [articular reference to the role of missionaries in the events leading up to the 1857 Mutiny. Internet link: <https://bradscholars.brad.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10454/6296/final%20masters%20amended%20thesis%2010.11.2013%20new.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y> [28.08.2019 13:26] p-13

⁵³ Ibid, p-75

⁵⁴ Ibid, p-82

⁵⁵ Ibid, p-94

The fact that there was no opposition of any type against the Christian missionaries by Ahmed Riḍa raises doubts to the aims and objectives of his call to Islām; to further allude to this point we can infer from his fatāwa that not only was he adamant on making takfīr⁵⁶.

Hussain has yet again shown that he had not studied the works of Imām Raza as he has not done justice to his research in not mentioning the religious edicts and reason for heresy (*takfīr*) of the persons mentions on religious grounds using the Qur’ān and Sunnah which Hussain has totally ignored and has without any justification questioned the religious authority of a most respectable religious personality amongst the Hanafī Scholars of India. Hussain not only stops there but also mentioned that Imām Ahmed Raza was against declaring Jihād against the British⁵⁷. This shows the level of propaganda against Imām Ahmed Raza being Pro-British and dividing the Muslims by those who have not taken an in-depth study of the edicts of the Imām and assumptions are made without any logic or reason possibly because he had exposed the Wahhābīs in India who were previously winning converts.

The personal attacks of the Deobandīs and their hate was unimaginable that they even tried to twist the meaning of Imām Ahmed Raza’s works even in their academic papers. An example of this is the late, Dr Khālīd Mahmūd Deobandī (d. 2020) did his PhD research paper called ‘*Mutalla-ē-Barēlvīyyat*’ in Pakistan in which he states that the British helped Imām Ahmed Raza with monetary benefits so that he would write edicts (*fatwas*) against other Muslim sects so this would in turn divide the Muslims and that weaken the Muslim unity per say so the British *Rāj* could rule indefinitely⁵⁸. The Question is how a simple edict can⁵⁹ imply serving British interests and deliberately blaming without any evidence by making only assumptions, such research is questionable as to the biased views of Mr Mahmood. This was not the first time that those who could not reply academically to the works of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān Barēlwi would make personal comments about him to dishonour him, some examples are as follows; the Deobandī scholar Maulāna Abu’l Awsāf Rūmī has written a book namely,

⁵⁶ N. Hussain. P-57

⁵⁷ Ibid, p-57

⁵⁸ Mahmūd. K. *Muta’ala-ē-Barēlwiyyat* (Urdu). Vol-1, p. 201

⁵⁹ Dr Khalid Mahmūd states that Imām Ahmed Raza gave the following edict, ‘There is nothing wrong in accepting government funding for religious education, stay firm upon your faith and don’t be excessive and did not the Holy Prophet and the rightly guided Caliphs accept gifts from non-Muslim rulers’. Ref: Mahmūd. K. *Muta’ala-ē-Barēlwiyyat* (Urdu). Vol-1, p. 200

‘*Deoband sē Barēlly tak*⁶⁰’ (From Deoband to Barēlly), in it there are many personal attacks to the extent of calling the edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza ‘*a heresy (kufr) machine.*’ The idea of such negative press against the edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza would over time be not taken seriously, and this was the scheming method used to degrade the religious standing of Imām Raza among the secular and religious circles that were not initially Barēlwī. Another Deobandī scholar Maulāna Muhammad Manzūr Nu’ māni wrote:

The blame placed upon the eminent scholars of the Muslims including Shah Ismaīl Shahīd, Maulāna Qāsim sahib Nanōtawī, Maulāna Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī and Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvī etc. It is by these means of blame that they create a rift and problems amongst the Muslims, and they have made this their way of business and main activity⁶¹.

The Salafī scholar Ehsān Elāhi Zahīr⁶² stated in his book ‘*Al-Barēlwiyyah*’:

The Barēlwī (i.e., Ahmed Raza Khān) declares everyone except himself as unbelievers (*kāfir*), thus dividing the Muslim community and demolishing the foundation of religion [...] It is said that he (i.e., Ahmed Raza Khān) was deeply dark, having a murky colour [...] He was absent minded, weak in memory and utterly forgetful [...] He was hot tempered, quickly excitable, severely irascible, insolent, given to cursing, reviling, obscene, and lewd his language [...] He was hard hearted and callous to his opponents⁶³.

This did not end there, even the early Deobandī works contain such stories. Maulana Ahraf Ali Thānvī has stated:

Maulvī Muhammad Yahya Khāndlawī said that once Maulāna Gangohī said to Maulvī Yahya, ‘Ahmed Raza Khān has been refuting my works for some time, read

⁶⁰ Rumi. A.A. *Deobandi se Bareilly tak*. Idarah Islamiyyat, Lahore. Pakistan.

⁶¹ Nu’mani. M. M. *Barelwi Fitne ka neya roop*. Idarah Islamiyyat, Lahore. Pakistan. 1978. P-20

⁶² Ehsān Ilāhī Zahīr was born 1945 and his father’s name was Zahūrē Ilāhī. He gained his early education and memorized the Qur’an at home and then was enrolled on to the Islamic seminary Jamīa Salafiyyah in Faisal Abad for further studies. It is said he was well versed in Arabic, Urdu and Persian languages and was a great orator and successful author. In March 1987 while at a conference in Lahore, Pakistan, he was severely injured in a bomb explosion and was then flown to Saudi Arabia and died soon after. Ref:

⁶³ Zaheer. E. I. *Bareilwis: History & Beliefs*. trans by Dr Abdullah. Idara Tarjuman Al-Sunnah. Lahore. Pakistan. P-35

from some of his works to me’, I replied, ‘O Shaykh, I will not be able to do this1’, ‘why not’, said Gangohī, upon which I replied, ‘there are swearwords (*Gāliyyah*) in this⁶⁴’.

Again, no mention of the book is mentioned and nor the swears to be found in the works as the works sent to Gangohī and others were sent for them to reconsider their religious positions on the concerned matters and repent and return to what Imām Ahmed Raza as true Sunni Islam but they paid scant attention to the situation to the extent that it divided the majority Hanafi Sunni Muslims into groups.

0.5. Conclusion

The attacks upon the person of Imām Ahmed Raza as well as upon his Fatawa upon the Deobandīs and Ahlē Hadīth has been mocked and ridiculed without any real research into the issue and he had been called as the one who declared all other Muslims as disbelievers except him and his followers. This was the propaganda that was being preached and taught because of his edict which he issued in defence of Prophet Muhammad, the Saints, Angels and even God Himself.

While other charged him with misinterpreting and altering the text of the founding fathers of Deoband and if this was not enough then it was why he did not ask the writers of what they meant. If this wasn’t enough, then came the personal attacks of the colour of this skin or an event when he forgot something to show that he didn’t have good memory. There became so much confusion with misinformation that possibly would have caused further confusion amongst the Sunni masses.

All these attacks were based on the fact of his fatwas against their founding fathers, and it was difficult for the Ahlē Hadīth or the Deobandīs to digest that they had been taken outside the fold of Islām without trying to understand what exactly happened that Imām Ahmed Raza was impelled to give such a Fatwa and that too upon scholars respected by others. Many will not know

⁶⁴ Ali. A, *Arwâhê-Thallâtha yanī hiqayâtê-āwiya (Urdu)*, Karachi: Dar ul-Isha’at, p. 257

how he struggled by trying to get the likes of Thānvī to retract but his letters were ignored just was the books sent by Hājī Imdādullah which were burned and no taken any notice of.

The Deobandīs heeded to no call of a medial path even though many tried and yet failed including the likes of Shah Fazlē-Haq Khairabadi, Maulāna Abdul Samī, Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr and Hāji Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī.

Chapter 1. The *Taqwiyyat al-Imān* of Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī

In this chapter I shall discuss the book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* written by Mohammed Ismaīl Dehlawī⁶⁵ (d. 1831) and how it was viewed during his era and the key issues raised by them. The *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* was the first book written in India said to be similar to the *Kitāb-al-Tawhīd* of Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb, the founder of the Wahhābī movement in Saudi Arabia. The book contains essays on different aspects of *Tawhīd* and limiting supernatural powers of Prophets and Saints in the Islamic tradition and focusing the attention of the reader to God alone and how man should serve God and it is his duty of servitude. This book would be the cause of chaos and divide amongst the Muslim Sunni communities of South Asia as majority of the Indian Muslims followed the Sufī . Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thanvī has related that Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī said upon writing *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*:

I have written this book and I am aware that I have at times used strong words (*tāiz alfāz*) and aggression (*tashāddud*) has also been used, for example, those matters which were *shirk-e-khafī* (inconspicuous polytheism) I have said them to be *shirk-e-Jallī* (open polytheism). I suspect due to these matters there will be much commotion (*shōwrash*) due to its publication [...] I have written this book in spite the commotion it will cause, but I hope that after the discord and friction, the matter will be resolved.⁶⁶

A few points can be noted from the statement of Thānvī about the writing of *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*. By the testimony of the author, the book contains the use of strong words, examples of which I will present later in this chapter. He had been aggressive and said those matters which were inconspicuous polytheism (*shirk-e-khafī*) and were not a major issue of faith to be open polytheism (*shirk-e-Jallī*). There is a serious implication in this act, namely, the labelling of hundreds, if not thousands of Muslims, as unbelievers outside the fold of Islam. He mentions that this book will cause commotion, discord, and friction amongst the Muslims as it goes against the belief system of the old age Sunni orthodoxy of Muslim India.

⁶⁵ Ref: Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 31.

⁶⁶ Ashraf, Ali, *Arwāhê-Thallâtha* (Karachi: Dar ul-Isha'at) p. 74.

Shah Ismaīl was the son of Shah Abdul Ghanī (d. 1789), who was the youngest of the four sons of Shah Walī-Ullah⁶⁷ (d. 1762), his other sons were Shah Abdul-Azīz (d. 1823) who was the eldest and the next was Shah Abdul-Qādir (d. 1815) and then was Shah Rafī-Uddīn (d. 1818). It is said that Ismaīl completed his religious studies at the age of 16 and he enjoyed horse riding and other fighting arts and gained mastery over the art of war by the age of 21. It is said that he began his preaching at the Central Mosque which stirred much tension amongst the local Muslims and was the cause of friction and dismay and the use of words of contempt and disrespect towards not only God but his Prophets, Angels and Saints⁶⁸.

The people of India were aware of Wahhābism at least since 1809-1811⁶⁹. The first known preacher of Wahhābism in India was said to be Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī who belonged to the prominent Dehlawī family who had repute in India for their services to the Islamic sciences for over three centuries.

I shall look at the Sunni responses to the book of Ismaīl Dehlawī, including the edict of Imām Raza upon the strong words and aggressive approach towards the most revered personalities in the religion of Islam in his book. Nūrānī, who wrote a book detailing with the Indian Jihād movement and the British government stated;

After Shah Ismaīl and Maulāna Abdul Hāy, the son-in-law of Shah Abdul Azīz Dehlawī took discipleship of Syed Ahmed, they both left their homes and Shah Abdul Azīz Dehlawī gifted all his property to his wife and his nephews such as Shah Ishāq (d. 1848) and made them take ownership of it, due to this, Shah Ismaīl and Abdul Hāy had taken employment at the courts as clerks⁷⁰.

From these statements it is clear that no one from the elders would have been happy with Shah Ismaīl adopting Wahhābism and thus he was not left to own anything that had belonged to the previous generations of the Dehlawī family. Abul Kalām Āzad (d. 1958), famous Indian independence activist, theologian, writer, and senior member of the Indian National Congress, has stated:

⁶⁷ Indian religious Muslim leader and influential Islamic reformer. He sought to regenerate Islamic society. A prolific writer, he wrote 51 important Islamic works.

⁶⁸ Ahmed. G.M. *Azad ki Kahānī khud Azad ki Zubānī* (Urdu), Unain Printing Press, Delhi, India (1958). p. 55

⁶⁹ Pearson. O. H. *Islamic reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah Muhammadiyyah*. P. 198

⁷⁰ Nūrānī. K. *Tehrīkē Jihād aur British Government* (Urdu). Idārah Fikrē Islāmī, Delhi, India. p. 18

When Shah Ismaīl had written his book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, the Scholars (*Ullama*) were alarmed by his writing which were propagated throughout their areas. Ismaīl's class fellow Maulāna Munawar Uddīn after the death of Shah Abdul Azīz Dehlawī was one of his opponents who was active in writing many works against Shah Ismaīl and his ideas. In the 1240/1825 there was the famous debate at the central Mosque (*Jāme Masjid*) and an edict (*fatwa*) was written and another was requested from the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madīnah (*Haramāyn*). It is evident from the writings to point out that in the beginning they (i.e. Sunni Ullama) tried to persuade and reason with Shah Ismaīl and his friend and the son in law of Shah Abdul Azīz Dehlawi, Maulāna Abdul Hay and when they were unsuccessful in convincing them a great debate took place at the central Mosque of Delhi, on one side there was Shah Ismaīl and Maulāna Abdul Hay and on the opposite side there was Maulāna Munawar Uddīn and the rest of the scholars of Delhi.⁷¹

It is possible to observe that Shah Ismaīl and his followers were a small minority by the year 1825. The great debate which took place at the Delhi Central Mosque is evident of the fact that there were only Ismaīl and Abdul Hay on one side with possibly some followers whereas the rest of the scholars of Delhi were in opposition to them. Amongst those present were the famous students of Shah Abdul Azīz, namely Muftī Rashīd-Uddīn Khān and Shah Mūsa⁷² who were opponents to Ismaīl. This was the reaction of the Sunni leadership which was opposed to the new ideas propagated by Shah Ismaīl who was from the prestigious Delhawī family. People would initially show respect to him due to his lineage and this could have been the possible reason how he managed to create a following in the beginning of the movement with his Spiritual Master (*pīr*) Syed Ahmed. The book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* was translated into the English language and published by the Royal Asiatic Society in 1852⁷³.

With many disagreements and differences, even upon the unity of God (*Tawhīd*) as stated by Shah Ismaīl Dehlawi in his book, he describes God as being jealous and who would punish anyone who likens anything other than Him or ascribes something similar onto anyone else. The jealousy factor had taken Ismaīl Dehlawī to such that he began to challenge everything and everyone besides God in his understanding of Tawhīd. No effort was made to abstain from

⁷¹ Ahmed. G.M. *Azad ki Kahānī khud Azad ki Zubānī* (Urdu), Unain Printing Press, Delhi, India (1958). p. 55

⁷² Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 15. P. 561

⁷³ Ali, M. (1852). Translation of the Tahwiyat-ul-Imān, Preceded by a Notice of the Author, Maulavi Isma'il Hajji. *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 13, 310-372. Retrieved September 3, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25228646>

using derogatory words and sentences to dishonour the creation of God when used in comparison to God and no effort was made to abstain from this practice as Ismaīl stated himself:

1. ‘All the creation, big or small is more disgraceful (*zalīl*) than that of a cobbler (*chamār*) before the Glory of Allah⁷⁴’.
2. ‘All the Prophets, saints and friends of Allah are lesser than the smallest of particles in the sight of Allah⁷⁵’.
3. ‘Be cautious in praising a respected person and give him praise only like another human (*bashr kī sī ta’rīf ho, bas wohi karo*), even be brief in this (*in mē bi ikhtisār karo*)⁷⁶’.

Such statements are not typical and could be seen as outrageous and possible least expected from a scholar or theologian. Religion has always taught to respect and honour human beings and spread love amongst God’s creatures, but the language used in the above sentences could be argued is one used to show hate or jealousy towards another. For example, the following words are used to belittle someone rather than to show a person respect or honour:

1. All creatures are disgraceful (*zalīl*)
2. Lower than a cobbler (*chamār*)
3. Worthless than the smallest of particles
4. Praise a respected person as a human and even be brief in this.

The book *Taqwiyyat-ul-Imān* had been the cause of chaos and friction amongst the Muslims, considering it was written just before Ismaīl went on his Hāj and Jihād campaign. Were such sentences intended by the writer to prepare people to accept his interpretation of Tawhīd which would demand total submission that all things big or small, person or cleric are a disgrace and worthless than the smallest of particles. It is with such ideologies where nothing is respected

⁷⁴ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 46

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 92

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 101

or honoured except the leader (*Amīr*) or the supreme commander, who in this case is blindly followed without question which can be dangerous and lead to totalitarianism.

There was a marked contradiction between in works and actions. In his works, he calls all except his followers as being indulged in polytheism (*shirk*), yet all that he opposed has been recorded for his Master Syed Ahmed. Sana Haroon said:

He offered his skills to help other soldiers or tradesmen, or visitors survive poverty and hunger through good advice, prayer, and the magical ability to make four spoons-full of lentils feed thirty men. Syed Ahmed wrote *wazīfas* or 'prescriptions' — magical combinations of God's names drawn on grids on papers. Writing *wazīfas*, he helped a man get rid of debt taken on because of British taxation demands on his lands, and gave another man a rupee coin which, if it were never spent, would bring great wealth to its holder. He ran his hands over sick people and read prayers over water which he then gave them to drink, causing them to become well again. His prayers caused a blind man to see again, sick oxen to be able to pull carts again, and a dried-up cow to produce milk⁷⁷.

The miracles, respect and honour that Ismaīl denied for the Prophets and Saints, it was these same things that he attributed and used to elevate the status of his spiritual leader, Syed Ahmed Barēlwī, giving him access to divine powers and developing a reformation of Sufism to fit within the contextualisation of Wahhābī thought in South Asia. There would always be flaws as they would prohibit one thing for everyone else, yet it was ok for them to preach otherwise⁷⁸, thus contradicting many of their own ideologies. Due to lack of material available in the English language, there have been many misconceptions and understanding the difference between Sufism and Wahhābī thought in South Asia, that even Harlan O. Pearson said, '*The combination of Sufism and orthodox belief in the Naqshbandī order would later develop into*

⁷⁷ Haroon. S. Reformism and Orthodox Practice in Early Nineteenth-Century Muslim North India: Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed Considered. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, APRIL 2011, Third Series, Vol. 21, No. 2 (APRIL 2011), pp. 177-198

⁷⁸ It is a belief of the Wahhābis that the dead cannot benefit the living, But Ashraf Ali Thanvi states, 'Māulvī Muīn-Udīn was the elder son of Māulāna Yaqūb, he mentioned a miracle of his father (after his death), that once there was a flu epidemic in the Nanōta area, whosoever would take the soil from his grave and fasten and it is he would be cured of the illness. Whenever I would get soil put onto the grave, it would finish (i.e., people taking it), and this occurred several times. One day I was fed up and went to the grave of Māulana and said, 'It is a miracle for you but has become a problem for us, if anyone from now gets better, I will not up anymore soil on your grave and will leave it as it is. Then after no one was cured from the soil'. Ref: Thanvi, A. A, *Arwāhê-Thallātha yanī hiqayātē-āwiya* (Urdu), Karachi: Dar ul-Isha'at. P. 294

*the basis of the Tarīqah-Muhammadīyyah*⁷⁹.’ Further research is needed in this area of how Syed Ahmed and his later followers used elements of Sufism to attract followers for a movement which essentially represented the Wahhābī ideology.

1.1. The Madhab of the Dehlawī Family:

To understand the Sunni tradition and practices of the Muslims of India, we need to see from the works of the famous Dehlawī⁸⁰ family who were known for their knowledge of the Qur’an and Hadith and it was this family of scholars the different schools including the Barēlwī, Deobandī and Ahlē Hadīth trace their tutledge from. The Dehlawi family had been serving the religion of Islam for many generations and it is not surprising that the leaders and founding fathers of the Ahlē-Hadīth, the Deobandīs and the Barēlwīs were all students of this seminary and taught religious sciences by the Dehlawī family. Shah Makhsūs Ullah b. Shah Rafī’uddīn b. Shah Walīullah *Muhaddith Dehlawī* was asked seven questions by Allāma Fazlē Rasūl Badāyūnī⁸¹ (d. 1872) regarding *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*. These questions and answers have been published in a book format and has been named *Tahqīq al-Haqīqah* from Bombay in

⁷⁹ Pearson. O. H. Islamic reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah Muhammadiyyah. Yoda Press, India (2008). P. 6

⁸⁰ The forefathers of the *Dehlawi* family were from Najār, their elders migrated to India during the thirteenth century CE during the reign of Sultan Alā Uddīn Khiljī in 1296 CE. The Sultan had great respect for their family and sent them to Gujrāt as one of the deputies. Aghā Muhammad stayed in Gujrāt after conquering it. Aghā had many sons whom all died in an incident except one, his name was Mo’iz Uddīn. After the unfortunate incident Aghā Muhammad decided to leave the city for Delhi and decided to go into seclusion at the Sūfī lodge of Shaykh Salāh Uddīn Suharwardī. Aghā died in the year 739 AH\1339 CE and was buried there. The family heir was Malk Mo’iz Uddīn. Shaykh As’ad Ullah had two sons, Shaykh Rizq Ullah and Shaykh Saif Uddīn who had a son who was named Abdul Haqq born in the year 958\1551 under the reign of Shah Sūri. He memorised the Qur’an at a young age and studied under various teachers and also travelled to the Holy cities of Makkah and Madina and gained from the company of many Sūfis of his era including Khawājah Bāqi Billah and Shaykh Muhaqiq Abdul Haqq Muhadith Dehlawi died in the year 1052\1642. Shaykh Abdul Haqq had three children, the eldest being Shaykh Nūr ul-Haqq Mashraqi who was a theologian like his father and authored many books and the other son was Shaykh Ali Muhammad who was also a theologian and also authored many books and was an expert in the science of Hadīth literature and the third son was Shaykh Muhammad Hāshim whose son Muhammad Āsim was a favourite of Shaykh Abdul Haqq’. Ref: Haqq, A. Akhbār-ul-Akhyār (Urdu). Madina Publishing Company, Karachi, Pakistan. p. 15 [...] Shah Wali Ullah (d. 1762) was a great Muslim thinker, author and Mystic and his grandfather, Sheikh Wajihuddin, was a high-ranking military officer in the army of Shah Jahan who sided with Prince Aurangzēb in the war of succession. His father, Shah Abdul Rahīm, was a Sufī and an illustrious scholar who helped compile the *Fatāwa-i-Alamgīri*, the huge written work of Islamic Law. He established the *Madrassa-e-Rahīmīyyah* in Delhi. Shah Abdul Azīz Muhadith Dehlawi (d. 1823) was one of the sons of Shah Wali Ullah and Muhammad Ismaīl Dehlawi was his nephew.

⁸¹ Allāma Fazlē-Rasūl Badāyūnī was a student of Shah Abdul Azīz Dehlawī and opponent of Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī. He was a theologian and wrote many books including refutation of Wahhabism in India.

1850/1267AH. Three of the answers from the then representative of the Dehlawī family Shah Mahsūs are stated below:

I call it (i.e., the book written by Isma'īl) *Tafwīyyah-tul-Imān* (with the letter fā⁸²) – is that which I have written in a monograph refuting it named *Mu'eedul Imān*. Isma'īl's book is not only against the traditions of our family, but it is against the monotheism (*Tawhīd*) of all the Prophets and Messengers themselves! Because Prophets and Messengers are sent to teach the people and make them walk the path of monotheism. In this book however, there is no sign of that nor the Sunnah of the Messengers. Things that are claimed to be polytheism (*Shirk*) and innovation (*Bid'ah*) in this book and taught to the people have not been taught by any of the Prophets or their followers. If there is any proof otherwise, ask his followers to show it to us. The answer to the fourth question was that the Wahhābite book (ibn Abdul Wahhāb) was the original text and this (e., *Taqwīyyat-al-Imān*) is its commentary. The answer to the fifth question was that Shah Abdul Aziz was impaired by his poor-sight. When he heard about the book, he said that if he were not ill, he would have written a refutation similar to *Tuhfa Ithna Ashārīyyah*. It is the grace of Allah that I (*Maulānā Makhsūs-Ullah*) wrote a rebuttal of the commentary (*Tafwīyyah-tul-Imān*) by course of which the text (*Kitāb al-Tawhīd*) was also refuted. My father, Shah Rafī'uddin, had not seen the book but when Shah Abdul Azīz saw it and expressed his disapproval, I set out writing the refutation⁸³.

After knowing the background of this family, it is possible to understand why some groups and factions thought it was important to stand by Isma'īl Dehlawī even though he defied the long-standing Sunni tradition as understood by the elders of the Dehlawī family. This was nothing personal but based on the change of understanding of religious dogmas by the controversial religious figure Isma'īl Dehlawī.

Before Shah Wali Ullah, it was Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawī (d. 1642) who was known as the towering figure of knowledge and wisdom. Shaykh Abdul Haq wrote a book called, '*Ma'thabata bi sunnati fi ayāmi sannah*' in which he discusses the twelve Islamic

⁸² If you change the letter in Taqwiyyah (Strengthening) from 'Qāf' to a (Fa) so its becomes Tafwiyyah (death), thus giving it a opposite meaning to what it was intended for.

⁸³ Rasūl. F. *Tahqīq-ul-Haqīqat* (Urdu) < <https://archive.org/details/tahqeeq-ul-haqeeqat> > [08.08.2022 18:38]

months and their virtues and Muslim practises. Shaykh Abdul Haq stated regarding the birthday celebrations of the Holy Prophet (*Māwliḍ-un Nabī*):

The twelfth of *Rabbī-ul-Awwal* is the established date of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad and the people of Makkah visit the place of His birth on this date [...] The birthday of the Noble Prophet is superior to the night of power (*Shabbē Qadr*) because the night of the birth of the Prophet is when he arrived in this world and the night of power is a thing granted to him. The night which is blessed due to his arrival (mawlid) is superior compared to the night given as a gift and honour. One reason for the night of the birth of Prophet Muhammad being superior is to the night of power is because on the night of his blessed birth, he came into this world and that angels would come and visit him whereas on the night of power only the angels descend from the skies⁸⁴.

There are two points to be noted at this stage that before 1924, when the Wahhābīs officially took control of Arabia (*Hijāz*), it was a tradition of the people of Makkah to visit the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad on his birthday and secondly the celebrating of the Prophets birthday has always been a day when Muslims all around the world rejoice and give charity and hold dinners and sermons are given and streets are decorated.

Later, Shah Wali Ullah wrote of his visit to Makkah during the Islamic month of *Rabbī-ul-Awwal*:

During my stay at the holy city of Makkah, I visited the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad, it was the day of his blessed birth and people were gathered there and reciting peace and blessing (*salawāt*) upon him and they were talking about the miracles of his birth and before announcing his prophethood. I saw at this time the place is filled with light, I cannot say if I saw this with my physical eyes or the eyes of my soul and only Allah knows of my exact state. Then I concentrated upon the lights (*anwār*) and I saw they were angels who descend upon such gatherings and I saw the lights of the angels were intermixed with the lights of mercy (*rahmah*)⁸⁵.

⁸⁴ Haqq, A. *Mumin ke mao'saal* (Urdu/Arabic). Darul-Isha'at, Karachi, Pakistan. p. 84

⁸⁵ Allah. W. *Fuyūz-al-Haramain* (Urdu). Dar-ul-Isha'at, Karachi, Pakistan. p.115

Regarding the life of the Prophets after their death, seeking help and going to their graves which Isma'īl rejected in *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* but such beliefs were held by his elders, Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawī said:

Ibn Najār has reported from Ibrahīm b. Bashār who said that one year he performed the Hajj and then after went to Madīnah to visit the Holy Prophet, when I reached the blessed grave and presented my greetings of peace (*salām*) I heard a voice coming from within saying, 'peace also be upon you' (*wa alaikassalām*). Thus, there are many such events reported by the friends of Allah (*Awliya Allah*) and the pious people of the Ummah and all the scholars agree there is no doubt in the life of the Holy Prophet after his (momentary) death and the same applies to the other prophets that they are also alive in their graves as their life is superior to the one of the martyrs which has been mentioned in the noble Qur'an [...] The Prophet said, 'My knowledge after my death is the same as it was during my lifetime'. Hafidh Ibn Mandhar and Ibn Adhī in his *Kāmil* has reported this narration and Abū Ya'la who is trustworthy (*thiqa*) has reported from Anas b. Mālik, 'the Prophets are alive in their graves and their worship there'. The meaning of this is that the Prophets are alive in their graves eternally [...] Imām Hujja-tul-Islam has stated, 'you can gain blessings from a person after his death from whom you used to do so during his lifetime. Imām Shāfi said, 'the grave of Imām Musa Kāzim is the place where prayers are accepted. Some Mashaykh have said that there are four saints (*Awliya*) who actively benefit people from their graves as they did during their lifetime or even more so, from these are Shaykh Ma'rūf Karkhī, Shaykh Muhī'uddīn Halbī and there are two more mentioned [...] The practise of asking for mediation (*tawwasul*) and beseeching for help (*Istigāthah*) from the Holy Prophet and helping (*istimdād*) the Prophets and Messenger is a practise of the elders (*Mutaqadimīn*) and those after them (*Mutta'akhirīn*), may this have been before the Holy Prophet came into this world or after this, may this be in this world or of the afterlife (*Barzakh*) or the plain of judgement (*Qayāmat*)⁸⁶.

It is possible to understand the beliefs of the Sunnis from the above statements of the elders and prominent Muslim theologians of India before Isma'īl Dehlawī and how he challenged the age-old orthodoxy. Maulāna Abu'l Kalām Azād (d. 1958) has mentioned some of the topics

⁸⁶ Haqq, Abdul. *Jazb-ul-Qulūb ila diyāril-Mahbūb* (Urdu). Madina Publishing Company, Karachi, Pakistan. p 234

that were debated between Ismaīl Dehlawī and the majority of the scholars of Delhi were as follows:

1. The possibility of creating another like Prophet Muhammad as the final Prophet and Seal of Prophethood.
2. Reality of innovation (*Bidah*)
3. Help (*istimdād*) and assistance from the Martyrs, the people of the graves
4. Raising of the hands during prayer (*Rafayadāyn*)
5. Reality of Polytheism (*Shirk*)
6. Mediation from other than Allah (*Tawassul ila Ghāir illah*)
7. Sacrificing in name of other than Allah (*wamā ohilla bi ghair illah*)⁸⁷

Despite all the controversies and heresies written by Ismaīl Dehlawī and Syed Ahmed Barelwī and the written rebuttals by Shaykh Fazlē Haq Khāirabadi, it seems this did not affect Ismail's ideology which was not restrictive to any Sunni school of thought. Ismaīl himself was very liberal in his thought regardless of theology. Maulāna Muhammad b. Abdul Qādir Ludhyānwi (Deobandī) stated:

In this matter (*imkānē kizb*), Maulvi Ismaīl has gone to high level of free thinking (*ghāir Muqalidī*) because ordinary non imitating (*ghāir muqalidī*) is that we do not blindly follow the Imāms (of the Sunni Madhabs), and we take the Qur'anic verse and Prophetic narrations (*Ahadīth*) literally and the high level of free thinking is not even taking from the Qur'an and Ahadīth and from one's own ideas. Therefore, going against clear verses of the Qur'an and the majority of the thinkers being correct as was done by Maulvi Ismaīl that he opposed all evidence in this matter and followed his whims⁸⁸.

Even some of the Ahlē Hadīth scholars did not agree with some of religious matters of theology found in his book that were the core reasons for the edict of heresy and the opposition against

⁸⁷ Ahmed. G.M. Azad ki Kahānī khud Azad ki Zubānī (Urdu), Unain Printing Press, Delhi, India (1958). P. 56

⁸⁸ Muhammad, A. *Taqdīs-al-Rehman anil kizbē wal nuqsān* (Urdu/Persian). Published by Maulvi Fazl Uddīn. p. 7

him and his master Syed Ahmed. Some new ideas presented by Isma'īl were not seen as acceptable within the teachings of the Qur'ān and Sunnah according to Maulāna Ludhyānwī. Below I shall discuss the different controversies many of which have been deemed as not only heretical but also blasphemous by the majority of Indian Muslims before the founding of the Deobandī and Ahle Hadith movements in principle.

1.2. Rebuttal of Shah Fazlē-Haq Khāirabādī

Shah Fazlē-Haq⁸⁹ was an employee of the British Raj serving as a Muftī. It is important to note that once upon a time, these jobs were managed by the state but since the end of the Mughal Empire, the East India Company had taken that role of sovereign and was thus employing religious clerics for their expertise in specific roles for different communities at the time⁹⁰. It is said that Allāmah Fazlē Haq disliked working for the East India Company, but this was the order of his father and only resigned when his father died, after working sixteen years at the courts⁹¹. He was offered employment by various kingdoms. It has also been recorded that when the rebellion started on the 10th of May 1857 in Meerut, the rebels managed to take control of Delhi. Soon it seems that the tide was changing that the last Mughal King Bahādur Shah called on Shah Fazlē Haq who then travelled to Delhi and upon arrival, Bahādur Shah gave him the role of leading the rebellion and he took part in framing the constitution for the rebel army that had now set up administration in Delhi, but this did not last, and it was on the 19th of December 1857 that the British regained control of the city of Delhi. Pearson has stated, 'Although many

⁸⁹ A brief summary of the life of Allāmah Fazlē Haqq is mentioned below as related by Salma Sahūl: 'His Eminence, Allāmah Fazlē Haqq was born in the year 1797 in the city of Khāirabād and completed his religious education at the age of 13, in the year 1810. His ancestry can be traced by to the second Caliph of Islam, Umr b. Khattāb. From amongst his ancestors was Shēr-ul-Mulk b. Atā-ul-Mulk, who was a ruler in an area of Irān, upon the decline of the kingdom, both his sons Shams-Uddīn and Bahā-Uddīn migrated and settled in India, the family of Shah Walī-Ullah are from the children of Shams-Uddīn whereas the family of Allāmah Fazlē-Haqq are from the descendants of Bahā-Uddīn [...] Fazlē-Haqq's father Fazlē-Imām (d. 1829) was a renowned scholar of his era. His family was reputable for their religious standing in India and especially in Ma'qūlāt [...] At the turn of the nineteenth century, he came to Delhi which was under the control of the East India Company, here he was employed as a Mufti in the courts and was then promoted to a Sub-Judge (Sadr-ul-Sodūr) during which time he also continued the teaching of religious sciences alongside his job at the courts. In 1827 he left his post and gained employment under the Mahrājah of Patyāla and then returned to his hometown of Khāirabād towards his last days'. Ref: Sahūl. S. Allāmah Fazlē-Haqq Khāirabadi. Al-Mumtāz Publications, Lahore, Pakistan (2001). p. 40

⁹⁰ GIUNCHI, ELISA. "The Reinvention of 'Sharī'a' under the British Raj: In Search of Authenticity and Certainty." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 69, no. 4, 2010, pp. 1119–42. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40929286>. Accessed 18 July 2023.

⁹¹ Sahūl. S. Allāmah Fazlē-Haqq Khāirabadi. Al-Mumtāz Publications, Lahore, Pakistan (2001). p. 48

Muslims participated in the revolt of 1857, the Wahhābīs did not join as a community against the British [...] The leader of the Wahhābīs at Bombay even provided British officials with assistance during the disturbances⁹². After the loss of Delhi, Fazlē Haq as all others managed to escape back to his hometown in Khāirabad. In December 1857, then war broke out in Lucknow against the British, Fazlē Haq made the journey to Lucknow to assist but in March 1858, the British regained control of Lucknow too and Fazlē Haq once again returned to Khāirabād but then left his hometown so not to be captured by the British for rebellion. During those times of uncertainty, Queen Victoria announced to pardon those involved in the rebellion, due to which Fazlē Haq then returned to his hometown after which he was taken into custody by the British and he was imprisoned for life on false charges⁹³ made against him and sent to the jail in Andaman⁹⁴. After suffering from many illnesses and hardships, Fazlē Haq died on the 20th of August 1861, at the age of 64 and was buried in Port Blair next to Maulvī Liaqat Ali Elāhabādī⁹⁵.

A great theologian and a man of many qualities a warrior and leader, Fazlē Haq also authored many books on theology, his biography and his polemics with his class fellow and contemporary, Wahhābī Shah Ismaīl Dehlawi. Tareen⁹⁶ argued:

But as a historian, I would also be interested in the historical circumstances that muddy the clear divisions the texts establish and introduce more ambiguity. If we look at the writings of Fazlē-Haq and Shah Ismaīl, to make just example, the opposition between the two of them seems clear and is borne out by their actions. Not only did they condemn each other in no uncertain terms, they also positioned themselves in the public sphere in a very different way. While Fazlē Haq spent a good part of his life in British service, Shah Ismaīl distanced himself from the

⁹² Pearson. O. H. *Islamic reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah Muhammadiyyah*. Yoda Press, India (2008). P. 44

⁹³ Sahūl mentioned how Allāma Fazlē-Haq was captured by the police the wrong Fazlē-haq as the list of accusations were not of those of the Allāma and in the end the British courts accepted their mistake on the issue but the case did not end there, Allāma was further interrogated about his role in the uprising in 1857 to which Allāma did not hesitate to accept his role in this and was then sentenced to life in Andaman.

⁹⁴ The Cellular Jail is based on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, off the Bay of Bengal.

⁹⁵ Sahūl. S. p. 58

⁹⁶ Dr. SherAli Tareen is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster PA. He received his PhD in Religion/Islamic Studies at Duke University and his BA at Macalester College. His work centers on Muslim intellectual thought in modern South Asia with a focus on intra-Muslim debates and polemics on crucial questions of law, ethics, and theology. He is currently completing a book project entitled "Polemical Encounters: Competing Imaginaries of Tradition in Modern South Asian Islam" that explores polemics over the boundaries of heretical innovation (*bid'ā*) among leading 19th century Indian Muslim scholars ('*Ulama*').

colonial power and went for jihād at the Northwest Frontier. But here ambiguities come in already, if these choices were a result of their theologies, why did Fazlē Haq leave his career in Delhi behind and seek employment at surrounding courts, coming back only in summer 1857, when the city was under the rebels? How does the memoir he wrote as a prisoner on the Andaman Islands tally with his earlier texts? Things are more complicated than a biographical development might explain, for he is not renouncing his earlier writings⁹⁷.

As Tareen has suggested that both Fazlē Haq and Ismaīl positioned themselves in the public sphere in a quite different way. While Fazlē Haq spent most of his life serving the Muslim community, majority of whom he represented as a Sunnī and had no reason to retaliate or go against the belief system of the Muslim community that he so belonged in contrast to Ismaīl who firstly stood against the orthodoxy that his ancestors followed and then went on to take steps to what seemed similar to what Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb Najdī had taken to declare a jihād against his fellow Muslims and when this failed, he retaliated against the Sikhs of that area with help from the British, as I shall discuss in following chapters.

1.2.1. The concepts of Intercession (*Shafā'at*)

With so many issues of controversy, Ismaīl also began to reject the religious concept of intercession⁹⁸ (*shafā'at*) and its various levels in the name of monotheism (*tawhīd*). He began to remove anything that would be seen as honorable signs, persons, religious relics or objects besides the person of God, according to him, nothing was worthy of honour and respect except for Allah. He began to propagate these austere ideas in the name of what he understood as true monotheism based on his theology which would then take the form of a whole school of thought in South Asia. A letter was written to Allāma Fazlē Haq about the following statements of Shah Ismaīl regarding the concept of intercession (*Shafā'at*) in the book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*:

⁹⁷ Tareen. S. *Defending Muhammad in Modernity*. University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana (2020). p. xiii

⁹⁸ Ismaīl rejects the Intercession of Honour (*Shafā'at-bil-Wajāhat*) by stating that this is a form of ignorance and polytheism as God has no need for intercession out of respect and he also rejects the concept of the intercession of Love (*Shafā'at-bil-Muhabbat*) as something heretical and that this is not acceptable in the court of God.

Here one significant thing is to be kept in mind [...] *Shafā'at* means *sifārish*⁹⁹ (intercession), and intercession is of various kinds in the world, for example; if the burglary of a person is proven in the court of the king and the convict is saved through the intercession of a minister or a noble, then, in one instance, the king does want that the convict is tried and punished according to the law but due to the pressure of the influential individual of his court, for it is easier for the king to pardon the thief than to invite the anger of the noble, for his displeasure may create problems within the kingdom. This is called intercession of high position (*Shafā'atē-Wajāhat*). But this type of intercession cannot be submitted to Allah. The one who considers any Prophet, friend of Allah, a religious guide, a martyr, angel or any other spiritual guide as an intercessor before Allah is most ignorant and a polytheist and he has not understood the actual meaning God and failed to comprehend the significance of the Lord of the universe. Through His greatness, He can in one split of a second (*ik āan mē*), by the word be (*kun*), create thousands (*crores*) of the likes of Prophets, saints, Jinns, angels, Gabriel and Muhammad [...] And secondly, a king may pardon a thief under the pressure of an intercession from his offspring, wives or some beloved and the king acknowledges the intercession because of his love for the intercessor, this is called intercession of love (*Shafā'atē-Muhabbat*). Here, the king thinks that to pardon the thief is easier for him than to invite the wrath of his beloved. This type of intercession is not possible in the court of God, and anyone who considers a person of such a position as an intercessor, then, he is surely ignorant, and a polytheist (*Mushrik*) as mentioned previously [...]. Thirdly, theft has been proven but the thief is not accustomed to it and does not do this as a way of profession. However, he committed theft and is shameful for his actions and is fearful day and night of the consequences and he respects the laws enforced by the king and professes his crime and finds himself liable to be punished and does not seek refuge with any minister or noble escaping the king, nor wanting anybody's support but keeps looking towards the king for a decision. The king takes pity upon seeing the state of him but does not pardon the convict keeping in mind the laws and that they do not lose their dignity in the eyes of the subjects. If any minister or noble keeping in mind the will of the king, intercedes with him on behalf of the convict, pardons him apparently to add honour of that minister. This

⁹⁹ Sifārish is the equivalent of intercession in the Urdu language.

is called intercession with permission (*Shafā'at-bil-Idhan*). Thus, this happens with will and pleasure of the king. Such an intercession is possible in the court of Allah and the intercession of a Prophet or a friend of Allah which a person finds in the Qur'an and Hadīth means exactly this. All persons should always call upon Allah and fear Him and only beseech Him and confess his sin before Him and think of Him as his Lord and helper and consider none his saviour except Allah and rely on no other for any favour because it is He who is the forgiver and merciful. He will remove all the difficulties through His grace He may appoint anyone as intercessor as He wills¹⁰⁰.

Ismāil rejects the intercession of honour and the intercession of love as being unacceptable as he thinks it is not worthy of God's Majesty to forgive in honour of any creation or on a basis of his love towards his creation as Ismāil understands these both as a form of weakness and not befitting God's greatness. Fazlē Haq replied, ‘

Shafā'at (intercession) is *sifārish* and it is of two types: (a) for the forgiveness of sins, (b) to elevate one's status. One person intercedes for another in front of a person and the reason why it is accepted is because the first person holds a position of respect and honour before the other person, and there are a few reasons for respect and honour; (1) The Intercession of Honour (*Shafā'at-bil-Wajāhat*¹⁰¹), (2)

¹⁰⁰ Ismail, M. p. 63

¹⁰¹ Fazlē-Haq defines this as, ‘the one who is interceding on another behalf, he has a special honorary status in the court of the Almighty with due respect. One of these honours is that those who are under his care, he has permission to intercede on their behalf for their forgiveness, his request is granted, and his intercession is accepted. If the request and intercession of that honourable person is not accepted then he becomes upset, this does not have any affect in whose court this favour was being presented. And not to accept the pleading or pay no attention to the words of this honourable person would go against his honour and dignity that was given to that person. This is called *Shafā'atē-Wajāhat*. There is no condition in this that to whom the intercession is presented should fear the discontentment of the intercessor and nor fear any loss in the case it is not accepted because intercession (*shafā'at*) means to intervene and honour (*wajā'hat*) is to revere and be tolerant, there is no word by which one can term here as fear or concern’. Ref: Haqq. F. *Shafā'atē-Mustapha* (Urdu). Shah Abdul Haqq Academy, Pakistan 1994. P. 72

The Intercession of Love (Shafā'at-bil-Muhabbat¹⁰²), (3) The intercession of consent (Shafā'at-bil-Idhan¹⁰³)¹⁰⁴.

Shah Ismaīl rejected the intercession of love and honour and then limits the intercession of permission. Fazlē Haqq had used Qur'anic verses and prophetic statements from the Ahādīth literature to support his understanding of the different types of intercession and how Allah holds those beloved to Him with honour and this is what the office of intercession is, it is essentially a way of Allah showing His love and respect of those who are His friends, and they are intercessors in His court, Fazle Haqq discuss all this in his book *Shafā'atē-Mustapha* (The intercession of the chosen one).

1.2.2. The possibility of creating another like Prophet Muhammad (*Imkānē-Nazīr*)

This is a sensitive topic, and the question is why Ismaīl felt the need to raise such an issue to create a controversial debate linked to the God's power and abilities. The sentence in question are the words of Ismaīl Dehlawī in his book, '*Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*':

¹⁰² Fazlē-Haqq defines this as, 'the intercessor loves the one who is interceding and the requisites for love is that the beloved's wishes are accepted and to keep him happy. He is kept away from despair and hurting his feelings because the lover to the beloved and a friend to another do not standing to hurt the feelings of the other. The people of love (Ahlē-Muhabbat) cannot stand hurting the feelings of their beloved, their requests are fulfilled, and their intercession is accepted and in accepting their intercession, it is not seen that if it is not accepted that they make the other angry and upset in doing so or become angry and hurt the others feelings because Keeping the beloved word (dildārī) is a condition of love and to accept the beloved's words is a necessary attribute. Such a thing can be asked from a person who has fallen in love and the reality of this is evident from logic (aql) and the sources (naql)'. Ref: Haqq. F. Shafā'atē-Mustapha (Urdu). Shah Abdul Haqq Academy, Pakistan 1994. P. 74

¹⁰³ Fazlē-Haqq defines this as, 'the meaning of the intercession with permission can be understood with the following example, 'if a criminal is presented in the court of the king and that such a crime has previously been pardoned by the king. There are some persons who are close to the king and can speak before him and they are most honoured from the people of their stature and they want to intercede on behalf of the criminal. It is possible they plead on his behalf in the kings court because they have permission to be able to intercede for such crimes in the court of the king and it is not such a crime that the king has vowed that he will surely punish for. It is possible that on the account of the honourable status of these persons, which the king himself has bestowed, accepts their intercession and decides not to punish the criminal ... If it is the habit of the king that he surely punishes for that crime, then no one will have the courage to request for his pardon and forgiveness because everyone is aware that the king has vowed that such a crime will surely be punished, thus, no one will dare to look at the king to his face and release him from the punishment. In the case of the intercession with permission, it cannot be said that the king himself wants to forgive the convict out of his generosity, as in such a case the intercession of a noble would be in vain and useless as the king himself has not forgiven him but rather it was due to the intervention of the intercessor that was the cause if his forgiveness and therefore if the convict says that the king himself had mercy on me and forgave me and there was involvement of a mediator then this would be ungrateful to the blessed office of intercession'. Ref: Haqq. F. Shafā'atē-Mustapha (Urdu). Shah Abdul Haqq Academy, Pakistan 1994. P. 82

¹⁰⁴ Haqq. F. Shafā'atē-Mustapha (Urdu). Shah Abdul Haqq Academy, Pakistan 1994. P. 72

His greatness is that if He wishes (*chāhey*) He can bring into being (*payda kar dāley*) crores (millions) of the likes of Prophets, friends, jinns and angels equal to Jibrāil and Muhammad in one split of a second (*aik ān mae*), by the command of ‘be’ (*kun*)¹⁰⁵.

Fazlē Haq stated:

The words of the claimant are incorrect and a lie for two reasons; in the Urdu language, it is not hidden that if a person states, ‘If such a person wishes (*chāhey*), he is able to do so (*kar sakey*)’, and the second person said, ‘If such a person wishes then he can make sure of it (to happen) (*kar dāley*)’. There is difference in the two sentences as in the first it is meant that such a person has the power that he can do such a thing and the second means the actual possibility of an action as the word ‘make sure of it’ (*kar dāley*) is to bring into being and not that he is not able (*qādir*) upon doing it. In the same way, if someone said, ‘If a person wanted (*chāhata*), he could have done such and such a thing (*fulān kām kar dālta*)’, and the other person said, ‘If so and so person wishes (*chāhey*) then he can do such a thing (*Fulān kām kar sakey*) or if he wants he can make sure of it (*ya chāhey to kar dāley*)’ [...] It should be understood that these examples are for explanation and no one should think that it is in regards to God’s abilities (*qudrat*) as He is above examples and resemblances [...] In short, what is meant here is that the possibility of doing anything in the beginning and its possibility is also essential (at that time) and if it is meant that the possibility of doing such a thing is correct now then the possibility (*imkān*) of such an action is also essential and possible [...] After this introduction, it should be understood that the claimant means ‘the possibility of bringing into being thousands of persons’ like Prophet Muhammad with all his attributes and prophetic characteristics to be correct. A person who understands a little Urdu will not doubt the sentence being offensive even though it is wrong (*bātil*) to believe that even the possibility of the creation of even one person like Prophet Muhammad with all his attributes and Prophetic characteristics would mean attributing a lie unto the Qur’anic text and it is not possible for Allah to lie (*muhāl bil dhāt*) [...] the presence of another like Prophet Muhammad would mean attributing a lie unto Almighty Allah. No person except a prophet can be an equal unto him and there

¹⁰⁵ Ismail, M. p. 64 (Urdu)

cannot be new Prophet after him as it would be attributing a lie unto the Qur'an as he being the last (*khātim*) of all the Prophet's is evident from the Qur'an, Allah said, 'Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Last of the Prophets', (Q. 33:40). If creating an equal unto Prophet Muhammad is seen possible then this would be falsifying the clear text of the Qur'an, God forbid¹⁰⁶.

It is possible from the above understanding and the problem created by Shah Isma'īl. It is clear from the explanations of Fazlē-Haq that by using specific words in present tense in such context is opening the gateway to further theological issues and problems. The intentions of those use such loose language are questionable and the possibility of wanting to claim a similar spiritual role for themselves and this would involve bringing the supernatural role of Prophets and saints to mere humanity as is possible from the works of Isma'īl Dehlawī and those of the founding fathers of Deoband as suspected by Imām Ahmed Raza. Pearson stated:

A growing belief in the special sanctity of Syed Ahmed Barēlwī led to difficulties in defining his function as leader of the movement both for reform and jihad. Shortly before his death in 1831, Muhammad Isma'īl began writing *Mansabe-Imāmat* in order to define leadership in the movement. Repudiating kinship, he described the true Muslim leader as an Imām: one who piously submits to the orders of God by strictly observing the Shar'iah. Despite this and other efforts to clarify the position of Syed Ahmed, many of his followers regarded him as a 'prophet' under divine guidance¹⁰⁷.

Similar to the concept of it being impossible for God to lie, then it also becomes impossible for the possibility of creating another like Prophet Muhammed, Allāma Fazlē-Haq explained:

If it is said that there is a possibility of creating another like Prophet Muhammad in all his Prophetic attributes, it would then be the joining of two opposites (*Ijtimaē-naqīzayn*) and the evidence for this is that if for instance a person is equal to Prophet Muhammad with all his Prophetic attributes, then he will be of either of the two following states: (1) He will be the seal of the Prophet's (*Khātim-ul-ambiya*) or (2) He will not be the seal of the Prophets. In both these instances he will not be equal

¹⁰⁶ Haqq. F. *Shafā'atē-Mustapha* (Urdu). Shah Abdul Haqq Academy, Pakistan 1994. p. 155

¹⁰⁷ Pearson. O. H. p. 45

to Prophet Muhammad because (if that person is the seal of the Prophets, which is impossible, then Prophet Muhammad would be amongst those Prophets of which he is the seal of), and God forbid! This would then not make Prophet Muhammad as the seal of Prophets. This one attribute (i.e., being the seal of the Prophets) of his (i.e., the other) would mean that Prophet Muhammad would no longer possess this attribute and thus making Him not equal to the other (who would be an equal to Prophet Muhammad but rather become superior to him). And if the other person is not the seal of the Prophets and as Prophet Muhammad is undoubtedly the seal of Prophethood then he (Prophet Muhammad) will have this attribute which makes him the seal of the Prophets, and this cannot be found in the other which makes him not equal to Prophet Muhammad. In both instances to suppose an equal would not necessitate equality. It is evident that if the other person is equal to Prophet Muhammad in all his Prophetic attributes, then it would necessitate that Prophet Muhammad with all his attributes is not equal with the other. So, it is clear that to make an equal to Prophet Muhammad would be the joining of two opposites (*Ijtimaē-naqīzayn*) and this would be impossible for God (*muhāl bil-dhāt*)¹⁰⁸.

The question remains if such statements made by Ismaīl Dehlawī were intentional to make way for yet another Prophet or a similar religious figure. There are many more similar statements which are also found by other Deobandī elders which I shall discuss in the forthcoming chapters.

1.2.3. The possibility of God lying (*Imkānē-Kizb*)

The problem with the statement of the writer in his work, ‘*Yak Roaza*’ (One day) included, ‘*It is possible for God to be attributed with a lie and have a defect*¹⁰⁹’.

A question was sent to Imām Raza which is stated in *Fatāwa Rizwiyyah* regarding the issue, if Allah can lie. The questioner stated, ‘The Deobandīs have not only openly written about the possibility of God lying but also spoken of this in their sermons and state that this is not a new issue and there is difference upon this issue and one Maulvī Nāzir Hassan, a Deobandī preacher

¹⁰⁸ Haq. F. *Shafā’atē-Mustapha* (Urdu). Shah Abdul Haqq Academy, Pakistan 1994. p. 166

¹⁰⁹ Haq. F. *Shafā’atē-Mustapha* (Urdu/Persian) Shah Abdul Haqq Muhadith Academy, Pakistan (1994). P. 157

at Madrassah Mīrat at the Kout Mosque, said in a raised voice, ‘our belief is that God has never lied and never will but He can do if he wishes, He can send the people of heaven to Hell and vis versa and no one has power over this, and this is what is called Imkānē-Kizb’, How is it to hold such a belief .¹¹⁰

From the letter sent above it is possible to understand that such issues were now being preached openly to the public who have no understanding of these theological issues and thus causing further divide and confusion in the Muslim community. Imām Raza explained the theological problems the Wahhābīs have created not only regarding polytheism (*shirk*) and innovation (*bidah*) but also arguing on the attributes of God, which had been resolved centuries ago.

Imām Ahmed Raza answered this question in his *Fatāwa Rizwiyyah* and named the article, ‘*Subhān-al-Subūh-al-Kadhibi aybun Maqbūh*’ (Glorious is Almighty God from the ugliness and flaw of falsehood). Firstly, Imām Raza wrote about how lying (*kizb*) is being falsely attributed to God who is free from all defects¹¹¹ from his understanding of traditional Sunni

¹¹⁰ Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 15. Markazē Ahle Sunnat Barakāte Raza, Gujrāt, India (2003). P. 311

¹¹¹ Imām Raza stated: ‘It is obvious that these people use the matter of kizb (lying) to fool the lay people for example they say, ‘if we do not believe God to be able to lie then God forbid, this would make Him weak and this would go against the Qur’anic verse, ‘Lo! Allah has power over all things’ (Q. 2:20). This is the deceiving and lying to the ordinary people of these shrewd ones. Dear Muslims! The power (qudrat) of God is established through His perfect attributes and God forbid! Not by a defective attribute which will be a defect (ayb). If we are to believe in the possibilities of these things which are impossible (Muhālāt) for God (i.e., like lying), then there will come a revolution and the reason being that when a possibility is believed for something that is impossible (muhāl), then it is necessary that God will lose His power and will also have the power to make Himself helpless ... It is stated in Sharh Aqā’id Nasafi; ‘It is impossible for God to lie’, and then he related that Allāma Kamāl-Uddīn Mohammad b. Mohammad ibn abi Sharīf stated in his Sharh Musamira, ‘the Ashāriyyah and others have no difference in this that Almighty God is free from any attributes of defect and this is not possible for Him as lying is a defect’ ... It is stated in Sharh Muwaqif, ‘these are the proofs used by Ahle Sunnah upon the impossibility of lying by God, one is that when a lie is found in His (God’s) words then sometimes we (as humans) become superior to Him, as we are truthful in our words’ ... Allah stated in the Qur’an; ‘And whose word can be truer than Allah’s?’ (Q. 4:122), ‘And whose word can be truer than Allah’s?’ (Q. 4:87), ‘Say: “What thing is most weighty in evidence?” Say: “Allah is witness between me and you’ (Q. 6:19 and also ‘The word of thy Lord doth find its fulfilment in truth and in justice’ (Q. 6:115) ...It has been reported in a hadith, ‘Some companions asked the Prophet, ‘O Prophet of Allah! You joke with us’, He replied, ‘I only speak the truth’. Imām Ahmed, Tirmidhī has said it has a sound chain of narration (Sanad-ē-Hassan) and has been reported by Abu Hurairah ... The Imām of the Wahhābīs argues, ‘If it is not possible for God to lie and He has no power over this and this would mean that God has no power to lie whereas people in general have the power to do this and it would mean that man is more powerful than God and this is not possible, so it is necessary that He (as God) is able to lie’ ... Firstly he (the wahhābī) is deceiving people to make them believe that men lie and if God is not able to do the same then man would be more powerful than He. Whereas it is the belief of Ahle Sunnah that man and all his actions and words, attributes and states of affairs are all creation of Almighty God, He said, ‘While Allah created you and that which you do?’ (Q. 37:96). If this logic of the Dehlawi Mullah is said to be correct then there is possibility of two gods, ten gods, a thousand gods and countless gods and the reason for this is that whatever men can do then God to can do this also. Then marriage, sexual intercourse, the sperm reaching the womb which is in the power of man, then is it not necessary Mr Mullah! That God should be able to do such things and if not then the power of man will be greater than Gods ... Allah said, ‘No knowledge have they of such a thing, nor had their fathers. It is a grievous thing that issues from their mouths as a saying what they say is nothing but falsehood!’ (Q. 18:5) ... In

Islam. Secondly, he deals with Ismāil's belief that God can access His knowledge when He likes thus creating further issues regarding God's eternal knowledge and then that the Qur'an is His word and if this is created as it is accessible and not with God¹¹². The third issue was the Holy Qur'an confirming Prophet Muhammad to be the last of the Prophets (*imkān-ē-nazīr*) then the possibility of creating another like him would bring a lie and contraction unto the word

regards to God's attributes, Allah said, 'And of all things He hath perfect knowledge' (Q. 2:29), 'Lo Allah hath power over all things' (Q. 2:20), 'Say: Shall I choose for a protecting friend other than Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, Who feedeth and is never fed?' (Q. 6:14), 'Allah! There is no god but He,-the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth' (Q. 2:255) and also, 'That He might justify Truth and prove Falsehood false, distasteful though it be to those in guilt' (Q. 8:8). Ref: Khan. A. R, Fatawa Rizwiyyah. Vol. 15. p. 373

¹¹² Imām Raza said, 'The Muslims have seen this misguided leader as to what he has gained and lost? He (Ismāil Dehlawī) turned against thousands of orthodox beliefs and opened the door to innovation in beliefs and heresies that those who follow would never turn back. They also claim to be the only monotheists and everyone else to be polytheists ... He (Ismail Dehlawī) further said, 'To have the will to obtain the knowledge of the unseen whenever one wills; such is the glory of Allah Sāhib only'. This is an open lie unto God, He (Ismāil) has only accepted that God can gain access to His knowledge or stay ignorant (i.e. God does not have knowledge of all things as an eternal attribute but has access to it whenever He wants) ... What a great belief! By God, according to the Sunni School God knows all things from pre-eternity (*azl*) to post-eternity (*abad*) and He is aware of all things ... The long list of the heresies of Ismāil Dehlawī seems never ending, attacking and mocking age old issues and using them as a basis to opening Pandora's box. First he used the argument of *Imkān-ē-Kizb* to make controversy of the final Prophetic status of Prophet Muhammad and then in *Taqwiyyah-tul-Imān* he again spoke of God's knowledge not being with Him eternally but accessible to Him whenever He wants, which mounts close to the age old issue of the Holy Qur'an being created or eternal ... Imām Abū Hanīfa said in *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, 'The attributes of Allah are pre-eternal (*azli*), nor are they temporary (*hāthis*) or created (*makhlūq*), anyone who considers then either to be temporary or created or causes hesitation or has doubt is a heretic (*kāfir*) and does not believe in God' ... When the true word of God becomes optional (*ikhtayārī*) and there is no doubt in the Qur'an being His true word ... As truth is essential to the Qur'an (also as an eternal attribute of God), essential, essential and essential and having something that is necessary (as God's attributes as knowledge) as optional is truly incorrect (*bātil*). In accordance to the consensus (*ijma*) of Muslims, all that exist besides His (God's) existence and His necessities (attributes) is all accidental and created and it is now evident from Qur'anic sources (*dalīl-ē-qatī*) that it would be necessary for the father of the *wahhābīs* to believe in the Qur'an as being created in this case. There are reports from ten companions including (1) Abdullah b. Masūd, (2) Abdullah b. Abbās, (3) Jābir b. Abdullah, (4) Abū Darda, (5) Huzāifah b. abil Yamān, (6) Imrān b, Hasīn, (7) Rāfe' b. Khatīj, (8) Abū Hakīm Shāmī, (9) Anas b. Mālik and (10) Abu Hurairah that the Prophet of Allah said, 'Anyone who states the Qur'an to be created (*makhlūq*) is a heretic (*kāfir*)'. The scholars of Hadīth have mentioned there are serious issues with these reports thus we shall now have to turn to the statements of the companions and those after them. Imām al-Lekāī has reported in his *Kitāb al-Sunnah* with an authentic chain of narration (*Sanad Saheh*), 'It has been reported by Shaykh Abū Hāmid b. abī Tāhir al-Faqīh who related from Umr b. Ahmed al-Wā'idh who related it from Mohamad b. Harūn al-Hadrāmi, who related it from Qāsim b. Abbās al Shaybānī, who in turn related it from Sufyān b, Uyyainnah who reported it from Hadhrat Amr b. Dinār who stated that he met nine companions of the Prophet and they all stated, 'anyone who stated the Qur'an to be created is a heretic'. O believers! I have presented the edicts from the companions (*sahāba*), those after them (*tabī'in*) and the Imāms of the *Madhabs* and the learned scholars who would consider the words of the Imām of the *wahhābīs* as heretical ... Allah said, 'The Word changes not before Me, and I do not the least injustice to My Servants' (Q. 50:29), 'And the Book is placed, and thou seest the guilty fearful of that which is therein, and they say: What kind of a Book is this that leaveth not a small thing nor a great thing but hath counted it! And they find all that they did confronting them, and thy Lord wrongeth no-one' (Q. 18:49) and 'Lo! Allah wrongeth not even of the weight of an ant; and if there is a good deed, He will double it and will give (the doer) from His presence an immense reward' (Q. 4:40). In these mentioned verses from the Qur'an, Allah praises Himself that He does not do injustice or wrongs anyone'. Ref: Khan. A. R, Fatawa Rizwiyyah. Vol. 15. p. 385

of God and Shah Ismaīl replied by stating that if the word of God is erased, the contradiction will also disappear with it thus making God’s knowledge as non-eternal and created¹¹³. It did not end there with the last part of the question being that the Deobandīs state there being a difference of opinion (*Mukhtalif-fī*) upon this within Ahlē Sunnah and that it is not as a big controversy as is made out to seem. But Imām Raza explained that what they refer to as *Khulfē-Wa’īd*¹¹⁴ is nothing to do with lying (*kizb*). It is possible to see that there have been many controversial issues that Ismaīl Dehlawī and then later the Deobandīs and the Ahlē Hadīth

¹¹³ Imām Raza said, ‘A question was raised that if a person was created like Prophet Muhammad with all his Prophetic attributes, wouldn’t this prove the statement of God to be a lie? Ismaīl Dehlawī replied to this in booklet Yak Roaza, ‘But (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets’ (Q. 33:40), After having the ability, it is possible that this Qur’anic verse is forgotten then the matter about the possibility of creating another like the Prophet Muhammad will not be contradicting any verse as there is possibility of it (i.e. the verse) being erased which is possible by Almighty God, He said, ‘None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?’ (Q. 2:106). In conclusion, to believe in Imkānē Kizb only necessitates lying upon the Qur’an if the verses of the Qur’an are protected, whereas if it is possible that Almighty Allah takes the Qur’an (from the people) then how will lying be even required. O believers! It is clear (from Ismaīl’s words) that the words of God can be a lie and it is not a big matter and the only issue of concern is that people see it as a lie. And because of this the verse will be there and due to which we will be able to ascertain that such a thing (in the Qur’an) is a lie. When the Qur’an is removed then no one will be aware of any of the lies and who will then point out the contradiction (as stated by Ismaīl). This whole fear (of the Wahhābīs) is because of this reason that the lie is not exposed to the people and not that it matters if it is found to be a lie. It is the imaginary God (of Ismaīl) who fears of being taunted by people because of a lie ... As our Lord God, who is free from all defects and lying, other loss which is not possible and the actions that are from Him as He fears no one. Allah Said in the Qur’an: ‘And Allah doeth what He will’ (Q. 14:27), ‘Lo! Allah ordaineth that which pleaseth Him’ (Q. 5:1), ‘He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs)’ (Q. 21:23) and also, ‘To Him be glory throughout the heavens and the earth: and He is Exalted in Power, Full of Wisdom!’ (Q. 45:37) and, ‘Praise and glory be to Him! (for He is) above what they attribute to Him!’ (Q. 6:100). The Qur’an is an Eternal (qadīm) and pre-eternal (azlī) attribute of God and its corruption is impossible’. Ref: Khan. A. R, Fatawa Rizwiyyah. Vol. 15. p. 401

¹¹⁴ Imām Ahmed Raza stated, ‘To state that the possibility of God lying (imkānē-kizbē-illāhī) is a branch of khulfē-wa’īd and to say that there is difference of opinion on this matter of the scholars is a false accusation and distasteful. Some scholars have said khulfē-wa’īd to be permissible whereas others have prohibited and disagreed with this but this does not prove the permissibility of the possibility of lying nor that it is the belief of those who were in favour (of khulfē-wa’īd) but instead they would speak of this with displeasure and dislike then how is correct to make reference of them, which would be a great lie and false accusation. I have covered previously from authentic sources from which it is clear that it is impossible for God to lie and mentioned the names of many authors showing consensus on this matter. The scholars who speak of khulfē-wa’īd are the same who speak of the impossibility of God lying as stated in Sharh Maqāsid, ‘The latter ones saw khulfē-wa’īd to be permissible ...There is consensus of the scholars that it impossible for God to lie as logically it is a defect and God is pure from defects and impossible for the one who has no defects’. The reason for wa’īd is to threaten and frighten and not to implement and so the possibility of lying is not even there. It is stated in Sharh Fawātih al-Rahmūt, ‘Wa’īd in Khulf is permissible and sane people are aware of this and count this as a virtue and not a defect and the same is not permissible in that which is promised (wa’da). This is why it is khulfē-wa’īd and it is impossible for God to have any defects. A question is usually raised asking, ‘The threatening (wa’īd) of Almighty Allah is also a statement (khabr), then without a doubt it is true that it is not possible for Allah to lie. The reason given here that they do not believe it to be a statement (khabr) but rather it is to put fear (inshāē-takhwīf), thus there is no harm in the khulf’. It is clear that those who see khulfē-wa’īd to be permissible clearly accept the impossibility of God lying and they are displeased and dislike and against it and they have stated (above) the position of their school from which there can no possibility of any doubt, then God forbid! Then to use them as reference is an act of shamelessness’. Ref: Khan. A. R, Fatawa Rizwiyyah. Vol. 15. p. 406

delved into and innovated in matters concerning the religion according to Imām Ahmed Raza. It is possible to evaluate the problem as it is many fold in terms of the controversies which start from blaming majority of the Muslims becoming polytheists and then misinterpreting many hadiths and then blaspheming against the Prophets, saints (*Awliya*), and denying religious concepts like intercession (*shafā'at*). I have discussed the edict of Imām Raza and some of the blasphemes later in this chapter.

1.2.4. The Fatwa of Allāma Fazlē Haq

After the many heretical and blasphemous statements made by Ismaīl Dehlawī in the name of monotheism (*tawhīd*) which were not acceptable according to Imām Raza as this would go against the spirit of the Qur'an, as God said about mocking the gods of the polytheists, 'Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance' (Q. 6:108). The problem with many of the statements in *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* and *Yak-Roaza* are the ridiculing and deriding language used for God's elect persons, may they be Prophets, saints, angels and other sacred places and or relics which God mentions in the Qur'an to glorify His Existence, His infinite Mercy and His Oneness (*tawhīd*) whereas Ismaīl almost tried to portray Allah as a jealous God in his book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* who cares for no one and nothing and does as He pleases and this God of Ismaīl can lie and has access to His knowledge which is not with Him eternally but to say the least of these controversies. Analysing the above literature of Ismaīl Dehlawī and trying to make sense of what the cause of such behaviour could be, Shah Fazlē Haq then discusses the usage of language and how words and sentences can be used for both praise and insult as mentioned below:

- In the following sentence, 'So and so is a Human (*insān*)', if the narrative necessitates respect and honour then such a sentence would conceptualise the heights of respect and honour and it would go to mean that so and so is unique and it one of his kind and if the narrative necessitates words which are insulting then such a sentence would only dictate the dishonouring of that person and the meaning of such context would mean that so and so is an ordinary person with no real value.
- And if it is said, 'if so and so was a pig (*khinzīr*) then he would eat filth', surely such words are indicating disrespect towards the person, even though this sentence is conditional (*jumla shartiyyah*) and it is not vital that the condition is fulfilled.

- And if it is said, ‘if so and so was an angel (*farishta*) then surely, he would be amongst the senior Angels (*Malaika al-Muqarribīn*)’, these words indicate the lofty status of that person even though the first part (of the comparison i.e., being an angel) is not a possibility (*mumkin al-wuqū*’).
- It is upon the different narratives that necessitates indication of any respect or insult in the work (*kalām*) [...] For example, if a prominent leader said, ‘I am a worthless human (*mein na-cheez insān hoen*), is in no sense derogatory, rather by saying these words, he is showing his humility which is worthy of praise. If a wicked person says about his leader, ‘he is a worthless human’, surely these are displeasing words from the mouth of such a vulgar man and are dishonouring and scornful for the respected leader, in the same way if a king after talking about his power and kingdom states about a very beloved and senior vizier, ‘If I want I can take your post from you and put an ordinary person in your place and put you in prison or hang you’, these words would not be insulting coming from the king but if an ordinary soldier said, ‘If the king wishes, he can take your viziers post from you and put an ordinary person in your place and put you in prison or hang you’ are words of disrespect for such a dignified official and the perpetrator would be worthy of punishment by the king for dishonouring the official of his court as it is not befitting of an ordinary soldier to use such language about such an honoured and dignified official (vizier) and it is his duty to use the vizier’s honorific title to call him and this is enough for the thinking people and there no need for further protracted explanations. For example Allah said; ‘Say: "I am but a man like yourselves’ (Q. 18:110), ‘You are not but human beings like us’ (Q. 26:15), ‘If you should associate (anything) with Allah, your work would surely become worthless’ (Q. 39:65), ‘And if We willed, We could surely do away with that which We revealed to you’ (Q. 17:86) and also, ‘‘And had We not given thee strength, thou wouldst nearly have inclined to them a little. In that case We should have made thee taste an equal portion (of punishment) in this life, and an equal portion in death’ (Q. 17:75). There is no indication of disrespect or dishonour, but it is not befitting any follower that he uses such words that have been mentioned in these verses because such words used by the creation for God’s beloved is disrespectful and insulting.
- If a certain group of people believe that a certain scholar (*Ālim*) is unique and the best during his era due to his knowledge and command and that only few people are gifted like him and someone of his status to be born again is impossible and then someone

says, ‘If God wants, He can create thousands like him in a split second’. Surely the manner in which he has said this is to defame the scholar even though what he said was true, but it was an indication of disrespect¹¹⁵.

The understanding of how language is used conventionally is also important to be able to determine if something is an insult or not. So, it is obvious that before an edict (*fatwa*) was issued against Ismaïl, there was correspondence between Ismaïl and Shah Fazlê Haq and the book *Yak Raoza* is an example as it was named *Yak Roaza* as Ismaïl wrote a reply to *Shah Fazlê Haq* in one day. The edict was given due to blasphemous statements towards God’s elect persons, His Prophets, angels, saints and scholars and even God Himself. Shah Fazlê Haq named his book, ‘*Tahqīq ul-Fatwa-fi-Abtāl-il-Taghwa*’, which was completed about 1240/1840. This Fatwa by Shah Fazlê Haq Khayrabādi was the first in India stating Shah Ismaïl and all those who held such beliefs as deviant and heretics and they should repent and revert to what was considered as true Islamic beliefs.

1.3. The Jihād Movement

The Jihād movement was the centre stage and the climax of Syed Ahmed’s Barēlwī’s¹¹⁶ and Shah Ismaïl’s movement. It was their testing ground for conversions, preaching as well as

¹¹⁵ Haqq. M. F. *Shafa’atē-Mustapha* (Urdu/Persian) Shah Abdul Haqq Muhadith Academy, Pakistan (1994). P. 178

¹¹⁶ Dr Nūrānī has related about Syed Ahmed; ‘Syed Ahmed b. Syed Muhammad Irfān Takya was born in Raey Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, India in the year 1201\1786. At the age of four, as per the local tradition, he started his education, the teachers had tried for three years and Syed Ahmed had learnt but a handful of chapters (Surāhs) of the Holy Qur’an. As he had no interest in education, he was expelled from School. From then until reaching puberty Syed Ahmed would spend his time in playing different games and would carry the groceries of neighbours to their homes, he also enjoyed swimming and spent hours training. At the age of around eighteen he travelled with a few friends in Lucknow in the year 1804 looking for work, after several months of searching with no luck, Syed Ahmed decided to travel to Delhi to meet Shah Abdul Azīz Muhadith Dehlawī (d. 1824). Upon arriving he was entrusted to the younger brother of Shah Abdul Azīz, Shah Abdul Qādir, even here he failed to learn anything and was told to leave this. In the year 1222\1807 became a disciple (murid) of Shah Abdul Azīz and stayed in Delhi for four years before returning to his hometown. Syed Ahmed later became a horse rider for Amīr Khān small army and there are no records of the six years Syed Ahmed spent under the Amīr. In 1817, Amīr Khān had to make a truce with the British and his army was disbanded, and Syed Ahmed could not turn back thus in 1817 he decided to make his way to Delhi. Here he resided in the Akbarī Mosque and began to recruit disciples and began an evangelical movement to preach his new ideas to the people, it is said many flocked to become his disciples (murīd). During this time Shah Ismaïl Dehlawī also took up discipleship (bayah) from Syed Ahmed and under his leadership, he wrote *Taqwiyyat-ul-Imān* in the year 1817 and then while collaborating with Maulāna Abdul Hāy Badhānvī (d. 1828), they collected the sayings (malfūzāt) and teachings (ta’līmāt) of Syed Ahmed and then after reaching the borders in 1827, Syed Ahmed declared himself as Caliph

trying to establish a Wahhābī Imāmate under the religious leadership of the faithful (*Amīr-ul-Muminīn*) Syed Ahmed as I shall discuss in the following pages. Pearson has stated in regard to Syed Ahmed’s Jihād project, ‘*The lofty claims and ambitions of Syed Ahmed Barēwlī were questioned even by some who favoured his jihād against the Sikhs*¹¹⁷’. A lot of information is disputable as to the events in the life of Syed Ahmed and how things have been exaggerated¹¹⁸ and further study is required as to how he was always welcomed by the Dehlawī family as even Shah Ismaīl removed from his family home due to his unorthodox beliefs which were against the age-old belief system of the Sunnis of India.

To understand the mind of Syed Ahmed, there are many factors to understand as the jihād is remembered as the first jihād of India. Essentially the Sikhs were the target of this jihād movement but let us examine what they were dealing with that had not been thought through. The Greater Punjab was ruled by Raja Ranjeet Singh (d. 1839). Before looking at the jihād movement, it is important to understand what they were up against. The Indian Historian Lateef has recorded: ‘by 1820, Raja Ranjeet Singh had control over greater Punjab all the way to Khaybar Pass touching the Afghanistan border’¹¹⁹. With only a small army of around 20,000 gathered at the call of jihād against the Sikhs by Syed Ahmed. While Muhammad Azīm Khān and Doast Muhammad with an Afghan army whose allegiance was with Rāja Ranjīt Singh. Ranjit Singh having heard of the organization of this formidable insurrection on the immediate border of his territory sent a large force across the Attak to protect Khairabad and his interests in the adjoining country. A detachment of the Sikhs, under *Sardārs* (leaders) Budh Singh, Attar Singh and Lahna Singh Sindhianwalias. The Syed, at the head of a numerous, but ill-equipped host, attacked this force. The Sikh commanders fought from their entrenched positions, and by their superior discipline and equipment, were able to repel the assault of the tumultuous

and Imām, upon which Shah Ismaīl wrote the booklet ‘Risāla Mansabē-Imāmat’, and anyone who would not accept Syed’s Caliphate would be given the death penalty (wājib-ul-qatl).’ Ref: Nūrānī. K. Tehrikē Jihād aur British Government (Urdu). Idārah Fkrē Islāmī, Delhi, India. p. 19

¹¹⁷ Pearson. O. H. Islamic reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah Muhammadiyyah. P. 46

¹¹⁸ Hussain Ahmed Madanī has stated, ‘The purpose of Syed Ahmed’s jihad was not to establish a government of his own but to serve the Lord God. After succeeding with this, It will be left to the people as to what and how they wanted to be governed. Non-Muslims were invited to join the movement.’ Ref: Ahmed. H. *Naqshē-Hayāt* (Urdu), Dār-ul-Ishāt Karachī, Pakistan. Vol. 2. P. 422. But what we find it the opposite as Syed Ahmed wanted to establish his own Islamic state.

¹¹⁹ Latif, M. History of the Punjab: From the remotest antiquity to the present time. Calcutta Central Press company (1891). p. 361

mountaineers, who lost several hundred being killed and wounded. The Syed, being completely defeated, retired with his hill rabble to the mountains¹²⁰.

Syed Ahmed's Jihād¹²¹ of initially around six hundred persons who accompanied him from India, many of whom were theologians¹²², untrained in warfare, aimed to create an Imāmate. His decision to go towards the Punjab was possibly due to the several princely kingdoms which were free from British control, and which could lead to a potential takeover even though he was aware of the power of Raja Ranjit Singh. Syed Ahmed being aware of the civil war in Afghanistan¹²³, carried out by the four sons of Tymur Shah, the affairs of Humayūn, Mahmūd, Shah Zamān and Shah Shujā, between themselves for ascendancy, had ruined that empire, and the once dreaded power of the Afghans in India was now looked upon everywhere with contempt. Syed Ahmed found this time most opportune for gaining territory in the name of a jihād to which he would get a better response than to informing people of his plan to implement Wahhābism in the region. This was all too clear as when he started to enforce Wahhābism upon the locals who then retaliated against him and he and his forces had to leave the area and went up to the hills¹²⁴. In a letter sent by Budh Singh to Syed Ahmed in the year 1827 in which he wrote to Syed Ahmed asking him to act like a leader and stop playing cat and mouse and doing

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 442

¹²¹ Syed Nadvi wrote, 'the enemy were 7000 strong and the trusted fighters included 500 Indians and two hundred Kandihārīs and some locals and even then, they had not been trained in battle situations and they were attacking at night like robbers and actually taking to the fields.' Ref: Nadvi. A. p. 517

¹²² Khan, M. A. Sayyid Ahmed Shahid's campaign against the Sikhs. Islamic Studies, DECEMBER 1968, Vol. 7, No. 4 (DECEMBER 1968), pp. 317-338. Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad, p. 321

¹²³ Latif, M. p. 359

¹²⁴ The Indian Historian Mr Lateef has stated: 'Syad Ahmad had no sooner retired to his hill fastness's than a popular tumult, broke out in Peshawar, and the kazi and the two moultvis, who had been left to administer justice on reformed principles, were slain by the populace. Peshawar was thus lost to the Syad, who, moreover, met with no better success in the hills. His Eusafzai hosts had become tired of his yoke and began to look upon his authority as a burden. The peasants had paid him a tithe of their goods willingly enough, for such payment to a warrior in the name of God was in accordance with their religious notions; but the Syad gave them cause for extreme provocation, by passing a decree that all young women who had attained a marriageable age should be married to his Indian followers. The reformer's motives for this innovation were impugned, and the dissatisfaction against him was loud, for not only did the announcement and its partial enforcement interfere with the liberty which the wild mountaineers had hitherto enjoyed, but they thought a forced matrimonial alliance of their unmarried women with the needy Indians a disgrace to the tribes, who took a pride in the traditions of the bravery of their ancestors. His public preaching's declaring that no person professing Islam should bow before the shrines of saints, or pay benedictions to tombs, or offer food or money for the benefit of the souls of the dead, since such ceremonies could not profit them, his disbelief in the miracles of the saints, and his other doctrines, which he had imbibed from the Wahhabi moultvis of Nejd, in Arabia, were particularly distasteful to the mullahs, as they had a direct effect on their perquisites and emoluments as religious leaders. They unanimously declared the Syad to be an impostor, and he was soon compelled to leave the Eusafzai hills, with his immediate adherents, who had throughout followed his'. Latif, M. History of the Punjab: From the remotest antiquity to the present time. Calcutta Central Press company (1891). p. 443

sneak attacks at night¹²⁵. It is obvious the strategy of war being used Syed Ahmed was not in the methodology of the Holy Prophet or a fair fight. In the same year of 1827 in the month of *Jamādī-ul-Thānī*, Syed Ahmed was announced by his followers as leader (*Imām*) and Khalīfah and his name was read during the Friday sermons¹²⁶. Sana Haroon stated:

The experiment went terribly wrong when the Pashtun clans periodically turned on him, tried to poison him and then abandoned him in battle. Sayyid Ahmed's death on the battlefield fighting the Sikh army at Balakot along with Shah Ismaīl and one hundred and forty-two other companions in 1831 has been seen the end of his movement and the failure of his scheme¹²⁷.

We know that Syed Ahmed had his followers totally at his disposal, he was preaching to point out the relationship of the leader, the Imām and of his status that he points out in *Sirātē Mustaqīm*, 'The love for his Master (Murshid) is such that it is way to gain God's mercy and his way to gain salvation [...] Thus is a saying of one of the elders of this path, 'And if Allah appeared to me in other than the form of my Master then I will not pay heed to even Him'¹²⁸.

Imām Raza believed that Syed Ahmed Barēlwī had far greater plans in mind than just claiming to be leader of the whole Muslim Ummah, he wanted to claim divinity and possibly as similar status to Prophethood¹²⁹ as I shall discuss in the following chapters. One of the reasons for this allegation is a statement of Syed Ahmed found in *Sirātē Mustaqīm*:

For example he is able to tell from the conviction of his heart if certain words or a special action is likened or disliked by God and if a certain belief is correct or not [...] and these are known by two reasons; Firstly it is conviction of the heart which is to do with these matters and secondly in the matters of the religion which has manifested through knowledge which is of the first part [...] In religion and its commandments, they can be called the students of the Prophets or taught by the same teacher as their way of gaining (knowledge) is from the branches of revelation

¹²⁵ Nadvi. A. p. 532

¹²⁶ Nadvi. A. p. 537

¹²⁷ Haroon. S. Reformism and Orthodox Practice in Early Nineteenth-Century Muslim North India: Sayyid Ahmed Shaheed Considered. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, APRIL 2011, Third Series, Vol. 21, No. 2 (APRIL 2011), pp. 177-198

¹²⁸ Ismaīl. M. *Sirāte-Mustaqīm*. p. 14

¹²⁹ Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 14. p. 395

(*wahy*) [...] according to religious terminology. And some call it internal revelation (*Bātinī Wahy*) and the difference between these elders (*Bazurghoen*) and the Prophets is that they are sent towards nations and these elders bring commandments and their relation to the Prophets is that of a younger brother to his elder and the relation of brothers to their father¹³⁰.

All this was because he tried to enforce a version of Islam (i.e., Wahhābism) upon them that was alien to the pashtūns. After the death of their leaders, it is said around a hundred fighters survived from the battle which included Māulāna Muhammad, Ja'far Thānesri, Maulāna Wilāyat Ali, Maulāna Mamūk Alī and Maulāna Yahyā Alī¹³¹. Maulāna Malūk Alī was one of the survivors of the battle of Balakōt and the teacher of the founder of Deoband Maulāna Rashīd Ahmed Gangōhī and that of Sir Syed Ahmed Khān who established the Aligargh University¹³². The historian Qadir argued:

Despite Syed Ahmad's efforts for Muslim political dominance, he cannot be considered faultless. He was either unable to understand the tribal mindset or simply did not consider it by selecting the North-West Frontier as the battleground for his Jihad programme. Instead of reforming the Pukthūn society, shortly after his arrival, he attacked the Sikhs to attract the local population for his support. Taking the mismanagement of the Pukhtūn a justification for the declaration of *imārāt* reveals a serious problem of Syed Ahmad religious understanding¹³³.

Syed Ahmed found it much more difficult in spreading Wahhābīm compared to other parts of india in the North-West Frontier, the Pashtūn Sunnis would not put up with being forced or accept this new creed being forced upon them and thus Syed Ahmed and his followers had to leave the area, and this was a major blow to his Jihād. It is not normal to announce a jihād without knowing what you are up against or where you are heading with a small number of men and especially when dealing with a whole kingdom. To raise a jihad against the Raja in the Panjab was equally difficult as trying to call a jihād against the British, it was a suicidal mission and people would not have known about Syed Ahmed or Shah Ismaīl had it not been

¹³⁰ Ismaīl. M. *Sirāte-Mustaqīm*. p. 49

¹³¹ Rahman. D. *The Ulamā of Deoband: Their majestic past*. Madrasah Arabia Islamia, South Africa (1999). p. 36

¹³² *Ibid.* p. 47

¹³³ Qadir, A. p. 290

for the miracle stories and the fairy tales made to propagate his small movement which did not really have any standing or real significance compared to the joint efforts of Hindu and Muslims under the leadership of the last Mughal King Bahādur Shah with the assistance of Fazle Haq Khairabādī in 1857.

Regarding the death of Syed Ahmed and Ismaīl Dehlawī, Imām Ahmed Raza stated, ‘In the greed for power they fought against the Sikhs and were killed by the swords of the local Afghans¹³⁴’. This makes things clear regarding the continuous tensions Syed Ahmed and his men were facing from not only the Sikhs but the local Sunni Afghans too. We know that most of the Afghan tribal areas were not tolerant towards Wahhābism as we find in the following account stated by Metcalf:

Maulāna Abdullah Ghaznavī (d. 1881) was also influential in his area, although born in Afghanistan, he travelled often to the Punjāb and Delhī, and ultimately settled in Amritsar. Disciples of Maulāna Ismaīl and of other reformers had, in small numbers found their way to Afghanistan, and as a child, Abdullah had studied the *Taqwiyyat-ul-Imān* and adopted the reformist orientation towards custom. Expelled for doing so by the Amir (leader), he travelled to Delhi to study *hadīth* from Nazīr Hussain. Twice he returned home, each time only to be expelled, on the last occasion after being beaten and jailed for two years¹³⁵.

1.4. The Fatwa of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān

After the initial edict (*fatwa*) of Imām Khāirabādī, the book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* was still in print. Imām Ahmed Raza in his book, ‘*Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*’ (The scorching star on the infidelities of the father of Wahhabism) completed in 1312/1896, in this Imām Raza stated that he was giving a preview by presenting seventy charges of heresy (*kufr*) from the works of Ismaīl Dehlawī. Imām Ahmed Raza labelled Shah Ismaīl and Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī as *Wahhābiyyah Kazzābiyyah*, who held the belief that God could lie¹³⁶.

¹³⁴ Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 14. Markazē Ahle Sunnat Barakāte Raza, Gujrāt, India (2003). P. 396

¹³⁵ Metcalf. B. p. 292

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 309

Below are a few examples of these heresies of Ismaīl Dehlawī as analysed by Imām Raza of which the original Urdu transliteration can be found in the appendix at the end of the thesis:

1.4.1. The first heresy: The spread of polytheism (*shirk*) all over the world.

He (Ismaīl Dehlawī) stated when mentioning a hadīth about the end of times, the words of the Prophet, ‘The world will not come to an end until *Lāt* and *Uzza* are worshipped. In *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, Farūqī publishers, Delhi, 1293 AH on page 44, the above Hadīth is mentioned as narrated from *Mishkāt* and Ismaīl Dehlawī translated it as follows: “then Allah will send a pure breeze, then everyone who had an atom’s weight of *Imān* will die, then there will remain only those who have no goodness in them, then they will return to the religion of their forefathers”. The Holy Prophet mentioned, “The breeze shall appear after the eras of the Antichrist (*Dajjāl*) and Prophet Jesus (Isa)”. In *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, he (Ismaīl Dehlawī) also included this information and translated it as follows on page 45: “Dajjāl will come, then Allah will send Isa, the son of Mary (Maryam), he will then find Dajjāl and destroy him, then Allah will send a wind from the direction of Syria, which will kill all those who had an atom’s weight of *Imān* in their hearts. After stating this Hadīth, he added the following, “Therefore, this happened in accordance with the prophecy of the Holy Prophet”. Now, there is neither the wait for the ascent of the Anti-Christ nor the descent of Prophet Isa; furthermore, the breeze had also occurred; thereafter he associated this Hadīth to the present era in order to label every Muslim as a polytheist (*Mushrik*) and an unbeliever (*Kāfir*)¹³⁷.

Interestingly the above explanation of the hadīth is not in the English version of *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*¹³⁸ but can still be found in the Urdu translation¹³⁹. It seems that it has deliberately not been included due to the interpretation of the Hadīth which was said to have come to pass during the lifetime of Ismaīl. Instead of explaining the error of the author in the footnotes, they have not included the explanation on the benefits from the hadith which is mentioned in the Urdu version of *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* as follows:

¹³⁷ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. Nūri Kutub Depo, Lahore, Pakistan. p. 11

¹³⁸ Ismail, M, *Taqwiyyat al-Imān* (English), p. 56

¹³⁹ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu), Mustaq Book Corner, Lahore, Pakistan (2004). p. 79

We find from the above hadīth that in the end of times people will begin to practise polytheism of old and it has occurred according to the words of the Prophet of Allah, therefore as we find Muslims of today doing acts of polytheism (*shirk*) with the Prophets, saints, Imāms and martyrs and this way the polytheism of the old is spreading¹⁴⁰.

As stated above in the analysis of Imām Raza, there are a few theological concerns from the statement of Ismaīl Dehlawī.

1. According to the Hadīth, a pure breeze will blow, and the souls of any believer will leave the earth on that night before the end of times. This would mean that no believing men or women would be left on the earth when the book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* was written.
2. This event will happen after the coming of Jesus and the anti-Christ, thus creating another theological issue about the return of Christ being physical or it being a metaphor because if according to Ismail, this event had come to pass also.

According to Ismaīl's interpretation, there are no Muslims left on the earth as everyone is indulged in polytheism in one way or another. In regard to this, Imām Ahmed Raza stated:

The person's acceptance of one's own heresy (*kufr*) has indeed made him a heretic (*Kāfir*). It is written in *Khulāsat-ul-Fatāwa*, 'The person who proclaims his own infidelity is an infidel'. In '*shāba fann*' it is written, 'if someone says you are a heretic and the reply is yes, I am a heretic, then the replier has become that which he confirmed. In *Fatāwa Alamghīri*, published in Egypt, 1310 AH, in volume 2, page 279, it is mentioned, 'If a Muslim declares himself to be an apostate, he will become a heretic and if he says that he did not know the ruling on this fact, then this excuse will not be accepted¹⁴¹.

Imām Ahmed Raza had made his position clear that the edict (*fatwa*) of heresy was not personal as some people have tried to label the Imām with but based on his statement of calling all

¹⁴⁰ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 79

¹⁴¹ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 11

Muslims polytheists and idol worshippers. It is from such teachings that the Wahhābīs used to justify the killing and looting other Muslims as they do not consider them to be believers.

1.4.2. The second heresy: The incomplete knowledge of God

Another example of his heresy, reported by Imām Ahmed Raza:

To have the will to obtain the knowledge of the unseen whenever one wills; such is the glory of Allah Sāhib only¹⁴².

Looking at the recent Urdu of *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, I found it difficult to trace the exact sentence quoted by Imam Ahmed Raza, going through it several times in the Urdu version published in 2004 which states, ‘*it is thus that He has kept it in his ability to obtain the Unseen to himself*¹⁴³.’ And in another modern Urdu version published by Saudi Arabia it states, ‘*And opposed to this, it is impossible for man to obtain the knowledge of the unseen, Allah has kept the keys of this to Himself*¹⁴⁴.’ And in the English translation it states, ‘*But to have knowledge of the hidden things is beyond their power. It is within the power of Allah alone*¹⁴⁵.’ It is possible to see the variations from one Urdu version to another compared to the origin from which Imam Ahmed Raza had taken from. I found an old copy of *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*¹⁴⁶ which had the exact words quoted by Imām Ahmed Raza. Imām Ahmed Raza stated why the above statement of Ismāil Dehlawi is heretical:

Here Ismāil Dehlawī did not consider the Knowledge of Allah to be Absolute and Compulsory and proposed a deviant belief that to obtain the Unseen is in the Power of Allah however whether He comes to know of it or not. This is explicit heresy (Kufr). It is in *Fatāwa Alamghīrī*, in volume 2 on page 258, ‘If anybody mentions an attribute of Allah that is not in accordance with His Glory or if someone brought one’s attention to a thought that will most likely lead to envision Allah’s attributes to be partial, defective or in ignorance; then such a person is a heretic¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴² Ibid. p. 12

¹⁴³ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 53

¹⁴⁴ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu), Maktaba Dawat, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. p.69

¹⁴⁵ Ismail, M, *Taqwiyyat al-Imān* (English), p. 24

¹⁴⁶ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). Maktaba Naeemiyah, UP, India, p. 28

¹⁴⁷ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 12

1.4.3. The third heresy: Not to believe in anyone except Allah.

The extent of the hate of Ismaīl Dehlawī towards people honouring, praising the Prophets, saints, relics, angels, etc. can be seen from the following statements of Ismaīl Dehlawī:

All the Prophets came with the same command to believe in Allah and not to **believe** in anyone else¹⁴⁸. And also said, ‘And don’t **believe** in anyone except Me¹⁴⁹ (i.e., Allah) and also in another place, ‘To **believe** in others is foolishness¹⁵⁰.

It is interesting how certain contentious words have been replaced and or censored in the new Urdu versions of *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*. For example, in the old version the words, ‘To believe in others is foolishness’, but in the new 2004 version, it states, ‘To ask others to fulfil your needs is ignorance¹⁵¹. We can see that the changes in the words are significant, from the first translation where the word ‘believe’ is used and in the other translation the words ‘to ask’ is used which are total different expressions in the English language and to understand why this has been done, we need to read the comments of Imām Ahmed Raza on the above statements:

In these expressions, he denied the necessity of **believing** in the fundamental aspects of Islam, such as Prophets, Angels, Judgement Day, Heaven, Hell and so forth; and he projected this scandal in the cloak of the commandment of Allah and His Messengers. This heresy (*Kufr*) is also a compendium of many other infidelities. It is essential for every Muslim to **believe** in Allah and all these as part of their faith, whosoever does not; will become a heretic (*Kāfir*). Every Urdu speaking person understands that the term ‘**to believe**’ (*mānana*) means to affirm and accept and to have faith. Linguistically the term ‘faith’ (*Imān*) is translated as **to believe** (*mānana*) and the term heresy (*kufr*) is translated as **not to believe** (*nā-mānana*)¹⁵².

¹⁴⁸ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 47

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 49

¹⁵⁰ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). Maktaba Naeemiyah, UP, India, p. 11

¹⁵¹ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 61

¹⁵² Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 18

Imām Ahmed Raza then gave a few examples from the Urdu Qur’anic translations on how the word **to believe**¹⁵³ (*mānana*) has been used.

1.4.4. The fourth heresy: The Prophet’s body will turn to dust.

In *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, translating the words of the hadīth thus, ‘*Oh you, think! If you pass by my grave, will you then prostrate to it?*’ Thereafter Ismaīl added the questionable words himself attributing them to the Holy Prophet:

‘In other words, I too shall die one day and turn to dust¹⁵⁴ (*markar mittī māy milnāy wālla hōen*)¹⁵⁵’.

Interestingly, the English translation of the above statement is, ‘*That is, one day he (the Apostle) was also to die and mingle with dust*¹⁵⁶’. There are two differences in the translations from the Urdu version and the English translations:

1. In the original, it is made to seem that the words are of the Prophet Muhammad.
2. In the English translation, they have changed as referring to sentence separately and the Prophet Muhammad as a third person and there are no footnotes or any other explanation for the wrong interpretation of the sentences.

It was due to a few reasons this was possibly seen as offensive. One possible reason could have been the use of the words, ‘turn to dust (*mittī māy milna*)’, this is an Urdu idiom which in the Urdu dictionary is used for, ‘*To be marred, spoiled or ruined; to be disgraced; to die*¹⁵⁷’. And the other reasons explained by Imām Ahmed Raza himself, as follows:

¹⁵³ The following examples are given by Imām Raza from the Urdu Qur’an translation of Shah Abdul Qadir: ‘It is alike whether you warn them or warn them not, they will never believe (Na mānein gāy)’ (Q. 2:6). And, ‘Undoubtedly, the word has been proved against most of them, so they shall not believe (so wo nā mānein gāy)’ (Q. 36:7), ‘They believe (māntein hein) in that which has been sent down to you (O Holy Prophet)’ (Q. 4:162), ‘And cut off the roots of those who belie Our Signs and they were not believers (mānaney wālle)’ (Q. 7:72), ‘And when those who believe (mānaney wālle) in our signs come to you then say to them, ‘Peace be upon you’’ (Q. 6:54), ‘The Messenger believed (māna) in that which was sent down to him from his Lord and the believers all accepted Allah and His Angels and His Books and His Messengers’ (Q. 2:28), ‘The proud ones said, ‘in that which you believed we disbelieve (nahī mānte)’ (Q. 7:76).

¹⁵⁴ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 26

¹⁵⁵ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 98

¹⁵⁶ Ismail, M, *Taqwiyyat al-Imān* (English), p. 79

¹⁵⁷ Feroz Sons *Urdu-English Dictionary*. p. 674

His contemporaries and his Peers should inform me from which Hadīth these words are taken? Where are these words mentioned in the above Hadīth? Where is such a commentary that may have said, ‘one day I will turn to dust? This is an open slander on the Holy Prophet! The Holy Prophet said, ‘whosoever attributes a lie to me, then let him find his abode in Hell¹⁵⁸’. Oh’ Wahhābī fellows! Inform me the location of your leaders as per the instruction of our Prophet. Our Holy Prophet informed us, “Verily, Allah has prohibited the ground to devour the bodies of the Prophets¹⁵⁹”.

To show that the statement made by Ismāil Dehlwāī was unorthodox and blasphemous Imām Raza further mentioned the names of Hadīth books¹⁶⁰ to strengthen his point of view that the bodies of the Prophet’s do not decay after their momentary death. Imām Ahmed Raza then also mentioned verses from the Qur’an¹⁶¹ to further show the honour and status of those who are loved by Allah. Imām Raza finished with an event related to this issue stating:

Zarqāni Sharh Mawāhib, Egypt publication, in volume 1, on page 106, that it is reported by Abu’l Abbās has stated in his Kāmil ‘that one of the reasons for the Scholars who labelled Hajjāj a heretic (*kāfir*) was that once he saw some people¹⁶² circumbulating (performing tawāf of) the blessed Tomb of the Holy Prophet upon which he remarked they are making circumbulation of some pieces of sticks and decomposed body’. Kamāl-Uddīn Dumāiri stated that due to this exclamation (of Hajjāj), the Scholars have declared his infidelity because he contradicted the words

¹⁵⁸ Ismāil. M. *Sahīh Bukhāri, Kitāb-ul-ulūm, Bāb atham min kizb alā Nabī*, Qadīmi publication, Karachi, Vol.1, p. 21

¹⁵⁹ Ash’ath. S. *Sunan Abū Dawūd, Bāb tafri*“ abwāb-ul-jummuah, Qadīmi publication, Karachi, Vol.1, p. 150

¹⁶⁰ Imām Raza mentioned: This Hadith has been narrated in Abū Dawūd, Nasāi, Ibnē Mājah, Musnad Imām Ahmed, Ibnē Hibbān, Ibnē Khuzāima, Dār Qutnī, Hākim, Abū Nuāim and many others from Aus b. Aus and Ibnē Khuzāima, Ibnē Hibbān and Dār Qutnī have established its authenticity as Sahīh and Imām Abdul Ghanī and Imām Abdul Azīm Mundhīri have considered this as good; Hākim said that according to Bukhāri this Hadith is Sahīh. Ibnē Dāhiya has stated that this Hadith is Sahīh, faultless and has been narrated from the trustworthy and reliable chain of transmission. Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 26

¹⁶¹ Allah says: “And say not those who are killed in the path of Allah as dead; but they are alive yes, you are unaware’ (Q. 2:154), and also, ‘And those who have been slain in the way of Allah, never think of them as dead; but they are alive with their Lord, get their subsistence’ (Q.’. 3:169).

¹⁶² In regard to who these people were, Imām Raza stated: ‘These people who were circumbulating the tomb were definitely from Tābi’īn or atleast Tabi Tābi’īn, (since Hajjāj b. Yusuf Thaqafi was born in 40\660 and died in 95/714). Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 27

of the Holy Prophet that Allah has prohibited the ground to devour the bodies of the Prophets¹⁶³.

1.4.5. The fifth heresy: The thought of the Prophet in prayer

Ismaïl Dehlawi in his book ‘*Sirāte-Mustaqīm*¹⁶⁴’ stated:

During Salah, it is far better to concentrate on making love with your wife with the intention of adultery rather than to contemplate on the thought of the Shāykh or other such holy personalities and may this even be the Prophet (i.e. Muhammad) himself which is worse than overwhelming oneself in thought of donkeys and cattle; because the thought of the Shaykh is due to his respect and honour and gets attached to the inner most element of the heart, whereas the thought of a donkey or cattle is insignificant and without any due respect. The respect and honour of the other in the state of worship (*salah*) will take a person towards polytheism (*Shirk*)¹⁶⁵.

The use of such language for the Prophet is questionable even if said to be in defence of Tawhīd. Imām Ahmed Raza stated the following points about the above statement made by Shah Ismaïl Dehlawī:

Muslims! Muslims! For God’s sake, contemplate on these satanic, blasphemous and impure words that to think of Prophet Muhammad in the state of worship is darkness upon darkness, and it is worse than to be indulged in the thought of a prostitute and fornicating with her and it is much worse to be drowned in the thoughts of the Holy Prophet than the donkeys and cows. Alas, neither the prostitute showed her heart nor the donkey caused harm, but humility was shown by Muhammad in the Qur’an by refreshing our minds with the verse of being the

¹⁶³ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 26

¹⁶⁴ *Sirātē-Mustaqīm* is the collections of the words (*Mafūzāt*) of Syed Ahmed Barēlwī which were collected and written by Ismaïl Dehlawi and Maulvi Abdul Hāy. This is the reason why it has been attributed to Ismaïl Dehlawī because he was one of the main contributors of the book. Ref: Ahmed. H. *Sirātē-Mustaqīm par l’tirazāt ka jāizah*. Sunni Academy Pakistan. 25

¹⁶⁵ Ismaïl. M. *Sirāre-Mustaqīm* (Urdu). Idārat-ul-Rashīd, Deoband, India. p.118

‘final Messenger’ (*khātaman-nabiyyīn*¹⁶⁶) and setting up fire to the courts of newly formed ‘Prophetic-statues’ therefore why shouldn’t there be a grudge from them due to the poison brewing in their hearts¹⁶⁷?

Imām Raza advocated in his above analysis that what can be the reason for so much hate for Prophet Muhammad that they use such comparisons with lower creatures to the Holy Prophet and words that a Muslim would never use for Him but Ismaīl and others have used such words that are not only thought to be unworthy of his person and disliked by Muslims worldwide. Imām Raza stated that the dreams of becoming prophet like were shattered with the revelation of the Qur’anic verse (Q. 33.40) declaring Muhammad as the seal of Prophethood and thus attempts were made to interpret this verse to mean otherwise and challenge the known superiority of Prophet Muhammad and belittle him as much as possible as I shall discuss in following chapters. After critiquing the above statement of Ismaīl Dehlawī, Imām Raza stated:

Muslims! Do justice! Can such phrases be uttered from an Islamic tongue and written from the Islamic pen? God forbid! Read the literature of the pundits and the priests, who are open idolaters, and they have been propagating to blemish the Illuminated religion of Islam, but even in their articles you shall not obtain such corrupt words as these that insult the dignity of your Beloved Messenger¹⁶⁸.

The Holy Qur’an contains stories of earlier Prophets, lessons, law, signs etc. To say that to think of other than Allah with respect in worship would lead to polytheism because worship is only for Allah goes against everything that Islam stands for. Imām Raza thus pointed out the fact:

Worship (*salah*) without the reverential contemplation of the Holy Prophet is invalid. Inform these clerics (*Maulvīs*) to congregate every *Shirk* and advocate in the court of the Powerful Lord, and complain to Him as to why did He reveal such a law (*shari’at*) which necessitates the recital of the *Tashāhud* at the end of every two unit of worship, wherein there is a compulsion to state, ‘Peace be

¹⁶⁶ ‘Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men but is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets’ (Q. 33:40).

¹⁶⁷ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 29

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 29

upon you, O Messenger, and mercy and blessing of Allah be upon you' (*assalāmo alāika aiyuhan-Nabiyyo wa-rahmatullahi wa-barakāto*). Muslims! Does not the recital of this provide direct injunction to contemplate the Holy Prophet in prayer? Verily it does, and without a shadow of a doubt his thoughts in the hearts of Muslims will invite magnificence and greatness, his contemplation is enveloped with speciality and saluting such a personality is in reality remembrance and honouring him; so the explicit injunction herewith is not merely salutation but honouring and magnifying his Blessed person in the state of worship¹⁶⁹.

Imām Ahmed Raza gives a few Qur'anic examples:

1. 'Those who have been favoured by Allah are the Prophets, and the Truthful, and the Martyrs and the Righteous.' (Q. 4:69)
2. 'The Path of those You have blessed—not those You are displeased with, or those who are astray'. (Q. 1:07)

The above Qur'anic examples are enough to show that when these verses are recited in prayer, these persons will be remembered in reverence and honour which is due to them, as firstly they are mentioned in the word of God and secondly that they are enshrined in the eternal word of God forever to be remembered with His favour. To say as mentioned by Ismaīl Dehlawī is though he was jealous according to Imām Raza of God's favour and honour for those who were His elect and friends, but Ismaīl Dehlawī had his own ideas of how God should be recognised as stated in his book, firstly, one should not think of even the Holy Prophet with reverence with respect in prayer as it will result in polytheism but it is ok for Maulāna Ilyas Ghuman Deobandī (b. 1969) to advise a boy to help him rid of the illness of homosexuality by going to meet him in person and to sit and just look at him¹⁷⁰, after obligatory prayers and otherwise while passing

¹⁶⁹ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 31

¹⁷⁰ Maulāna Ghuman has stated in his book, 'I did tell you of a boy who wrote a letter to me from Karachi. He informed me that he has an illness within himself, he looks at boys and has a liking for them, 'can you tell me a cure for this illness?', he said, I told him to come visit me at Sarghoda (a city in Pakistan) and so he did and asked me what to do? I told him not to do anything and just to pray him obligatory prayers and for a whole week sit here and look at me (bas *mujay daektey rahoe*) and you need not do nothing else but coming and going just look at me. After a week he left and said because of these blessings he was cured from this illness'. Ref: Ghuman. M. I. p. 110

and this was done for a whole week¹⁷¹. Ghuman has prescribed something and that to after prayers immediately, which includes to look upon a person and that looking would obviously be with respect and honour and to do this as a form of contemplation and meditation according to their tradition would be polytheism and something new to Islām. This is something not only alien but can also reach polytheism according to the Deobandī tradition as understood by Ismāil Dehlawī. The other reason that requires justification is the method of looking at this particular male when the illness according to this cleric described by the young man is being sexually attracted towards other men and logically thinking, the obvious religious prescription would have thought to been seeking repentance from God, to pray regularly and meditate upon the names of God but none of these were prescribed except that he come and look at another man which would not have provided the answer to his problem when he was surrounded by more men for a whole week in a male dominated society and then in a place which is further crowded by men where he was to spend a whole week. It is a peculiar resolve and intentions of the cleric unknown as to calling the young man to spend a whole week with him and in his presence.

The next few heresies are Ismāil Dehlawī's contradictions of the Holy Qur'an itself.

1.4.6. The sixth & seventh heresies: Contradicting Qur'anic verses

Expanding and constricting sustenance (*rizq*), providing health and causing sickness, granting honour and disgrace, increasing needs and repelling difficulties, and to help in the times of adversity; all these are functions of Allah alone, and this function is not of any Prophet, saint, fairy or ghost. Whosoever attributes such a quality (to them) and he asks for any needs and calls them for help in difficulty, becomes a polytheist (*mushrik*), whether he understands such a quality to be self-possessed by them or if he understands such quality to be an ability bestowed upon them from Allah, in every case, it is shirk¹⁷².

And Ismāil further said:

¹⁷¹ Ghuman. M. I. *Majālis-ē-Mutaqallim-ē-Islām* (Urdu), Maktaba Ahle Sunnah wal Jammah, Lahore, Pakistan. 2012. P. 110

¹⁷² Ismail, M. *Taqwiyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 42

Shirk is spreading amongst the people and the reality of Tawhīd is scarce¹⁷³ [...] ‘and this occurred in accordance with the words of the Prophet that there remains no Muslims on the whole earth¹⁷⁴’ [...] and thereafter he applied his forceful command, ‘if he understands it in such a way that the ability has been bestowed upon them by Allah, is Shirk in every way¹⁷⁵’.

Imām Ahmed Raza has stated regarding the above:

Observation is required regarding this unjustified statement that from the Prophets and angels to Allah and His Messenger and from his (i.e., Ismaīl Dehlawī) leaders to himself, no one is spared from his allegations of shirk [...] Allah said, ‘Allah and His Messenger have enriched them with their bounty.’ (Q. 9:74), and, ‘O Jesus, you heal the blind and the leper with My leave’. (Q. 5:110). God forbid! This is polytheism (*shirk*) in the Holy Qur’an and the placement of the word, ‘with My leave’, will not provide immunity from shirk even though it is thought that the power to heal is by Allah’s leave, even then it is *shirk* according to this fanatic¹⁷⁶’.

In the book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, there are no footnotes to explain the above questionable explanation of the writer by his followers or later generation of scholars. The reason for the silence could only mean the approval of such blasphemous statements by those who revere him as a reformer. The question remains on the publication of this book by the Deobandīs and the Ahlī Hadīth who agree with its radical ideas and theories and going against the consensus of the believers (*Ummah*). Essentially it is such work that has led many fundamentalists to raise arms against humanity because according to Ismaīl’s interpretation, everyone is indulged in polytheism and thus killing, and looting would become permissible as mentioned earlier. It was only after writing this book that the Jihād movement¹⁷⁷ was started by Syed Ahmed Barēlwī and Shah Ismaīl Dehlawi, was this a coincidence.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 36

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 79

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 42

¹⁷⁶ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 41

¹⁷⁷ Ashraf, A, *Arwāhê-Thallâtha yanī hiqayātê-āwiya (Urdu)*, Karachi: Dar ul-Isha’at. p. 74.

1.4.7. The eighth heresy: The Prophets committing shirk

Prophet Jesus said, ‘I heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead, by Allah's leave’. (Q. 3:49). God forbid! This is shirk committed by Prophet Jesus¹⁷⁸.

Imām Ahmed Raza refers to miracles performed by Prophets by God’s leave, but Ismāīl still considers this as polytheism (*shirk*) even though what he wrote contradicted what the Qur’an had mentioned as miracles. With such contradictory statements which would surely cause confusion in the minds of the Muslim masses who do not fully understand the concept of monotheism (*tawhid*).

1.4.8. Heresy number nine to thirteen: All types of prostration is shirk

Ismāīl Dehlawī wrote:

‘Whosoever prostrates to a Prophet is charged with committing *shirk* [...] whether he thinks that this is out of respect or that by doing this act, it is pleasing to Allah, is in every way (an act of) *shirk*¹⁷⁹’ and further stated, ‘Polytheism (*shirk*) such as to prostrate (to someone) [...] even if he considers such a personality to be lesser than Allah thinks of him as His creation and His slave, and in this matter there is no difference between the Prophets, Satan (*Shaytān*) and ghosts (*Bōt*)¹⁸⁰’.

Imām Ahmed Raza mentioned the following Qur’anic verses:

‘And when We said unto the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam, they all fell prostrate, save Iblis’. (Q. 3:34), and ‘And Yūsuf raised his parents high on the throne, and they all fell down in prostration for Joseph (Yūsuf)’. (Q. 12:100), Imām Ahmed Raza then stated, ‘This is the shirk of Allah, the Most High (heresy number nine), the angels (heresy number ten), Prophet Adam (heresy number eleven), Prophet Jacob (Ya’qūb) (heresy number twelve) and Prophet Yūsuf (heresy

¹⁷⁸ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 41

¹⁷⁹ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 43

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 39

number thirteen). It was Allah who commanded it, the angels prostrated, Adam was content, and Jacob prostrated, and Joseph was pleased¹⁸¹.

Imām Ahmed Raza has pointed out how the above statements of Ismaīl go against the concepts and ideas of polytheism and respect (*Adab*) mentioned in the Holy Qur’an. Such texts would surely create further confusion for the Muslims at large as Ismaīl refused to recognise that not all prostration is polytheism but would depend upon the intention of the person who is prostrating.

1.4.9. Other heresies:

Imām Ahmed Raza countering the logic of the allegations of what Ismaīl said to be shirk in his book with counter arguments from the Holy Qur’an, His use of questionable language towards the Prophets, religious personalities, saints, angels and compares them with Satan and other demonic beings as argued by Imām Raza. Imām Ahmed Raza explained that shirk is not something that was once permissible and then later prohibited, it is something that has always been prohibited¹⁸². Below are more of such statements by Ismaīl Dehlawī from his book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*:

1. ‘During the era of the Holy Prophet the disbelievers did not believe their idols as equal to Allah but they use to regard them as His creation and His slaves. They also did not think the power of their idols to be equal unto Allah, but they would call them for help, vow things in their name, prepare offerings (*nazaroniyyāz*), and consider them as their advocates and intermediates. This was their unbelief (*kufṛ*) and shirk which they were guilty of, hence, whosoever regards these things in connection with anyone even if such a personality is believed to be a slave and creation of Allah, then such a person is similar to Abū Jahl in committing shirk¹⁸³.
2. ‘Then, whosoever does for a Shaykh (*Pīr*), Prophet, ghost or fairy [...] to travel to such a place with intention [...] may this be a grave [...] to honour the surroundings forest and bushes (in other words, not to hunt or sever trees) [...] are all acts Allah has revealed for His worship. Therefore, whosoever respects

¹⁸¹ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 41

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p.42

¹⁸³ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 39

the homes and its surrounding jungles of any prophet¹⁸⁴ or ghost will be charged with shirk, whether he thinks that such a personality deserves this respect or by doing so Allah will be pleased; in every way it is Shirk¹⁸⁵.

3. ‘No Prophet and no friend of Allah knows about one’s own conditions or about anybody else¹⁸⁶’.
4. ‘I (i.e., Prophet Muhammad) cannot help anybody nor can I plead for anybody before Allah; hence affairs of the hereafter must be put to right, and everybody should take care of his safety from Hell¹⁸⁷’.
5. ‘Whose name is Muhammad or Ali has no power whatsoever¹⁸⁸’.
6. ‘Thus, anyone who [...] even considers the sayings of the Apostle to be the code of Islam and thinks that the Apostle would say of his own whatever he liked, are all polytheism¹⁸⁹’.
7. ‘All the Prophets, saints and friends of Allah are lesser than the smallest of particles in the sight of Allah¹⁹⁰’.

¹⁸⁴ Imām Ahmed Raza wrote, ‘The Holy Prophet requested his Lord, “O Lord! I establish the space between the two mountains of Madīna as Sacred (Haram) just as Ibrahim demarcated Makkah as Sacred (Haram)”’. This is in Sahīh Bukhāri, in Volume 1 on page 251 and in Sahīh Muslim in Volume 1 on page 441; narrated from Anas. The Beloved Messenger of Allah said, “Verily, Ibrahim demarcated Makkah as Sacred and I demarcated Madina as Sacred, neither its branches should be cut nor its animal be hunted” This is in Sahih Muslim, in Volume 1 on page 440 narrated from Jābir b. Abdullah. These varieties of Prophetic narrations are abundant which can be found in the six authentic manuscripts of Hadith (Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Ibn Majah, Tirmidhi and Nasaai); in which the Holy Prophet announced and declared explicitly on the sacredness of Madīna and its trees and forests that must be respected just as the sacred city of Makkah and its surroundings are honoured. This is the view of the scholars of Shāfi, Mālikī and Hambalī, and of numerous Companions and Tābi’īn. The Hanafi scholars practise upon another Hadith which is stated in Sharh al-Ma’ān-al-Āthār of Imām Tahāwi; however, preference, comparison and abrogation are a different topics altogether. The focus is on the words of the Holy Prophet openly declared the reverence of Madina and its forests as compulsory ... Alas! You see? This individual’s entire endeavour was to charge Allah and His Messenger with Shirk! Woe to him, thousands of woes upon such filth! Ref: Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 41

¹⁸⁵ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 43

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 60

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 71

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 75

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 76

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 92

8. ‘All the creation, big or small (including Prophets, saints and friends of Allah) are more disgraceful (*zalīl*) than that of a cobbler (*chamār*) before the Glory of Allah¹⁹¹’.
9. ‘Everything happens with the will of Allah and nothing happens with the will of the Prophet¹⁹²’.
10. ‘That, all humans are brothers (*bhaī*) amongst each other, he who is an honoured person (*bara buzurgh*), is an elder brother (*bara bhaī*) and should only be respected as thus¹⁹³ [...] It can be said from the above hadith that all persons like Prophets, saints, friends of Allah, religious heads and their sons, however close they might be to Allah, are nothing but human beings and are therefore humble, and our brothers whom Allah has given greatness; hence we should obey them for we are younger, but they should be shown respect like a man only, and not like that of God¹⁹⁴’.
11. ‘In God’s presence, the condition of Prophet Muhammad who is the best creation of Allah among all the human beings, upon hearing an indecent remark from a bedouin (*aik gawār*) became terrified (*dehshat mārē*) and lost his senses (*bē hawās ho ga’ay*)¹⁹⁵’.
12. ‘Be cautious in praising a respected person and give him praise only like another human (*bashr kī sī ta’rīf ho, bas wohi karo*), even be brief in this (*in mē bi ikhtisār karo*)¹⁹⁶’.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, p. 46

¹⁹² Ibid, p. 94

¹⁹³ In the English translation, some of offensive part of the sentence has been removed and has been translated as, ‘That, all men are brethren and hence they deserve respects of one another’. Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (78).

¹⁹⁴ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 97

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 92

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 101

1.4.10 Shaykh Gangōhī's defence of Taqwiyyat-al-Īmān:

Rashīd Ahmed Gangōhī was said to be amongst the few who received the original Arabic version of the book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* before it was translated into Urdū by Shah Ismāīl Dehlawi himself¹⁹⁷. Gangōhī said;

Ismāīl was a pious scholar and a remover of innovation (*bidah*) and propagator of the Sunnah [...] he was a saint and martyr [...] His book *Taqwiyyat-ul-Īmān* is a great work, refuting shirk and bidah and it is the interpretation of the Book of God and the Ahādīth and to keep it and practise upon it is in accordance with the religion of Islam and a means to gain reward and the one who calls it malicious is a sinner (*fāsiq*) and innovator (*bidatī*). If a person due to his ignorance cannot comprehend its speciality, it is then his own fault and no fault of the author. Great scholars of righteousness have likened this book and have said that if any deviant calls it malicious, then he himself is astray and misguided¹⁹⁸.

As an advocate of Shah Ismāīl a question was sent to Gangohi relating to Ismāīl's statement, 'All the creation, big or small (including Prophets, saints and friends of Allah) are more disgraceful (*zalīl*) than that of a cobbler (*chamār*) before the glory of Allah¹⁹⁹', He said;

From this it means to show the greatness of Almighty Allah and that all the creation, no matter the level they belong to, hold no comparison to Him [...] And there can be no comparison with God in due respect to Him [...] The pride of creation (i.e., Muhammad), though he is most honoured from all creation and there is comparison to him (*mithl*) and nor will there be but in comparison to the Majesty of Almighty God, he is a created being and this is the whole truth. But those less intelligent due to their imprudence lessen the Glory of God Almighty and name this the love of the Messenger of God (*hubbē-Rasūl*)²⁰⁰.

Gangohī had not really answered the query of the questioner, as the question was hinting towards the words used for describing the creation of God in such a derogatory manner. In the way Gangohī has responded according to him there is nothing in this book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* which is against the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah and the only thing Gangohī has pointed

¹⁹⁷ Ashraf, A. p. 73

¹⁹⁸ Ahmed. R. *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*, M.S. Publishers, Deobandi, India. p. 78

¹⁹⁹ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 46

²⁰⁰ Ahmed. R. p. 84

out is that in some matters (*masā'il*) he has shown some austere approach [...] And he stresses again that anyone whose hold beliefs oppose to this book (i.e., *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*) is an open sinner and an innovator²⁰¹. It is clear from the statements of the Rector of Deoband that they fully support and endorse the above-mentioned book and see it as part of their system of faith (*aqīdah*). Putting this in perspective, the use of the term Wahhābī for the Deobandīs by Imām Ahmed Raza makes more sense understanding their position regarding the belief system of Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī. When Gangohī was asked if the Wahhābī sect was an outcast or accepted or if their beliefs were according to those of *Ahlē-Sunnah-wal-Jammah*? he replied by saying, 'At this time, the term Wahhābī is used for those who are followers of the Sunnah and are religious practicing people²⁰²'.

1.4.11. Ismaīl Dehlawī's refutation of Taqlīd:

Breaking with tradition had become something of normality to Ismaīl Dehlawī that he even went against the age-old tradition of following one of the four established Sunnī schools (*Madhabs*). In his early days Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvī stated:

Maulvī Ismaīl began to do *rafayadāin* and his was reported to Shah Abdul Azīz and advised that this would create trouble and if you would stop him from this? Shah Sahib replied, 'I am old now, I am not able to debate [...] Maulvī Ya'qūb approached Ismaīl and asked him to stop practising *rafayadāin* during prayer as it will cause commotion amongst the masses upon which Ismaīl replied, 'What will then be the meaning of the hadith, 'There will surely be commotion when someone revives a Sunnah'. When Maulvī Ya'qūb informed Shah Abdul Qādir of Ismaīl's answer, he replied, 'We thought Ismaīl had become a scholar (*Ālim*), but he has not understood the meaning of one hadith, this is in regards to when there is a thing against the Sunnah and in this case (i.e. *rafayadāin*), it is not something practised against a Sunnah but rather replaced with another Sunnah, because where practising *rafayadāin* is sunnah, not doing it is also sunnah'. Maulvī Ya'qūb

²⁰¹ Ibid. p. 85

²⁰² Ibid. p. 110

returned to Ismaīl and presented the answer to him and to which he remained silent²⁰³.

One of the reasons why Ismaīl's actions were taken note of and tolerated was since he was a family member of one of the most respectable scholarly families in India. It is possible that anyone would have thought that he would turn against the age-old traditions, and from the above event it does seem that they did not take his actions seriously at that stage. As Shāh Abdul Azīz Muhadith Dehlawī was old and frail, it became difficult to admonish Ismaīl on his misgivings. In his latter works and records we do find many contradictions in Shah Ismaīl's behaviour and a different approach to what he deemed as shirk extensively through his book. In regard to this behaviour Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thanvī stated, 'upon return from Hajj, they heard of the death of Shah Abdul Azīz and Syed Ahmed Barēlwī advised Shah Ismaīl to go to Delhi at once and also gave him his horse to ride for the journey. Shah Ismaīl dared not ride the horse out of respect as it belonged to his Shaykh and he held the horse by the reins from Luknow to Delhi²⁰⁴. It is possibly due to such many conflicting reports about Shah Ismaīl that in one place he despises all such practises of respect and honour towards any creation, but the rules change when it's his own Shaykh, surely these are double standards!

In his book, '*Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, Ismaīl Dehlawī mentioned:

In this era, people take many paths in matters of religion. They follow many rituals, some look to the stories of saints while others take the words of the cleric (Maulvī), which they have incepted from their minds and take as authority²⁰⁵, [...] 'To know the Messenger as the Messenger of God, in the manner that no other path is accepted by him²⁰⁶, [...] 'Because of these stories, they leave the words of God and His Messenger and let their thoughts intervene and follow made up stories and hold onto wrong ritualism. Had they looked into the word of God and His Messenger they would realise that the non-believers would also do the same before the Messenger of Allah²⁰⁷, [...] 'whoever prefers the way or explanations of any Īmām

²⁰³ Ashraf, A. p. 86

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 90

²⁰⁵ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). p. 33

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 35

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 37

or Mujtahid over the command of the Messenger of Allah or that he considers their reasoning over the Hadīth, then this will substantiate shirk²⁰⁸.

Ismaīl Dehlawī not only condemned the four established Sunni Schools of Law calling them many paths but has also questioned the rulings of the schools (*madhabs*) and their Īmāms. And he even went to the extent of calling this shirk too. He then compares the explanations of qualified scholars as stories and ritualism.

Ismaīl Dehlawī further mentioned:

And it is well known amongst the masses that it is difficult to comprehend the words of God and His Messenger and much knowledge is required for this, this is incorrect as Allah has said in the Holy Qur'an that it is easy and comprehensible and it is not difficult to understand, Allah says; 'We have sent down to thee Manifest Signs (*ayah*); and none reject them but those who are perverse²⁰⁹' (Q. 2:99) and also 'It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered a messenger from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom,- although they had been, before, in manifest error; (Q. 62:2)²¹⁰.

Imām Ahmed Raza questioned the motive behind such leniency towards the sacred text and its interpretation to the extent that he stated:

Allah said, 'And such are the Parables We set forth for mankind, but only those understand them who have knowledge' (Q. 29:43). This individual desire to rebel and open the doors of freedom of thought (*Ghāir muqaladī*) and *Deen-ē-Elāhī*²¹¹ that he states that it is wrong to say that one acquires knowledge to understand the Holy Qur'an²¹².

It is possible to understand the concerns that Imām Ahmed Raza had regarding allowing every individual their own understanding of the sacred text that this would create chaos and further

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 76

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 33

²¹⁰ Ibid, p. 34

²¹¹ The possible reason why Imām Ahmed Raza was comparing the Wahhābis to the *Deen-E-Ilāhī* of Akbar is because firstly Akbar saw himself independent of any tradition like a Prophet which Imām Raza believed the founders of the Wahhābi/Deobandī trying to do and not that Imām Ahmed Raza was arguing that the Wahhābis are advocating Akbar's syncretism.

²¹² Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 39

giving way to new ideologies outside the four established Sunni Schools like those of Isma'īl Dehlawī. As I shall discuss further how this new Wahhābī independent reasoning (*Ijtihād*) was used to further make blasphemy and derogatory statements against Allah and His Messenger a mere child's play to which Isma'īl Dehlawī had already laid the foundations to. Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī said, 'Even though it is unreasonable to call them (i.e., the Ahlē Hadīth) outcasts of Ahlē Sunnat, all muqalid and ghāir muqalid are one in our beliefs (aqā'id) and only differ upon the actions (*a'māl*)²¹³'. Again, and again the Deobandīs²¹⁴ are openly confirming that they do not differ with the Ahlē Hadīth on the basis of beliefs leaving no space for doubt on their beliefs and shared cases of blasphemy.

²¹³ Ahmed. R. p. 239

²¹⁴ The Deobandis contradict themselves in many places and their beliefs seem to change and they adapt them to where they are. They being advocates of Shah Isma'īl Dehlawi who calls seeking help from the Saints and the Prophets as polytheism yet the deobandis see it permissible and also relate such things to their elder as found in the following example: Maulāna Munazir Ahsan Gilani narrates an incidence on the authority of Maulāna Mahmudul Hasan, (another great Deobandi Scholar) who narrated about a young Maulāna who graduated from Darul Ulūm Deoband and went towards the province of Punjab [...] People from a small town appointed this young Maulana (from Darul Ulūm Deoband) as the Imam of their Masjid. The inhabitants of the town soon became friendly with this Maulana. After a few months, an evangelist Maulana came to this town and started preaching and giving lectures. A few people got impressed from this man. The evangelist asked who the Imam of the masjid was, and he was told about the young Maulana from Deoband. As soon as this evangelist Maulāna heard the name 'Deoband' he got furious and issued a verdict that all these months the salah performed behind this Deobandi Imam was not valid. The inhabitants of the town were very depressed and thought that they have not only wasted their money on this Deobandi Scholar (paying salary) but also their worship had become void. One man approached this Deobandi Scholar and said, Maulana either you refute this new preacher who has come in the town or else you decide what should we do? The young Deobandi Imām was much tensed and thought that he is now about to lose his job (as Imam) as his knowledge is less and this new preacher might give him lectures on Logic and Sufism (tassawuf). Having all these fear in mind, the young Maulana still accepted the debate challenge. Date, time, and place were fixed for the debate. On the appointed date the preacher came with his magnificent turban on his head, with loads of books and his supporters. Whereas this poor Deobandi Imām with dull face, feeble voice, full of fear appeared remembering Allah. The young Maulana narrated that before the discussion started, he realized some unknown man coming and sitting next to him and told him "Yes, start the discussion, don't fear". With this assurance he got some comfort and power in his heart. The Deobandi Imām continued and said after this he was not aware what was coming out from his tongue. The preacher did try to answer some question in the beginning, but then I saw that this preacher stood up and placed his head on my feet, his turban was all scattered, he was crying and saying "I did not know you were such a big scholar. Please forgive me for the sake of Allah. Whatever you are telling is truth and I was on fault". The scene was totally different as to what I had thought before starting the debate. The young Deobandi scholar said that the person who had come to help him suddenly disappeared." Hazrat Shaykhul Hind (Mawlana Mahmoodul Hasan) asked that young Deobandi Maulana about how the person looked who had had suddenly appeared and then disappeared, when he started to describe him, his every description matched that of Hazrat-al-Ustaādh (i.e., Nanotawi), when he finished describing I said, 'This was my teacher, who had come to help you by Allah.' Then in the footnotes to this event, it is stated: 'With regards to taking help (Imdād) from the spirits (arwāh) of the deceased pious Muslims, the scholars of the Deoband have the same belief which is the general belief of Ahlus sunnat wal jamaat. After all, Allah himself tells in Quran that angels provide help to human beings. It is narrated in many Sahih Hadith' [...]. Ref: Ahsan. M. Sawānē-Qāsimī tanī Sīrat Shams-ul-Islām, Vol. 1 (Urdu), Maktaba Rahmāniyyah, Lahore, Pakistan. P. 332

1.4.12. The Fatwa of Imām Ahmed Raza:

After mentioning the many blasphemous statements that were obviously intentional by Shah Ismāil Dehlawī, Imām Ahmed Raza concludes his edict as follows:

Qādi Ayād has stated in his *Al-Shifā*, ‘If anyone utters such a statement that declares the entire Ummah to be deviated, is surely a heretic (*Kāfir*)²¹⁵ [...] And Qādi Ayād also said, ‘In other words we understand the reality of that person who, with intention, criticised the glory of the Holy Prophet; another circumstance is simple to understand that neither the person had the intention of criticism and disdain nor devoted himself to it but such a person uttered some words of infidelity in connection with the Holy Prophet which was criticism; for example, he proclaimed something that was disrespect or evil or some form of criticism however such a person is seen externally as a one who would not have intended these evil words, but he blurted them out in intoxication or out of ignorance or in haste, his tongue did not have the power to impede such words; for such a person the verdict is the same as for the former; he must be killed without any delay²¹⁶ [...] And then Imām Raza related, It is stated in ‘*Sharh Fiqh-ul-Akbar*’, on page 201 from ‘*Majmu-ul-Fatāwa*’, ‘Whosoever says a phrase of kufr and the opposite person laughs at it (i.e. acknowledges it and does not refute it) then both of them became infidels, and if someone pronounces a kufr in a lecture and the audience acknowledge it then everyone became infidels²¹⁷ [...] ‘It is in *Bahār-ul-Rā’iq* on page 124, “Whosoever deems the words of the deviants as fine, or considers such words as meaningful or regards them as authentic, therefore if those words were Kufr then the one considered them good becomes a *Kāfir*²¹⁸ [...] ‘These Individuals (*Wahhābī*) always have this reluctant tendency and a trait of disposition that whenever they find any Muslim to be a follower of a certain Imam then they, fearlessly, slash a Muslim with the verdict of shirk, whereas from the Manifested Law, numerous authentic reports²¹⁹ (*Ahādīth*), scholars of Hadith and

²¹⁵ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 12

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 32

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 53

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 53

²¹⁹ To make it clear for the reader Imām Ahmed Raza mentioned the following Ahadīth showing the seriousness of calling another Muslim a non-Muslim and what this entails for the other. It is in Sahīh Bukhāri in Vol. 2 on p. 901 and in Sahīh Muslim in Vol. 1 on p. 57, narrated from Hazrat Abdullah b. Umar that the Holy Prophet declared, ‘If a person calls anyone who recites the declaration of faith (*Kalima*), a *Kāfir*, then this adversity will

judicial opinions²²⁰ are sufficiently enough to evidently and compulsory regard the Wahhābī as infidels. It is strange that this deviant sect claims to be the staunch followers of Authentic (*sahīh*) Ahādīth' [...] 'From this valid views of Islam and the authentic verdicts of the Scholars and Jurists, it is now evident and crystal clear that the charge of kufr on this individual (Ismaīl Dehlawī) is immensely incumbent because he, openly, unjustly and from his heart, declared Muslims as idolaters (*mushriks*) and this is evident from his literature; therefore the necessitating kufr on this person and on his views is not invalid' [...] 'In conclusion, it is manifest and indisputable that this deviant sect of Wahābiyah Ismaīliyah, their Imāms and their followers (Deobandī, Tablīghī Jamāt and Ahlē Hadīth) are plunged into such a situation that it is plain, evident and without a shadow of doubt that it is compulsory to regard them as infidels. Without doubt, as per in accordance with the verdicts of the scholars, consensus of the jurists and elaboration of the experts; all of them are apostates and infidels as per consensus; and it is obligatory and compulsory upon all of them to openly repent and abrogate their statements of apostasy and renew their faith with the recitation of the declaration of faith (*Kalima*). However, in my point of view, in the state of cautiousness²²¹, I hold my tongue (from labelling Ismaīl Dehlawī an infidel) And

befall on one of them, if the one was indeed a Kāfir upon whom the word Kāfir was proclaimed, then it is fine, otherwise this word will return to the one who proclaimed it'. It is in Sahīh Bukhāri on p. 893 and in Sahīh Muslim on p. 57, narrated from Abu Zarr that the Holy Prophet said, 'Whosoever claims someone to be filled with unbelief (kufr) or considers him to be the enemy of Allah and if this is not true then this remark of his returns to him'. Ref: Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 54

²²⁰ Imām Ahmed Raza further elaborates with the decision of renowned scholars, In Sharh Fiqh Akbar, p. 220, 'Everyone returned to the verdict of Imām Abū Bakr and declared *that anyone who verbally abuses a Muslim in this way becomes a disbeliever*'. It is narrated in Alamghīri, Vol. 2, p. 278 from Zuhaira; in Sharh Naqāya, Lucknow Publication, Vol. 4, p. 68 from Fusūl Amādi; in Hadīqatun Nādiyya, p. 140 -156, from Ahkām Hāshiya Darar; in Khazānatul Muftēn, Vol. 1, Kitāb Al-Sēr, Last section on the words of kufr; in Jāmi-ul Fasūlīn, Vol. 2, p. 311 from Qādhi Khān; in Bazāziya, Vol. 3, p. 331; in Raddul Muhtār, Istanbul Publication, Vol. 3, p. 283 from Nahrul Fā'iq, "In these types of matters the authentic view is that if a person labels a Muslim with such words with the intention of abusing him and in his heart he does not consider this Muslim as a disbeliever then such a person does not become a disbeliever. However, if he considers this Muslim as a disbeliever from his heart and soul then if he said such then the person becomes a disbeliever'. It is in Durrē Mukhtār, p. 293 from Sharh Wahbāniya, 'If someone considers a Muslim as an infidel then he himself is an infidel, this is the verdict'. In Jāmi-ul- Ramūz, Kolkata Publication 1274 AH., Vol. 4, p. 651, 'The authentic view is that if he recognises a Muslim as a Kāfir and proclaimed him as a Kāfir then he (the blamer) became a Kāfir" It is in Majma"ul-Anhar, Istanbul Publication, Vol.1, p. 566, 'If he declares it from his heart then he became an infidel'. Ref: Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 55

²²¹ Imām Ahmed Raza does not call Ismaīl Dehlawi an apostate or infidel and this could be due to many reasons, firstly being as reported by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi has related that Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī said upon writing Taqwiyyat al-l-Imān, 'I have written this book and I am aware that I have at times used strong and aggressive words, for example, those matters which were shirk-e-khaffī (inconspicuous polytheism) I have said them to be shirk-ê-Jallī (open polytheism). I suspect due to these matters there will be much commotion due to its

I adopt this, as per my will and consideration. Allah Knows best! All praises are due to Allah, this comprehensive answer was completed on the first of Jamādī-ul-Ākhir, on the blessed day of Jummuah, in 1312 A.H, and as per its date the name of this literature was, ‘*Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*²²².

From the above words of Imām Ahmed Raza it is evident that he was not on a mission to make everyone an infidel but was using the religious sources to suggest the contempt and the seriousness of the issue according to the classical tradition of Islam. Even after stating the various statements which were obviously seen offensive by Imām Ahmed Raza, he still did not call Ismaīl a heretic and the reason for his caution is obvious that there were rumours that Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī had repented²²³ from the blasphemous statements made by him in his works. When asked regarding the status of Ismaīl Dehlawī, Imām Raza stated:

I believe that his (i.e., Ismaīl’s) case is similar to Yazīds, if anyone declares him a heretic (*kāfir*), we will not stop them, but I will not indorse it either. Besides this, to doubt the unbelief (kufr) of any of the following, he will become a heretic (*Kāfir* himself) i.e., Ghulām Ahmed, Syed Ahmed, Khalīl Ahmed, Rashīd Ahmed and Ashraf Ali²²⁴.

Imām Ahmed Raza’s advice to the Wahhābīs:

If you are desirous to be Muslims then instil the honour of Prophet Muhammad inside your hearts and detach yourself from those who insult the blessed personality of Muhammad²²⁵.

Imām Ahmed Raza mentioned this to all those who hold Ismaīl Dehlawī and his book in high esteem to repent from the blasphemy and retract from agreeing to his works and this would end

publication [...] I have written this book in spite the commotion it will cause, but I hope that after the discord and friction, the matter will be resolved, this is what I think.’ Ashraf, Ali, *Arwāhê-Thallātha* (Karachi: Dar ul-Isha’at) p. 74. Here it is clear from this statement of Ismaīl that he may have wanted to change or even alter some of the language used in his book.

²²² Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 60

²²³ Ahmed. R. *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*, M.S. Publishers, Deobandi, India. p. 84

²²⁴ Khan. A. R. *al-Malfūzāt*. Farid Book Stall, Lahore, Pakistan. p. 110

²²⁵ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 31

the divide in the Ummah. After looking at the issue, which is regarding words which are seen not befitting the lofty status of God's beloved persons and using language which would be considered inappropriate and unorthodox. It is quite apparent that Imām Raza uses works of authoritative personalities from classical Islamic law as is not surprising as his role as a Mufti. So, the only solution to this from Imām Ahmed Raza would be the other to repent and retract and return to the pristine teachings of Sunni Islam for those in question.

1.5. Conclusion

The work *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* was essentially written by Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī underlining the core beliefs of the new movement which Imām Ahmed Raza labelled as Wahhābīs. Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī distanced himself from the Hanafi School and became a follower of Syed Ahmed Barēlwī under the spiritual movement named *Tariqah-e-Muhammadiyah*.

It can thus be argued that it is not for the writer of any book to use words deemed as offensive for the creation when being compared to the creator for example the creation is lesser than the smallest of particles in the sight of Allah (*Zarra najīz sē be kam hēin*). The use of hurtful words and their context could cause theological issues as previously discussed as something that is not taken lightly which can become the cause of disagreement and division.

The *Tariqah-e-Muhammadiyah*²²⁶ movement and more so the book *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* was met with a lot of opposition upon the liberal approach and being insensitive to religious ideas of others and regardless of the consequences and the friction this book would cause, it was printed and widely distributed and received much criticism from Sunni scholars throughout India. *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* was not welcomed by the majority of Sunni Muslims and thus Shah Ismaīl and Abdul Hay were alone in the famous debate between the two and the rest of the Scholars of Delhi on the other side. After the publication of this book, there were small numbers of followers and sympathisers of the new Wahhābī movement throughout India.

²²⁶ The Tariqqah Muhammadiyyah was named as an infusion of Sufi elements and austere Wahhabi beliefs possibly because the original Wahhabi approach was not welcomed as these ideas were seen as alien in India where Sufism was a way of life for Muslims at large.

One of the main critics of Shah Isma'īl was his class fellow Shah Fazlē Haq Khairabādi, he had written a treatise condemning his ideas and labelled Isma'īl as a heretic. The *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* has been the creedal representation of the Deobandī and Ahlē-Hadith schools in South Asia.

With the publication of the *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān*, there became a divide within the Sunni school in India. Imām Ahmed Raza saw the Deobandīs and the Ahlē Hadīth schools as representation of the Wahhābī movement which began in Saudi Arabia by Sheikh Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb. The *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* is said to contain language not befitting the honour and respect due to Prophets (*Ambiyyah*), Angels (*Malāika*) and the Saints (*Awliyā-Allah*). Though this book has been a dividing factor amongst the Sunni's in South Asia, it is still printed and has even been translated into various languages by its followers, but there does not seem to be any compromise on both sides between the Wahhābī factions and the Barēlwī school.

It is clear that the book in question contained many issues and matters that could be argued to be out of context and the use of words seen as derogatory for the Creator, the Prophets and other religious personalities according to Imām Ahmed Raza. The blasphemous words are mainly used when comparing something between the Creator and the creation and no consideration is given to the sensibilities of any creation. The books contents are still debated until the present day and there seems to be no compromise on either side to deal with these issues and I do not think minimalism (*sulla kul*) is something that is a popular concept within the Sunni Muslims of South Asia. The younger Muslims amongst the South Asian Muslims are more informed of these theological debates compared to their fathers who came to the UK as migrant workers, and this is possible due to the fact each denomination has its own Mosques and Madrassahs and it is quite easy to spot one from the other.

Chapter 3. The Tahzīr ul-Nās of Muhammed Qāsim Nanōtawī

In this chapter I will analyse how certain statements of the book *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* written by Maulāna Muhammad Qāsim Nanōtawī (1833-1877) were seen as contentious by Imām Raza and his rebuttal. I will also look at how Nanōtawī interprets the report (*Athar*²²⁷) of Ibn Abbas, his understanding of the term finality of Prophethood and the possibility of another Prophet coming after Prophet Muhammad.

Muhammad Qāsim's family had long been connected with the scholars of Delhi. Qāsim completed his early education in the local school. He had known Hājī Imdādullah (1815-1899) from a young age who would visit Nanotah as his mother was from this area. Due to family disputes, Qāsim was sent to Deobandī to live with relatives and studied under local shaykhs. In 1843, When Maulāna Malūk Ali returned from Hajj, he took his nephew Qāsim and his own son Ya'qūb with him to Delhi in order to broaden their educational opportunities. There, Qāsim met Rashīd Ahmed, who had also come from Gangoh to study from Mamluk Ali. In 1850, he took up employment in the Matba Ahmedi, the pioneering printing house of Maulāna Ahmed Ali that had been founded five years earlier to print collections of Ahadīth and works of Shah Wali-Ullah²²⁸. It was during this time that the foundation for Darul Ulūm Deoband was laid. After a little while, he went to Deoband and saw to every aspect of the Madrasa. He performed his first Hajj in 1860 and his second Hajj in 1285 A.H and the third in 1294 A.H. Upon return from this Hajj his illness began, which proved to be fatal. He passed away on Thursday 4 Jumada al ula 1297 A.H (1879).

3.1. Why was Tahzīr-ul-Nās written?

The *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* was written in response to a question raised upon the *Athar* (*pl. āthār*) of Ibn Abbās by a relative of Nanotawī, a Maulāna Ahsan Nanotawī²²⁹ (d. 1895) from the town

²²⁷ An Athar is a term used for what is narrated by the companions (Sahāba) and their followers and this does not have any mention of the Holy Prophet.

²²⁸ Metcalf. B, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deobandi, 1860-1900*. Princeton University Press. United Kingdom. 1982. P. 78

²²⁹ Maulāna Ahsan Nanotawī was from the family of Maulāna Hāshim of Nanota who was from the heirs of the first Caliph of Islam, Abū Bakr Siddique, India. Maulāna Hassan was the son of Hāfiz Luft Ali and his exact date of birth is unknown but Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvī has stated that his approximate date of birth would be 1825.

of Barēilly in UP, India. We are aware that the issue of *Imkān-ē-Kizb* and *Imkān-ē-Nazīr* had already been dealt with by Fazl-Ḥaq Khāirabādī and these issues had extended to the Deobandīs and the Ahl-Ḥadīth movements. The issue in regard to the *Athar* of Ibn Abbās was firstly raised by the Ahl-Ḥadīth scholar Amīr Ahmed Sahsawani²³⁰ (d. 1889)²³¹. In 1871, a debate took place between the student of Fazl-Ḥaq and the son of Shah Fazl-Ḥaq Rasūl Badāyuni²³² (d. 1872), Abdul Qādir Badāyuni²³³ (d. 1901) and the Ahl-Ḥadīth scholar Amīr Ahmed Sahsawani. Maulana Muhammad Nazīr Sahsawani (d. 1881) published the details of the debate according to his account of the events as '*Munāzarah-Ahmedīyyah*'. Part of the

Initially Maulāna Hassan was tutored at home from his father and memorised the Qur'an at home. Hassan's paternal uncle Maulāna Mamlūk Ali was a senior lecturer in Delhi, so Hassan travelled to Delhi for further education under the tutelage of his uncle. It is also worth mentioning that Maulāna Hassan's family had family ties with the famous Sufi Master, Hāji Imdādullah Muhājir Makki and most of these families were under his spiritual mentorship and also studied English at the Delhi College and studied theology under Shah Abdul Ghani Mujjaddadi and Maulāna Ahmed Ali Muhadith Sahāranpurī. Hassan became a disciple of the Naqshbandī Tarīqah at the hands of Shah Ishāq Dehlawī who was the Grand Sheikh at the Shrine of Hazrat Mirza Mazhar -Jānēyānah. Maulāna Hassan was employed by the East India Company and moved to Banāras for about five years as the College had opened a branch there. He moved to Bareilly in 1851 after the opening of the Bareilly branch of the College. During the Mutiny in 1857, on Friday the 22nd of May, Maulāna Hassan Nanotawi gave a sermon in the NoMahala Mosque stating that it was against the law to fight against the British, due to which he left the city as the Muslims went against him and it became a danger to his life. The work *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* was first printed by Hassan Nanotawī printing press in Barēilly in the year 1873. Maulāna Hassan left Bareilly in 1877 after the closure of the Bareilly branch of the Delhi College by the East Indian Company and travelled back to his home town of Nanota and died in the year 1895. Ref: Ayub. M. *Maulana Mohammed Hassan Nanotawi* (Urdu). Javaid Press, Karachi, Pakistan. 1966

²³⁰ Maulāna Syed Amīr Ahmed Sahsawani was the son of Maulāna Syed Amīr Hassan and was renowned scholar in the Ahl-Ḥadīth circles, he was a student of the famed Ahl-Ḥadīth scholar Shaikh Muhammad Bashīr Sahsawani (d. 1908). Syed Amīr Ahmed was given the religious title of '*Shams-ul-Ullama*', he died in the year 1888. Ref: Irāqi, A. I. A. *Chalīs Ullama-ē-Ahl-Ḥadīth* (Urdu). Numānī Kutub Khāna, Lahore, Pakistan. P. 65

²³¹ Hassan. M. K. *Lam'āt bar-sawālāt* (Urdu). Hazrat Qamar Raza Foundation, Barēilly, UP, India. P. 215

²³² Shah Fazl-Ḥaq-Rasūl was born in the year 1798 Badayūn in India. He received his early education from his father Shah Majīd. Then he travelled to Luknow and studied under Maulāna Nūr-ul-Haqq, disciple of Bahr-ul-lūm Farangī Mahal, Luknow. He gave Bāyat to his father and was granted permission in all Sufi Tariqahs. Alongside his expertise in Islamic sciences, he also practiced medicine and advised people in law, spiritual and herbal medicine. Besides his services to religion, teaching and other duties he also spent time writing and produced many works like Saif-ul-Jabbār, Fauzal-Mubīn and many others. He died in the year 1872 and is buried in the Badayūn in the Courtyard of the Dargah (Sufi lodge). The Scholars of Badayūn were active in dissemination of their Aqidah in refutation of sects which they considered heretical.

²³³ Shah Abdul Qādir was the son of Shah Fazl-Ḥaq-Rasūl Badayūni and was born in the year 1837. His father passed away when he was at the tender age of eight and studied Arabic and Persian at a young age and began to learn the Islamic sciences from different teachers at the Madrasa-Qādiriyyah. He was a quick learner and enjoyed learning and was a student of Shah Fazl-Ḥaq Khairabādī and Hazrat, Hakīm Barakār Ahmed Tounghī. He gave Bayāh to his elder brother, who was the head of the Sufi Order Syed, Shah Mutī' ul-Rasūl, Muhammad Abdul Muqtadir Qādri. After the death of his elder brother, he became the head of the Sufi lodge. During his visit and travel throughout the Middle East, he was welcomed and was given official protocol and welcomed by the religious authorities and political heads of these states and countries. He is also remembered for his religious poetry. He was involved in the freedom struggle against the British and was part of the Khilafat movement and part of the tark-ē-māmulāt (boycotting action) and died in the year 1920 and was buried next to his Sufi Master in Badayūn. Ref: Qādir. A. *Masnavi-ē-Ghausia* (Urdu). Tāj-ul-Fahūl Academy, Badaūn, (UP), India. 2008

debate involved a discussion on the *Athar* of Ibn Abbas²³⁴. Maulāna Muhammad Ahsan Nanotawī's name was amongst those who signed and agreed to the belief presented by the Ahlē Hadīth in *Munāzarah-Ahmedīyyah*, when this signed document had reached the Sunni scholars of Barēilly, a letter for questioning his belief on this issue was sent to him by Maulāna Naqī Ali Khān²³⁵ (d. 1880), the father of Imām Raza but he declined to answer. Then a second letter was sent to him to clarify his position on the *Athar* of Ibn Abbas when he could not find a way out, he wrote to his relative Qāsim Nanotawī to reply to this²³⁶.

The book *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* was written as a form of legal response to the *Athar* of Ibn Abbas about Prophets on six planets (earths) and the status of finality of Prophet Muhammad which was unique and not to be understood as it is by the common man. He discussed in length his concept of finality of Prophethood which was not to be understood chronologically otherwise it would not do justice the real status of finality of Prophet Muhammad as discussed in later parts of this chapter.

Syed Shujāt Ali Jillānī stated that Maulāna Naqī Ali Khān was jealous of the fame of Maulāna Muhammad Ahsan Nanotawī in the city of Bareilly and this was the primary reason for the whole propaganda against Ahsan Nanotawī²³⁷. While assessing the whole record of events, it was clear that Ahsan Nanotawī signed a document favouring the Ahlē Hadīth after the debate thus fuelling further tensions locally and throughout the region. And it was only fair on the part of those concerned who had written letters to Ahsan Nanotawī to enquire about his beliefs before any edict (*fatwa*) be issued against him and this is exactly what had happened. Hafiz Baksh Anolvī has stated that Maulana Rehmat Hassan had written to Ahsan Nanotawī asking if he has replied to the letter of Naqī Ali Khan upon which Nanotawī expressed himself that this is an error and that he will repent if a mistake was made and that, 'no such thing was presented or he was made aware of and that Maulāna Naqī Ali Khān had given the verdict of heresy (kufr) against me', [...] But it is known that no such edict was given by the noble

²³⁴ Ali. S. *Tahzīr-ul-Nās: aik tahqīqī Mutāla'* (Urdu). Idārah Tahqīqātē Ahlē Sunnat, Lahore, Pakistan. 2008. P. 14

²³⁵ Maulana Naqī Ali Khan was born in Bareilly 1830. He completed his education from his father, Maulāna Raza Ali Khan was known as a renowned scholar of his era. He began writing edicts under the guidance of his father and gave edicts and answered religious quires until his demise. Maulāna had three sons and a daughter, namely Maulāna Ahmed Raza Khan, Maulāna Hassan Raza Khan and Maulāna Muhammad Raza Khan. Maulāna Naqī Ali Khān visited Marehrā with his son Ahmed Raza and became disciples of Shah Aalē-Rasūl in the Qādiriyyah Sufi Order. Maulāna Naqī Ali Khan wrote 26 known books on different religious topics and his died at the age of 51 in the year 1880 and was laid to rest next to his father in Bareilly.

²³⁶ Hassan. M. K. *Lam'āt bar-sawālāt* (Urdu). Hazrat Qamar Raza Foundation, Barēilly, UP, India. P. 217

²³⁷ Ali. S. *Tahzīr-ul-Nās: aik tahqīqī Mutāla'* (Urdu). Idārah Tahqīqātē Ahlē Sunnat, Lahore, Pakistan. 2008. P. 15

scholar²³⁸. A full explanation has been recorded by Hafiz Baksh detailing the whole saga of events of Ahsan Nanotawī and how he lost total respect when signing this document created by the *Ahle-Hadith* accepting their beliefs of the *Munazira Ahmediyyah*. Ahsan then wrote to his relative Maulāna Qāsim Nanotawī for an answer which was named *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* and was first printed in 1873 and was almost identical to the *Ahlē Hadīth* beliefs found in the *Munāzarah-Ahmediyyah* regarding the *Athar* of Ibn Abbās with some additions made by Qāsim Nanotawī himself.

When the distribution of the book *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* spread in different parts of India, it had also reached Delhi, Maulāna Nanotawī debated with Maulāna Mohammed Shah Punjabi (d. 1888), after the debate a transcript was prepared by a Maulāna Abdul Ghafār. These were then sent to eminent Sunni scholars of Delhi, Luknow, Rāmpur, Badayūn, Mumbai and other cities of India and their decisions as to who was on the truth (*haq*) and who was on falsehood (*bātil*) in their beliefs and statements²³⁹. The scholars of these cities favoured the statements of Zayd (i.e., Maulāna Mohammed Shah Punjabi) as being upon the correct beliefs and wrote Amr (i.e., Qāsim Nanotawī) to hold false beliefs. This was then collected and produced as a treatise of the debate and the decision of the *Sunni Ullama*, the treatise was named *Ibtal Aghlāt Qāsimiyyah* around the year 1882. Maulāna Thānvi stated the damage this book caused to the reputation of Nanotawī that, ‘no one from the whole of India supported him except Maulāna Abdul Haiy when he wrote *Tahzīr-ul-Nās*²⁴⁰’.

The *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* was completed in the year 1290 AH (1873 AD) and a rebuttal was written in 1291 AH by Mufti, Hāfiz Baksh Badayūnī called ‘*Tanbih-ul-Juhāl bi-ahlāmīl-basasatul-mutāl*²⁴¹ labelling Maulāna Nanotawī a heretic (*kāfir*)²⁴² and another was written by Maulana Fasīh Uddīn Badayūni who had written the work *Qaul ul-Fasīh* in refutation of Nanotawī.

²³⁸ Baksh. A. *Tanbih-ul-Juhāl* (Urdu). Ref: < [Tanbeeh Ul Juhaal Rad E Takhzeer Un Naas](#), Hafiz Baksh Anolvi: > [accessed on 02.09.2021 17:14]

²³⁹ Abdul-Ghaffār. *Ibtāl Aghlāt Qāsimiyyah* (Urdu) < [AbtalEAglatQasmiya.pdf](#) (nafseislam.com)> [accessed on: 02.08.2021 17:54] p. 40

²⁴⁰ Ali. A. *Malfūzāt Hakīm ul-Ummat* (Urdu), Idārah Ta’līfātē-Ashrafyyah, Multān, Pakistan, Vol, 5. P. 296

²⁴¹ Bahsh. B. *Tanbih-ul-Juhāl bi-ahlāmīl-basasatul-mutāl* (Urdu). <<https://archive.org/details/TanbeehUlJuhaalRadETakhzeerUnNaas/mode/2up>> [22.06.23. 14:21] > [22.06.23. 14:21]

²⁴² Baksh. B. *Abtāl Aghlāt Qāsimiyyah* (Urdu). Ref: <<https://archive.org/details/AbtalEAglatQasmiya/mode/2up>> [accessed on 08.08.2022 14:56]

Maulāna Anwārullah Farūqī (d. 1917)²⁴³, a deputy (*Khalifah*) of Hāji Imdādullah Muhājir Makki also wrote in a refutation of the *Tahzīr ul-Nās* called *Anwār-ul-Ahmedī*²⁴⁴. All the above mentioned works were written prior to the edict of Imām Ahmed Raza.

3.2. The narration of Ibn Abbās

The narration (*Athar*) of Ibn Abbās is as follows:

Verily, Allah created seven earths. In each earth is an Ādam like your Ādam, a Noah (Nūḥ) like your Noah, an Abraham (Ibrāhīm) like your Abraham, a Jesus (‘Īsā) like your Jesus and a Prophet like your Prophet²⁴⁵.

About this about narration, Shaykh Ghulām Nasīr Uddīn Siālvi has stated:

The principle is when a *Marfu*²⁴⁶ report (hadith) contradicts a verse of the Holy Qur’ān, it will be interpreted accordingly. But Mr Nanotawī took the narration of Ibn Abbās even though Ibn Hajr Asqalānī (d. 1449) in his *Fath-ul-Bārī*, Ibn Hajr Makkī (d. 1566) in his *Fatāwā Hādīthiyyah* stated this to be *Shādh*²⁴⁷ whereas

²⁴³ Maulāna Anwār-Ullah Farūqī belonged to the descendants of the second Caliph of Islam, Umr al-Farūq through his ancestors Shaykh Badr Uddīn Sulaimān who was the eldest son of Shaykh, Babā Farīd ddīn Ganj-Shakr (d. 1266) and was the son of Shuja’Uddīn Mīr Adl (d. 1871) and born in the year 1846 in the town of Kandhar in Maharashtra, India. His Grandfather Qāzī Sirāj- Uddīn was the Qāzī (Mufti) of the town and well respected in the community. He completed his initial studies with his father and then He studied jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and logic under Maulana Abdul Haleem Firangi Mahalli and He studied some works of jurisprudence under Maulvi Fayyazuddin Aurangabadi as well. He studied exegesis of the Quran (*Tafseer*) Shaykh ‘Abdullah Yemeni and received his authorization in Hadith from the same Shaykh. He performed the pilgrimage in the year 1264 where he met the great Shaykh Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki to whom he pledged allegiance and from whom he also received ijazah. He was selected as a teacher by the ruler of the Deccan: Mahbub Ali Khan the sixth Nizam. In the year 1301 he travelled for his second pilgrimage and in the 1305 for a third, taking up residence in Madinah the Illuminated for three years. He returned to Hyderabad in the year 1308 and was appointed a teacher by the crown prince Uthman Ali Khan, and when the ruler of the Deccan Mahbub Ali Khan passed away in the year 1329 Uthman Ali Khan became the seventh Nizam in the year 1330. He proceeded to appoint Mawlana Anwarullah the minister of Awqaf in the year 1332 and gave him the title ‘*Nawab Fadilat Jung*’. He would teach the *Futuhat al-Makkiyyah* after Maghrib till the middle of the night and had an immense respect for Shaykh Muhyiuddin Ibn Arabi. Towards the end of his life he would spend his nights with matters relating to knowledge and would sleep after Fajr until the break of day. He was also known for his love for collecting rare books. He passed away after Jumadi al-Akhir in the year 1917 and was buried in the Madrassa al-Nizamia which he founded.

²⁴⁴ Anwārullah. M. *Anwār-ē-Ahmedī* (Urdu). Maktaba Jām-ē-Nūr, New Delhi, India

²⁴⁵ Q. M. *Tahzīr-un-Nās* (Urdu), Dār-ul-Kutub, Deoband, India, (1997). P. 3

²⁴⁶ Technically marfu` means a hadith attributed to the Messenger of Allah and a companion (sahābī) narrates it.

²⁴⁷ A hadith is *Shadh* when a trusted narrator brings a hadith that opposes the narrations of other trusted narrators.

Mullah Alī Qārī (d. 1605), Sahāwī (d. 1497), Suyūtī (d. 1505), Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), Abū Hayyān Andulūsī (d. 1362), Ismāīl Hāqqī (d. 1725) have all stated this to be a Jewish tradition (*Israīliyyāt*)²⁴⁸.

This report of Ibn Abbās is ambiguous of its context and its interpretation as Shaykh Siālvi further stated:

This report is *Shādh* and no authority of religion has agreed to its meaning in word nor is this well-known (*mashūr*). It is considered less than the narrators with a single reporter (*Khabar-ē-Ahād*). Then how can this be accepted in terms of belief?²⁴⁹

The Deobandī scholar Anwar Shah Kashmīrī²⁵⁰ (d. 1933) in his commentary of Sahīh Bukhārī, namely *Fāiz-ul-Bāri sharh Sahīh Bukhāri* he said:

When this has been said to be *Shādh* and weak (*daīf*) by these scholars and it is not acceptable in the matter of beliefs and as its meaning is not apparent from it. Then how can it be correct to use this to lay the foundation and to explain that which is from established proofs and then devising a meaning of a verse of the Holy Qur'an²⁵¹?

Shaykh, Syed Muhammad Madanī Mīah²⁵² Ashrafī (b. 1938), a prominent Barēlwī scholar belonging to the Shaykhs of Kochocha Sharīf, a Sūfī lodge in India had stated about the Athar of Ibn Abbās:

²⁴⁸ Nasīr-Uddīn. G. Athar Ibn Abbās par Muhaqqāna Nazar (Urdu) <<https://archive.org/details/asar-ibn-e-abbas-par-muhaqqana-nazar-by-allama-ghulam-naseer/page/702/mode/2up>> [Accessed 07.05.2021 09:08]

²⁴⁹ Nasīr-Uddīn. G. Athar Ibn Abbās par Muhaqqāna Nazar (Urdu) <<https://archive.org/details/asar-ibn-e-abbas-par-muhaqqana-nazar-by-allama-ghulam-naseer/page/702/mode/2up>> [Accessed 07.05.2021 09:08]

²⁵⁰ Syed Anwar Shah Kashmīrī was born in the year 1875 was a Kashmiri Muslim scholar and jurist who served as the first principal of Madrasa Amīnia and the fourth principal of the Darul Ul-Ulūm Deoband. He was a student of Mahmud Hasan Deobandi. Aged four, he started reading the Quran under the instruction of his father, Muazzam Ali Shah. In 1889, he relocated to Deoband, where he studied at the Darul ul-Ulūm for three years. After graduating from Darul ul-Ulūm, he taught in Madrasa Amīnia, Delhi, serving as its first principal. In 1903 he went to Kashmir, where he established Faiz-ē A'am Madrasah. Later he returned to Deoband to teach and taught Hadīth for nearly twenty years and resigned in 1927. In 1933, Shah became ill and travelled to Deoband for medical care. He continued addressing students there until he died on 28 May 1933. He was survived by his elder son Azhar Shah Qaiser and younger son Anzar Shah Kashmiri.

²⁵¹ Ibid

²⁵² Syed Mohammed Madni Ashraf often referred to as Madanī Mīah was born in the year 1938. He is the Guardian and successor of the Syeds of Kachocha Sharif, India. His father Muhadith Azam was a student of Imām Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilwi. Madani Miah is a renowned Muslim theologian, Scholar and Spiritual leader. Known

From this narration, it only stated that there are six other levels (worlds) besides the earth and that on each earth there are prophets who are sent to guide those people. It is obvious that there will also be a first and a last prophet and this report also compares their beginning with that of ours and their ending with ours but in the report there is nothing to suggest that their prophets of the likes of Adam, Noah, Abraham etc. were contemporary to our prophets or if there were before or after them [...] The report does suggest both Messengers (*rasūl*) and Prophets (*nabī*) existed there too. Now what remains is the issue of the last (*khātam*) prophet of each of these worlds, were they before or after each other or contemporaries in each of their worlds? The report is silent upon this part. If we keep in mind the last Prophet (*Khātam*) of our world compared to those of the other worlds, there are four logical possibilities: (1) All or some of the last prophets of the other worlds came after the time of the Holy Prophet, (2) Or they were before i.e., they were not contemporaries of the Holy Prophet, (3) they be contemporaries and bringers of new law (4) they are contemporaries and are only prophets (*nabī*). In the first example as previously explained that there is possibility of a prophet after Prophet Muhammad. In the second example, the Holy Prophet would be the sole last (*khātam*) for the universe thus there would be no reason for that anyone would try to change the known meaning of the word. In the case of the fourth example, which would also be rejected as the evidence (*nusūs*) about the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad is universal thus making it universal Messengership (*Risālat-ē-Āma*), thus the fourth example would be rejected and void. The reason being is if any of the last prophets of the other worlds were contemporary to our Prophet, this would limit the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad to our world and would not be universally last. Even though the words of God and the Prophet of Allah said, ‘I am the final Messenger (*ana Khātaman-Nabiyīn*) is clearly showing that the Holy Prophet is the last (*khātam*) of every prophet, no matter which world they belong to [...] The Holy Prophet being the last of all the prophets is his speciality and if someone became a part of this then this would no longer be specific to Prophet Muhammad [...] To make the report of Ibn Abbās acceptable is to consider that the prophets of the other worlds existed before the era of Prophet Muhammad but

for his eloquent speeches, he is an expert of Islamic Philosophy, Islamic Sacred Law and Fiqh (Jurisprudence). He has authored many works on various religious topics including his own Tafsīr (Qur’anic exegesis).

one grave error that exists is that in this report is how the last prophets of the other worlds have been compared with Prophet Muhammad, even though this may include prophethood or being last or in characteristics of Prophethood or its superiority. No prophet regardless of which world he belongs to has any comparison with that of Prophet Muhammad and the reason being is that his Prophethood includes the universe which other prophets have not been privileged with. The finality of our Prophet is universal (*haqīqī*) and that of the others is limited (*idāfī*) to a specific place, how then can there be any comparison between our Prophet and the others when there is such a great difference between them²⁵³.

Shaykh Madanī Miah has shed light on a lot of information about the narration of Ibn Abbās, though, there is a difference of opinion about its authenticity and the actual context and its meaning, but it is possible to understand why this was made an issue of to cause further conflict and divide when it could have been avoided. After the religious controversies of Ismāīl Dehlawī, this narration was being used to create commotion in the Muslim community to try to make sense of the statement of Shah Ismāīl on the possibility of God creating a thousand like Prophet Muhammad respectfully. The narration has never been used to create contentions amongst the Muslim community and to further the Wahhābī ideology of Ismāīl Dehlawī. Though there is difference upon the authenticity of the Athar of Ibn Abbas, it was rather how it was being used by the Ahlē Hadīth and the Deobandīs upon the above-mentioned issues.

3.2.1. A new Prophetology of Muhammad Qāsim Nanotawī

Mohammed is not the father of any of your men; yes, He is the Messenger of Allah and the last one among all the prophets. And Allah knows all things. (Q. 33:40)

This Qur'anic verse is very important in Islamic theology as it is clearly stating that Prophet Muhammad is the last and final Prophet and Messenger of God, there will be no further Prophets or revelation thereafter. There is no difference amongst the Muslims from the common man to the scholars of the religion and the men of understanding that the term 'Last of the Prophets' (*Khātām-ul-Nabiyyīn*) means just that and this is how it has been understood and taught by the Holy Prophet himself, his companions and those after them and there has

²⁵³ Madani. M. *Khatam-ē-Nabuwwat aur Tahzī-ul-Nās* (Urdu). Global Islamic Mission, New York, USA. 2007. P. 30

been no difference upon this and there is a consensus (*ijma*) of the Muslim community upon this meaning and understanding of the term mentioned.

Nanotawī has stated in the introduction of his book *Tahzīr-ul-Nās*:

After praising (Allah) and (sending) blessings (on the Prophet): Before presenting an answer, it is submitted that first the meaning of “the Seal of Prophets” (*Khātām al-Nabiyyīn*) should be understood so no time is taken in understanding the answer. Hence, in the understanding of the common people (*awām kē khiyāl mein*), the Messenger of Allah being the “seal” is with the meaning that his time comes after the time of the previous prophets, and he is the last of all prophets. However, it is clear to men of understanding (*ahlē feham*) that there is no intrinsic virtue (*bil-dhāt kuch fazīlat nahī*) in coming earlier or later in time. Then, how can it be valid, in this case, that” but the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of Prophets” (Q. 33:40) is in a context of praise (*maqām-ē-Madah*)? Yes, if this description is not regarded as being from the attributes of praise, and this context is not determined as a context of praise, then certainly “sealship” in terms of chronological lateness (*ta’akhur-ē-zamānī*) may be valid. But I know that no one from the adherents of Islām can accept this because, firstly, there will be an assumption of excess in speech (*ziyāda gohī*) with respect to the Lord. Ultimately, what is the difference between this attribute and attributes of stature and height, form and colour, family and lineage, residence and so on, which have no involvement in prophethood or other merits, such that this one is mentioned, and others are not mentioned? Secondly, there will be an assumption of lessening the status of the Messenger of Allah because it is the perfections of the people of perfection that are mentioned, and such circumstances are described of such people. If heed has not been taken, then review the histories. The possibility remains: This religion is the last religion. Hence, it blocked the door to following claimants to prophethood who, by making a false claim to everyone, will misguide people. Although, in itself is worthy of attention, but then what will be the viability of the sentence, “Muḥammad is not the father of any of your men” and the sentence “but the messenger of Allāh and the Seal of Prophets,” in which one has been made a conjunction to the other, and one has been made the subject of correction (*mustadrak minhu*) and the other a correction (*istidrāk*)? It is obvious that this kind of disconnectedness and unsuitability is inconceivable in the inimitable, ordered, speech of God. If closing the aforementioned door was kept in

view, then there were scores of other opportunities. Rather, seal-ship is based on something else, from which chronological lateness and closing the aforementioned door are automatically necessitated, and prophetic virtue is multiplied. Thus, in this way, consider the seal-ship of the Messenger of Allah meaning, he embodies the attribute of prophethood intrinsically. All prophets besides him bear the attribute of prophethood extrinsically²⁵⁴.

There are some points that can be considered in the above statement according to Shaykh-ul-Qur’ān, Ghulām Ali Qādrī²⁵⁵, who has also critiqued the text to help better understand the technicalities of it:

The belief that Prophet Muhammad is the Seal of Prophethood (*Khātām-ul-Nabiyyīn*) as in the last of the Prophets (*Ākhir-ul-Nabiyyīn*) to be the thought (*khiyāl*) of the common people (*awām*), whereas this is the belief and understanding of the term found in the classic exegesis, the Prophetic narrations (*Ahadīth*), consensus (*ijma*) and in the Qur’an itself. Then to divide the believers into two groups: the common man (*awām*) and the other as the men of understanding (*ahlē-feham*). To categorise the Messenger of Allah from among the common folk and not from the men of understanding as it was the Prophet who taught the Muslims the meaning of the term Seal of Prophethood (*Khātām-ul-Nabiyyīn*) as He said himself, ‘There is no Prophet after me’. He stated the people who oppose the understood meaning by exegetes (*Muffasirūn*), the Prophetic narrations (*āhadīth*) the consensus (*Ijma*) as the people of understanding. Not to think of that meaning (i.e., being the last Prophet) in the context of praise. To say, not to determine this context as the context of praise, then certainly “seal-ship” in terms of chronological lateness (*ta’akhurē-zamānī*) may be valid. If the Holy Prophet is believed to be the last Prophet and this attribute is said to be in context of praise, then, God forbid! there will be an assumption of excess in speech (*ziyāda gohī*) with respect to the Lord. Excess speech here means talking nonsense and this is apparent blasphemy towards God Almighty. To say that the term Seal of Prophethood (*Khātām-ul-Nabiyyīn*) as in the last of the Prophets (*Ākhir-ul-Nabiyyīn*) is not due to the Holy Prophet’s finality (*Khātamiyyat*) but the reason of

²⁵⁴ Q. M. Tahzīr-un-Nās (Urdu), Dār-uk-Kutub, Deoband, India, (1997). P. 6 and Tahzīr-ul-Nās (English Translation) < Tahdhīr un Nās – Translation | Barelwis: A Critical Review (wordpress.com) > [accessed on 15/05/2021 12:08]

²⁵⁵ Shaykh Ghulām Ali Okarwi is a leading Scholar of the Barelwi School and is a lecturer in Qur’anic and Hadith studies and is known with the title of Shaykh-ul-Qur’an.

seal-ship is something else. To interpret the term Seal of Prophethood (*Khātam-ul-Nabiyyīn*) with your own independent reasoning (*tafsīr-bil-ra'e*) to mean such a thing that no one had done for over the last thirteen hundred years²⁵⁶.

Nanotawī's statement about the belief that Prophet Muhammad is the Seal of Prophethood²⁵⁷ (*Khātam-ul-Nabiyyīn*) as in being the last of the Prophets (*Ākhir-ul-Nabiyyīn*) is the thought (*khiyāl*) of the common people (*awām*), but according to the men of understanding (*ahlē-feham*), there is nothing special about coming first or last in prophethood. The Qur'anic verse, "but the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of Prophets" (Q. 33:40) is not in the context of praise (*maqām-ē-Madah*) and this description is not regarded as being from the attributes of praise in this context is not determined as a context of praise. The "seal-ship" of the Holy Prophet in terms of chronological lateness (*ta'akhur-ē-zamānī*) could be justified and even then, this would be excess in speech (*ziyāda gohī*) with respect to the Lord and this would necessitate disconnectedness and unsuitability is inconceivable in the inimitable, ordered, speech of God, thus, this attribute of chronological lateness (*ta'akhur-ē-zamānī*) having no involvement in prophethood or other merits, it is not a perfection thus there will be an assumption of lessening the status of the Messenger of Allah. The term Seal of Prophethood (*Khātam-ul-Nabiyyīn*) as in the last of the Prophets (*Ākhir-ul-Nabiyyīn*) is not due to the Holy Prophet's finality (*Khātamiyyat*) but the reason of seal-ship is something else.

3.2.2. Prophetic categories: Intrinsic and extrinsic

After discussing the term finality of Prophethood (*Khātam-ul-Nabiyyīn*) as per his definition, Nanotawī then divided Prophethood into two groups which have previously not been used by any Muslim theologian, Nanotawī stated:

²⁵⁶ Ali. G. *Al-Tanwīr li-dafē-Julām-al-Tahzīr ya'nī Masalā-ē-takfīr* (Urdu), Jamiyyat Isha'at-ē-Ahle Sunnat, Karachi, Pakistan. 2005. P. 20

²⁵⁷ It is stated in the encyclopaedia of Islam, 'Still Muḥammad was not thinking any more than before of founding a new religion, but only of restoring the true religion proclaimed by the prophets from the beginning. On this point a distinction needs to be made between religious beliefs and later theological formulations on the one hand, and the conclusions reached by modern historical and sociological research. For instance, in traditional Muslim belief Muḥammad is the "last and greatest of the prophets", a concept that is most likely based on a later interpretation of the expression "seal of the prophets" (*khātam al-nabiyyin*) that is applied to Muḥammad in sūra XXXIII, 40. Ref: Muḥammad — Brill (brillonline.com) [Accessed on 18/01/24 22:17]

Thus, in this way, consider the seal-ship of the Messenger of Allah. Meaning, he embodies the attribute of prophethood intrinsically. All prophets besides him bear the attribute of prophethood extrinsically. The prophethood of others is his effusion. Since his prophethood is not the effusion of any other, the series of prophethood is culminated at him. Thus, just as he is prophet of the ummah, he is prophet of the prophets²⁵⁸.

According to Nanotawī, the two types of Prophethood are as follows:

1. The attribute of intrinsicity (*mawsūf-bil-dhāt*)
2. The attribute of extrinsicity (*Mawsūf-bil-ardh*)

Here Nanotawī concluded that the attribute of Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad is intrinsic (*bil-dhāt*) and does not rely upon anyone else for this attribute but the Prophethood of the other Prophets is extrinsic (*bil-ardh*) and they are reliant upon Prophet Muhammad for their prophethood thus making Prophet Muhammad more superior to the others and he sees this as a more befitted meaning to the term finality of Prophethood (*Khātam-ul-Nabīyyīn*) which is not even regarded as being from the attributes of praise in this context according to him. By using the term intrinsically last (*Khatam-ē-dhātī*) as suggested by Nanotawī, it makes the Prophet superior to the other Prophets, may they be before him or come after, this will in no way affect his superiority even if a Prophet is born after him as he will be his shadow and deputy hypothetically. By introducing these new words for a narration (*athar of Ibn Abbās*) which does not affect the finality of Prophet Muhammad but rather contradicts the orthodox understanding and making the terms more abstract that they could easily be used to mean otherwise and challenge the actual meaning which was conveyed by the Holy Prophet himself. The Question is where Nanotawī picked up this terminology he used to describe the new meaning he concocted for the term finality of Prophethood. Anwar Shah Kashmīrī Deoband stated:

To divide Prophethood into intrinsic (*bilā-wāsta*) and extrinsic (*bil-wāsta*) and to go on about independent (*mutlaq*) and dependent (*ghayr-mutlaq*) is false and

²⁵⁸ Tahzīr-ul-Nās (English Translation) < <https://barelwism.wordpress.com/2020/09/16/ta%e1%b8%a5dhir-un-nas-translation> > [accessed on 15/05/2021 12:08]

without any meaning from the point of view of the Holy Qur'ān [...] To mean that the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad is intrinsic (*bi-dhāt*) and that of the other Prophet's is extrinsic (*bil-ardh*) and therefore Prophethood can be obtained through the Holy Prophet and this understanding of finality (*khātamiyyat*) is wrong as intrinsic and extrinsic are from philosophical terminology (*falsafa kī istila hey*)²⁵⁹.

So, even by Deobandī standards, the use of such terms is wrong and should not be used but it is intriguing how Kashmirī admonishes the Qādiānīs for the use of the above-mentioned terminology, but he does not in any way admonish the elders of his own school of thought. It seems there are double standards at play where they use and abuse and attack others, yet they do not use the same criterion for their own. Muftī Mohammed Shafī²⁶⁰ Deobandī (d. 1976) has also stated:

If those who misinterpret (*taa'wīl-ē-bātila*) the terms 'finality of Prophethood' (*Khātam-al-Nabiyyīn*) and 'there is no Prophet after Me' (*lā nabiyyah ba'dī*) are not ousted from the circle of Islam otherwise idol worshippers, polytheists, but also their teacher and master Satan would not be taken outside the fold of Islam. And those who oppose and separate those who present misinterpretation of the orthodox religious beliefs of the Muslims and the religious texts of the Qur'ān and Prophetic traditions (*Sunnah*) because they think this will cause harm to the Islamic community. There are few who actually do this and if there become differences amongst them and if to save from further differences and disputes meant that no matter what someone does or says, he should not be thought as ousted from the circle of Islam, then how will the people depend upon these few infidels and heretics. With such absurd interpretations you can include the non-believers of the world within circle of Islam and if this is the way forward then do so on a full stomach so that all the people and nations of the world become one and there is no difference between people of faith and the other²⁶¹.

²⁵⁹ Anwar, M. *Khātam-ul-Nabiyyīn*, Trans by. Mohammed Yūsuf Ludyanwī. Ilmī Majlis tahafuz Khatam-ē-Nabuwwar, Multan, Pakistan. P. 204

²⁶⁰ Muftī Mohammed Shafī was born in the year 1897 and was the son of Mohammed Yasīn in Deoband, India. He started studying at Dā-ul-ULūm Deoband in 1908 and completed his studied in the next five to six years. In 1917 he completed his studies in Hadīth from Anwar Shah Kashmiri and was also appointed some lessons at Deoband. Shafī worked his way from teaching elementary books to the books of Hadith. In 1951, he established the Dār-ul-ULūm Karachi. He died in 1976.

²⁶¹ Shafī. M. *Imān-o-kufr Qur'ān ki raushani mein* (Urdu). Dar-ul-Ma'ārif. Karachi, Pakistan (2007). P. 78

The term ‘finality of Prophethood’ cannot be taken to mean anything except that which has been accepted and understood by Muslims for over fourteen hundred centuries, as it is an article of faith of the Muslims to believe that Prophet Muhammad is the final prophet and Messenger of God and he is the Seal of Prophethood, closing the doors of divine revelation from God. To argue otherwise would be to challenge the age-old orthodoxy on an agreed meaning for the last fourteen hundred years.

3.3. The Fatwa of Imām Ahmed Raza Khan Barelwī

According to Imām Ahmed Raza Khān Barēlwī, Maulāna Qāsim Nanotawī had blasphemed but also presented an unorthodox meaning to the concept of Prophet Muhammad as the Seal of Prophethood (*Khatam-un-Nabiyyīn*). Metcalf stated that Muhammad Qāsim Nanotawī was called a Wahhābī who denied the uniqueness and finality of the Prophet Muhammad²⁶² (*Wahhābiyyah Imsāliyyah, Khawātimiyyah*). Imām Raza mentioned the statements²⁶³ in question found in *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* by Qāsim Nanotawī:

1. Hence, in the thought (*khiyāl*) of the common people (*awām*), the Messenger of Allāh being the seal (*khatam*) is with the meaning that his time comes after the time of the previous prophets, and he is the last of all prophets. However, it is clear to men of understanding (*ahlē feham*) that there is no intrinsic (*bil’ dhāt*) virtue (*fazīlat*) in coming earlier (*taqaddum*) or later (*ta’akhur*) in time (*zamāni*). Then, how can it be valid, in this case, ‘but is the Messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets’ (Q. 33:40) is in a context of praise?²⁶⁴
2. The attribute of one that embodies an attribute extrinsically (*Mawsūf-bil-ardh*) culminates at one that bears the attribute intrinsically (*mawsūf-bil-dhāt*)²⁶⁵.
3. Thus, in this way, consider the seal-ship (*khatamīyyat*) of the Messenger of Allāh. Meaning, he embodies the attribute of prophethood intrinsically

²⁶² Metcalf. B. p. 309

²⁶³ In the text of the Fatāwa Rizwiyyah, Imām Ahmed Raza has put the sentences he found to be unorthodox and unacceptable as one paragraph and in no way were they done so to show as one paragraph or seem otherwise as the original work of Tahzīr-ul-Nās was available even at that time. And nor had Imām Raza mention or state that this was meant to be seen as one paragraph.

²⁶⁴ Q. M. Tahzīr-un-Nās (Urdu), Dār-uk-Kutub, Deoband, India, (1997). P. 4

²⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 6

(*mawsūf-bawasf nabuwwat bil-dhāt*). All prophets besides him bear the attribute of prophethood extrinsically (*mawsūf-bawasf nabuwwat bil-ardh*)²⁶⁶.

4. If what I have presented regarding his (i.e., Prophet Muhammad) being the seal (*khatam*) will not be specific in relation to earlier prophets (*ghuzashta Ambiya hī kī nisbat khās nā ho ga*). In fact, if hypothetically (*bil-farz*) in his own time a prophet appeared somewhere, even then, his being last (of the Prophets) will remain sound²⁶⁷.
5. Therefore, even if hypothetically (*bil-farz*) after the time of the Prophet (*ba'd zamāna Nabawi mein*) any prophet is born (*koī nabi payda ho*), even then there would be no difference to the finality of Prophet Muhammad (*Muḥammadan khātamiyyah*) even though there be another prophet contemporary to him on another earth (*chēja kē Āpkē muasir kisī aur zamīn mein*), even if you hypothesise (*ya farz kījī'ay*) of another prophet on this earth (*isī zamīn mein koī aur nabī tajwīz kia jāē*)²⁶⁸.

Imām Raza said, 'The deviant (*Nanotawī*) has distorted (*tahrīf*) in meaning and God forbid! Has mentioned the term 'seal of the prophets' (*Khātaman nabīyyīn*) to mean that he is the essence of Prophethood (*Nabī-bil-dhāt*) and all other Prophets are extrinsic (*bil-ardh*), thus the impossibility for another prophet to come after Prophet Muhammad is not the meaning of the 'seal of the Prophets' (*Khātaman nabīyyīn*), he (i.e., *Nanotawī*) clearly wrote that if a Prophet comes after Prophet Muhammad it does not affect the Prophet being the seal of Prophethood, this being the summary of his deviation'²⁶⁹.

Nanotawī's conception of the theological term 'Seal of Prophethood' (*Khātaman Nabīyyīn*) was different from the early generations of Muslims and those who followed after them. In response to this, Imām Ahmed Raza wrote a whole thesis in his *Fatāwa Rizwiyyah* with over sixty narrations challenging the statement of Nanotawī and showing the opposite and providing

²⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 6

²⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 22

²⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 43

²⁶⁹ Khan. A. R, Fatawa Rizwiyyah. Vol. 15. P. 712

evidence that this is a distortion in the meaning of what had been understood as the Prophet being the last and final in the line of God's Prophets and Messengers by the early generations of Muslims and those after²⁷⁰.

²⁷⁰ Imām Ahmed Raza stated, 'Prophet Adam & the Finality of Prophet Muhammad: Tabrānī in Mu'jam Kabīr and Hākīm & Baihqī in Dalā'il-un-Nubuwwah reported on the authority of Umr Fārūq that the Prophet of Allah said, 'When Prophet Adam erred, he requested, 'O Lord! I ask of you by the means of Muhammad, forgive me?' it was said, 'O Adam! How did you recognize Muhammad when I have not created him yet? Adam replied, 'My Lord! When you created me and you blew my soul into me and I looked upwards, and it was written at the feet of the Throne (Arsh) 'There is no God except Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger.' I realized that this name attached to yours will be most beloved to You than all that exists!' God said, 'O Adam! You have spoken the truth, undoubtedly! He is more beloved to me than all the worlds and when you asked Me by the means of his name, I forgave you, had Muhammad not been I would not have created you.' And Tabrānī has included. 'He will be amongst your children and the last of the Prophets' [...] Prophet Moses & Finality of Prophet Muhammad: Abu Nu'aym has related on the authority of Abū Hurā'irah that the Prophet of Allah said, 'When the Torah was revealed upon Prophet Moses, he read from it and found in it the mention of my nation (Ummah) and requested to God, 'O My Lord! I find in these revelations of a nation which will come at the end and they will be superior to those before them', it was said, 'This is the nation of Muhammad' [...] The Seal of Prophethood: Suāilmān Fārsī has reported that Gabriel came of the Messenger of Allah and humbly said, 'Your Lord has said, 'Undoubtedly! I have finished (Khatam) Prophethood upon you' [...] The Prophets request for intercession: It has been related in Ahmed, Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhi, in a lengthy narration (Hadīth) about intercession (shafā'at) reported on the authority of Abū Hurā'irah that the Prophet of Allah said, 'All past and present people will come present themselves before Prophet Muhammad and they will request, 'You are the Prophet of Allah and the Seal (Khatam) of the Prophets, please intercede on our behalf' [...] It has been related in Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurā'irah that the Prophet of Allah said, We have been sent towards the end and we shall be at the front on the day of reckoning' [...] Muslim and Ibn Mājah have related on the authority of Abū Hurā'irah who has reported the Prophet of Allah said, 'We have come on the earth after all others and will be the first on the last day, and we will be before all others on that day' [...] Dārmī has related in his Sunan with an authentic chain (Sanad Sahih), Bukhārī in his Tarīkh, Tabrānī in Ausat, Baihqī in his Sunan and Abu Nu'aym have related on the authority of Jābir b. Abdullah that the Prophet of Allah said, 'I am the seal of all the Prophets and I do not say this out of pride and that I will be the first to intercede and first to be accepted for intercession and I do not stated all this out of pride' [...] Ahmed, Hākīm, Baihqī and Ibn Habbān have all related on the authority of Arbaz b, Sāriyyah that the Prophet of Allah said, 'Undoubtedly! I was written as the last of the Prophets (Khataman-Nabiyyin) on the Tablet (Lāuh) and Adam had not yet been created', a similar report has been mentioned in Sahih Muslim on the authority of Abdullah b. Umr' [...] Imām Tirmidhi Hakīm Muhammad b. Ali has related in Nawādir ul-Usūl on the authority of Abū Dhar that the Prophet of Allah said, 'the first amongst the Messengers was Adam and the last amongst them is Muhammad' [...] Tirmidhi in a long hadith on the authority of Maula Ali has said, 'the sign of Prophethood was between the shoulders of the Prophet and that he is the seal of the Prophets' [...] Bukhārī has related that the Prophet of Allah said, 'the Prophets of Israel would be involved in politics, when one passed another would take his place but there is no Prophet after me'. Ahmed, Tirmidhi and Hākīm have all related with an authentic chain (sanad Sahīh) on the conditions of Sahih Muslim as stated by Hākīm and has been authenticated by the researchers (muhaqīqīn) on the authority of Anas that the Prophet of Allah said, 'Undoubtedly! Prophethood and Messengership have finished, now there will neither be any Prophet or Messenger after me', and he said, 'Nothing of Prophethood is now left, only glad tidings through dreams' (Shahīh Bukhārī). Tabrānī has related in Mu'jam Kabīr that Huzaifa b. Assiyyed through an authenticated chain that the Prophet of Allah said, 'Prophethood has passed, there is no Prophethood after me, only glad tidings that will come to people in the form of a dream'. Ahmed, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Huzāima and Ibn Habbān have related on the authority of Karz with a Hassan chain that the Prophet saidm 'Prophethood has passed, and only glad tidings remain'. It has been related by Sahih Muslim, Sunan Abī Dawūd and Sunnan Ibn Mājah on the authority of Abdullah b. Abbas that during the final illness of the Prophet from which he passed away, a cloth was placed upon his blessed forehead and people were stool behind Abū Bakr Siddīque upon which the Prophet of Allah said, 'O People! Nothing remains from the tidings of Prophethood only that good dreams that Muslims will see, or others will see about them'. It has been related by Ahmed, Tirmidhi and Hākīm and authenticated by Tabrānī and Abu Ya'la, Uqba b. Amir and Tabrānī and Ibn Asākir and Khatīb in Kitāb Rawāt Malik and Abū Sa'eed Khudrī

This report of Ibn Abbās²⁷¹ was not new, nor that people were unaware of its existence, and this is possibly why Imām Raza had not mentioned the *Athar* of Ibn Abbas itself and instead the polemical issue the booklet of Nanotawī. There seems to be a few theological problems created by Nanotawī in this book which have been explained by Imām Raza in his Fatāwa:

1) **The Thought of the common man:** In the first issue Nanotawī stated: ‘The thought (khiyāl) of the common people (awām), the Messenger of Allah being the seal (khatam) is with the meaning that his time comes after the time of the previous prophets, and he is the last of all prophets’ is that of the common man whereas Imām Raza argued and presented ample proof that this is the universal creed of the Muslims which upon there is a consensus (*ijma*) that Prophet Muhammad is the last and the Seal of Prophethood and a beautiful narration in regards to understanding this concept from the Holy Prophet himself to his companions. Imām Ahmed Raza Khan has stated that this has been related by Ahmed, Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī on the authority of Jābir b. Abdullah and Ahmed and Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of Abū Hurāirah and Ahmed and Muslim on the authority of Abū Saeed Khudrī and Ahmed and Tirmidhī on the authority of Abī ibn Ka’b that the Prophet of Allah said:

The example of me and the Prophets is like that of a palace, which has been built beautifully and there is an empty space for one brick. The people looking at the palace would walk around and admire the architecture but the space of that one brick would make them wonder, until I came, and that place was filled in, this

that the Messenger of Allah said, ‘If there was to be a Prophet after me, it would be Umr’. It is related in Sahīh Bukharī on the authority of Ismaīl b. Abī Khālid, ‘I asked Abdullah b. Abī Aufa that had he seen Ibrāhīm, the son of the Prophet?’ he replied, ‘he had passed away as a child, had it been destined that there would be a Prophet after Muhammad, then the son of the Prophet would have stayed alive but there is no Prophet after him’. Imām Ahmed has also related a similar report by Ibn Abī Aufa who said, ‘If there was to be another Prophet after the Messenger of Allah then his son would not have passed on’. Imām Abū Umr b. Abdul Bir by Ismaīl b. Abdul Rahmān said that Anas has reported, ‘Ibrāhīm was small and had he lived on, he would have been a Prophet, but he died in infancy as your Prophet is the last of the Prophets’. Benefit: Many of these narrations are (Marfuh), Marwardi from Anas and Ibn Asakir from Jābir b. Abdullah or Abdullah b. Abbas and Abdullah b. Abī Aufa has reported that the Prophet of Allah said, ‘Had Ibrāhīm staid alive, he would have beena Prophet’ [...] Imām Bukhārī has related on the authority of Abū Hurāirah and Ahmed, Muslim, Abū Dawūd, Tirmidhi and Ibn Mājah on the authority of Thu’bān that the Prophet of Allah said, ‘Soon there shall be around thirty liars and deceivers and each one will say they are a Prophet (nabi) even though I am the seal of Prophethood and there is no Prophet after me’, in the wording of Bukhārī, ‘there will be about thirty liars)’. Ref: Khan. A. R, Fatawa Rizwiyyah. Vol. 15. Markazē Ahle Sunnat Barakāte Raza, Gujrāt, India (2003). P. 631.

²⁷¹ ‘Verily, Allah created seven earths. In each earth is an Adam like your Adam, a Nūḥ like your Nūḥ, an Ibrāhīm like your Ibrāhīm, an ‘Īsā like your ‘Īsā and a Prophet like your Prophet’.

building was now complete due to me. I am that last brick of the Prophetic building and I and the Last (Khatam) of the Prophets²⁷².

It is possible to understand from the prophetic traditions that such was not the understanding of the common man but was also how it was taught by Prophet Muhammad himself. The importance of the idea of Prophet Muhammad being the last and final Prophet is universally accepted by the different Sunni schools of law so to call this the belief of the common man is not doing justice to the concept to itself either as no one has said about this sacred creed of the Muslim majority.

2) **To come earlier or later:** Nanotawī said in the second part of the sentence: ‘*It is clear to men of understanding (ahlē feham) that there is no intrinsic (bil’dhāt) virtue (fazīlat) in coming earlier (taqaddum) or later (ta’akhur) in time (zamānī)*’. After stating that the Qur’an verse: ‘*but is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets*’ (Q. 33:40), Nanotawī clearly objected to the term meaning last, final or seal in their religious context and said it to be the understanding of the commoner and after this he tried to strengthen his position by stating that being first or last does not make one superior. The point is not about who is first or last but rather the religious concept of the finality of Prophethood upon Prophet Muhammad. Being the seal and last has always been seen as an attribute of Prophet Muhammad that he has been honoured with this special status which sets him aside of all other Prophets and Messengers in the Islamic tradition and giving him superiority as being the awaited Prophet from the time of Prophet Adam.

3) **The attribute of superiority:** Nanotawī said: ‘The attribute of one that embodies an attribute extrinsically (*Mawsūf-bil-ardh*) culminates at one that bears the attribute intrinsically (*mawsūf-bil-dhāt*) [...] Thus, in this way, consider the seal-ship (*khatamīyyat*) of the Messenger of Allāh. Meaning, he embodies the attribute of prophethood intrinsically (*mawsūf-bawasf nabuwwat bil-dhāt*). All prophets besides him bear the attribute of prophethood extrinsically (*mawsūf-bawasf nabuwwat bil-ardh*)’. Here Nanotawī explained his concept that all Prophets are dependent upon the grace of Prophet Muhammad and His Prophethood is inherent whereas all other Prophets are because of him making them extrinsic. Using this as a context for superiority has many flaws including (a) the finality

²⁷² Khan. A. R, Fatawa Rizwiyyah. Vol. 15. P. 667

(*khatamīyyat*) of the Messenger of Allāh. Meaning, he embodies the attribute of prophethood intrinsically (*mawsūf-bawasf nabuwwat bil-dhāt*), (b) the Messenger of Allah being the seal (*khatam*) is with the meaning that his time comes after the time of the previous prophets, and he is the last of all prophets is the thought (*khiyāl*) of the common people (*awām*), (c) the Qur’anic verse: ‘but is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets’ (Q. 33:40), does not mean last, final or seal of Prophet in its chronological order but instead that he embodies the attribute of prophethood intrinsically²⁷³ (*mawsūf-bawasf nabuwwat bil-dhāt*).

- 4) **A Prophet can come after Prophet Muhammad:** Nanotawī said, ‘Even if hypothetically (*bil-farz*) after the time of the Prophet (*ba’d zamāna Nabawi mein*) any prophet is born (*koī nabi payda ho*), even then there would be no difference to the finality of Prophet Muhammad (*Muḥammadan khātamiyyah*) even though there be another prophet contemporary to him on another earth (*chēja kē Āpkē muasir kisī aur zamīn mein*), even if you hypothesise (*ya farz kījī’ay*) of another prophet on this earth (*isī zamīn mein koī aur nabī tajwīz kia jāē*)’. Nanotawī finally concludes the effect of the meaning of ‘*the last (Khatam) of the prophets*’ (Q. 33:40), when it is interpreted that the Prophet of Allah embodies the attribute of prophethood intrinsically (*mawsūf-bawasf nabuwwat bil-dhāt*) and not with the meaning as the last Prophet and Messenger that even if a Prophet came after the time of the Holy Prophet or even though there be another prophet contemporary to him on another earth or another prophet on this earth would not affect the finality of Prophet Muhammad in anyway at all.

²⁷³ The Qādiānīs argue the same point argues by Nanotawī in the book Invitation to Ahmadiyyat, ‘*He (i.e., Prophet Muhammad) is more than a prophet. He is the Seal of the Prophets. The expression ‘Seal of the Prophets’ asserts something further. It asserts that not only will the Prophet have followers and believers of the usual order: as Seal of the Prophets he will have the further power of raising others to this spiritual rank of prophet*’. Ref: Ahmed. M. B. M. Invitation to Ahmadiyyat. Islam International Publications LTD. Surrey, UK. 2007. P. 44

Justice, Pīr Karam Shah²⁷⁴ Al-Azharī²⁷⁵ (d. 1998) had stated: ‘From these statements, the lying Mirza Qāadianī could use these to their advantage and announce that they believe Mirza to be a Prophet²⁷⁶ (*nabī*), nor was he superior or in any way like the Holy Prophet and they may even say that it was through the grace of the Holy Prophet that he is propagating his religion and were they to use these arguments in favour of Mirza, then who would be responsible for those who would go astray. It was due to these dangers to which Āla Hazrat, Imām Ahmed Raza realised and without any fear he condemned such statements in *Tahzīr-ul-Nās*²⁷⁷’.

In regard to the above-mentioned objectionable statements of *Tahzīr-ul-Nās*, Imām Ahmed Raza had put them together into one paragraph which is now being used to blame him to show that he has cut and pasted sentences from different parts of the book to make them seem blasphemous. Such an argument is very weak as the book is available and can be easily checked by anyone. Syed Na’īm Uddin Muradabādī²⁷⁸ stated regarding this objection:

²⁷⁴ Pīr Karam Shah was born in the year 1918 at Bhera, Sargodha district of Pakistan. He finished his basic education in his home town in 1936 and then went to Murādabād, India to study further and he graduated from Punjāb University in 1945 and travelled to Al-Azhar, Egypt for higher education and received his Masters degree in Islamic Law. He authored books on the biography of the Holy Prophet and wrote an exegesis of the Holy Qur’an amongst his other works. He was an active participant in the Pakistan Movement. He served as a justice on the Supreme Court of Pakistan until his death in 1998. He belonged to the Barelwi school.

²⁷⁵ It is noteworthy that earlier when Pīr Karam Shah wrote his treatise in favour of *Tahzīr ul-Nās* written by Qāsim Nanotawī, this created much commotion amongst the Barelwis with his various ideas. We are aware that possibly in and around 1986, he had retracted from his statements in favour of Qāsim Nanotawi and wholly accepted the edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza in refutation upon the Deobandis. Ref: Mahmūd. K. *Muta’ala-ē-Barēlwiyyat* (Urdu). Hāfzī book Depo, Deoband, UP, India. Vol. 1, P.413

²⁷⁶ In the book invitation to Ahmadiyyat it is stated, ‘We cannot even for a moment believe in the coming of one whose coming implies the superseding of the Holy Prophet, who should give the world a new Kalima (creed) and a new Qibla (direction to worship) and give the world a new religious law or alter any part of the law of the Holy Qur’an; or who should wean people away from the obedience to the Holy Prophet and ask them to obey him instead of the Holy Prophet; or should arise from outside the circle of the Holy Prophet’s servants and devotees or should have achieved even a part of his spiritual status without owing it to the Holy Prophet [...] The attainment of Prophethood independently of the Holy Prophet is not possible now. That is why we deny that the Messiah of Nazereth can return to guide the followers of the Holy Prophet. His coming would be without the spiritual guardianship of the Holy Prophet. But prophethood which comes through the Holy Prophet and which, therefore, is glory to him, we cannot deny [...] A prophet who supersedes an earlier prophet is one who brings a new law and who attains his rank without the tutelage of the earlier prophet. But a prophet who attains his rank through dependence on the earlier prophet, through the grace and influence of his example and teachings, and through obedience to him, does not and cannot supersede the earlier prophet. Far from being derogatory to him, this sort of prophethood glorifies the earlier prophet, his teachings and example. This way to prophethood, it appears from the Holy Qur’an, is open to attainment by the followers of the Holy Prophet’. Ref: Ahmed. M. B. M. Invitation to Ahmadiyyat. Islam International Publications LTD. Surrey, UK. 2007. P. 40

²⁷⁷ Karam. M. *Tahzīr-ul-Nās merī nazar mein* (Urdu). Zia-ul-Qur’an Publications, Lahore, Pakistan 1986. P. 52

²⁷⁸ Syed Naeem-Uddīn Murādabādī was born in the year 1887 in Muradabād, India. His father was Mu’in-Uddīn, descendants of Prophet Muhammad, his family was originally from Mash’had, Irān. Syed Naeem Uddīn is said to have memorised the Holy Qur’an by the age of eight and studied the religious sciences of Dars-ē-Nizāmi from his father and Shah Fazl-ē Ahmed. He founded the Jamia Naeemiyyah in Murādabād in 1920 and his remembered his defence against Wahhabism and his activism in British India and was part of the Khilafat Committee in India and

Although there were several sentences belonging to the same category, so they were abridged and put together as each sentence had content which was blasphemous. No new meaning was created by putting them together. This is just a lie as any person check the original text copied into *Husām-ul-Haramayn* for themselves²⁷⁹.

This cannot even be considered an issue as the words which Imām Raza had copied and mentioned as blasphemous are clear and have not been tampered with and the words are taken as can be found in the original text of *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* word for word.

When the distribution of the book *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* spread in different parts of India, it had also reached Delhi, Maulāna Nanotawī debated with Maulāna Mohammed Shah Punjabī (d. 1888), after a lengthy debate, there could be no agreement upon the winner of the debate, each side stating that it was correct, supporters of each side were claiming to have won. Then a person named Maulāna Abdul Ghaffār collected and wrote to both debaters and recorded the statements of Nanotawī under the alias of Amr and the statements of Shah as Zayd so that the scholars they were sent to could not recognise the names and statements of the debaters. These were then sent to eminent Sunni scholars of Delhi, Luknow, Rāmpur, Badayūn, Mumbai and other cities of India and their decisions as to who was on the truth (*haq*) and who was on falsehood (*bātil*) in their beliefs and statements²⁸⁰. The scholars of these cities favoured the statements of Zayd as being upon the correct beliefs and wrote Amr to hold false beliefs. This was then collected together and produced as a treatise of the debate and the decision of the *Sunni Ullama*, the treatise was named *Ibtal Aghlāt Qāsimiyyah* around the year 1882. It is clear that it was not only Imām Ahmed Raza but scholars throughout India did not agree with the new concepts and ideas being propagated under the banner of Sunni Islam and reformed Sufism.

Thānvī has related that once Nanotawī, the writer of *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* went to visit someone at Rāmpur in the company of Munshī Hamīd Uddīn Sambhāilī who stated that there was no train, so they began to walk towards Murādabād and on the way Nanotawī got hold of Munshī Hamīd Uddīn's refile and put it on his shoulder, disguising as the servant. At Rāmpur, you could not

worked for the good of the community under the banner of Imām Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilwi. He visited Pakistan in 1947 and death soon after in 1948. He is also remembered by the religious title of 'Sadr-al-Fāzil'.

²⁷⁹ Na'im-Uddīn, M. *Al-Tahqīqāt* (Urdu). Anjuman Furūgh-ē-Millat, U.P. India. P. 6

²⁸⁰ Abdul-Ghaffār. *Ibtāl Aghlāt Qāsimiyyah* (Urdu) < AbtalEAglatQasmiya.pdf (nafseislam.com)> [accessed on: 02.08.2021 17:54] p. 40

pass at the gates without giving your details and Nanotawī gave the name Khurshīd Hassan as stayed in an unfamiliar rented room at the roof top, and this was said to be during the time when there was so much commotion about his book *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* and he had been called a heretic²⁸¹. The occurrence of such events and showing that they had to hide from majority Sunni populated areas as they feared they may be caught and attached by mobs for the works which were seen as not acceptable in Sunni circles throughout India. Maulāna Thānvī stated the damage this book caused to the reputation of Nanotawī that, ‘no one from the whole of India supported him except Maulāna Abdul Hay when he wrote *Tahzīr-ul-Nās*²⁸²’.

3.4. Conclusion

Maulāna Muhammad Ahsan, a cousin of Maulāna Qāsim Nanotawī had signed a document agreeing to the beliefs of the Ahlē Hadīth which was a presentation of a debate between the Ahlē Hadīth and the Hanafīs, when the action of Maulāna Ahsan became apparent in the town of Barēlly and was not going away. It can yet be seen again as the Deobandīs at the centre of yet another controversy, this time it was one dealt with the father of Imām Ahmed Raza, Shaykh Naqī Ali Khān.

Maulāna Ahsan asked his cousin Maulāna Qāsim to write a response to the matter of the report (*Athr*) of Ibn Abbās. Instead of presenting a simple and straight forward answer to the enquiry, he further complicated the issue by not only taking the stand of the Ahlē Hadīth but also added some of his own ideas to the report of Ibn Abbās, which was used as a pretext to further re-interpret the famous Qur’anic verse regarding the finality of Prophet Muhammad.

The *Tahzir-ul-Nas* was also condemned as blasphemous by the Barēlwī school based upon ideas which were deemed as not acceptable and saw as dangerous to Sunni doctrines about the finality of the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad. Several works were penned by different Sunni scholars as rebuttals and clarification of Sunni beliefs and all these works were written before the Fatwa of Imām Ahmed Raza who would later take the same stance and also condemn this work as erroneous and heretical.

²⁸¹ A. A. *Arwāhê-Thallâtha yanī hiqayâtê-âwiya*. P. 238

²⁸² Ali. A. *Malfūzât Hakīm ul-Ummat* (Urdu), Idārah Ta’līfātê-Ashrafyyah, Multān, Pakistan, Vol, 5. P. 296

The issue was once again said to be words used as being derogatory and insulting towards the Prophet Muhammad and his status as the final messenger of God. A new interpretation was offered by the author which was deemed as out of context, and which was not orthodox. This was yet another blow to the reputation of Deoband amongst the Sunni circles.

Chapter 4. The Barāhein ul-Qā'tia of Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī

In this chapter I will look at the Barahēin which was written as a rebuttal to a book named *Anwār-al-Sātia* by Maulāna Abdul Samī. This was essentially an internal issue but the Barahēin made similar mistakes to Shah Ismāil in using words and comparisons as well as calling the extensive knowledge of the Prophet as polytheism (*shirk*) which angered many scholars in India, including the person of Imām Ahmed raza.

Masūd Ahmed stated in *Tazkirat-ul-Rashīd* about Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī: ‘the genealogy of Gangohī is Rashīd Ahmed (d. 1905) b. Maulāna Hidāyat Ahmed b. Qādi Pīr Baksh b. Qādi Ghulām Hussain b. Qādi Ghulam Ali b. Qādi Ali Akbar b. Qādi Muhammad Aslam al-Ansārī al-Ayūbī and his eleventh ancestor is the great saint, Shaykh Abdul Quddūs Gangohī (D. 948 AH) and Metcalf said, ‘The family of Rashīd Ahmed (1829-1905) was connected to the Ullama of Delhi for some time, his father had studied from the family of Shah Wali-Ullah and had acquired spiritual training from Shah Ghulām Ali Mujaddadi, Naqshbandi. A distinguished Ālim, he had died a young man, leaving his seven-year-old son, Rashīd Ahmed. Qāsim and Rashīd shared much the same company of distinguished scholars [...] When Maulāna Mamlūk died. He tried to end various ceremonies held at the grave of his ancestor Shah Abdul Qudūs Gangohī (d. 1538) [...] He led a disciplined life and extraordinarily conscientious in performance of his duties and Rashīd Ahmed was a disciple of Hāji Imdadullah. Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī died on Friday the 11th of August 1905’.

4.1. Why was Barahein-ē-Qātia written?

The *Barahein-ē-Qātia* was written in response to the work *Anwār-ē-Sātia* of Maulāna Muhammad Abdul Samī’ Ansārī, Rāmpurī²⁸³ (d. 1900) who had studied under Qāsim Nanotawī and was also a disciple of the Sūfī Master, Hāji Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī.

²⁸³ Maulāna Muhammad Abdul Samī was born in the year 1820 in the district of Saharanpur. Through his family lineage of Shaykh-ul-Islām Khawāja Abdullah al-Ansārī, it goes back to the Prophet’s companion Abū Ayūb Ansārī. He gained his early education from Maulana Rahmatullah Keranwi, who was the founder of Madrassah Saulētia in Makkah. He also studied under Maulana Ahmed Ali Muhadith Saharanpur, Maulana Sa’adat Ali Saharanpurī, Maulāna Muhammad Thānvī and Maulāna Qāsim Nanotawī before he left for Delhi for further education in 1854. He also had great interest in Poetry and began to spend a lot of time in this area and then decided to turn in attention to religious affairs. He became a disciple of Haji Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī in the

As the ideas of Ismaīl Dehlawī began to spread in India, the Deobandīs and Wahhābīs began to attack the age-old religious traditions of the majority Sunnīs in India, it was at this time that Maulāna Abdul Samī raised his pen and wrote in defence of celebrating the Birthday of Prophet Muhammad and other religious practises like holding annual death anniversaries (*Urs/ Khatam/ Fātiha*) and others. When the book *Anwār-ē-Sātia* reached Deoband, Gangohī wrote a rebuttal and named it *Barahein-ē-Qātia* and published it with the name of his close disciple Khalīl Ahmed²⁸⁴ Ambetwī²⁸⁵.

Maulāna Abdul Samī was not a representative of the Barēlwīs nor Imām Ahmed Raza, this was an internal disagreement upon religious polemics (*Aqīdah*) of Deoband and amongst the disciples of Hāji Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī. From the beginning it has been possible to know that Hāji Imdādullah represented traditional Sūfism unlike his disciples of Deoband as I shall discuss in future chapters. Maulāna Abdul Samī held similar beliefs to those of Imām Ahmed Raza and thus reacted naturally in the defensive when Wahhābīs were attacking what he saw as Orthodox Sunnī Islām. It did not end there, a copy of the book *Anwār-ē-Sātia* reached Hāji Imdādullah in 1886, Hāji Imdādullah wrote to Maulāna Abdul Samī personally stating, ‘This book is in accordance with the beliefs of this servant (faqīr) and that of our elders, you have written well, may Allah reward you²⁸⁶’.

year 1899. He was a renowned religious figure and he died in the year 1900 and was buried in the graveyard of Shah Wilayat’. Ref: Abdul. M. *Anwār-ē-Sātia dar bayān Maulūd-o-Fātia* (Urdu) Published by Idārah Furūgh-ē-Islām, U.P. India. P 12

²⁸⁴ Maulānā Khalīl Ahmad Saharanpuri was born in December 1852 A.D. in Ambehta, a town in the district of Saharanpur India. Khalīl commenced his studies at an elementary school at the age of five. Maulānā Mamlūk Ali conducted his Bismillah and Maulānā Khalīl Ahmad Sahib soon completed the recitation of the Qur’an. He then studied the primary books of Urdu and Persian under various Ulamā in Ambehta and Nanota. When Dār-ul-Ulūm Deoband was opened in May 1866 and his uncle, Maulānā Muhammad Yā’qub, was appointed as the Dean (Sadr-Mudarris), Maulānā Khalīl Ahmad Sahib took permission from his parents and travelled to Deoband, where he continued his studies. Six months later, in November 1866, Mazāhir-ul Uloom Saharanpur was established. There, another maternal uncle of Khalīl Ahmad Sahib, Maulānā Muhammad Mazhar was appointed as the Dean. Maulānā Khalīl Ahmad Sahib transferred to Mazāhir-ul Uloom Saharanpur where he completed his studies in 1288 AH (1871) at the age of 19. He was appointed as an assistant teacher at Mazāhir-ul Ulūm. When there arose a need for a teacher at the Islāmic institute of Mangalore, he was sent there as the head teacher. Maulānā Khalīl also taught in Bhopal, Bahawalpur, Bareilly and Deoband. At the age of 45, he was appointed the head teacher of Mazāhir-ul Ulūm Saharanpur where he taught the books of Hadīth. He is also said to be one of the primary visionaries behind the success and achievements of Dār-ul Ulūm Deoband. He took Bay’ah at the hand of Hadhrat Maulānā Rasheed Ahmad sahib. Maulāna Khalīl Ahmed died in the year 1927 at the age of 74 years and was buried in Jannat-ul-Baqi in Madīnna, Saudi Arabia.

²⁸⁵ Abdul. M. *Anwār-ē-Sātia dar bayān Maulūd-o-Fātia* (Urdu) Published by Idārah Furūgh-ē-Islām, U.P. India. P 17

²⁸⁶ This letter of Hāji Imdādullah is printed in the old, published version in Persian’. Ref: Abdul. M. *Anwār-ē-Sātia dar bayān Maulūd-o-Fātia* (Urdu) Published by Idārah Furūgh-ē-Islām, U.P. India.

It is said that the first version of *Anwār-ē-Sātia*, Maulāna Abdul Samī had used strong language against his opponents and when the book was reviewed by Hāji Imdādullah, he was advised to remove the harsh language used for the next print and to send him a few of the new edition once published.

As things begin to clear that the beliefs held by Imām Ahmed Raza were thus the same as those of Maulāna Abdul Samī and Hāji Imdādullah, simply because Imām Raza and Maulāna Abdul Samī opening defended their beliefs and opposed Wahhābism they became personal enemies and false propaganda has been spread against them as is evident in later chapters.

4.2. Maulāna Abdul Samī's defence of the Sunni doctrine

The book *Anwār-ē-Sātia* was written in the year 1886 by Maulāna Muhammad Abdul Samī Ansārī, Rāmpurī in protest of Wahhābī propaganda against the age-old traditions of the Sunnī Muslims of South Asia. Below is a list of some of the main topics covered in this book:

1. Types of innovation (*bidah*)
2. To prayer (*fātiha*) with food present
3. Permissibility of celebrating Mawlid throughout the year
4. The world of souls
5. The miracles of the saints (*Awliya*)
6. The knowledge of the Prophet of Allah (*Ilm-ē-ghayb*)
7. To proclaim O' Prophet of Allah (*Ya Rasūllallah*)²⁸⁷

Scholars who wrote an epilogue for *Anwār-ē-Sātia* included: Maulāna Lutfullah of Ali Ghar, Maulāna Fāiz-ul-Hassan of Saharanpur, Maulāna Ghulām Dastaghīr of Qusūr, Maulāna Muhammad Arshad Hussain of Rāmpur, Maulāna Ahmed Raza Khan of Barēlly, Maulāna Abdul qādir of Badayūn, Maulāna Abāidullah Qādri, Badayūni of Mumbai, Maulāna, Syed

²⁸⁷ Abdul. M. *Anwār-ē-Sātia dar bayān Maulūd-o-Fātia* (Urdu) Published by Idārah Furūgh-ē-Islām, U.P. India. P 270

Amāduddin Rifa'ī, Maulāna Wakīl Ahmed Sikandarpuri of Haidrabād Dakkan, Maulāna Nazīr Ahmed Khan, Mauāna Muhammad Abu'l Barakāt of Ghāzīpur, Maulāna Muhammad Farūq of Charyākoat, Maulāna Abdul Majīd of Luknow, Maulāna Qadī Abdul Ghafūr of Fattehpur, Maulāna, Shah Muhammad Ādil of Kānpur, Maulāna Muhammad Abdullah of Akbarabād, Maulāna Muhammad Yaqūb of Delhi, Maulāna Rahmatullah Muhajir Makkī, Hājī Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī²⁸⁸

Besides being accepted by the Sunnis, it was written to demonstrate that the practises of the Sunni Muslims regarding especially the celebration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad and other beliefs and ceremonies were regarded as commendable practises by scholars from the Middle East as well as from the Sunni leadership of South Asia. The book *Anwār-ē-Sātia* is well written with the author demonstrating his broad knowledge of different subjects and using traditional and rational evidence to get his point across to the audience. The epilogues written by Maulāna Rahmatullah Kairanvi²⁸⁹, Hājī Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī and Imām Ahmed Raza Khan shows the standing of this book and that it was representing the main body of Muslims of India.

4.3. Shaykh Ghulām Dastagīr's defence of the Sunni doctrine

When *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* was published and it reached Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr Qusūrī²⁹⁰, who was a friend of Maulāna Khalīl Ahmed Ambētawī, when he saw the *Barahēin-ē-Qātia*

²⁸⁸ Abdul. M. *Anwār-ē-Sātia dar bayān Maulūd-o-Fātia* (Urdu) Published by Idārah Furūgh-ē-Islām, U.P. India. P 300

²⁸⁹ Maulāna Rahmaullah Kairanvi (d. 1891) is the famous writer of the works '*Izhār-ul-Haq*' who debated many Christian Missionaries during the British Colonial Rule in India and He later migrated to Makkah, present day Saudi Arabia. Ref: Rahmatullah. M. *Izhar-ul-Haq* (English). Taha publishers, London, UK. 2003. P. ix

²⁹⁰ Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr, Hāshmi, Qurāishi, Siddīqūī was born in Muhallah Chilla in Andrūn Mauchī Gate in the city of Lahore. His fathers name was Maulāna Hassan Baksh Siddīqūī and one of his elder brothers, Maulāna Muhammad Baksh was the religious minister at the Mosque Mullah Majīd and served their for-a while. He mother was the sister of Maulāna Ghulām Muhī'Uddīn Qusūrī, daā'imul-Khudhūrī, who was the Khalifah (vice-gerent) of Shah Ghulām Ali Mujajadī, Dehlawī for this reason Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr was privileged with marrying into his uncle's family alongside being his student and disciple (Murīd). When he grew to enough to begin his studies, he went to study under Mahdūm, Ghulām Murtaza Qusūrī in Western Pakistan, where a religious seminary was established. Maulāna Ghulām Murtada Barēlwi and Khawajah Ghulam Nabī had studied under Maulāna Ghulām Muhī'Uddīn Qusūrī. He would spend his time in study and learned the religious sciences and logic and he also enjoyed religious discussions, he also spent much of his time in study of the Qur'an and Sunnah with Tafsīr and upon completion of his studies he went though some difficult times and especially with new sect margining and coming into existence. Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr was amongst those Sunni scholars who tried to defend what he saw as orthodoxy during the era of Colonial British rule in India. He also stated, 'I have written many books to uphold the faith and which have been favoured by scholars around the world, among them were, '*Tufa Dastagīriyyah, Ba-Jawāb Ithna-Ashariyyah, Umda-tul-Bayān fi-E'lān Manāqib il-*

which had been published under his friend's name. At that time Ambēt̄wī was head of Madrassah-Arabīyyah in Bahawalpur (which is in present day Pakistan). At this time the Sunni leadership had signed documents showing their unity in protest and differences found in the *Barahēin-ē-Qātia*. When Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr saw the book, he was shocked and disgusted as he saw the name of his friend on the book, he decided to make his way to see Ambēt̄wī personally. Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr tried to make Ambēt̄wī retract from what had been written in the book and generally regarding Wahhābī beliefs, but Ambēt̄wī was adamant and did not want to listen and it was at this point that Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr challenged Ambēt̄wī for a debate. Ambēt̄wī agreed and a total of six Deobandī scholars accompanied him and six Sunnī scholars accompanied Maulāna Qusūrī. The debate took place in the Islamic month of Shawwāl in the year 1889 at Bahāwalpur under the supervision of the local Nawāb. The issues debated were those that have been discussed in *Anwār-ē-Sātia* and *Barāhēin-e-Qātia*. The judge was the *Pīr* of Bahāwalpur, the honourable, Shaykh, Khawāja Ghulām Farīd²⁹¹ (d. 1901) of Chāchura Sharīf. Ambēt̄wī lost the debate and he and his fellow Deobandi's were escorted out of city and labelled Wahhābīs and were forced to leave the city of Bahawalpur²⁹².

This book was written after the debate and a transcript was also prepared in Arabic for the Sunni Arab scholars and especially to be presented to the scholars of Makkah and Madīnnah. Like the book *Anwār-ē-Sātia*, many scholars wrote an epilogue for this too. As stated previously, the subjects discussed as similar to *Anwār-ē-Sātia* as the group of people being

Nu'mān, Tahqīq Taqdīs-ul-Wakīl, Radd Ibn Taymiyyah and Hidāya-tul-Shīatayn', amongst other written works. An organization called Anjuman Hamayatul-Islam was set up to combat the Christian missionaries in the Punjāb, the publications department of this organisation gained much benefit with the presence of Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr who wrote a book in refutation of the Christian Missionaries called 'Tahrīf-ul-Qur'ān' in the year 1878. He died in the year 1897 and was buried in the famous graveyard of Qusūr. Ref: Dastagīr. G. A. Taqdīs-ul-Wakīl-an-Tāuhīnil-Rashīd-wal-Khalīl (Urdu), Nūrī Kutub Khāna, Lāhore, Pakistan. P. 52

²⁹¹ Khawāja Ghulām Farīd was born in the year 1845 and his mother died when he was four years old and he was orphaned around the age of eight when his father, Khawāāa Khuda Bakhsh, died. He was then brought up by his elder brother, Khawāja Fakhr-ud-Ddīn, also known as Khawāja Fakhr Jehān Sain. Siddique Mohammed Khān III, Nawāb of Bahāwalpur took Ghulām Farīd to his palace in Ahmedpur East for his religious direction and study of the religious sciences by scholars at the palace. He was a scholar, writer, Sufi Master of the Chishti Nizāmī Sufi Order and a poet and wrote in several languages. At the age of 28 years, he left for the Cholistan desert also known as Rohī for his spiritual retreat where he retired for about 18 years. Ghulām Farīd performed his Hajj pilgrimage in the year 1876. He died at the age of 56 in the year 1901 and is buried at his shrine Mittankōt also known as Kōtmittan, in the city of Rajanpur, Punjāb, Pakistan. The shrine is visited by thousands of people throughout the year.

²⁹² Dastagīr. G. A. Taqdīs-ul-Wakīl-an-Tāuhīnil-Rashīd-wal-Khalīl (Urdu), Nūrī Kutub Khāna, Lāhore, Pakistan, p. 2

dealt with were all belonging to the same school of thought. The book covers the following main areas:

1. *Imkān-ē-Kizb*
2. *Taqwiyyat-al-Īmān*
3. *Imkān-ē-Nazīr*
4. *Imkān-ē-Kizb* and Deobandī beliefs
5. The life (*Hayāt*) of Prophet Muhammad
6. *Maulāna Qāsim Nanotawī* and finality of the Holy Prophet
7. The Prophet being a ‘brother’
8. The knowledge of the Holy Prophet, angel of death and Satan
9. The knowledge of the unseen for the Prophets
10. Death anniversaries (*fātiha*)
11. The epilogues written by the Scholars of Makkah and Madīnnah (*Haramāin Sharīfāin*)
12. An addition of *Taqdīs-ul-Wakīl anil Hayānatil-Rashīd-wal-Khalīl*
13. Answers by Maulāna Ghulam Dastagīr Qusūrī²⁹³

Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr has also listed the names of over twenty scholars²⁹⁴ from the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madīnnah who agreed with the contents of the book which would thus

²⁹³ Dastagīr. G. A. *Taqdīs-ul-Wakīl-an-Tāuhīnnil-Rashīd-wal-Khalīl* (Urdu), Nūrī Kutub Khāna, Lāhore, Pakistan, p. 300

²⁹⁴ Mufti Hanafiyyah Makkah: Shaykh Muhammad Sāleh b. Siddique Kamāl, Mufti Shafī Makkah: Shaykh Muhammad Sa’īd Ba’badheel, Mufti Mālikiyyah Makkah: Shaykh Muhammad Ābid b. Hussain, Mufti Hanābillah Makkah: Shaykh Khalf b. Ibrāhīm, Mufti Hanafiyyah Madīnnah: Shaykh Uthmān b. Abdul Salām Daghīstānī, Ustadh Hadīth and Islamic sciences at the Prophet’s Mosque: Shaykh Muhammad Ali b. Syed Zāhir Witri, Hanafi, Madani, Shaykh Rahmatullah Kairanvi Muhājir Makkah, Head Master of Madrassah Hindiyyah in Makkah: Shaykh Nūr, Lecturer at Madrassah Hindiyyah at Makkah: Shaykh Abdul Subhān, Hāfiz, Shaykh Abdullah Sindī, Mutalwi, Matari of Makkah, who was the student and disciple of Shah Abdul Haq Illāhabādi, Shaykh-ul-Dalā’il: Shah Abdul Haq Illāhabādi Muhājir Makkī, Shaykh-ul-Mashā’ikh: Hazrat, Hāji Muhammad Imdādullah Fārūqī, Chishtī, Thānvī, Muhājir Makkī, Shaykh-ul-Islam: Anwārullah Fārūqī, Hydarabādī, Shaykh Nūruddīn of Makkah, Shaykh Syed Hamza, disciple of Hāji Muhammad Imdādullah, Shaykh Muhammad Sa’īd, lecturer at Madrassah

strengthen its religious standing with the understanding that the others had innovated into the religion and could no longer be considered as Sunnis.

4.4. The Fatwa of Imām Ahmed Raza

After formally propagating the works of Shah Ismaīl, such religious errors were least expected from anyone who would not see anything wrong with the many issues within the whole text. Regarding *Barāhēin-ē-Qātia* there are several issues with this work including those matters mentioned above. Some of the issues raised in *Barāhēin-ē-Qātia* had already been dealt earlier with Ismaīl Dehlawi by Shaykh Fazl-ē-Haq. The First issue is the following text related by Gangohī: ‘Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawī has reported that the Prophet of Allah said, ‘I do not have knowledge of what is behind the wall²⁹⁵’.

In this above statement which has been presented as a whole sentence whereas it is incomplete and partial which can be misleading to mean that the Prophet had no knowledge of the unseen according to the great scholar of Hadīth, Shaykh Abdul Haq Dehlawī. The actual reference of Shah Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawī is take from his book *Madārij-ul-Nabūwwah* in which he stated, ‘Some people become perplexed that in some reports (Ahadīth) it is reported that the Prophet of Allah said, ‘I am a human and I do not have knowledge of what is behind the wall²⁹⁶’, there is no reality in this and nor are there any authentic (sahih) reports as these²⁹⁷’.

The other statement that has been identified as offensive and blasphemous from the book *Barāhēin-ē-Qātia* is as follows:

It ought to be contemplated: Seeing the state of Satan (*Shayṭān*) and the angel of death (*Malak-al-Maut*), affirming encompassing knowledge of the world (*ilm-ē-*

Saulētia in Makkah, Shaykh Syed A’zam Hussain also lecturer at Madrassah Saulētia in Makkah, Shaykh Ismat Ali also lecturer at Madrassah Saulētia in Makkah.

²⁹⁵ Ahmed. K. Barāhēin-ē-Qātia. Dār-ul-kutub Deoband, UP, India. P. 121

²⁹⁶ The reason why Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawi brings this report to our attention is because it goes against the authentic reported which state otherwise. Shaykh Muhaqiq has related in this same section, ‘Ibn Abbās has reported that the Prophet of Allah would see in the darkness of the night as he would see during the daylight of the sun (related by Bukhārī) and Baihqī has also related this on the authority of Lady Āisha. Qādhī Ayyadh has related in his book ‘Al-Shifa’ that the Prophet would see the seven bright stars in Taurus [...] It is mentioned in authentic reports that the Prophet of Allah used to say to the worshippers behind him, ‘do not hasten in your prayer positions as I can see you from behind as I say you from the front.’ Ref: Haq. A. Madārij-ul-Nubūwwah (Urdu). P.19

²⁹⁷ Haq. A. *Madārij-ul-Nubūwwah* (Urdu) Trans by Ghulām Muhī Uddin Naīmi. Shabīr Brothers, Lahore, Pakistan. 2004. P.19

Muhīt zamīn ka) for the Pride of the World, against Qur’anic texts (*fakhar-ē-Ālam ko khilāf nusūs-ē-Qatia kē*), without evidence, based purely on corrupt analogy (*billa dalīl mahz qiyāsē fāsīd sē sābit karna*), if not shirk, which part of faith is it? (*Shirk nahī to kaun sa īmān ka hissa hey*). This expanse has been established for Satan and the angel of death from the Qur’anic text (*Shaytān aur Malk-ul-Maut ko ye wusat nas sē sābit huwi*). Which Qur’anic text is there for the expanse of knowledge for the Pride of the World (*fakhr-ē-Ālam kī wusat-ē-ilm kaun sī nase-qatī hey*), based on which all Qur’anic text will be rejected, and one shirk established? (*kē tamām nusūs-ē-qati rad kar kē aik shirk sābit karta hey*)²⁹⁸.

There are several issues concerning the above paragraph which mention the angel of death and Satan encompass the knowledge of the world and the evident for this is from Qur’anic text and to believe the Prophet Muhammad encompasses such knowledge of the world is not only against the Qur’anic text but also based on corrupt analogy. Khalīl Ahmed continues by stating that there is no Qur’anic text to support the idea that the knowledge of Prophet Muhammad encompasses extensive knowledge of the world and such knowledge is not a part of one’s faith but rather to believe in this would be polytheism.

Maulāna Safdar²⁹⁹, copied the words of the author of *Anwār-ē-Sātīa* in his book *Ibārāt-ē-Aqābir*, the summary of which is that the author of *Anwār-ē-Sātīa* has used the examples of how Satan and the angel of death have leave from God to travel the earth and have access to

²⁹⁸ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātīa* (Urdu). Dār-ul-kutub Deoband, UP, India. P. 122

²⁹⁹ Sarfarāz Khān Safdar was born in the year 1914 at the city of Mansehra, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (previously known as the Northwest Frontier Province) of what is now Pakistan. He was the son of Nur Ahmad Khan b. Gul Ahmad Khan. He completed his early studies in his hometown under Mawlana Ghulām Ghaūs Hazārvi and then travelled to Siālkot and Multan for further studies. There, he studied under Shaykh Ishaq Rahmāni, a student of Mufti Muhammad Kifayatullah Dehlawi, and Maulāna Ghulām Muhammad Ludhiānwi, an early student of Imām, Syed Anwar Shah Kashmiri. After completing elementary studies, there he enrolled at Jamī’ah Anwār al-Ulūm, Gujranwala, where he studied under ‘Allāma ‘Abd al-Qādir Khan Kambelpuri. He later travelled to Deoband in 1939 along with his younger brother, Maulāna Sufi Abdul-Hamīd Khān Sawāti, and enrolled at Dar al-‘Ulūm Deoband where he studied *hadīth* under Maulāna Hussain Ahmad Madani. It was he who who gave him the title of “*Safdar*“. Shaykh Sarfaraz moved to Gujranwala, a town in the Punjab province of Pakistan, at the request of Chaudhry Fakhr al-Din and Master Karam Din and started to teach there. In 1955, he became a lecturer and teacher at Jamia Nusrat al-Ulūm, a madrasah founded by his brother. He went on to teach at Nusrat al-Ulūm for many years where he held the position of *shaykh al-hadith*. Because of his well-researched writings, he quickly became known among scholars as researcher of the age (*muhaqqiq al-asr*) and *imam Ahl al-Sunnah*. This title was given to him by the likes of Mufti Ahmad al-Rahman, Mufti Wali Hassan Tonki, Shaykh Yusuf Ludhianwi Shahid and other scholars of Deoband. It is said that Shaykh Sarfaraz penned the greatest number of books among Deobandi scholars after Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali Thanawi and Mufti Muhammad Shafi. Maulāna Sarfarāz Khan died away at the age of 98 in the year 2009.

the (knowledge of the) conditions of people and they are aware of them and who they are (i.e., their identities). He (I.e., Abdul-Samī) used this as a logical explanation and comparison that the above (I.e., Satan and the angel of death) are not superior to the Prophet of Allah and that surely the Prophet has more knowledge than both³⁰⁰,

The words used by Abdul Sami' in his work *Anwār-ē-Sātia* were used to defend the superiority of the knowledge of Prophet Muhammad when compared to that of Satan and the angel of death who the Deobandīs would agree have this extensive knowledge, thus the use of these examples by Abdul Samī were possibly to help the Deobandīs to think and contemplate upon the examples given and not that the author of *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* should have used this to further offend the Prophet of Islam by stating to believe the Holy Prophet having extensive knowledge was polytheism (*shirk*).

Imām Ahmed Raza did a further critical analysis of errors of the works of Gangohī, Imām Raza stated:

1. Ibn Abdul Wahhāb³⁰¹ was a good person with great beliefs.
2. Deobandīs and the Ghair-Muqallids are one and the same³⁰².

³⁰⁰ Safdar. S. K. *ibārāt-ē-Akābir* (Urdu). Maktaba Safdariyyah, Gaujrah Wāla, Pakistan. 2005. P. 153

³⁰¹ Imām Raza stated; 'The heresies of Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb Najdi are apparent, the scholars the Middle East and others have widely written about his heresies, he would call the blessed resting place of Prophet Muhammad as a great Idol (Sanam-ē-Kabir) and stated that the scholars for over six hundred years were all heretics and if this was not enough to know his heresy that he wrote the names of the Holy Prophet, Ali ibn Abi Talib and Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jīlli (Ghaus al-A'zam) without due respect and said these are the way to the hell fire (Jahannum), Undoubtedly, the curse of God be upon the oppressor. Mr Gangōhi has called him a good person and then why shouldn't he mention his beliefs to be great because he (b. Wahhāb) would make derogatory statements about his enemy, the Prophet Muhammad. It is strange that Mr Gangohi has blind faith (Imān bil Ghaib) in him as he has mentioned in his Fatawa, volume one, 'I am not aware of the beliefs of Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhab', and then on another page it is written, 'Muhmmad b. Abdul Wahhāb had great beliefs and he had pious followers'. In other words he was are of at least that Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb would make derogatory remarks about the Prophet of Islam, and this would be enough for him to be a good person and hold great beliefs. There is no need of further research as looking at one rice from the pot is enough.

³⁰² Imām Raza stated; 'Here he is in favour of the statement of a Ghair-Muqallid Wahhabi but differs on actions (A'māl), the first statement is without doubt true. Undoubtedly, the Muqalidīn and Ghair Muqallidīn Wahhābis are united deviation and hold the same heretical beliefs and had their differed upon anything then it would not be that unbelievers are one untied body (al kufr millatun wāhidah). It is strange that Mr Gangōhi believes his God as a liar (kādhīb) yet he has spoken the truth here as even the biggest liar speaks the truth at times (al-kadhābu qad usādiq). And the second sentence where he states that there is difference in practive (A'māl) is a lie as difference in appearance (Thūri) is nothing as it is stated in Barāhein-Qātia, 'It is possible to have differences of opinion (Mukhtalif-fi masala) in the issue', and in the first issue of the Fatawa, he wrote, 'To practice upon Hadith for the sake of Allah is a good thing', and then upon page six, he said to a person who raised his hands (rafayadāyn) and raised his voice for the amen (amīn bil jahr), 'prejudice is not good, they also practise upon hadith (āmīl bil hadith)'. But also said, 'May he be doing it out of egotism/pride, even then it is correct in itself (fi dhātihī)', and then stated on page five, 'All practise hadith, whether they are Muqallid or Ghair Muqallid.'

3. *Taqwiyyat-al-Imān* is representation of pure Islam³⁰³.
4. It is a waste to speak on the issue of the possibility of God lying (*Imkān-ē-Kizb*).
5. The Prophet is not the only Mercy towards the universe³⁰⁴.
6. The Mawlid gathering³⁰⁵.
7. Why wouldn't they (i.e., the Deobandīs) compare the blessed gathering (i.e., *Mawlid*) with the birthday of Kaneya³⁰⁶ (the Hindu God) when they compare the Vēda and Ashlōk³⁰⁷ with the Holy Qur'an in Barāhein Qātia.

Imam Raza mentioned a few more points and differences but these do not concern us at this point. Another interesting factor which Imām Raza mentioned is how the celebration of the Holy Prophet birthday and the sweet (*Niyāz*) distributed in the names of Shaykh Abdul Qādir al-Jīllī and the saints to the poor and needy is seen as unacceptable³⁰⁸ and not permissible because a date is set for it, and it is done yearly and yet according to Gangohī it is permissible to eat the sweets that are distributed at the Hindu festivity of *Holi*³⁰⁹. There are many

³⁰³ Imam Raza stated; 'The person to lay the foundations wahhābism (tark-ē-taqīd) in India was Ismāil Dehlawi, which is obvious from his books 'Taqwiyyah-tul-Imān', and 'Tanwīr-ul-Aynnain'. The Faith of Mr Gangōhi upon this book is more than his faith upon the Holy Qur'an. He stated in his Fatawa, page 122, 'To keep, read and practice (what is written in) this book is in its essence (ayn) Islam itself'. Every person is aware that if something is an essence then the rejection of the opposite would be in contrast/contrary to it. So if reading Taqwiyyah-tul-Imān is the essence of Islam, then, not reading it would be heresy (kufr) ... What I wanted to say is when such a book is propagating ghair-muqallidi, then why wouldn't Mr Gangōhi give permission for this ...'

³⁰⁴ Imam Raza stated; 'The attribute of being the Mercy towards the Universe (Rahma-tulil-alamīn) is the speciality of the Holy Prophet according to Muslims but why would Mr Gangōhi agree to this as it would make the like of another like Prophet Muhammad impossible (Muhāl). The Qur'anic verse, 'And We have not send you but as a Mercy towards the Universes' (Q. 12:107), thus besides Allah, the Messengership of Prophet Muhammad is universal, so, all besides All are the followers (ummati) of the Prophet and for the follower to be equal to the Prophet is impossible, therefore, to reject the imperative of the universality (Umume Qati) of the word universe (ālamīn) from the attribute of the Merciful Prophet and thus use it for street Mullahs.

³⁰⁵ And the glad tidings the scholars and the pious received and saw that the Holy Prophet is happy with the blessed practise of the gathering of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (Mawlid) and the Prophet of Allah said, 'Whoever shows happiness for me, we be happy with him'. Shah Abdul Rahim, the father of Shah Wali-Ullah saw the Prophet happy upon seeing the distribution of sweets during the yearly programme (i.e. Mawlid), the answer these people give about these dreams is that how can anyone believe in these, even so he dream of Abdullah b. Abbas has been related in Sahih Bukhari about the cursed Abu Lahab's punishment is decreased on every Monday because of the happiness he showed upon the birthday of the Holy Prophet [...] And the status of your dreams is such and that you use false dreams to show our own egotism by the Prophet Muhammad [...] The elders said about the Prophet, 'Tutored and insane' (Q. 44:14), they affirmed the tutoring from a dream and in regards to insanity, it was Mr Thanvi who completed the cycle by stating, 'Every insane has knowledge of the unseen like His', in his book Hifz-ul-Imaan.

³⁰⁶ Barahēinē Qātia, p. 317

³⁰⁷ These are Holy religious books of the Hindu faith.

³⁰⁸ A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 15. P. 524

³⁰⁹ Fatawa Rashidiyyah, p. 575

controversies of the founding fathers of Deoband which require further detailing research to find out how they managed to fool the masses of being Sufis yet practised strict Wahhābī ideologies as stated above. In short, the possible answer to this is due to them being a minority at that point they would dissimulate (*Taqiyyah*)³¹⁰, the idea of which Imām Raza mentioned stating:

‘They devise of dissimulation (*Taqiyyah*), then why complain of commanding it, after all it is their heritage from their elders who would present themselves before the Prophet of Allah and take filthy oaths and say, ‘We bare witness that undoubtedly Thee are the Messenger of Allah’ (Q. 11:18). The Lord God replied with that He is surely aware that Thee are His Messenger and Allah is witness that these wicked people are liars, they pray with their tongues and they have filth in their hearts that, ‘had we returned to Madinnah’ (Sunan Ibn Mājah) and this is the state of them (I.e. Deobandī/Wahhābīs) that when they meet Muslims, they will try to show they are praising the Holy Prophet and they will say, ‘In short, you are the most venerable after God’ (*ba’daz Khudā buzurgh tuhī qissa mukhtasar*) and their hearts filled with the filth that (thinking of the Prophet) such as a sweeper (*Chūra*), cobbler (*Chamār*), worthy less than an atom (*Zhara nāchiz sē kamtar*), his leadership is thus as a village elder (*unki sardarī aisi jaese gha’oen ka chawdary*), powerless (*ājiz*) and to die and become dust (*markar mati me mil ghaey*) etc’ and Allah said, ‘Indeed, those who malign Allah and His Messenger, Allah has cursed them in this world and the hereafter, and has prepared for them a humiliating punishment’ (Q. 33:57)³¹¹.

According to Imām Raza, it is thus not surprising how these people held double standards in approaching the masses with an Islam that they are familiar without revealing what is actually written in the books of their elders in regard to Sufism and following an Imām. There is further research needed in this area of how the Deobandīs and Ahlē Hadīth managed follow

³¹⁰ In *Islam*, the practice of concealing one’s belief and foregoing ordinary religious duties when under threat of death or injury. *Taqiyyah* has been employed by the *Shī’ites*, the largest minority sect of Islam, because of their historical persecution and political defeats not only by non-Muslims but also at the hands of the majority *Sunni* sect. The Minority Deobandī’s are also known to use *Taqiyyah* as a way of getting employment in Sunni places of worship as Imāms and preachers, not because of fear but to fool the lay person to think they are representatives of the Sunni/Barēlwi school.

³¹¹ A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 15. P. 526

contradictory practices and also recruit people from mainstream Sunni Islam and one possible answer could be of using Taqiyyah where majority of the community were known to be Barēwī. Metcalf stated, ‘They (i.e., the *Ahlē Hadīth*) never had popular appeal of the Deobandī or Barēlwī Ullama because of their opposition to acting as Sufi shaykhs to their followers³¹²’, As both the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs were Hanafīs, it would not be easy to spot a Deobandī, they could easily say they were Sunnī in a Barēlwī setting and doing *Taqiyyah* is evident from Deobandī works³¹³.

4.5. Conclusion

The *Barahēin* was written regarding the internal differences within Deoband. Maulāna Abdul Samī had written the work ‘*Anwār-al-Sātīa*’ opposing Deoband as Wahhābīs as he was inclined towards the understanding of Sunni Islam as was represented by Imām Ahmed Raza Khān. The *Barahēin* was thus written to defend Deobandī beliefs and explanations and a critique of age-old Sunni practices and traditions in South Asia.

Besides from being a rebuttal, Gangohī made some serious errors regarding the knowledge of Prophet Muhammad and said it to be polytheism (*Shirk*). Following this controversy and other matters discussed in this book including causing friction by stating the birthday celebrations of the Prophet Muhammad (*Milād-ul-Nabi*) in comparisons to the Hindu Demi God Rām, this was seen as distasteful by the Sunni majority who celebrated the Prophets birthday with great honour and respect.

This was yet seen as another controversy by another leading Deobandī, raising further objections and this would tarnish the reputation of Deoband and was not seen as a representative of the long-standing Sunni Hanafi tradition of South Asia by Imām Ahmed Raza and Hajī Imādullah Muhājir Makkī.

Imām Ahmed Raza also deemed this book as blasphemous and issued a verdict of heresy when there was reply and nor were the Deobandīs willing to retract from their errors.

³¹² Metcalf. B. p. 294

³¹³ Ahsan. M. *Sawānē-Qāsimī tanī Sīrat Shams-ul-Islām*, Vol. 1 . P. 332

Unless one is aware of the Barahēin-ul-Qātia as being a rebuttal and a response to the work of Maulāna Abdul Samī known as Anwār-al-Sātia. Maulāna Abdul Samī was educated by Deobandīs but was a disciple and follower of Hajī Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī and stood up against the Wahhābī school in India. With the writing of this book and the statements of Sunni scholars in support of this work, included is his spiritual Master Hajī Sāhib who has stated that this book is a representation of the beliefs of the Grand Master and his elders. This would only mean that the Deobandīs would have gradually distanced themselves from the circle of Hajī Sāhib as they had been exposed of their Wahhābī beliefs. This would make it clear that it was not just Imām Ahmed Raza who was refuting the Deobandīs but also other Sunni scholars were doing the same.

Chapter 5. The Hifz ul-Imān of Shaykh Ashraf Ali Thānvī

In this chapter I will analyse the works of Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvī and his problematic statements about the extent of Prophetic knowledge and its comparison with lesser beings which was a matter of concern to Imām Ahmed Raza, who wrote to Thānvī to repent and retract but Thānvī did not respond and ignored the many letters requesting his explanation, but he refused to respond to Imām Raza in person or in writing.

Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvī's paternal family were Fārūqī³¹⁴ and his maternal family were Alawī³¹⁵ [...] His father's name was Abdul Haq and he was from the town of Thāna Bavan of the district of Muzaffar Ghar and was a considerably wealthy person. His maternal family was linked to Shaykh Abdul Razzāq Janjānawī³¹⁶ (d. 949 AH) belonging to a line of Sūfī Shaykhs who is mentioned in the works 'Akhbār-ul-Akhyār of Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawī [...] He was born on the 19 August 1863 [...] He completed his memorisation of the Holy Qur'an and also learnt Persian (*fārsī*) from different teachers and then completed the Arabic language at Deoband at the age of 19 years. He started his studies at Deoband at the age of 1878 and completed his studies in the 1884 [...] After graduation, he spent fourteen years

³¹⁴ The title Farūqī is used for descendants of the second Caliph of Islam, Umr b. Khattāb.

³¹⁵ The title Alawī is used for the descendants of the cousin of the Prophet and the fourth Caliph of Islam, Ali ibn abi Tālib.

³¹⁶ Shaykh Abdul Haq Dehlawī has stated, 'Shah Abdul Razzāq Janjāna was the disciple of Shaykh Muhammad Hassan and was amongst the Masters of the Qadrī Sufi Order. He acquired religious knowledge from a young age and then was attracted towards the path of the Sufis and spent time in meditation and solitude and many miracles are related to him. He had many disciples. Ref: Haqq. A, *Akhbār-ul-Akhyār* (Urdu). Madinnāh Publications Company, Karachi, Pakistan. P. 488

teaching at Kānpur and then at different places and spent a lot of time preaching and lecturing and the printed versions of his lectures and discourses usually became available shortly after these tours. During his pilgrimage to Haj, Thānvi became a disciple of Hājī Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī [...] He decided to retire from teaching and devote himself to re-establishing the spiritual centre at his hometown Thāna Bavan and authored many works [...] He died on the 20th of June 1943³¹⁷.

5.1. Why was Hifz-ul-Imān written?

In the year 1319/1901, Ashraf Ali Thānvī, replied to a question about the knowledge of the unseen (*ilm-ul-ghāyb*) for the Prophet of Islam in his booklet entitled *Hifz ul-Imān*. This booklet deals with two questions, the first is about prostration (*sajdah*) and its type and the second is asked about the unseen knowledge for Prophet Muhammad. The objectionable words from the paragraph regarding the unseen knowledge of Prophet Muhammad are mentioned below:

Moreover, what is the ruling if it is correct to attribute the knowledge of the unseen (*ilm-ul-ghāyb*) for the Revered One (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), if thought to be correct by Zāyd, then further clarification is required. Is this unseen (*ghāyb*) partial (*ba'z ghāyb*) or complete (*kul ghāyb*)? If it is referred to as partial knowledge of the unseen (*ba'z ulūm-e-ghāybiyyah*), then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? Such (*aisa*³¹⁸) knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by Zāyd, Amr (i.e., just anyone), indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts: For every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual³¹⁹.

To understand the issue at hand, it is important to understand the background of the issue and not just to go by the official edict by Imām Ahmed Raza. In the above reply by Ashraf Ali Thānvī regarding a question about the prophetic knowledge of the unseen of Prophet Muhammad. There are a few points that can be noted regarding the above statement of Thānvī, he argues that there are two types of the knowledge of the unseen i.e., partial and complete. Complete knowledge is only for Allah and partial knowledge is for the rest of his creation and this is not unique to Prophet Muhammad and can also be possessed by any individual, child,

³¹⁷ Haq. A. *Ashraf-ul-Sawāneh* (Urdu). Idārah Ta'lifāt-ē-Ashrafiyyah, Pakistan. P. 103.

³¹⁸ The word *aisa* (such) is used for comparison in the Urdu language. The Urdu dictionary Feroz-ul-lughaat (Urdu-English) translates the term *aisa* as Such, like this, resembling. Feroz Sons Urdu-English Dictionary (revised edition), Lahore, Pakistan. P. 89

³¹⁹ Thanvi, A. A. *Hifz ul-Iman*. Dar-ul-kutub Deoband. India. P. 15

madman, animals and beasts. Then Thānvī makes comparison (*Tashbīh*) between the Prophet and lower creatures and said that every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual.

Thānvī wrote a reply to a letter sent by a close disciple, namely, Maulāna Muhammad Murtadha Hassan³²⁰ (d. 1951) Darbangī which is now attached to *Hifz-ul-Imān*, known as *Bast-ul-Banān wa-Taghyīr-ul-Unwān* regarding the fatwa of one Maulvī Ahmed Raza who accused Ashraf Ali of blasphemy. Thānvī replied with the following:

I have not written any such wretched content in any book, never mind writing such a matter, it has not even crossed my mind; such content does not necessitate any such meaning from my statement because I will mention this in the end. When I think of such content as wretched and such a meaning has not even crossed my mind then how can I have mean it such. Whoever holds such a belief, knowingly, clearly or to hint such a thing, I think such a person to be outside the fold of Islam and that he is contradicting the authentic scriptures and being blasphemous towards His Majesty, the leader of creation, the pride of the children of Adam (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), this is the answer to your question. Now I will answer the question in regard to my statement in *Hifz-ul-Imān* and the blame which has been placed on me [...] The sentence that starts with, ‘If it is referred to as partial knowledge of the unseen (*ba’z ulūm-e-ghāybiyyah*), then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e. Prophet Muhammad)?’, in other words, the knowledge of the unseen possessed by the Prophet is through mediation [...] and if it is meant by partial knowledge even though it may be of one thing, and that maybe insignificant, it is in such (knowledge) that which is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e. Prophet Muhammad)? Such (*aisa*) knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by Zāyd, Amr (i.e., just anyone) and others. The word such (*aisa*) does not entail therein actual fact such (insignificant) knowledge is possessed by the Prophet of Allah. God forbid! The meaning to be understood from the word ‘such’ (*aisa*) is as

³²⁰ Maulāna Murtadha Hassan was a resident of Chāndpur and was born in the year 1868. He was amongst the students of Maulāna Muhammad Yaqūb Nanautavi. He graduated from the Dār al-ULūm Deoband in 1304 AH. He served as principal for a long time in the madrasahs of Darbhanga, Muradabād (India). but the real place of his services was the Dār al-ULūm, Deoband. He had had the honour of vowing allegiance to Maulāna Rafī’ al-Dīn but later he resorted to Maulāna Thānvī and was authorized to receive allegiance. He retired from the Dar al-ULūm on 1st Ramazan, A.H. 1350, and settled down in his native place Chandpur where he died aged 83 in December 1951.

mentioned above, in other words generalised knowledge (*mutlaq ba'z ilm*) even though it may be of one thing, and that maybe insignificant, and it has also been mentioned above that the term partial (*ba'z*) here is generalised (*ām*) because every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual. If Zāyd thinks its ok to call any person knower of the unseen (*alim-ul-ghāyb*) who knows every insignificant hidden thing, then Zāyd should apply this to them all because they all have knowledge of some hidden matters [...] In this instance, the problem with generalised knowledge (*mutlaq ba'z ilm*) has been mentioned as what then is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e. Prophet Muhammad) because Zāyd, Amr and others will also be included in this attribute as it is not possible for anyone to be a comparison or share your unparalleled attributes³²¹.

The explanations of Thānvī of the objectionable paragraph and the words used were not befitting or respectful towards the Prophet of Allah as further explanation was required and even then, it does seem that the explanation is out of context from the original statement as the original statement is clear and not ambiguous that it would need an explanation to understand its context. In his defence, Thānvī had to explain the words which were seen as blasphemous in the Urdu language. There are a few points from his defence that can be mentioned to understand the issue better. Thānvī denied the use of any offensive words in his booklet regarding the Prophetic knowledge or of knowingly using any offensive words regarding the knowledge of Prophet Muhammad. Thānvī stated to think of his statement with such meaning as explained by Imām Raza, which is clearly apparent from the actual text which is contradictory to his explanation to be blasphemous. Thānvī further mentioned that the term partial knowledge (*ba'z ghāyb*) in the objectionable paragraph is to be understood as general and not in particular to Prophet Muhammad, even though the question is about the prophet knowledge of the unseen of Prophet Muhammad. Furthermore, in his statement, Thānvī, himself challenged the vastness and the extensive knowledge of Prophet Muhammad by questioning the fact, 'then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? In general terms this could be understood as there being nothing special or unique in regard to the knowledge of Prophet Muhammad. He then used the word such and compares the partial knowledge of the Prophet to other creatures, he said, 'Such (aisa) knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by Zāyd, Amr (i.e., just anyone), indeed, by every

³²¹ Thanvi, A. A. Hifz ul-Iman. Dar-ul-kutub Deoband. India. P. 22

child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts'. The problem here is the deliberate comparison of the most honoured of God's creation with those of the lowest. Thānvī concluded the argument with the words, 'For every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual'. The problem with this statement is that Thanvi is not discussing or comparing the knowledge between God and his creation, but here the use of the term of knower of the unseen (*Ālim-ul-ghāyb*) for Prophet Muhammad besides God, which could lead to polytheism (*shirk*) according to the Deobandi school of thought and Thānvī. There seems to be a pattern in such offensive statements made by other Deobandi elders towards Prophets, relics, Saints etc. which is also found common in Wahhābī literature in the name of defending Islam from their understanding of polytheism (*shirk*).

Thānvī tried to explain that the words used in the objectionable paragraph, are not to be understood specifically for Prophet Muhammad but in general terms, such as partial knowledge (*ba'z ghāyb*) is to be understood in general terms in the paragraph when it clearly mentioning the Prophet Muhammad. He questioned the partial knowledge of Prophet Muhammad with the objectionable words, 'then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? He deliberately challenged and questioned the uniquely special knowledge of Prophethood, which is not comparable to the knowledge of other creations of God according to Imām Raza. Thānvī then compared Prophetic knowledge with that of all that he could think of which included, 'anyone, indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts'. In his defence, he mentioned that this is not actually a comparison between the prophetic knowledge of Prophet Muhammad and other creatures but rather an explanation of the significance of His knowledge compared to others as though they may possess partial knowledge of the unseen, even though it is insignificant, it is a hidden thing and says, 'For every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual'. He further tried to interpret the objectionable paragraph with generalisation of the offensive words, but this logic of Thanvi would not be very convincing as the statement is in regards the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen which is specific and cannot be generalised as it is very self-explanatory in the language it was written, in this case the Urdu language. Even though this was highlighted by Imām Raza, Thānvī ignored all correspondence and failed to reply to official letters by a Mufti.

5.2. Letters by Imām Ahmed Raza sent to Thānvī

From the collection of the letters sent by Imām Ahmed Raza, there are three letters which are directed to Thānvī. The letter below is one that was sent to him in the year 1328AH/1910AD written by his own hands before the edict (*fatwa*) of blasphemy (*kufṛ*) was issued:

This servant (i.e., Ahmed Raza) of the Almighty does not hold any personal enmity or any worldly contention with anyone. I am in the service of the Beloved of Allah, revealing and making aware my Muslim brothers from those who disguise as Muslims yet make derogatory remarks towards God and His Messenger [...] You can test me, there will be many situations, God willingly, you will never find me responding to personal attacks. This opportunity to be of service to protect the honour of the Prophet has been given to me, not for myself. I am happy that you swear at me, spread lies, spread hate about me because in such at least you are not defaming the Prophet Muhammad and are unaware of this. I have published this and write it again, it is the coldness of my eyes that I and my ancestors standing are always for the honour of the Prophet Muhammad. Āmīn [...] (a) you are well aware, and it is clear to the people that by the grace of God, we have year after year published materials in your refutation and that of your elder Maulvī Gangohī etc. We published this and all praise is due to Allah that there has never been a rebuttal. (b) You have clearly resigned from debating, (c) questions were sent, no replies received, we sent you publications, registered posts (i.e., recorded delivery) but these were returned, (d) In the end we considered having counsel with the sponsors during the Deoband convention (jalsa-e-Deoband), even then you stayed silent. (e) with the pressure of the sponsors, your representative Chānd Purī Sāhib³²² was at the fore front, I send a registered card asking if you were ready for a debate? If you had arranged for Chānd Purī Sāhib to be your representative? It has now been seven months and you have not replied to this, it is obvious that had you been ready and had a representative, it was not a difficult task to write this down [...] (b) upon your great false accusations, Muslims have offered a reward for five hundred Rupees in an advert and also have sent you a registry, you have not replied to this nor presented any proof! (c) Then on the second accusation, an advert for the amount of three thousand Rupees was published and a registry was sent to yourself, If the

³²² Maulāna Murtadha Hassan Darbangī

whole of your organisation (*Jamāt*) could have come up with something, then, such a large amount would not have gone a miss for your Madrassah Deoband. But there was no reply and no evidence, just the same silence. (d) What must one do when there is no answer? Where do they source this from? It would have been just to stop the foul mouths of your followers, their inconsiderate acts in religious matters, you should have reprimanded them, and if this wasn't done on your behalf, then your silence has given them free reign that they have published a writing namely *sāif-ul-Naqī*, such a book has not even been produced by the Hindu Priest (*Ārya*) or a Pastor (*Pādri*). In other words, when they couldn't reply to my objections, they forged books on the name of my father and grandfather, my Sufi Shaykh (*Pīr-o-Murshid*) and even in the name of The Great Helper (*Ghaus-al-A'zam* i.e., Shaykh *Abdul Qādir al-Jīlī*), made up publisher's names, made up fake content and fake references, some of which are mentioned below:

<i>Name of fake book</i>	<i>Authored in name of</i>	<i>Fake publisher</i>	<i>Fake page reference</i>	<i>Summary of page content</i>
<i>Tuhfat-ul-Muqalidīn</i>	<i>Maulāna Naqī Ali Khān</i>	<i>Subhu Sādiq Press, Saptapur</i>	15	<i>In praise of Gangohī</i>
<i>Hidāyat-ul-Barīyyah</i>	//	<i>Lahore</i>	13	<i>About knowledge of the unseen</i>
//	//	//	14	<i>Changing graveyards</i>
<i>Hidāyat-ul-Islām</i>	<i>Maulāna Raza Ali Khān</i>	<i>Subhu Sadiq Press, Saptapur</i>	30	<i>Knowledge of the unseen in support of Thānvī</i>
<i>Tuhfat-ul-Muqalidīn</i>	//	<i>Lucknow</i>		<i>Changing graveyards in support of Gangohī</i>
<i>Khazīnat-ul-Awlīya</i>	<i>Hazrat, Shah Hamza</i>	<i>Kānpur</i>		<i>Knowledge of the unseen in support of Thanvi</i>
<i>Malfūzaat</i>	//	<i>Mustafāhī</i>		<i>Changing graveyards in support of Gangohī</i>
<i>Mirat-ul-Haqīqah</i>	<i>Shaykh Abdul Qādir Jīlāni</i>	<i>Misr</i>		<i>Knowledge of the unseen</i>

And these references have been used to show that the standing of our elders is different from ours, even the press and page numbers have been created even though these books are not to be found anywhere in the world. One reference given

of a books called *Hidāyat-ul-Bariyyah*, said to be attributed to my respectable father, they have made up edicts and used a fake stamp with the date 1301 AH, but my father had passed away in the year 1297 AH [...] All praise is due to Allah that it is clear and the opposition are also aware now who was the person who for years fled from the debates and who rejected the face to face meeting each time? [...] We wasted so much time, you were given (the opportunity to respond), all this has gone to waste. You with your intentions, you are living to just defer the issue. It is necessary to arrange a date to meet and analyse, the questions do not require deliberation, a person with a little intellect could answer yes or no at once to these but due to your competency respectfully, the law (Shari'ah) has allowed for leniency for the irresponsible to a set time. From the day of receiving the letter, you have three days to answer each question appropriately, clearly with your stamp. This is the last time. If you also abstain this time, we should be given permission from yourself to associate you to those who you linked with the dishonouring the knowledge of the Holy Prophet.

The questions are as follows:

1. In relation to the imperative charges of attributing a lie unto Allah the Almighty and blasphemy against Prophet Muhammad from a long time in concerns to yourself and your elders Maulvī Gangohī and Nanōtavī respectfully. Are you ready or will be to debate on these issues with myself?
2. Can you in your right frame of mind, in health, without any pressure confirm that you replied to the questions in *Husām-ul-Harāmāyn*, *Tamhīd-ul-Imān*, *Batshe Ghāyb* etc. with you signature and stamp. And then if there are any further questions upon your answers and it reaches to arrange a debate, so that the truth may be known.
3. If you are responsibility of your own statements and are not ready to discard the blasphemies of your elders Mr Gangohī, Mr Nanōtavī and Mr Dehlawī. Then you should be made aware that there are two groups; (1) the Muslim of Ahlē Sunnah wal Jammāh of the world and (2) those who follow Gangoh, Nanōta and Dehli. If you are from the first group, then All praise is due to God and you should put this in writing that you are not associated, connect or belong to the followers of Gangohī, Nanōtavī or Dehlawī, that they are

according to their blasphemous statements toward Allah and His Beloved Prophet Muhammad as stated by the Scholars of Makkah and Madīnnah (*Haramāyn Sharīf*), mentioned in *Husām-ul-Haramāyn* and *Fatāwa-al-Haramāyn* etc. In such a case we cannot demand the answers of their statements from you as you will also be free from their following and wanting their clarifications but if you are from the second group then their statements are your statements and what would be the meaning of abstaining from answering these?

Dear respected Maulvī Thānvī! These are the ten questions [...] You are being given three days to reply to these questions, if this is not enough time then please do mention this without any hesitation as I am willing to allow you as much time as you require as long as the reply is from yourself, the time for a representation has passed, the state of your representatives is obvious. Previously you were given ample time to bring forth a representative if you were nervous by authorising him with your signature and stamp. Many time over we mentioned this in adverts and letters, but you remained silent without replying. In the end Mr Chānd Purī on his own accord, becomes a self-appointed representative, the outcome of which is that are you not qualified? Are you not aware of how to present evidence? Are you not acknowledging the words of your statement? Does this not make necessary malediction of yourself? Stop taking assistance from others and take heed in God and don't turn away from real inquiry, do not take the life out of the people in this state of worry and confusion³²³

The above letter gives so much information as to what was happening in the environment causing much confusion and worry amongst the majority Hanafī Muslims regarding the charges of blasphemy, the Sunni/ Wahhābī divide and the continuous fight over orthodoxy and claim of following the pristine school (*Madhab*) of the Sunni elders of India.

This letter not only shows the commitment and professional dealings of Imām Ahmed Raza to his understanding of Sunnism but also how he adheres to the religious proceedings as a judge (*Muftī*) and giving the accused ample time to prove his innocence in matters pertaining the religion, especially when it involved the Islamic creed. During this time the Imām was receiving letters threatening him to stop his edicts (*fatwas*); he is being accused of dividing the

³²³ Ahmed, M. Maktubat-e-Imam Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilwi (Urdu). Lahore, Pakistan (1986). P. 115

Muslims and more. Imām Ahmed Raza interestingly also mentions Deobandīs fabricating books in the name of his father and grandfather trying to prove that his own elders held such beliefs which are listed in the above letter of Imām Raza. So, we can gather that taking such a decision to declare another Muslim as a blasphemer and charging him of heresy was not an easy task for Imām Raza and it was not something that he took lightly but wrote to Deoband and personally to Thānvī to clarify the issue and retract from the offensive words used but there seems to have been silence and no reply by Maulāna Thānvī to Imām Ahmed Raza.

Imām Ahmed Raza also asked Thānvī in the above letter to answer and or explain the blasphemies from the works of his elders, if he thinks of them as such and if not, he should make his position clear on this. Another two letters requesting Thānvī to respond were written on Monday the 14th of Rabbī-ul-Awwal 1328/ 1910³²⁴ and another letter sent on the 19th of Safar 1329/ 1911³²⁵.

Interesting, Thānvī did not think it important to respond to an official enquiry of Imām Raza but did mention in the letter to Maulāna Muhammad Murtaza Hassan stating;

Until now I have not paid any attention to such nonsense because I know from experience there will be no benefit in this and a waste of time. The way you have approached me I have presented before you with the information and it should not be doubted as to why I have not replied or maybe that I have retracted? The reason for not writing was that I was never approached in a dignified manner³²⁶

Thānvī thus deliberately did not reply to the enquiry of Imam Raza possibly due to the already differences between Ismaīl Dehlawī and Shah Fazl-Haq Khāirabādī and allowing this to play out and this could be used as a method of spreading propaganda against Imām Raza for dividing the Sunni Muslims of India. The interesting matter is that though he is defensive and trying to provide alternative meaning to clear texts, he is still not ready to retract from the objectionable text or acknowledge the enquiry of another religious authority of the country and help resolve the issue.

³²⁴ Ibid, p. 128

³²⁵ Ibid, p. 130

³²⁶ Thanvi, A. A.

5.3. In defence of Hifz-ul-Imān

Prophetic knowledge *Ilm-al-Ghāyb* is a matter much disputed amongst some Muslim scholars mainly due to the ambiguity of Qur'anic verses relating to it and theological concepts but the Deobandīs and the Ahl-e-Hadīth³²⁷ reject *Ilm-al-Ghāyb* for the Prophets and saints (*Awliyā*). It should also be noted that to believe in extensive knowledge for Prophet Muhammad is seen as polytheism (*Shirk*) by the Deobandīs³²⁸ and thus the way in which Thānvī tackles the question without showing any sensitivity towards the person of Prophet Muhammad.

From the year 1901 until 1911, Imām Raza wrote to Thānvī but there was no reply to Imām Raza and the self-representation of Murtaza Hassan on behalf of Thānvī was not accepted as he was not declared to officially represent the case on behalf of Thānvī on his behalf.

There is no real argument in this case and war of words in Thānvī's statement. If this is the case, then why has this issue escalated for over a hundred years dividing the Hanafīs into two camps? But we must first analyse the reply from Thānvī and Deoband. In response to a letter by Thānvī regarding the offensive statement, Thānvī agrees with Imām Raza by replying:

I have not written any such wretched content in any book, never mind writing such a matter, it has not even crossed my mind; such content does not necessitate any such meaning from my statement because I will mention this in the end. When I think of such content as wretched and such a meaning has not even crossed my mind then how can I have meant it such. Whoever holds such a belief, knowingly, clearly or to signify such a thing, I think such a person to be outside the fold of Islam and that he is contradicting the authentic scriptures and being blasphemous towards His Majesty, the leader of creation, the pride of the children of Adam (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), this is the answer to your question.

Thānvī's rebuttal is quite contradictory to the offensive statement made by himself, because in the above statement he stated that he has not written any such wretched words in any book and that nor such a thing has ever crossed his mind and that whoever holds such a belief knowingly, clearly or even or hints such a thing is outside the fold of Islam.

³²⁷ Shaykh Rashīd Ahmad Ghangohi, the founder of Madrasa e-Deoband states in his Fatawa Rashīdiyya in response to a question about the *Ilm-ul-Ghaib* of the prophet, 'Anyone who ascribes the knowledge of the unseen to anyone besides Allah and also believes it equal to Allah is indeed a kafir (apostate).' p. 65

³²⁸ Ahmad, Khalil, Barahīn-e-Qātia (U.P: Dar-ul-Kutub Deoband) p. 122

Though Imām Ahmed Raza had made the issue of the offensive statement clear to Thānvī by means of writing, adverts, articles and by means that were available to him to do so, he had decided not to take this seriously at all and understandably so, as there was no real alternative interpretation he could offer as he himself admitted that if what Imām Raza has charged him for was exactly that, then he openly admits that such a thing is blasphemy even if an indication of disrespect is found in a statement about Prophet Muhammad.

Thānvī has himself confirmed the ruling regarding to what counts as derogatory which includes even ‘AN INDICATION’ is categorised as blasphemous and such a person is outside the fold of Islam. For Thānvī having to write a whole letter to try to clarify his statement which is seen as offensive in the Urdu language and even in its English translation, it is obviously not very likened in its context.

As an official edict has been issued against Thānvī, this called for a rebuttal and an official reply from Deoband as Thānvī was a rector of the institute. The Arab Ullama are said to have written to the Deobandīs for further clarification on this upon which the Deobandīs wrote a reply in Arabic which has now been made available in both Urdu and English called ‘*Al-Muhannad alal-Mufannad.*’ In this short thesis, under question twenty in regard to the offensive statement of Thānvī, Deobandīs have replied thus:

I say: this too is from the inventions of the innovators. They distorted the meaning of the statement and, in their hatred; they produced the opposite of what the Shāykh intended [...] So look, Allah have mercy on you, at the statement of the Shāykh. You will not find even a trace of what the innovators invented. How farfetched for any Muslim to claim that the knowledge of Allah’s Messenger is equal to Zāyd, Bakr or beasts. Rather the Shāykh ruled by way of implication that one who claimed the permissibility of using knowledge of the ghāyb for Allah’s Messenger due to his knowledge of part of the ghāyb, that it would be necessary for him to allow its usage for all men and beasts. How far this is from the equivalence of knowledge, which they fabricated about him! Allah’s curse be on the liars. We are convinced that any who believe that the knowledge of the Prophet is equal to Zāyd,

Bakr, beasts and madmen, is an absolute disbeliever. Far be it that the Shāykh say such (a thing), and this would indeed be a strange thing³²⁹.

In an analysis of the offensive statement of Thānvī, Shāykh Nuh Ha Mīm Keller³³⁰ has stated:

Their (Thānvī's) response was strident and hyperbolic, comparing the knowledge of the Prophet to that of various lower creatures in a way that probably no Muslim had ever compared him before³³¹.

Shāykh Nuh further added:

In the heat of argument, some of them met what they deemed exaggerated statements about the Prophet's knowledge with equally exaggerated statements about his lack of knowledge; reaching a degree that, by any ordinary measure, can be only described as far below the standards of normal Islamic scholarly discourse³³².

There are two interesting points from the statements of Shāykh Nuh regarding Thānvī's offensive statement: Comparing the knowledge of the Prophet to that of various lower creatures in a way that probably no Muslim had ever compared him before and to make exaggerated statements about his lack of knowledge; reaching a degree that, by an ordinary measure, can only be described as far below the standards of normal Islamic scholarly discourse.

It was exactly the above reasons that alarmed Imām Raza that such a statement was made by a scholarly figure and not an ordinary person. Not to mention the edict of Imām Raza but even according to their own understanding of blasphemy, the Deobandīs themselves would be liable to be outside the fold of Islam as even AN INDICATION of disrespect would be blasphemy and this rule is agreed by the Deobandīs as stated above in *al-Muhannad* and also stated by Imām Raza.

³²⁹ *Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad* (English Translation) < https://www.themajlis.co.za/books/Al-Muhannad_%27ala_al-Mufannad_Translation.pdf > [accessed on 01/10/2020 10:23]

³³⁰ Shaykh Nūh Ha Mīm Keller was born in the year 1954, Keller was raised in the Roman Catholic tradition and went on to study Philosophy and Arabic at Chicago University and converted to Islam in 1977. He began a prolonged study of the Islamic sciences with scholars in Syria and Jordan and was given Shaykhdom in 1996. He later joined the Shadhili Sufi Order under Shaykh Abdul Rahmān al-Saghourī until his death in 2004. He is a Muslim scholar, teacher and author who lives in Amman, Jordan. He has also translated a number of Islamic books into English.

³³¹ Iman, Kufr and Takfir < <https://www.scribd.com/document/174576574/Iman-Kufr-And-Takfir-by-Nuh-Keller> > [Accessed on 01/10/2020 11:37]

³³² Ibid

We now know that this was a new innovation in belief (*Aqīdah*) by the Deobandīs. The Urdu offensive statement was not vague or ambiguous but clear and self-explanatory and did not need any clarity in any sense thus it became difficult for the Deobandis to debate or face Imām Raza even though he allowed them to repent or change the sentence, but this was not accepted by the other and as per the job of a Mufti to provide an official judgement on the religious matter, Imām Raza declared the Deobandis outside the fold of Islam.

The matter regarding the comparing lower creatures with the knowledge of the unseen of the Holy Prophet would not be acceptable under any circumstances is what Imām Ahmed Raza has shown that not even a hint of smell or any derogatory statement will be tolerated regardless of the person or position in religion he maybe.

The position of the Sūfī Master (*Pīr*) of Thānvī and the Deobandīs, what Hāji Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī has to say about the knowledge of the unseen for the Holy Prophet:

To belief that the Holy Prophet honours the gathering of his birthday (*Māwliid*) with his presence as disbelief (*kufir*) or polytheism (*shirk*) is exceeding the limits and is outrageous (*had sē barna hey*). This is possible rationally and evidence from religious texts. It does happen on certain occasions. The doubt how the Prophet could know about the Māwliid and how he could be present at many places at one time is very weak and baseless doubt (*za'īf shuba hey*). These things are insignificant before the vast knowledge and spirituality of the Holy Prophet which are supported by religious texts and inspiration (*dalā'il-ē-naqaliyyah-o-kashfiyyah*). Besides, nobody can doubt the powers of Allah Almighty who could lift all the veils so that the Prophet can see everything while being seated in once place. In fact, in every respect this is possible. This belief does not mean that the Prophet possesses knowledge of unseen (*ilm-ul-ghāyb*) specific to Allah Almighty (*khasā'is dhāt-ē-Haq*) as knowledge of unseen (*ilm-ul-ghāyb*) is that which is specific to His Majesty and that which is by means (*bis'sabab*) of the All-Knowing God is possible for the creation but rather there are prominent and famous instances of its occurrences. The belief in something possible cannot be regarded as disbelief (*kufir*) or polytheism (*shirk*) even if such a thing does not occur, though of course evidence is necessary for such beliefs. If this evidence is available through one's own inspiration (*kashf*) or is informed by a person of inspiration (*sāhib-ē-kashf*), believing in such a thing is allowed. However, without evidence such a thing will

be wrong, and a person should retract from the error, but it cannot be regarded as disbelief (*kufr*) or polytheism (*shirk*) in any way or form³³³.

A few points that can be mentioned from this above statement about the knowledge of the unseen of the Holy Prophet: The belief that the Holy Prophet honours the gathering of his birthday (*Mawlid*) with his presence as disbelief (*kufr*) or polytheism (*shirk*) is exceeding the limits and is outrageous (*had sē barna hey*) as this is possible rationally and evidence from religious texts. To doubt how the Prophet could know about the Māwliḍ and how he could be present at many places at one time is a very weak and baseless doubt (*za 'if shuba hey*). These are things insignificant before the vast knowledge and spirituality of the Holy Prophet which are supported by religious texts and inspiration (*dalā'il-ē-naqaliyyah-o-kashfiyyah*). Nobody can doubt the powers of Allah Almighty who could lift all the veils so that the Prophet can see everything while being seated in once place. In fact, in every respect this is possible. Such a belief does not mean that the Prophet possesses knowledge of unseen (*ilm-ul-ghāyb*) specific to Allah Almighty (*khasā'is dhāt-ē-Haq*) as knowledge of unseen (*ilm-ul-ghāyb*) is that which is specific to His Majesty and that which is by means (*bis 'sabab*) of the All-Knowing God is possible for the creation but rather there are prominent and famous instances of its occurrences.

Hājī Imdādullah goes a step further than just mentioning the knowledge of the unseen to the possibility of the Holy Prophet blessing a person or a gathering with his blessed presence and Hājī Sāhib is saying all is possible with the will of God and has presented this in a very satisfactory manner without the use of words that could have hinted disrespect or the use of derogatory terms or any comparison that would show any dishonour to the Prophet Muhammad in any way.

5.4. A question regarding Bast-ul-Banān

A letter sent to Ashraf Ali about his *Hifz-ul-Imān* by Maulāna Murtadha Hassan as mentioned above and the doubt of his heresy (*kufr*) as he does not reject the unseen knowledge (*ilm-ul-ghayb*) of the Prophet but questions the use of the term knower of the unseen (*Alim-ul-ghayb*) which is evident from the extensive knowledge of the Prophet. The reply by Thānvī has been published in second part of *Hifz-ul-Imān* known as *Bast-ul-Banān*. Imām Ahmed Raza replied:

³³³ Hussain. I. Advice from beyond the grave: Faisala-Haft-Masala (English). Ahle-Sunnat-wal-Jamaat (UK), 2000. P. 23

Who knows better than Ashraf Ali, his intentions [...] For the people of knowledge, to remove the doubt, there is no better way that the question is presented from the statement of *Hifz-ul-Imān* and its reply and God-willingly you will see the truth that the whispers of the doubt will clear from the cloud of smoke³³⁴.

Before going to the reply of Imām Ahmed Raza it is important to get an idea as to what Imām Raza is replying to as the above question is about the letter Thānvī sent to a friend regarding the edict of the statement which is written by him. This letter is now published under the title *Bast ul-Banān*, Thānvī mentions the explanations regarding the offensive words which had been mentioned by Imām Ahmed Raza. He states the following in his defence to a friend and not as a reply to Imām Ahmed Raza, let's look at the points he mentions regarding his defence: 'I want to explain for that which I have been blamed for:

And if it is meant by some knowledge (*ba'z ulūm*) and may it be even one thing and this thing be of the smallest of things then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? Such (*aisa*) knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by Zāyd, Amr (i.e., just anyone) and others. The word such (*aisa*) does not imply the actual knowledge of the Holy Prophet but rather it means as has been identified above as in some general knowledge (*mutlaq ba'z ilm*), may this be that one thing, and this maybe be the smallest of things and it has been explained above that some (*ba'z*) means generally (*'ām*) here and it is clear that because every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual. If Zayd sees fit using the term 'knower of the unseen' (*Ālim-ul-ghayb*) for knowing the smallest of things then Zayd should use this term for all of them (i.e., Zāyd, Amr (i.e. just anyone), indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts) because they are also aware of some hidden matter, then there is the explanation of the next part that the knowledges which are essential for Prophethood, they were given to the Prophet and the one who says of the Prophetic knowledge then how can he compare the Prophetic knowledge with that of Zāyd, Amr (i.e. just anyone), indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts and has

³³⁴ Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 15. Markazē Ahle Sunnat Barakāte Raza, Gujrāt, India (2003) p. 313

Zayd, Amr and others also have these knowledges and the angels and other Prophets do not have such knowledge (as Prophet Muhammad), so, it is evident from this that the statement in question was not comparing the knowledge of Prophet Muhammad with that of Zayd, Amr and others. The word such (*aisa*) does is not always used for comparison, but the linguist use it for expression (*mahāwarāt fasīha*) such as saying that Allah is so (*aisa*) powerful does not entail a comparison of another also being powerful, it is not so [...] upon concentrating, it becomes clear that it is rather a negating comparison. To wrong that which has been stated in the statement about being speciality about the Prophet in this is that in this statement it does not entail specific to Him (i.e., Prophet Muhammad) but Zayd, Amr and others are also part in this attribute in comparison even though no one has part in the exalted attributes of the Prophet, this is why it is incorrect and even if it is an opposing comparison even then the knowledge of the Prophet cannot be compared with Zayd, Amr and others as the partial knowledge of the unseen (*ba'z ulūm-e-ghābiyyah*) which has been mentioned above [...] Would only be in the case for the partial knowledge of the unseen (*ba'z ulūm-e-ghābiyyah*)³³⁵.

Even the above letter of Thānvī does not show regret or offer any remorse but only an explanation to the terminology used to clarify the negation of rejecting the exalted knowledge of the Holy Prophet but was still firm upon the statement that the comparison was based on partial knowledge of the unseen (*ba'z ulūm-e-ghābiyyah*) with lower creatures and there is no real denying of the fact that Thanvi had not retracted from this even in this letter to a friend which has now been published with the original questionable text of the booklet *Hifz-ul-Imān*. The reply of Imām Raza regarding this letter to the enquirer is as follows:

Question: What do you say about this that Zayd while praising God (*Hamde Ilāhī*) says, ‘O’ Generous Giver, Lord of the universe (*ay sakhi Dāta, ila al-Ālamīn*).’ Hamīd and Walīd both object upon this, Hamīd says, ‘this is not permissible (*na'jāiz*) to use the term generous (*sakhi*) for Allah Almighty as the name of Allah (*asma-ē-illāhi*) are (*Tawqeefi*) and thus the term (*Jawād*) should be used. This explanation can be found in Sharh al-Aqaid al-Nasafi. Walīd said, ‘What is the ruling upon the use of the term generosity (*sahāwat*) for Allah Almighty, if this is deemed as correct, then it is further asked, does this generosity (*sahāwat*) entail some

³³⁵ A. A. Hifz-ul-Imān (Urdu), Dar-ul-Kutub, Deoband, India. P.22

giving (*atā*) as in from time to time or to give to some people, even if this may be one piece (*nawāla*) or one pence (*kaurī*) or is it total giving (*kul-atā*), which is that no beggar is turned away and he is given whatever he asks. If it is meant as some (*ba'z*), then what is the speciality of Allah in this, as such generosity is also possible from Zayd, Umr, wretched, sweeper or a cobbler because every person gives one person or another. Thus, everyone should be entitled as generous (*sakhī*) and giver (*dāta*). If it is then said by Zayd that he will call everyone generous (*sakhī*) and provider (*dāta*), then why is it that 'generosity' is also added amongst God's greatness (*kamāl*) in a matter which does not hold any speciality (*husūsīyyat*) for a believer or a gentleman, how then can it be a part of God's greatness and if it does not make it necessary to state the difference between God and the other. If total giving (*tamām atāyah*) is meant here in the way that not even one person is left out from this, then the falsehood (*batlān*) of this is evident from authoritative sources and logic. Hamīd and the scholars have said these statements of Walīd to be open heresy (*sarī kufr*) [...] It is now sent to the scholars:

- Can this statement of Walīd be interpreted otherwise (*ta'wīl*)?
- Just to reject the usage of the term generous (*sakhī*) was that which was by Hamīd or that which was said by Walīd?
- The reason for this application as to put to divide a favour into two parts, one that is not even found in God and the second which is found in cobblers and sweepers and thus not recognising it from amongst God's attributes (*kamalāt*) but then to find difference, and then asking the difference between God and the others as the cobbler and sweeper regarding this. Will the usage of the term generous (*sakhī*) be restricted of God as the provider?
- In this speech, not to recognise the provider (*Atā*) as from the attributes of God and then to ask the difference between God, the cobbler and the sweeper and not accepting it as a speciality of God and believing it to be possessed by every cobbler and sweeper, is this not an insulting the court of the Almighty?
- By listening to these words, is it possible for anyone to think that this is not the greatness of God and nor is it an attack upon his Attributes and nor any type of Providence (*Atā*) which He possesses. Nor is there any denying of this attribute and nor is there any expression of any cobbler or a sweeper partaking. The only real denial is of the word generous (*sakhī*).
- It is not enough to be heresy (*kufr*) that a statement be interpreted alternatively is turned to be so. It is stated in Shifa of Imām Qadi Ayād and in other authoritative books, 'There

is no (ta'wīl) possible to words which are clear (sarīh) in their meaning'. An interpretation such as this will not be said to be heresy (kufr), I have taken the word Rasul-Allah meaning the scorpion (bichū), the interpretation of this would be, 'Undoubtedly, the scorpion has also been sent by God' (Arridat-bi-rasulillahi-al-aqrab)³³⁶.

Bast-ul-Banān was not a reply to Imām Raza but was written as a response to a friend in regard to the blasphemy he had committed, and this was named as *Bast-ul-Banān*, Thānvī in no way retracted from his statement.

Imām Raza summarises the argument in expressing the importance of knowledge and how he defines people and society, people are categorised and social statuses are based upon knowledge and that if the writer of the objectionable text has knowledge of some (*bā'z*) matters, then what is special about it as such is also obtained by donkeys, dogs and pigs and thus they should also be called as scholars (*ālim*) and graduates (*fādhil*) and if we take his stance then all should be known as learned and scholarly (*ullāma*), then why is knowledge seen as from their specialities (*Kamālāt*). That matter (*amr*) in which there is no speciality to a believer or a human and is obtained by donkeys, pigs and other animals then why should it be a part of their specialities and even according to them (i.e., the Deobandīs), the reason for the difference between them and donkeys, dogs and pigs would need to be stated³³⁷.

Imām Raza has explained the importance of knowledge and its high regard and also then gave example of it and how Thānvī has made a grave blunder regarding the knowledge of Prophet Muhammad which is clear and obvious from the text of *Hifz-ul-Imān* and provided unwarranted explanations in *Bast-al-Banān*.

5.5. The Dream of a disciple

Below mentioned is a question where someone sent Imām Ahmed Raza a question about a dream of a disciple of Thānvī and his reply and the questioner was seeking a religious edict regarding this blasphemy and alarming story.

³³⁶ Khan. A. R, Fatawa Rizwiyyah. Vol. 14. Markazē Ahle Sunnat Barakāte Raza, Gujrāt, India (2003) p. 313

³³⁷ Khan. A. R. *Tamhīd-ul-Imān* (Urdu). Maktaba Nūrīa, Rizwiyyah, Sakkar, Pakistan. P. 23

A question was raised about Shaykh Thānvī that an admirer of his wrote relating a dream in which he repeats the testification of faith (*kalma-ē-tāyibah*) but in the place of the name of the Prophet he writes to Thānvī saying, ‘I would say your name (i.e., Ashraf Ali Rasūlullah)’, after this I thought that this is wrong, and I reacted the article of faith again and again and the same would happen. Then I concentrated and thought this not to be correct but it was coming out of my mouth without any control and when this happened continuously, I saw you in front of me and I fell to the ground and screamed and I shouted and then I thought my spirituality had left me and then I awoke and thought that it was just a dream and now while awake I was only thinking of you and I then thought about what had happened (in the dream) that I made a mistake while reciting the article of faith and I tried to take this thought out of my heart and during this I sat up (while awake) and turned the other way and laid down. Still thinking of the mistake, I had made while reciting the article of faith, I thought to recite Blessings (*Salawāt*) upon the Holy Prophet and then I said, ‘O Allah send Blessings upon our Leader, our Prophet and our Master Ashraf Ali’ (*Allahumma-sallay-ala-sayyidinna-wa-nabiyyinah-wa-maulāna-Ashraf Ali*), even though I am now wide awake and nor was I drowsy or in the state of a dream but the matter was out of my control and I could not control my tongue and this continuously happened throughout the day and the next day. I cried a lot and besides this there are other reasons for my love for you’. This was the end of the letter to Thānvī who then replied to his disciple saying, ‘In this account, it is to comfort you that the one who you turn towards is a follower of the Sunnah’. Thānvī also published this account in his monthly magazine named ‘Al-Imdād’, openly with great pride, informing his disciples (*murīdīn*) of his lofty status and his honour and the heights of his spirituality. The purpose of this magazine was to educate and guide his disciples. Then what is the ruling about both these persons from the sacred Law (*shariah*)? Imām Ahmed Raza replied stating, ‘Imām Qādi Ayād has said, “The people who commits blasphemy and his excuse was that it was slip of the tongue will not be accepted”. [...] This is the ruling for the confessor and as far as for Ashraf Ali who wrote a response in praise of a heresy (*kufr*) and without a doubt to think good of a heresy and to favour it is also heresy because the respondent has considered this to be worthy of such a worthy attribute that besides sending blessings (*salawāt*) upon the Prophet of Islam, it is offered to him

(I.e., Thānvī) and he is praised with the title of prophethood and he is happy upon this and he has given permission of this to everyone and has consolidated this. [...] To dishonour the Prophet Muhammad regarding his Prophetic attributes and his being the last of the Prophets (*khātim-ul-Ambiyyah*) and that your lower self (*nafsē-amārah*) has made you accept this wrong that you likened the attributes of prophethood and messengership for yourself. Without a doubt, these persons are filled with pride, and they have rebelled against God, so both Ashraf Ali and his disciple have committed heresy (*kufr*)³³⁸.

One would have thought that a celebrated scholar like Thānvī would not have favoured such an action, but it is not surprising with the record of his elders who have also made such errors in the matters of religion. The hypocrisy of the matter is that the issues and matters made on the exact matter regarding the Holy Prophet of Islam is regarded as polytheism and should be avoided yet encouraged and practised when it is in concern to themselves. The hate and enmity towards Prophet Muhammad and their errors in polemics and their free thought in matters of religion shows their want for divine apostleship and revelation as I shall discuss in following chapters as stated by Imām Ahmed Raza.

5.6. Conclusion

This small booklet written in response to a few questions answered by Maulāna Ashraf Ali became the centre of controversy for the Deobandī school when Thānvī compared the blessed knowledge of Prophet Muhammad to that of animals, children, mad men and any person. This error was picked up by Imām Ahmed Raza who then wrote to Maulāna Ashraf Ali to retract by changing the offensive words by this went on deaf ears and the letters sent by Imām Ahmed Raza were purposely ignored and Imām Ahmed as a Muftī declared that this statement was blasphemous and heretical in nature and thus the writer and anyone who agrees to its content is also a heretic. The edict of Imām Ahmed Raza was based upon the fact that the words were not ambiguous but were clear in their meaning and did not require any explanations and thus trying to provide an explanation other than the words used would not be accepted as it would be a distortion of the known understanding of the words in question.

³³⁸ Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 14. Markazē Ahle Sunnat Barakāte Raza, Gujrāt, India (2003) p. 313

Over time Thānvī wrote a reply to a disciple about the whole controversy but never thought it important to reply to the official enquiry about the controversy by Imām Ahmed Raza. The fact that due to the issue continuing after the death of Imām Ahmed Raza and the pressure was thus building upon the Deobandīs and especially Thānvī who was convinced by one of his followers Nu'manī to change the offensive statement due to the unnecessary attention and misunderstanding amongst the masses as he called it. Though changes were announced to the original text of the Hifz-ul-Imān, but Thānvī was not simply retracting from his statement but only applying changes after the built-up pressure from his close circle, but these changes were never implemented in the book until this very day. Had Thānvī responded to the questions of Imām Ahmed Raza, this issue would never have come about and could have been lost in the pages of history as a genuine mistake.

On the most part, it is difficult for Muslims to comprehend that a Muslim Scholar and representative could make such a religious blunder in the name of religion. It would have come as a shock too many to hear that this was written by a Muslim scholar and learned man of their religion.

Though, the followers of Thānvī as well as himself tried to state that the words were not what he had meant but the problem was that the sentences were clear in their meaning to the extent of where he makes comparison between the knowledge of the Prophet and that of lower beings. Had there been ambiguity in the words and possible for interpretation but this was not the case and it had to be clear as an answer for the questioner.

6. The God and the Prophets of Deoband

As mentioned earlier Imām Ahmed Raza has inferred amongst his edicts (*fatāwa*) the probable reason for all this hate and the way language was used against the majestic person of Prophet Muhammad was due to the shattered dreams of many of those mentioned below becoming prophets and messengers. Imām Raza stated:

But humility was shown by Muhammad in the Qur'an by refreshing our minds with the verse of being the 'final Messenger' (*khātaman-nabiyyīn*) and setting up fire to the courts of newly formed 'Prophetic-statuses' therefore why shouldn't there be a grudge from them due to the poison brewing in their hearts³³⁹?

In previous religious traditions, there was a continuity of prophethood and messengership like in the Jewish and the tradition of Hinduism where there were many Prophets and messengers from God bringing and keeping the law and order amongst the people. And these religions were localised and based within certain communities thus there was no propagation of their faiths outside their specified areas. Islām came and changed much of this with a universal message of truth, leading the way of the other monotheistic religious traditions and bringing an end to any further revelation from God after the Holy Qur'an and also restricting prophethood to the person of Prophet Muhammad as the last and final messenger of God on earth. The closing of the doors of prophesy by God as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an was something that would not be easily welcomed by people of other faiths and possibly some amongst the Islamic tradition. Besides the Shi'ī tradition, this was an issue expressed by three factions in the Indian Sub-continent:

- a. The Deobandīs
- b. The Ahlē-Hadīth
- c. The Qādiānis

The Deobandī's and the Ahlē-Hadīth never openly professed to prophesy but tried to create many loopholes as stated in the above chapters that had helped the Qādiānis to openly declare the continuity of prophethood. This said jealousy and resentment of end of Prophethood led

³³⁹ Khan. A. R. *Al-Kaukabah al-Shihābiyyah fī-kufriyyāt abil-Wahhābiyyah*. p. 29

the Deobandī founding fathers and leaders making their intentions apparent in their works of their desire to become prophets as stated by Imām Raza according to his analysis. Below are mentioned the statements of the founding fathers of the above-mentioned schools of thought regarding their claim to prophethood from their works. Many scholars realised from the works of Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb that his books revealed and showed tenancies of wanting to be a Prophet. Pīr, Syed Mehr Alī Shah³⁴⁰ Golrawī (d. 1937) has said about Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb:

After presenting these prophecies, after Musailama Kazāb (d. 632), Aswad al-Ansī (d. 632), Hamdan b. Qarmat (d. 899), Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb³⁴¹ (d. 1792) and Mr Qadiānī (d. 1908) who also declared himself a prophet³⁴².

As Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb has been known as a false prophet by many of the elders who saw his works as heretical and against the understood Sunni tradition.

6.1. Syed Ahmed Barēlwī

Syed Ahmed was seen to be almost as a saintly soldier, and it was possibly this idea of the saintly soldier image that attracted Shah Ismail towards him and gave his allegiance (*Bay'at*) to him as a Sufi Master. Syed Ahmed and his disciple Ismaīl Dehlawī had made plans to create a self-governing Islamic Emirate during those troublesome times in South Asia. Shah Ismaīl wrote about his Master (*Pīr*):

One day Allah took the right hand of the master into His hand and something great from the angelic realm was presented to him and God said, 'I give this and things

³⁴⁰ Pīr, Syed Mehr Ali Shah was born in the year 1859, in the family of direct descendants of the Holy Prophet. His fathers name was Syed Nazr Dīn Shah and was the 25th generation from the descendant of Shaykh Abdul Qādir al-Jīlānī, through Hassan b. Ali in the 38th generation. He received his early education at home. After the age of 15, he decided to travel throughout India learning from prominent Scholars of various cities. He was initiated into the Chishti, Nizāmī Sufi Order by Khawaja Shams-Uddīn Siālvi. He was a supporter of Shaykh Ibn Arabī's *Wahdatul-Wujūd* and was known as an authority of Ibn Arabī. Pīr Mehr Ali is remembered for his debates and refutation of the Qadiānī movement. Pīr Mehr Ali died in the year 1937 and thousands flock on his death anniversary (*Urs*) every year.

³⁴¹ Note: in a new printed edition of the book *Saif-ē-Chishtiāī* by Pīr Mehr Ali Shah. The book was printed with the names of the Patrons of the Shrine of Golra Ghulām Muhy Uddin and Shah Abdul Haqq, the name of Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb has been removed while it remains in older printed editions of the book. Ref: Ali. M. *Saif-ē-Chishtiāī* (Urdu) <https://archive.org/details/saifechishtiya/mode/1up> [16/01/2022 16:09]. P. 81

³⁴² Ali. M. *Saif-ē-Chishtiāī* (Urdu). Hafiz Muhammad Deen, Lahore, Pakistan. P. 98 < <https://archive.org/details/SaifEChishtiyaeeByPirMeharAliShah/mode/2up> > [16/01/2022 15:42]

besides this to him’ and said, ‘They conversed (i.e., Syed Ahmed and God) and he gained much³⁴³.

Imām Ahmed Raza stated that Shah Abdul Azīz Muhadith Dehlawī said:

Talking directly with God is only privileged to the Prophets and angels, this is specific for them and not possible for anyone else. To request to converse with God directly is to put oneself in the category of the Prophets and Angels³⁴⁴.

This level of direct communication with God is specific to the Messengers and Angels and this is not accessible to anyone else, even pious persons as this would be opening the gates of prophecy which was closed after Prophet Muhammed. Ismaīl wrote:

There are two methods of reaching the commandments of the Shariah. One is through light and the other is through the Prophets. Thus, it can be said that these are students of the Prophets knowing the particulars of the law and its parts. They can also be called the teachers of the Prophets and their method of deduction is from one of the categories of revelation which is known as ‘*Nafath-fil-Ru*’ according to the law and some people who have reached the heights of spirituality (*ahle kamāl*) call it spiritual revelation (*bātinī wahī*)³⁴⁵ [...] It is by this that is meant by leadership (*imāmat*) and successor (*wasī*)³⁴⁶ [...] It is important that he is declared saved (*mahfūz*) as the Prophets are saved which is known as immunity (*ismat*)³⁴⁷ [...] It should not be thought that spiritual revelation (*bātinī wahī*) and that proving immunity (*ismat*) for none Prophets is against the sunnah and as an innovation (*bidah*) and it should not be thought that people of such calibre (*kamāl*) no longer exist on the earth³⁴⁸.

Imām Ahmed Raza stated:

This is self-explanatory that some of their saints through the Prophets receive religious rulings (*ahkāme shariat*) through spiritual revelation (*wahī bātin*) and because of the religious rulings they be independent from following the Prophets

³⁴³ sirate mustaqeem. P. 221

³⁴⁴ Fatwa Rizwiyyah, Vol-15. P. 244

³⁴⁵ Ismaīl. M. *Sirāte-Mustaqīm* (Urdu). Idārat-ul-Rashīd, Deoband, India. P. 49

³⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 49

³⁴⁷ Ibid. p.51

³⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 52

and they are immune like the Prophets [...] It is important to clarify any misunderstanding that the people mentioned here are Mujtahid Imams as the difference is that the Imāms do not bring laws but interpret them, in this case it is not so as these persons receive laws and revelation independently. O Muslims! For the sake of Allah and His Prophet, they are openly making a non-Prophet into a Prophet, and this is open heresy. Shaykh Abdul Azīz has stated in Tafsīr Azīzī under the chapter of the cow (*sūrah al-Baqarah*), ‘Understanding the religious rulings (*ahkāmē Sharīat*) without the Prophets is impossible’ [...] Shah Wali Ullah has said, ‘According to the Shi’ī (*Rawāfīdh*) the Imām is immune (*Ma’sūm*) and following him is obligatory (*fardh*) and he receives spiritual revelation (*wahī Bātinī*) and this is what is meant to be a prophet and thus in their school of thought (*madhab*) they negate the belief of the finality of Prophethood (*Khatmē Nubuwwat*)’. Look! This is the same leadership (*Imāmat*), the same immunity (*ismat*) and the same spiritual revelation (*wahī Bātinī*) that Shah Wali Ullah calls the negation of the finality of Prophethood. As mentioned earlier the statement in Al-Shifa that only the claim to revelation is heresy even though he may not be a claimant of Prophethood³⁴⁹.

Imām Ahmed Raza has pointed out that revelation and bringing law is for Prophets, and these are not traits of a non-Prophet. This is clearly heresy according to Imām Raza as there are a few points that can be made from the statements of Ismāil:

1. Revelation to non-Prophets is possible.
2. These persons can also be law makers.
3. They are also immune from sin.
4. They can be teachers of Prophets.

All the above mentioned are not just heresy and blasphemous but also innovation and it would be such ideas which would help the Qadiānī in expressing themselves as within the Sunni school of thought. This is possibly why Imām Raza saw it important and his foresight to refute such ideas so that they cannot be thought or used as something permissible and orthodox.

³⁴⁹ Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 15. p. 249

These statements are typical of the earlier work of *Taqwiyyat al Iman* which has similar ideas regarding making way for this work to allow prophecy and revelation in the person of Syed Ahmed. In the work *Taqwiyyat-al Iman* Ismaīl Dehlawī:

- Promoted Wahhābī Tawhīd.
- Prohibited reverence of the Holy Prophet.
- Prohibited the reverence of the Saints.
- Prohibited the reverence of the Prophet's City.
- Used words not befitting the Prophetic status.
- Used word not befitting religious persons and saints.
- Not accepting the concept of different types of innovation.
- Promoting the idea that majority of the Muslims are inclined towards polytheism.
- Creating a new community of believers.

When all these ideas are put together creating chaos and tensions within the Muslim community, Ismaīl has thus tried to show that the situation of the believers was such as the pagan Arabs before the birth of Prophet Muhammad and thus the need for renewal and a new light, a new prophetic era, a new dawn for believers, a new community of believers under a new Prophetic leader to start a new world which was chosen as Bālakōt for obvious reasons as it was outside the realm of direct British control and was a weak spot of the Sikh kingdom of Raja Ranjeet Singh at the time. The writing of *Sirate Mustaqīm* was done when Syed Ahmed had taken leadership and announced as supreme leader (*Amīr ul-Muminīn*) of the Muslims of this new community. It is possible that had both Syed Ahmed and Ismaīl Dehlawī not been murdered by the Pashtun rebels, they would have announced a new religious order under the Prophetic leadership of Syed Ahmed Barēlwī.

6.2. Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī

It is interesting how there are many statements found from the works of Gangohī, his students and followers signalling and raising him to the status of Prophethood. The first of these works

being *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* where he deliberately compares and then making mockery of it, he argues that it is not as if it is a part of one's faith. Such comments would only gather the respect and honour or otherwise jealousy of Prophet Muhammad being the last and final Prophet and there being no way another Prophet could succeed him unless of course we agree with the interpretation of Nanōtawī as discussed above.

This strange feeling that Gangohi felt while meditation, which overwhelmed him and he would not have any power over himself, a trance like state, but Hājī Sāhib coincidentally mentioned the Prophetic state of receiving prophecy which was possibly expected with what Gangohī might have wanted to hear from his Shaykh as to the description he put forward to him. Regarding whom Gangohī was, Maulāna Rafī Uddīn stated:

Above humanity I have seen his status, he was an Archangel who came amongst the people³⁵⁰.

The other reference is regarding the resting place of Gangohī, Maulāna Rafī Uddīn³⁵¹, Mujajadī, Naqshbandī, the Dean of Dār-ul-ULūm Deoband said his insight (*Makāshifa*):

The grave of Maulāna Qāsim Nanōtawī, the rector of Dār-ul-ULūm Deoband is in the exact place of a grave of a Prophet³⁵².

Below is a lamentation³⁵³ (*Marthiyyah*) written by Maulāna Mahmūd ul-Hassan (d. 1921) in memory of Gangohī:

1. They turned asking for the direction of Gangoha, even at the Ka'ba, those who had in their bosoms, the taste and yearning of gnosis³⁵⁴.
2. (Gangohī) Bought the dead to life and he stopped the living from dying, O son of Mary – (have you) seen this kind of healing³⁵⁵.

³⁵⁰ Ali. A, *Arwāhē-Thallātha yanī hiqayātē-āwiya (Urdu)*, Karachi: Dar ul-Isha'at, p. 220

³⁵¹ Maulāna Rafī Uddīn was born in the year 1836. He was a disciple of Shah Abdul Ghani Mujadadi. Twice he was appointed as the vice-chancellor of Dar-ul ULūm; first time in 1284/1867 and 1285/1868, when Haji Muhammad Abid went for Hajj, he officiated as vice-chancellor and then near three years later he was appointed permanently in 1288/1871 and served on this post till the beginning of 1306/1888. He died in 1890- in Madīna and was buried in the graveyard of Baqī.

³⁵² Hassan. A. *Mubashirāt-e-Dār-ul-ULūm Deoband (urdu)*. Maktaba Rahīmiyyah, Deoband, p. 70

³⁵³ Hassan. M. *Marthiyyah (Urdu)* Kutub Khāna Rahīmiyyah, Deoband, India.

³⁵⁴ Pirēin thay Ka'ba mein bhī pouchtay Gangoh ka rāsta, jo raktē apno sīnon mein thay zawq O shawq-ē-irfany

³⁵⁵ Murdoen ko zinda kiya- zindoen ko marnē na diyaa, is Masīhayī ko dachein zarī lbn-ē-Maryam

3. Why on the tongues of the heretics (*ahlē ahlwa*), is glory of Hūbal³⁵⁶ perhaps, From the world has gone, someone who is second to the founder of Islām³⁵⁷.
4. Poor and weak and destitute, what will they do and where will they go? The host of the creation (*maizbān-ē-khalq*) is now a quest in paradise³⁵⁸.
5. Where should we take our needs of the religion and of the world O Lord! The direction of our needs³⁵⁹ (*Hājāt*) for the body and soul has gone³⁶⁰.
6. The passing of Gangohī was a portrait of the passing away of the leader of the Worlds (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), It was him, if there was a similitude for the Beloved of Allah³⁶¹.
7. On your account only did all these (scholars) appear alive, Bukhārī, Ghazālī, (Hassan) Basrī, Shiblī and (Muhammad b. Hassan) Shaybānī³⁶².

In the above third verse, Gangohī is stated as ‘*second to the founder of Islām*’, not making it clear, if this is meant as second to God or the Holy Prophet? Gangohī is also shown in verse two of the above lamentation, making it seem as though the miracles of Gangohī surpassed those of Prophets like Jesus. There are a few more instances which hint such ideas of the Prophetic status of Gangohī according to his followers but again like Ismaīl Dehlawī, Gangohī approves, ‘*If someone calls the Prophet brother (Akh), as to being human, it is not as though he has done so against the Qur’an*³⁶³’.

³⁵⁶ This is a possible reference to the hadith about the battle of Uhud in which Abu Sufyān thought that the Holy Prophet and the prominent companions had been martyred and he said, ‘Praised be Hubal or Hubal has prevailed’. Ref: Sahīh Bukhārī, Hadīth No: 4043.

³⁵⁷ Zabān par ahle ahwa kī hay kya “a’alu Hubal; Shāyad, Utha Ālam sē koī bānī-ē-Islām ka thānī.

³⁵⁸ Gharīb O ājiz O bēkas karein kya our kidar jā’ein? Huwī hey maizbān-ē-khalq kī Jannat mēin mehmānī

³⁵⁹ The first two letters of ‘Ha’ and ‘Alif’ have been removed leaving a space and leaving the rest of the incomplete word ‘Jāt’ whereas it is possible of the sentence to know that the two letters making the word ‘Hājāt’ have been deliberately removed as it would seem that they as saying that Gangohi is the fulfiller of their needs.

³⁶⁰ Hawā’ij Dēno’dunya kay kahān lē’ jā’ein ham Ya’Rabb! Gaya wo qibla Hājāt-e-rohānī O’Jismānī

³⁶¹ Wafā’at-ē-Sarwar-ē-Ālam ka naqsha āpkī rehlat, thī hastī gar nazīr-ē-hastī mahbūb-ē-Subhānī

³⁶² Faqat ik āp kē dam sē nazar ātē thay sab zinda, Bukhārī O Ghazālī, Basrī O Shibli O’Shaynānī

³⁶³ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). P. 12

6.3. Khalīl Ahmed Ambēt̄wī

While discussing the concept of standing (*Qiyām*) in respect while praising the Prophet or during his blessed birthday celebrations. Ambēt̄wī creates many scenarios which do not apply and then stated:

Or it has the reason that the pure soul (of the Holy Prophet) came from the world of souls to the world of seeing, so standing is done to honour this. This too is pure foolishness because in this case standing ought to be done at the time of the blessed birth occurring. Which birth is being repeated each day? Thus, this re-enactment of the birth each day is like the Hindus who observe the play-acting (*sāng*) of the birth of Kanhaiya each year, or like the Rawāfīḍ who recreate (the events of) the martyrdom of the prophetic household each year. Allah forbid, they have established a play-acting (*sāng*) of his birth. Just this act is worthy of blame and is prohibited (*ḥarām*) and wickedness. In fact, these people have exceeded them (the Hindus and Rawāfīḍ). They do it at a specific date. They have no restrictions. Whenever they want, they create these imagined tales. Such a thing is not observed anywhere in law (*Sharī‘ah*), that an imagined matter is established, and is treated as though it is real. Rather, this is forbidden in law. Thus, based on this reason, this standing would be forbidden and become a cause of imitating the disbelievers and the wicked³⁶⁴.

The hate for anything that displays respect and honour towards the Prophet of Islam is not likened by the elders of Deoband and they do not miss any chance to oppose anything that has reverence towards the Prophets and Saints unless it is for themselves, or their elders as displayed above. Such hypocrisy can be found in many of their own works as previously stated.

6.4. Ashraf Ali Thānvī

As witnessed earlier Ashraf Ali Thānvī had comforted and allowed a disciple to recite his name in the article of faith in the place of the name of Prophet Muhammad. Maulāna Abdul Majīd

³⁶⁴ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). P. 318

Daryābādī³⁶⁵ (d. 1977), a close disciple and vicegerent (*khalīfah*) has stated in his book *Hakīm-ul-Ummat* about a letter he had written to Thānvī:

Lack of concentration in prayer (*salāh*) is an old problem. But in my experience that while in prayer whenever I imagine you in prayer, the problem of concentration vanished only for a short while though. Nevertheless, please advise me if this action is correct, if it is not, then I shall be careful in the future?’ Thānvī replied to this stating, ‘It is correct as long as you do not disclose this to other people (*Mahmūd hey, jab doosuroin ko itla na ho*)³⁶⁶’.

This above controversial statement made by Daryābādī in regard to his concentration in prayer, is clear hypocrisy on behalf of Thānvī who at one hand endorses the edicts and statements of Ismaīl Dehlawī in which he clearly mentions that to think of the Prophet in prayer would mount to polytheism but no notice of this has been taken by any of the Deobandī Ullama as the possible reason is because they are above the law and are free to say and do as they please due to their prophetic careers at Deoband. As the Prophets are said to be immune from sin (*isma*) so too are the founding fathers holding a similar status compared to others in matters of theology.

6.5. Muhammad Qāsim Nanotawī

During Nanōtawī’s lifetime, he visited his Sūfī Shaykh, Hājī Imdādullah to whom he complained:

Whenever I sit with rosary beads (*tasbīh*), I have a problem, I feel overpowered like someone has put a hundred Kilos upon me, my heart and tongue stop’, upon this Hājī Sāhib said, ‘This is the grace (*faizan*) of Prophethood (*Nabuwwat*) upon your heart, and this is that weight which the Holy Prophet used to feel when he

³⁶⁵ Maulāna Abdul Majīd Daryabādi was born in the year 1892 His father is Abdul Qadir (1848-1912) ibn Mufti Mazhar Karim Qudwai (d.1873) Ibn Shaykh Mukhdum Bakhsh. Daryabadi's family had a long-standing tradition of spiritual leadership. Many of his ancestors were leaders of Sufi Orders. His father was also a follower of Qadirī Sufi Order. He gained his early education at home and he continued his school education there up to class ten from 1902 to 1908. He completed his BA (Hons) in English and Arabic language at the Allahabād University, India. In his later years, he was influenced by the scholars of Deoband and wrote a Qur’anic exegesis first in English and then in Urdu named Tafīr-ul-Qur’an. Daryabādi became inclined towards Sufism and became a disciple of Shaykh Ashraf Ali Thānvī. He gained many honorary awards during his lifetime and died in the year 1977, in Lucknow, India.

³⁶⁶ Abdul Majīd. *Hakīm-ul-Ummat* (Urdu). Maktaba Madīna. Urdu Bazār, Lahore. Pakistan. P. 56

used to receive revelation, God will take work from you that is taken from Prophets³⁶⁷.

While speaking upon the specific attributes of the Holy Prophet, in this case, he is writing about the attribute of life connected with the Prophet Muhammad (*Hayāt-un-Nabī*), while discussing this he has stated:

The words of the Prophet of Allah testify to what this ignoramus has written, The Prophet said, ‘my eyes sleep but my heart is awake’, but with this comparison the state of the Anti-Christ (*Dajāl*) should also be the same (*lēkin, is qiyās par dajāl ka hāl bī yahī hauna chāhiyē*)³⁶⁸.

This is no shock to the readers of the other blasphemous statements of Deoband that they are now openly use the attributes of the Prophet with that of the Anti-Christ and this is just the tip of the iceberg and is not something that they see would be blasphemous towards the Prophet.

6.6. Muhammad Ilyās Kāndalwī

Maulāna Muhammad Ilyās Kāndalwī (d. 1944) was born in the year 1885 came from a pious family and studied and memorised the Qur’an at an early age, Kāndalwī joined his brother Muhammad Yahya at Gangoha in 1896 to study under Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī.

It seems Kāndalwī was blessed with great spirituality and a reminder of the Prophetic times, fourteen centuries old that the Deobandī Shaykh-ul-Hind, Maulāna Mahmūd-al-Hassan³⁶⁹ (d. 1920) stated:

When I see Muhammad Ilyās, I am reminded of the Holy Companions (Sahāba)³⁷⁰.

It has also been related about Kāndalwī:

³⁶⁷ Hassan. A. *Mubashirāt-e-Dār-ul-Ulūm Deoband* (Urdu). Maktaba Rahīmiyyah, Deoband. P.70

³⁶⁸ Qāsim. M. *Ābē-Hayāt* (Urdu). Idārah Ta’ifāt-ē-Ashrafiyyah, Multān, Pakistan. P.199

³⁶⁹ Maulāna Mahmūd al-Hassan was born in the year 1851 in the town of Bareilly. His father Zulfiqār Ali was the co-founder of the Dār-ul-Ulūm Deoband and was the professor at the college of Bareilly College. Mahmūd became the first student of Deoband. He graduated in 1872 and became a disciple of Hāji Imdād Ullah and Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī. He became a teacher at Deoband in 1873 and the principle in the year 1890. He took part in the Khilafat Movement and established many organisations. He wrote a translation of the Holy Qur’an in Urdu and taught thousands of students at Deoband and is remembered with the title of Shaykh-ul-Hind. He died in the year 1920.

³⁷⁰ Nadwī. A. *Life and Mission of Maulāna Mohammad Ilyās*. Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, India. p. 8

At the time of gathering of remembrance (*Dhikr*), Maulāna Muhammad Ilyās used to feel a sort of load on his heart. When he mentioned it to Maulāna Gangohī, the Maulāna shuddered. He said, ‘Maulana Muhammad Qāsim has complained of a similar feeling to Hājī Imdādullah, upon which Hājī Sāhib observed that God was going to take some special service from him³⁷¹.

Regarding Gangohī’s implying towards an experience of Nanōtawī about which Hājī Imdādullah said, ‘This is the grace (faizan) of Prophethood (Nabuwwat) upon your heart, and this is that weight which the Holy Prophet used to feel when he used to receive revelation, God will take work from you that is taken from Prophets.’ From a young age Kāndawī was a saintly figure according to the Deobandī literature and then later he began to display his Prophetic qualities and miracles. Kāndawī said:

Dreams are one fourth of prophethood and some people reach such heights that cannot be achieved through meditation and effort because during these dreams authentic esoteric (*ilqa*) knowledge are transferred which are a part of prophethood and then why should there not be benefit from this.’ And then said, ‘During these days I am benefited by esoteric knowledge from dreams, and this is why I try to get more sleep.’ And he further stated that the methodology of this evangelisation (*tablīgh*) was disclosed to him through these dreams. Allah said in the Qur’an, "Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong," (Q. 3:110). Maulvi Ilyas further stated, ‘The exegeses (*tafsīr*) of this Quranic verse was disclosed to him in a dream, saying that "You (i.e., the Muslims³⁷²) have come to the people like the Prophets³⁷³.

Kāndawī does not want to awake from his sleep as he has been favoured with continuous esoteric knowledge which is a part of prophecy and that he had come to the people like a prophet, which could be forgiven due to the ambiguity of the statement. These are a few examples from the works of eminent Deobandī scholars.

³⁷¹ Ibid. p. 10

³⁷² It is strange and possibly a later addition that the words ‘the Muslims’ in brackets otherwise it was clear Kandelvī was clearly speaking of his esteemed station to his followers. Instead of adding the words, they have instead incorporated the words in brackets, so it seems that the words are not directed at the founder of this Tablighī movement.

³⁷³ Mazūr. M. *Malfūzāt-ē-Muhammad Ilyas Kandelvī* (Urdu). Madani Kutub Khāna, Karachi, Pakistan. P. 46

6.7. The Prophetology of the Deobandis

From the *Barahēin-ē-Qātia*, it seems the Deobandīs have made special relations with the Holy Prophet to the extent of even getting to know the Urdu language due to His relations with Deoband, Gangohī stated:

A pious person was blessed with the vision of the Holy Prophet in his dream and the Prophet was conversing in the Urdu language and he asked, ‘How did you become to know this language as you Arab? He replied, ‘Since I have had relations with Madrassah Deoband, I have come to know the language³⁷⁴.

From the works of the founding fathers of Deoband, the Prophets have certain characteristics and qualities which can be compared and sometimes the followers can even excel in these. Qāsim Nanōtawī stated:

If prophets are distinguished from their followers (*ummah*), they are distinguished only by knowledge. What remains is deeds. In this, at times, outwardly, a follower (*ummatī*) becomes equal and even surpasses him³⁷⁵.

Gangohī has written in his *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*:

The term ‘Mercy towards the whole of the universe’ (*Rahmat-ulil-Ālamīn*) is not exclusive to the Holy Prophet, but can be used for saints and other Prophets, rather the righteous scholars are also a mercy towards the universe (*rahmat-ē-ālam*). Even though the Prophet is superior to others but still this can be used in way of interpretation (*ta’wīl*)³⁷⁶.

Though there is no discussion on the term ‘mercy’ (*rahmah*) being used generally but even the Holy Qur’an has stated specifically for Prophet Muhammad saying, ‘And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds’ (Q. 21:107). To use the exact term would be seen as offensive especially when it is specific for the Holy Prophet.

Maulāna Hussain Ali who was a student of Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī has stated in his commentary (*tafsīr*) *Bulghat-ul-Hairān fī-rabt-ē-Āyātul-Furqān*:

³⁷⁴ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). Dār-ul-kutub Deoband, UP, India. P. 63

³⁷⁵ Q. M. *Tahzīr-un-Nās* (Urdu), Dār-ul-Kutub, Deoband, India, (1997). P. 8

³⁷⁶ Ahmed. R. *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*, p. 244

To call Jinn, angels, and Prophets Satan/sinners (*Taghūt*) is permissible' [...] 'I saw the Messenger of Allah (in a dream) that he is falling, I reached for the Holy Prophet and saved Him from falling'³⁷⁷.

It is possible to see the continuous themes and words which ordinary people cannot even think of using have been used openly in religious books in the name of research. Allah said in the Holy Qur'an: '*And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], "Worship Allah and avoid Taghut"*' (Q. 16:36). Allowing a word that *taghūt* is used for falsehood, evil and darkness for angels and Prophets is truly disrespectful and dishonouring them.

6.8. The God of Deoband

Regarding the God of Deoband, He has attributes which others of the Muslims world would not imagine God to have. A few examples are mentioned below:

Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī has stated in his book *Taqwiyyat-ul-Imān*:

To have the will to obtain the knowledge of the unseen whenever one wills; such is the glory of Allah Sāhib only³⁷⁸.

Maulāna Mahmūd al-Hassan Darbanghī has also stated,

How can we exclude filthy acts from the domain of Allah's essential powers' (*Afāl-ē-qabīha ko qudrat-ē-qadīma haqq Ta'āla Shānohū sē kyon kar khārij keh saktey hein*)³⁷⁹.

Gangohī also defends the objectionable statement in *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* that Allah can lie and said,

The meaning of this is the possibility of telling a lie³⁸⁰ (*imkān-ē-kizb*) that Allah has the power of telling a lie, but this will not happen³⁸¹.

³⁷⁷ Ali. H. *Bulghat-ul-Hairān fī-rabt-ē-Āyātul-Furqān* (Urdu). Himāyat-ul-Press. Lahore. P8

³⁷⁸ Ismail, M. *Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman* (Urdu). Maktaba Naeemiyah, UP, India, p. 28

³⁷⁹ Hassan, M, *Juhd-al-Miql* (Urdu) Maktaba Madīna, Urdu Bazār, Lahore, Pakistan. P. 41

³⁸⁰ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). P. 10

³⁸¹ Ahmed. R. *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*, p. 96

According to the Wahhābīs, God does not have access to all His knowledge at all times but can access it when He likes and alongside this attribute, filthy acts cannot be excluded from God's domain and He can also lie if He so wishes. I do not think anyone would accept these qualities to belong to God Himself but surprisingly can be found in the works of the early fathers of the Deoband school and yet they are ignored and not condemned.

6.9. Conclusion

It is interesting how many of the Deobandī reformers saw themselves and others mirroring the Prophethood of Prophet Muhammad in many ways. Syed Ahmed talked to God and received spiritual revelation (*Wahī-Bātin*) while Rashid Ahmed is called an Arch Angel and he also dismisses the Prophet's knowledge in comparison to that of the Angel of death and of Satan. Ambētawī displays the birth of Prophet Muhammad as Hindus celebrate the birth of their Demi-God Kaniyah. Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvī allowed his follower to think of him in prayer and said it was ok if his follower had read his name instead of that of Prophet Muhammad while saying the article of faith. Maulana Nanōtawī felt a similar state as Prophet Muhammad when he would receive revelation. These are some examples from the works of the founding fathers of Deoband which are indicating of their want of being Prophets or possibly seem like a similar rank.

There were possibly several reasons why Imām Ahmed Raza thought they were jealous of Prophet Muhammad as he had announced that he was the final messenger of God. The controversial words and blasphemous statements used as a basis of attaching the Prophet and then also implying through statements and experiences of their high-ranking status like Prophethood.

According to Imām Ahmed Raza, it was clearly evident from their own works of their wishes of becoming Prophets, but none dared to openly declare their inner most desire of this except through their works mentioned by Imām Ahmed Raza Khān.

The spiritual experience and some of the writings possibly indicate towards showing their higher spiritual Prophetic station that they may have thought it their right to use words which could be deemed as offensive and disliked about the Prophet Muhammad because they saw

themselves being equal to him in Prophecy. It was possibly this link of the founders of Deoband to Prophecy according to Imam Ahmed Raza that they did not see themselves as offenders by the law because they were spiritually and morally above the law.

Chapter 7. The *Husām ul-Haramayn* and the Deobandī rebuttal

In this chapter I will look at the *Husām al-Haramayn*, which was the final stage of declaring the Wahhābīs and Deobandīs as outside the fold of Islām due to their unorthodox beliefs and contentious statements about Allah, His Messengers, religious personalities, and relics according to Imām Ahmed Raza. I will discuss the edict (*fatwa*) upon these movements and their rebuttal and how both parties dealt with these issues as it created much chaos and disturbance amongst the Muslims of India.

The *Husām al-Haramayn* was written after many efforts being made to try to internally resolve the sensitive issues concerning matter of belief, as the issue was deliberately ignored by Maulāna Ashraf Ali and other senior leadership of Deoband, Imām Ahmed Raza was left with no choice but to issue a legal ruling against the Deobandī School on grounds of clear blasphemy. The book is a compilation of the edict of Imām Raza upon the founding fathers of the Ahlē Hadīth and Deobandīs. Though the edicts seem to be of Imām Ahmed Raza alone but as detailed in previous chapters, edicts of blasphemy had already been issued upon Taqwiyyat-ul-Imān, Tahzīr-ul-Nās and Barahēin-ul-Qātia before those by the Imām himself. The only fatwa which issued by Imām Ahmed Raza was upon Thānvī as it was written in his lifetime.

Though Imām Ahmed Raza had issued his edict against the founding fathers of Deoband, it was understandable that there would be many who would be hesitant in labelling those of religious authority as heretics (*murtad*) even if there was a genuine reason for this action. To show the seriousness of the matter, Imām Raza prepared a document in Arabic with his edict and translations of the objectionable statements and presented them to the Sunni religious authorities of the two holy cities of Makkah and Madinnah to attest his edict showing solidarity and conviction as it was a matter about the honour and religious status of Prophet Muhammad within the religious sphere. Before he issued this edict Imām Raza had stated regarding the various works³⁸² he wrote to warn and inform the Deobandīs of their fallacies. He wrote the following in chronological order:

³⁸² Khān. A. R. *Tamhīd-ē-Imān (The Preamble to Faith)*, English Trans by Abu Hasan. Ridawi Press, UK. 2012. P. 77

1. He wrote the work ‘*Subhān al-Subūh an-aybi-kadhāzun maqbūh*’ (Purity to God from the worst fault of lying) in the year 1309 AH/ 1891 CE.
2. He then wrote the work ‘*Al-kawkabatul-Shihābiyyah-ft-kufriyyāt abil Wahhābiyyah*’ (The scorching star on the infidelities of the father of Wahhabism) in the year 1316 AH/ 1898 CE.
3. He then wrote the work ‘*Sall al-Suyūf al-Hindiyyah alā-kufriyyāt Babā al-Najdiyyāh*’ (The unsheathing of the Indian sword upon the disbelief of the old man of Najd) in the year 1316 AH/ 1898 CE.
4. He then penned the work ‘*Izālatul-Āar bi Hajril-Karāyim al-Kilāb-il-Nār*’ in the year 1317 AH/ 1899 CE.
5. The finally he wrote ‘*Al-Mustanad al-Mūtamad bināyi Najātul-Abad*’ in the year 1320 AH/ 1902 CE.

It is possible to see that for many years, Imām Ahmed Raza had written to educate, warn the Deobandīs about their deviancies and had not received any correspondence for any years and the Deobandīs had not retracted from their blasphemies or thought it important to correspond to Imām Raza’s letters and thus were labelled as heretics, and this was in the year 1902. Imām Raza stated:

These are my statements that have been published for years – some ten years ago, some seventeen and nineteen; yet, the ruling of *kufr* concerning these blasphemers was issued only six years ago in 1902, when the book *Al-Mutamad al-Mustanad* was first published [...] As long as these insults were not issued by these blasphemers, and as long as I had not seen or heard of the blasphemies by these people concerning Allah and His Messenger, I was mindful of their being Muslims, and their being people who utter the testification of faith (*Kalima*). I was careful and I exercised caution; even though this necessitated *kufr* by the opinion of jurists, I chose the opinion of theologians (*Kalām*) scholars. When I saw these statements with my eyes which explicitly insult Allah and His Messenger, there remained no option except to rule them heretics (*kāfirs*). Then it was incumbent upon me to save myself and the faith of my Muslim brothers and was thus compelled to issue the decree of heresy (*kufr*)³⁸³.

³⁸³ Khān. A. R. *Tamhīd-ē-Imān (The Preamble to Faith)*. P. 81

It is clear that Imām Ahmed Raza did not issue an decree of heresy without first writing to them in person, which they totally ignored and refused to explain and retract and even then Imām Raza continuously wrote articles on these issues which were also sent to the Deobandīs but when there was no reply, Imām Ahmed Raza had no choice but to decree that the Deobandīs had committed open blasphemies of Allah and His Prophet and thus were outside the fold of Islam and to doubt their heresy is also heresy according to the ruling of the law (*shar'iah*). There seems to be continuous ignorance and people easily fall upon the propaganda against Imām Raza to the extent that academics like Sherali Tareen continued to falsely accuse Imām Raza of framing his Deobandī rivals as heretics because the Deobandī scholars outlawed rituals such as the standing upon offering salutations upon the Holy Prophet³⁸⁴. The answer to this is twofold, firstly the issue of heresy is based on essentials of faith, and this has nothing to do with innovation, which Tareen seems to have confused with and secondly the matter of standing for sending salutations (*salawāt*) upon the Holy Prophet is not a major issue that leads to heresy and should not be confused. The reason for the possible remark from Tareen is his possibly lack of understanding of the issue and Islamic theology calling *Mawlid* as a ‘heretical innovation’ by Imām Raza³⁸⁵ which he has not mentioned anywhere in his works is very misleading and least expected from an academic and shows his lack of understanding of the principle issues between the Deobandī’s and the edicts of Imām Raza which were never based upon minor issues like *Māwliid* but those that were doctrinal issues of defending Muhammad in modernity.

7.1. The contradictory statements of the Deobandī

The book ‘*Akābir-ē-Deoband ka Takfīrī Āfsāna*’ was written in the Urdu language, in the year 1961³⁸⁶ detailing the contradictions in the Deobandī belief system which was distributed far and wide in Pakistan and India and was also sent to all Deobandī scholars and their institutes. This was especially sent to the following Deobandī Scholars: Maulvī Manzūr Sambāilī, Qārī Muhammad Tayyab Qāsmī, Muftī-ē-A’zam, Muhammad Shafī, Maulvī Khair Muhammad Jalandharī, Maulvī Abdullah Darkhawsti, Maulvī Ahmed Ali Lahorī, Maulvī Ghulām Khān Rawalpindī, Maulvī Ghulām Ghaus Hazārīvī, Maulvī Ikhtashām-ul-Haq Thānvī, Muftī Mahmūd

³⁸⁴ Tareen. S. Defending Muhammad in Modernity. P. 276

³⁸⁵ Tareen. S. Defending Muhammad in Modernity. P. 277

³⁸⁶ Ali. M. H. *Akābir-ē-Deoband ka Takfīrī Āfsāna* (Urdu). Jamiyyat-ē-Ishā’at-ē-Ahlē-Sunnat, Karachi, Pakistan. P, 12

Multānī, Maulvī Muhammad Ali Jalandharī, Maulvī Muhammad Yūsuf Banorī, Maulvī Idrīs Kandhalwī, Maulvī Ināyat Ullah Gujrātī, Maulvī Shams-ul-Haq Afghānī and Maulvī Nūr-ul-Hassan Bukhārī.

A reward of ten thousand Rupees was also offered in the book to anyone who could prove any of the references to be wrong or misquoted could claim this prize. At the beginning of this booklet, the purpose of it has been written:

This Takfīrī Āfsāna has nothing to do with blames, jealousy, resentment, and antagonism in reply to antagonism for sure. All the statements, convictions and verdicts are copied from the books and pamphlets of all the prominent Deobandī Wahhābī intellectuals. Anyone able to prove the evidence provided as wrong or revealing any error in them will be awarded ten thousand rupees in cash. If unpaid, then it can be attained through the courts³⁸⁷.

The author has also noted that he had waited for thirty-five years since the publication of this booklet in 1961 and not a single answer has been given or a rebuttal written. This booklet contains forty-eight³⁸⁸ contradicting statements of the elders of the Deobandī school, these contradictory statements are taken from authoritative Deobandī texts which show how the Deobandis have contradictory ideas due to their age-old adherence to Wahhābism and then also the acceptance of certain tenets of Sufism, due to which they contradict their core tenets of belief. An example of this is regarding contradictions between Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī and Ashraf Ali Thānvī:

The lineage of Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī's Paternal side: Rashid Ahmed Gangohī b. Maulāna Hidāyat Ahmed b. **Qāzī Pīr Bakhsh** b. Qāzī Ghulām Hassan b, Qāzī Ghulām Ali and his maternal side: Rashīd Ahmed b. Karīm ul-Nisa b. **Farīd Bakhsh** b. Ghulām Qādir b. Muhammad Sālih b. Ghulām Muhammad. (Ref: Tazkirat-ul-Rashīd, Vol. 1, page 13). Ashraf Ali Thānvī gives a fatwa while discussing infidelity and polytheism: 'Adopting names such as Abd-ul-Nabi, Ali Baksh, Hussain Bakhsh (which also includes Pīr Bakhsh and Farīd Bakhsh) and saying if Allah and Prophet wills this will be done are all examples of polytheism³⁸⁹.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 10

³⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 16

The above lineage of Gangohī contains persons with the following names: Farīd-Bakhsh (bestowing of Farīd) and Pīr Bakhsh (bestowing of the spiritual guide) making them polytheists creating problems for the ancestors of the founder of Deoband. The book questions the Deobandīs with the exact issues which they blame the Sunnī-Barēlwīs for being innovators and polytheists. The book does help in understanding their hypocrisy within the Deobandī school on beliefs and acts of worship, an example of this can be found in the book:

Khalīl Ahmed Ambētwī stated, ‘It ought to be contemplated: Seeing the state of Satan and the angel of death, affirming encompassing knowledge of the world for the Pride of the World, against Qur’anic texts, without evidence, based purely on corrupt analogy, if not shirk, which part of faith is it? This expanse has been established for Satan and the angel of death from the Qur’anic text. Which Qur’anic text is there for the expanse of knowledge for the Pride of the World, based on which all Qur’anic text will be rejected, and one shirk established?’ Ref: Barahēin-ē-Qātia, page 122). The belief of Gangohī is stated as, ‘Molana Rasheed Gangohi, in various judicial decrees, has declared him to be infidel who says Satan’s knowledge is more than Prophet’s’. Ref: Shahāb-e-Thāqib, page 109 by Hussain Ahmed Madani³⁹⁰.

Controversies and contradictions not only exist in small and minor matters but in major issues which involve creedal matters and due to this, each Deobandī could be blaming the other for committing innovation, being heretics or even polytheists. These were just two examples from the forty-eight given in the book. One purpose of this book was to show solidarity with the edicts (*Fatāwa*) of Imām Ahmed Raza upon the Deobandīs as not being child’s play and that they are serious issues pertaining the correct creed of the Muslims and should not be made mockery of and secondly that the Deobandī’s were no angels in matters of religious polemics and if they were going to attack the Barēlwīs then they should first enquire from the books of their elders in regards to how religious concepts are being presented by different persons of their Deobandī school.

From 1961 until now in 2023, there is no rebuttal to this booklet, and no one has put a claim to the ten thousand rupees offered for anyone that can prove any references as incorrect therein. The booklet also invites the new generation of Deobandi Scholars to come forward and tackle the forty-eight contradictions in Deobandi polemics.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 32

7.2. Analysing the book *Al-Muhannad alal-Muffannad*

Al-Muhannad is a rebuttal to the edict of Imām Raza namely *Husām al-Haramayn*. It is stated that after Imām Ahmed Raza returned with the edict from the honourable scholars of the holy cities of Makkah and Madinnah. After receiving conflicting information from the Deobandīs, the scholars of Madīnna sent twenty-six questions to the Madrassah of Deoband for further clarification which was then written by Maulāna Khalīl Ahmed Anbētūwī on behalf of the Deobandī school³⁹¹. Someone had either been present from the Deobandīs when the edict namely *Husām al-Haramayn* was being circulated in Arabia or possibly someone with links with Deoband had approached the scholars of Arabia and created doubts about the accusations on the Deobandīs. We have no way of knowing if *Al-Muhannad* was actually a document which was sent by the scholars of Arabia or just sent by a Deobandī residing in Arabia and secondly I don't think the scholars of Arabia would have been so naïve that they would just ask for clarifications from the accused as the erudite scholars of Arabia would have done their own research if this was to be true, for example they would have sent a body of independent scholars to India themselves to enquire and ask for the books in questions and have these translated before coming to a decision. The whole affair and background of this book is very suspicious on how it came about also regarding when it was authored is unknown. Hussain Ahmed Madanī was resident in Madīna³⁹² and it was possibly his ideas to write a rebuttal to *Husām al-Haramayn* by Imām Ahmed Raza and wrote to Khalīl Ahmed Ambētūwī about the presence of Imām Ahmed Raza in the Hijāz about exposing the beliefs of their elders to the Arab world. In the biography of Ambētūwī, there is no date specifying the year this was authored³⁹³ but it is known from the work *Faisala-kun-Munāzarah* by Maulāna Manzūr Nu'manī³⁹⁴ that some

³⁹¹ Ahmed. K. *Aqā'id-ē-Ahlē Sunnat-wal-Jammah* (Urdu). Dār-ul-Ishā'at, Karachi, Pakistan. P. 8

³⁹² Ahmed. H. *Naqshē-Hayāt* (Urdu), Dār-ul-Ishāt Karachī, Pakistan. Vol. 1, p. 118

³⁹³ Ilāhī. A. M. *Tazkira-tul-Khalīl* (Urdu). Maktaba-tul-Shaykh, Karachi, Pakistan. P. 293

³⁹⁴ Manzūr Nū'mānī was born on 15 December 1905. His father, Sufi Muhammad Husain, was a moderately wealthy businessman and landlord. Nomanī received his primary education in his hometown, finally he enrolled at Dārul Ulūm Deoband where he remained for two years. He graduated in 1345 AH (1927). After completing his studies, he taught for three years at Madrasa Chilla, Amroha. Thereafter for four years he held the post of Shaykh al-Hadith at Dār-ul-Ulūm Nadwat-ul-Ullama, Lucknow. Nomanī was a founding member of Jamāt-ē-Islāmī at its founding Session in August 1941 he led the seven-member committee that proposed Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi as Amir. He himself was selected as Na'ib Amir (Deputy Amir). Six months later, in 1942, Nomanī arrived at the Jamaat's *Darul-Islam* community in Pathankot with the intention of permanently settling there. In August/September 1942 (Sha'ban 1361 AH) and returned home to Sambhal. Detailing his time with Maududi and the reasons for his departure from Jamaat-i Islami he wrote *Maulana Maududi ke sath meri rifaqat ki sarguzasht aur ab mera mauqif* (1980). After leaving Jamaat-e-Islami, he and Abu'l Hassan Ali Nadwi became affiliated with the Tablighī Jamāt movement. Nomanī's compilation of the *mal'fuzat* (sayings) of Muhammad

changes were suggested to *Hifz ul-Imān*, the first revision made in September 1923 (Safar of 1342 AH) and then the second suggested change took place on August 1935 (Jumada al-Ukhra 1354 AH) [...] Nu'mānī published the revision with the blessings of Thānvī in his publication *Al-Furqān* in September 1935 (Rajab 1354 AH)³⁹⁵. So, it is possible that a rebuttal to the *Husām al-Haramayn* was devised during these years after the death of Imām Ahmed Raza.

The Arab Ullama being aware of the deviations of Deoband prior to the visit of Imām Raza when he had *Husām al-Haramayn* attested by leading authorities of the two holy cities. We are aware that the book *Anwār-ē-Sātia* was written in the year 1886 by Maulāna Muhammad Abdul Samī Ansārī, Rāmpurī and *Taqdīs-ul-Wakīl an Tauhīnil -Rashīd-wal-Khalīl* was written in response to *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* was published after 1889 by Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr Qusūrī and a transcript was also prepared in Arabic for the Sunni Arab scholars and especially to be presented to the scholars of Makkah and Madīnnah. When Imām Raza presented this edict to the scholars of Makkah and Madīnnah, it was not surprising to them at this point. The critical comments made by the Deobandīs about the respected scholars of the two Holy Cities of Makkah and Madina in *Barahēin-ē-Qātia*, it would be highly unlikely that they would approach the same scholars to attest a document in their favour such as the *Al-Muhannad*, which the Barēlwī scholars argue was not known of during the lifetime of Imām Raza and nor mentioned until after his demise in 1921³⁹⁶, though the Deobandīs argue otherwise.

Regarding this book (i.e., *Al-Muhannad*) of the Deobandīs, Syed Na'im Uddin Murādabādi³⁹⁷ (d. 1948) stated:

Ilyās comes from the period of 1943 to 1944, mostly during Ilyas's final illness. In 1943 (1362 AH) he was appointed a member of the Majlis-e-Shura of Dārul Ulūm Deoband. He regularly attended its meetings and those of the Majlis-e-Amilah (Executive Council). He died in Lucknow on 4 May 1997 and is buried in Aishbagh.

³⁹⁵ Manzūr, M. *Faysalakun-Munāzirah* (English Trans). P. 196

³⁹⁶ Hussain Ahmed Madan mentions Hussam-al-Haramain and how the Arab Scholars entertained Imam Raza but nowhere does Madani speak of the rebuttal or its date of publication. Ref: Ahmed. H. *Naqshē-Hayāt* (Urdu), Dār-ul-Ishāt Karachī, Pakistan. Vol. 2, p. 136.

³⁹⁷ Syed Naeem-ud-Deen Muradabadi was born in the year 1887. His father was Mu'in al-Din. His family originally came from Mashhad, Irān. He memorised the Holy Qur'an by the age of 8 and studied the religious sciences at the feet of his father at home and then went to study Darse-Nizāmi from Shah Fadle-Ahmed. He was an activist and organised debates with other schools of thought, and he worked and defended the works of Imām Ahmed Raza Khan and belonged to his school of thought. During the Hindu Shuddi conversion movement, he successfully prevented around four hundred thousand re-conversions to Hinduism specially in eastern parts of Uttar Pradesh and in Rajasthan. He was a member of the khilafat committee and worked for the two-state theory and supported the idea of a Muslim homeland. He also visited Pakistan in the year 1948 and also died in the same year. He wrote many books and is remembered for his defence of the Sunni school and for writing his tafīr '*Khazā'in-ul-Irfān*' which accompanies the Qur'an translation of *Kanz-ul-Imān* of Imām Ahmed Raza.

Their second deception is that they have written out the questions themselves and also written the answers themselves and then got the people from their own household to attest them. They also deceived in their responses (mentioned below) and then they took this collection of deception and travelled to the Holy Cities (in Arabia) and deceived some of the scholars of the two Holy Cities about their open heresies and got them to attest this so they can then say that the objectionable texts that the scholars of the Holy Cities attested against them and now the same scholars have attested to them being Muslims. And Allah is the protector of the true scholars and they did not succeed in their deceiving trickery and they did not manage to get the signatures of the scholars of the two Holy Cities, It was not expected that the scholars would fall for their deceitful responses as showing themselves a Sunnīs but all praise due to God that they didn't fall for their deception³⁹⁸.

As alleged, it is possible that this is a forged document to deceive the common man regarding the fatwas signed by the scholars of the two Holy Cities in the book *Husām al-Haramayn*. Shaykh, Syed Na'im Uddīn has mentioned some points regarding the statements said from the eminent Arab scholars (*Ullama*) of Makkah:

These statements are summaries of the verification of the texts from the scholars of the blessed city of Makkah³⁹⁹. Why do these even need to be edited or summarized? There is only the testimony Shaykh Muhammad Saeed Ba'basīl Al-Shāfī of Makkah and even then, there is no mention that the edicts (*Fatwas*) given by Imām Raza upon the Deobandīs in his *Husām al-Haramayn* were wrong, based on their books *Barāhēin-ē-Qātia*, *Hifz-ul-Imān*, *Tahzīr-ul-Nās* and the *Fatāwā*'s of Gangohī and there is no statement in favour of them either. How have the Deobandīs benefited from such a statement? They have tried to show themselves as Sunnis and disassociated themselves from Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb and said Milād was permissible and got the Shaykh to sign this⁴⁰⁰. The name of a Shaykh Ahmed Rashīd Al-Hanafī is mentioned to make people think that he is also Arab but when you look at the end of his text, it is signed with Ahmed Rashīd Khān Nawāb has been written making it clear that this 'Khān' and 'Nawāb' is not an Arab and the reason why the full name was not written at the top in the first

³⁹⁸ Na'im-Uddīn, M. Al-Tahqīqāt (Urdu). P. 17

³⁹⁹ Ahmed. K. *Aqā'id-ē-Ahlē Sunnat-wal-Jammah* (Urdu). P. 88

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 89

instance⁴⁰¹. The third verification is by a Shaykh Muhib-Uddīn Muhhajir Makkī and the title ‘Muhhājir’ gives his cover away that he is not from the Arab Ullama of Makkah. To attach the verification of such a people amongst the Arab scholars of Makkah is deception in itself⁴⁰². The fourth verification is by a Shaykh Muhammad Siddīque Afghānī⁴⁰³ who has also been added as from the scholars of Makkah. The scholars who were from India (*Hindi*) or from Afghanistan (*Afghānī*) origins at Makkah, then the names of the *Hājīs* travelling from India could have all signed this being the scholars from Makkah⁴⁰⁴. The fifth and sixth persons on the list are Shaykh Muhammad Ābid Muftī Malīkī and his brother Shaykh Ali b. Hussain teacher (*Muddarīs*) of Al-Harrām (Makkah). Undoubtedly these are from the Arab scholars of Makkah but the writings that are attributed to them in *Al-Muhannad* are forged as it is written therein, ‘*The Mufti of Makkah and his brother had signed this and had taken the document for proof reading because of the pressure of the opponents and had not returned it but coincidentally, a copy of this had been made and is added*⁴⁰⁵.’

Shaykh, Syed Na’īm Uddīn has mentioned some points regarding the statements forged to be said from the eminent Arab scholars (*Ullama*) of Madīnnah:

The writer of *Al-Talbīsāt* (i.e., *Al-Muhannad*) has played a cunning game by copying short pieces from different parts of the treatise of Maulāna Syed Barzanjī (i.e., *Ghāyat-ul-Ma’sūl*⁴⁰⁶) and then copied the signatories to his work which were on the book by Barzanī and not the other (i.e., *Al-Muhannad*). The signatures are there so the common folk could be easily misled from the truth⁴⁰⁷.

After checking the names of the signatories⁴⁰⁸ in the introduction of *Ghāyat-ul-Ma’sūl*⁴⁰⁹ by Shaykh Barzanjī are identical to the ones found in *Al-Muhannad*⁴¹⁰ could possibly have been

⁴⁰¹ Ibid. p. 118

⁴⁰² Ibid. p.93

⁴⁰³ Ibid. p.94

⁴⁰⁴ Na’īm-Uddīn, M. *Al-Tahqīqāt* (Urdu). P. 19

⁴⁰⁵ Ahmed. K. *Aqā'id-ē-Ahlē Sunnat-wal-Jammah* (Urdu). P. 96

⁴⁰⁶ Barzanjī, A. *Gāyat-ul-Ma’sūl* (Arabic). Shirka Dar-ul-Masharīh, Beirut, Lebanon. 2010.

⁴⁰⁷ Na’īm-Uddīn, M. *Al-Tahqīqāt* (Urdu). P. 21

⁴⁰⁸ Barzanjī, A. *Gāyat-ul-Ma’sūl* (Arabic). P. 4

⁴⁰⁹ No original copy can be found of this book, only copies adulterated by the Deobandī’s and others. This book is written as Shaykh Barzanjī differed with Imām Raza’s position on Prophetic knowledge, but this must not be confused with his agreeing to the edict of Imām Raza on the blasphemous statements of the Deobandis.

⁴¹⁰ Ahmed. K. *Aqā'id-ē-Ahlē Sunnat-wal-Jammah* (Urdu). P. 104

easily forged because the scholars of Deoband were already critical of the eminent Sunni scholars of Makkah and Madīnah before Imām Raza had written his edicts about the heresies of the Deobandīs. Ambētawī stated:

And the condition of the clergy (*Ullama*) of Makkah is apparent to those who have witnessed with intelligence and wisdom. Those who did not witness this; they received authentic information from reliable sources that it is as good as personally witnessed. Majority of the clergy are like this but there are some who are pious, and the majority also includes those who are known as jurists (*Muftīs*). They are seen as wearing clothing which is not compliant with the law (*shar'iah*), their sleeves are folded; their shirts under their cloaks tucked into their pants which is undesirable in prayer (*salāh*); the length of their beards (i.e., four finger length) is not in accordance with the law and they perform worship haphazardly. There is no promotion of virtue (*amr-bil-ma'rūf*). They wear all sorts of rings on their fingers which are prohibited, they freely cross over rows (*suffūf*) of worshippers, when it can be avoided. As far as writing edicts (*fatwa*) is concerned, they can be easily bribed with some money and get them to write that which one pleases. If they are informed of their violations, they will stand up to fight. The matter is not hidden which had taken place when Shaykh-ul-Ullama (i.e., Sayyid Ahmed Zaynī Dahlān) did to our Shaykh-ul-Hind (i.e., Maulāna Rahmatullah). He (i.e., Shaykh-ul-Ullama) took money from a Shi'ī from Baghdad (*Baghdādi Rafḍī*) who asked him to write a book on the faith (*Imān*) of Abu-Tālib which he did and there are conflicting narrations of authentic reports (*Sahīḥ Aḥadīth*) against it. How much can I write on this as there is so much to say and I also feel very ashamed about writing defamatory statements about the clergy of the Holy Cities (*Haramayn*), but I am forced to do so. And in such a state, if someone gives superiority to the scholars of Deoband over the scholars of the two Holy Cities due to their trustworthiness, then why the outrage⁴¹¹?

The Deobandī Ullāma already had an adverse reputation amongst the Sunni leadership in the Holy cities of Makkah and Madīnah due to books written in refutation against these works before Imām Ahmed Raza and it would have been difficult for the Deobandīs to be able to convince the eminent Sunni clergy of Makkah and Madina to attest their work *al-Muhannad*.

⁴¹¹ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). P. 46

The other issue with this book ‘*al-Muhannad*’ is that Ambēt̄wī and the Deobandīs have tried to prove that Imām Ahmed Raza Khan has misinterpreted the Deobandī works which is wrong to say the least as the actual statements have been presented but as they are presenting this to a people who do not understand Urdu, they can say pretty much anything as they are authoring the text themselves. About the continuous Deobandī propaganda about misinterpretation, Syed Na’im Uddīn Muradabādī stated:

It is wrong to say that the objectionable text has been chopped and changed and made to seem blasphemous, the texts have been copied to the letter and it is upon them that the edict (*fatwa*) has been given⁴¹².

Not only this but the confirmation of the blasphemous statements of Deoband can also be found in the introduction of *Ghāyat-ul-Ma’sūl*⁴¹³ of Sayyid Barzanjī⁴¹⁴, a copy of which has also been attached to the book *Ashihab-al-Sāqib*⁴¹⁵ written by Maulāna Hussain Ahmed Madanī Deobandī only strengthening the position of Imām Raza that he had translated the questionable statements word for word and the eminent clergy of the two Holy Cities had understood what Imām Raza had presented to them and had full confidence in his edicts on the issues presented before them.

7.2.1. Are Deobandi’s Wahhābīs

Question one of *Al-Muhannad* is asking the Deobandīs about them accepting of Wahhābī beliefs upon which they replied:

Indeed in the origin of the terminology in the lands of India, the unqualified usage of “Wahhābī” was for one who abandoned taqlid of the Imāms and then its scope was broadened and its usage became dominant for one who practiced the glorious Sunnah and left the reprehensible innovated affairs and the ugly customs until it spread in Bombay and its corners that one who prohibits prostration to the graves of the saints and circumambulation of them, he is a Wahhābī, rather, one who

⁴¹² Na’im-Uddīn, M. *Al-Tahqīqāt* (Urdu). P. 6

⁴¹³ Barzanjī, A. *Gāyat-ul-Ma’sūl* (Arabic). P. 9

⁴¹⁴ Shaykh, Sayyid Ahmed b. Ismāil al-Barzanjī (d. 1919), was a jurist (Mufti) of the Shāfi school of thought during the Ottoman reign in Arabia.

⁴¹⁵ Ahmed. H. *Shihāb-al-Sāqib* (Urdu). Dār-ul-Kitāb, Lahore, Pakistan. (2004)

announced publicly the prohibition of usury, he is a Wahhābī, even if he is from the elders of the adherents of Islam and their great ones; then its scope was broadened until it became an insult, and thus [based] on this if a man from the inhabitants of India said to a man that he is a Wahhābī, it does not indicate that he has a corrupt belief, rather it indicates that he is a Sunni Hanafī, practicing on the Sunnah, avoiding innovation and fearful of Allah⁴¹⁶.

In the above statement, Ambēt̄wī has tried to mislead the Arab scholars for whom this was written by asserting that in India, the term Wahhābī is now used to describe people who follow the Sunnah and that he is a Sunni and Hanafī. Ambēt̄wī does not mention how they agree with Wahhābī teachings, and they also prohibit age old Sunni traditions as innovations which I shall discuss in the following section. Syed Na'im Uddīn has pointed out that in the above statement, the Deobandī's have clearly tried to misguide the people by stating, 'rather, one who announced publicly the prohibition of usury, he is a Wahhabi, even if he is from the elders of the adherents of Islam and their great ones⁴¹⁷'. I don't think anyone disagrees that usury is prohibited in Islām, but clearly, according to the Deobandis, you become a Wahhābī by prohibiting it.

7.2.2. Wahhābīs, Deobandīs and Shirk

Question twelve is based upon the Wahhābīs and how they thought of the Muslims as polytheists? Upon this interesting Question, Ambēt̄wī stated:

Al-Shāmī said in his marginalia: "As has occurred in our time in the followers of 'Abd al-Wahhāb who came out from Najd and dominated the two Harams and would claim to belong to the madhhab of the Hanbalīs but they believed that they are the Muslims and those who disagreed with their belief are polytheists, and due to this they legitimised the slaughter of the Ahl al-Sunnah and the slaughter of their 'ullama until Allah broke their supremacy." Then I say: Neither he nor any of his followers and his party are from our masha'ikh in a chain from the chains of knowledge of jurisprudence, hadīth, fiqh and tasawwuf [...] As for the people of Qiblah from the innovators, we do not anathematise them so long as they do not deny a necessary matter from the immediate necessities of the religion, so when

⁴¹⁶ Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad (English Translation) P. 4

⁴¹⁷ Na'im-Uddīn, M. Al-Tahqīqāt (Urdu). P. 6

denial of a matter necessary in the religion is established we anathematise them and we are cautious therein. This is our practice and the practice of our masha'ikh⁴¹⁸.

It is clear how the Deobandī's easily distant themselves from Wahhābīsm as at that point, the scholars of the two Holy Cities were still under Ottoman guardianship and the Saudi's had not fully taken control of Arabia. There are a few issues with the above statement of the Deobandīs as Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī stated in his *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*: 'the followers of Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb are called Wahhābīs and the held excellent beliefs and they followed the Hanbalī school but he had a violent temper⁴¹⁹'. Gangohī further stated: 'People would call Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb a Wahhābī, he was a good man and I have heard that he followed the Hanballī school and practised the Prophetic traditions (*Āmil-bil-Hadīth*) and he would stop people from polytheism (shirk) and innovation (bidah)⁴²⁰'.

Gangohī advocated Wahhābism but when writing to the scholars of the two Holy Cities, this is not mentioned and Ambētawī stated Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb as a deviant. But it does not end there, from the 1970's, due to the oil boom, Saudi Wahhābīs provided monetary assistance to selected Islamic institutions was only one method through which Saudis sought to patronise and influence key Muslim leaders and opinion makers in India. The largest beneficiary of this largesse is believed to be the Ahlē-Hadīth, although the Jamāt-ē-Islāmī and the Deobandīs are also said to have benefited to some extent. The Barēlvīs and the Shīa, both of whom regard 'Wahhābism' as wholly heretical, have received little or no financial support at all from Saudi sources. A clear indication of the Deobandī flexibility towards their relationship with the Saudi 'Wahhābīs' was the publication in 1978 of a book revealingly titled, *Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb kē khilāf propaganda aur Hindustān kē Ullamā-ē-Haq par uskē asarāt* (The propaganda against Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb and its impact on the true scholars of India), the timing of the book was significant. It came at a time when the Deobandīs, both in Pakistan and India, were increasingly turning to Saudi patrons. As the founding fathers of Deoband had bitterly critiqued Muhammad b. Abdul Wahhāb, however, the increasingly close relations between the Deobandīs and their Saudi patrons called for both an apology and an explanation for the bitter critique of the founding father of Wahhābism by the elders of Deoband. This is precisely what this book set out to do. The access to Saudi funds had heightened the conflict between the Ahlē-Hadīth and the Deobandīs, efforts by the Ahlē-Hadīth to win support among

⁴¹⁸ Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad (English Translation). p. 13

⁴¹⁹ Ahmed. R. *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*. P. 292

⁴²⁰ Ibid. p. 292

the Arab Wahhābī's for their campaign against the Deobandīs seemed to have met with considerable success. A clear indication of this was the fact that leading South Asian Ahlē Hadīth scholars had managed to prevail upon the Saudi managed Islamic University of Madīnah to ban the publication of the *Tafsīr-e-Uthmānī*, by Mahmūd-al-Hassan (d. 1920), for many years the rector of Deoband and a commentary (*tafsīr*) of another leading Deobandī scholar Shabbīr Ahmed Uthmānī. This book had reportedly been published for many years by an official Saudī publishing house, the Madīnah based King Fahd Complex for Printing the Holy Qur'an, for mass distribution. The publication is said to have stopped after an Ahlē-Hadīth activist claimed that it propagated anti-Islamic beliefs such as appealing to the people of the grave (*Ahlē qubūr*) for help. By arguing that the Deobandīs were not true Muslims, they managed to convince the Saudi authorities to replace Mahmūd al-Hassan's qur'anic translation by one written by a leading Ahlē-Hadith scholar, Maulāna Muhammad Junagadhi⁴²¹ (d. 1941). The Deobandī were quick to react with rebuttals countering the Ahlē-Hadīth as un-Islamic with many articles and books in Arabic aimed at the Arab patrons⁴²². Besides the differences within the Deobandī school about Wahhābism, the recourse to the oil boom had encouraged the Deobandīs to become even more lenient and accepting of the Wahhābi ideology outwardly and yet preach and practice aspects of their reformed Sufism trying to make sense of both and creating further chaos and confusion in the minds of the people of South Asia. It seems the confusion created by the Deobandīs was deliberate to keep the inner circle more inclined towards Wahhābism and use Sufism as a means of bringing the ordinary people closer to the thoughts and ideas taught in *Taqwiyyat-ul-Imān* of Ismaīl Dehlawī.

⁴²¹ Muhammad Junagarhi was born in 1890 in the state of Junagath to Ibrahim and belonged to the Memon caste. He completed his early education from the town and later moved to Delhi for higher education. In Delhi, he went to Madrasa Darul Kitaba wal-Sunnah of Abdul Wahhāb Multani, from where he graduated. Junagarhi co-founded the All-India Ahlē Hadith Conference and served as the president of the All-India Ahl-i Hadith Conference. He is remembered for his Translation of the Holy Qur'an and translation of many Arabic works into the Urdu language. He died at the age of 64 in the year 1941.

⁴²² Yoginder Sikand; Stoking the Flames: Intra-Muslim Rivalries in India and the Saudi Connection. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 1 May 2007; 27 (1): 95–108. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1215/1089201x-2006-046>

7.2.3. The finality of Prophet Muhammad

In Question Sixteen, being asked about the finality of the Holy Prophet, Ambēt̄wī confirms the belief of the Holy Prophet being the final messenger and the consensus of the believers upon this and then stated:

Our belief and the belief of our elders is that our chief, our master, our beloved and our intercessor, Muhammad, the Messenger, is the Seal of the Prophets and there is no prophet after him, as Allah said in His Book, “But he is the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets” (33:40). This is established in many hadiths that are mutawātir⁴²³ in meaning, by consensus of the ummah. Far be it that one of us said something contrary to this, since the one who denies this is according to us a disbeliever because he denies decisive and unequivocal texts⁴²⁴.

Syed Na’īm Uddīn has stated regarding the above statement:

Here, it is clearly mentioned that the Holy Prophet is the last Prophet and there can be no Prophet after Him and that this is established by the Qur’an and many Prophetic statements and by consensus of the believers and has stated this to be clear from the Qur’anic text. They can thus show themselves to be truly Sunnis from these words but let look at what has been stated in *Tahzīr-ul-Nās*: ‘in the understanding of common people, the Messenger of Allah being the “seal” is with the meaning that his time comes after the time of the previous prophets, and he is the last of all prophets. However, it is clear to men of understanding that there is no intrinsic virtue (*bil-dhāt kuch fazīlat nahī*) in coming earlier or later in time. Then, how can it be valid, in this case, that” but the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of Prophets” (Q. 33:40) is in a context of praise (*maqām-ē-Madah*)?⁴²⁵

It is obvious there is clear contradictions in their speech as their books say something else and they state their beliefs to be otherwise. In response to the Fatwa of Imām Ahmed Raza, they partially mention the issue and have not stated the main issue which Imām Ahmed Raza and others had objected to. The statement of Nanōtawī was:

⁴²³ A Mutawātir hadith is one which is reported by such many people through various chains of transmission that they cannot be expected to agree upon a lie and is a way that substantiates its authenticity.

⁴²⁴ Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad (English Translation) P. 17

⁴²⁵ Na’īm-Uddīn, M. Al-Tahqīqāt (Urdu).p. 10

1. If what I have presented regarding his (i.e., Prophet Muhammad) being the seal (*khatam*) will not be specific in relation to earlier prophets (*ghuzashta Ambiya hī kī nisbat khās nā ho ga*). In fact, if hypothetically (*bil-farz*) in his own time a prophet appeared somewhere, even then, his being last (of the Prophets) will remain sound⁴²⁶.
2. Therefore, even if hypothetically (*bil-farz*) after the time of the Prophet (*ba'd zamāna Nabawi mein*) any prophet is born (*koī nabi payda ho*), even then there would be no difference to the finality of Prophet Muhammad (*Muḥammadan khātamiyyah*) even though there be another prophet contemporary to him on another earth (*chēja kē Āpkē muasir kisī aur zamīn mein*), even if you hypothesise (*ya farz kījī'ay*) of another prophet on this earth (*isī zamīn mein koī aur nabi tajwīz kia jaē*)⁴²⁷.

7.2.4. Prophet Muhammad as an elder brother

In Question Seventeen, Ambētawī, is asked if they believe the Holy Prophet was not superior to us but like the superiority of an elder brother to a younger brother, and nothing more? Did one of them write such content in a book, and he replied stating:

None of us, nor our noble predecessors, believe this at all. We do not believe a man from the weak ones in faith even utter the like of such falsehood. Whoever says that the Prophet has no superiority over us but as an elder brother is superior to the younger, we believe with respect to him that he is outside the domain of faith. The works of all the elders state the opposite of this, and they clarified and expressed and reviewed the modes of his excellences and his favour upon us, the assembly of the ummah, in a number of ways, whereby it is not possible to affirm the like of one of these things to any person from the creatures, let alone its entirety⁴²⁸.

It is clear from the statement of the Deobandī's that calling the Holy Prophet as an elder brother to a younger is unbelief and anyone who hold some beliefs is outside the fold of Islām,

⁴²⁶ Q. M. Tahzīr-un-Nās (Urdu), p. 22

⁴²⁷ Ibid. p. 43

⁴²⁸ Al-Muhammad al al Muffannad (English Translation) P. 18

Ambēt̄wī also mentions that the opposite is found from their books, so let's examine this statement, let's have a look at some of the statements found in their books?

1. Ismaīl Dehlawi has stated: 'That, all humans are brothers (bhaī) amongst each other, he who is an honoured person (bara buzurgh), is an elder brother (bara bhaī) and should only be respected as thus⁴²⁹'.
2. Khalīl Ahmed Ambēt̄wī, who is said to be the author of *al-Muhannad* has written: 'If anyone calls you (i.e., Prophet Muhammad) a brother because you are from the children of Adam (banī Adam), then how is this against the scriptures but rather he is in accordance with it⁴³⁰'.
3. Dr Pearson stated, 'Syed Ahmed Barelwī did not use the ideal Sufī model of the Prophet as the perfect man but rather the scriptural model of the very human and historical Muhammad⁴³¹'.

Syed Na'īm Uddīn stated: 'What are the height of such deceit that the beliefs which they have already printed and then they do the opposite in Al-Muhannad⁴³²'.

7.2.5. Is Satan more knowledgeable than the Holy Prophet?

In Question nineteen, they are asked if they believe that Satan (*Iblis*), the accursed, is more knowledgeable than the Holy Prophet and has more expansive knowledge than him in absolute terms? Have you written this in a book? And how do you judge one who believes this? Ambēt̄wī stated:

A review of this issue preceded from us, that the Prophet is the most knowledgeable of creation in general, of the sciences, the judgement, the secrets and other than that from the Kingdom of the Horizons, and we believe with certainty that one who says that so and so person is more knowledgeable than the Prophet has disbelieved⁴³³.

⁴²⁹ Ismail, M. Taqwiyat-ul-Iman (Urdu). p. 97

⁴³⁰ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). P. 12

⁴³¹ Pearson. O. H. Islamic reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah Muhammadiyyah. P. 37

⁴³² Na'īm-Uddīn, M. Al-Tahqīqāt (Urdu). P. 12

⁴³³ Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad (English Translation) p. 20

Syed Na'im Uddin points out that in this statement, the Deobandis have conveniently mentioned the extensive knowledge of the Holy Prophet to the extent that He is the most knowledgeable in God's creation but now let's examine what they really believe regarding the Holy Prophet that He is not even aware of His death or what will happen to Him, God forbid!⁴³⁴.

1. Isma'il Dehlawi has stated: 'No Prophet and no friend of Allah knows about one's own conditions or about anybody else'⁴³⁵.
2. Ambetwi has stated in *Barahain-e-Qatia* that Shaykh Abdul Haq has stated that the Prophet said: 'I have no knowledge of what is behind the wall'⁴³⁶.

The belief that the Prophet is more knowledgeable in God's creation and to believe that Satan is more knowledgeable than the Prophet is disbelief. It is clearly mentioned in *Barahain-e-Qatia* by themselves that extensive knowledge is given to Satan but then rejects the same for the Holy Prophet. Ambetwi has stated:

This expanse has been established for Satan and the angel of death from the Qur'anic text. Which Qur'anic text is there for the expanse of knowledge for the Pride of the World (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), based on which all Qur'anic text will be rejected, and one shirk established⁴³⁷?

You may have established that the belief stated in *Al-Muhannad* is opposite to what is found in the Deobandi literature, which they have stated to be heresy. They present one thing to the non-Urdu speaking audience and yet their books contain contradictory statements to that which they preach to hide the reality of their beliefs and agendas.

7.2.6. Deobandi rebuttal on Hifz-ul-Iman

In Question twenty, they are asked if they believe that the knowledge of the Prophet is equal to the knowledge of Zayd, Bakr and beasts or are you innocent of such a belief? Did Shaykh Ashraf Ali al-Thānvī write such content in his treatise *Hifz al-Iman* or not? How do you judge one who believes this? They stated:

⁴³⁴ Na'im-Uddin, M. Al-Tahqiqat (Urdu). p. 13

⁴³⁵ Ismail, M. Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman (Urdu). p. 60

⁴³⁶ Ahmed. K. *Barahain-e-Qatia* (Urdu). P. 121

⁴³⁷ Ahmed. K. *Barahain-e-Qatia* (Urdu). P. 122

We are convinced that anyone who believes that the knowledge of the Prophet is equal to Zayd, Bakr, beasts and madmen, is an absolute disbeliever⁴³⁸.

The above is what is said to have been presented to the Arab scholars of the two Holy Cities but in fact the actual objectionable text is stated below written by Ashraf Ali Thānvī in his book *Hifz-ul-Imān*:

Moreover, what is the ruling upon this (*ilm-ē-ghayb ka hukm kya jāna*), if it is correct to attribute the knowledge of the unseen for the Revered One (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), if thought to be correct by Zāyd, then further clarification is required. Is this unseen partial or complete? If it is referred to as partial knowledge of the unseen, then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? Such knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by Zāyd, Amr (i.e., just anyone), indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts: For every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual⁴³⁹.

Syed Na'īm Uddīn has stated regarding the above:

The statement which has been deemed as heretic in *Al-Muhannad* is an actual statement of their elder, Ashraf Ali Thānvī. Besides this the deception the actual paragraph from the book *Hifz-ul-Imān* has been chopped and changed and presented otherwise in *Al-Muhannad*. In the text of *Hifz-ul-Imān* it is stated, 'what is the ruling upon this (*ilm-ē-ghayb ka hukm kya jāna*) and in *Al-Muhannad*, the words are, 'What is the application (*ilm-ē-ghayb ka itlāq*), how can the term 'ruling (*hukm*) be changed with application (*itlāq*). If the meaning was correct in the original text, why has this been distorted (*tahrīf*) if it was not heresy according to them and presented otherwise in *Al-Muhannad*? Why change the original words and present something else to the Arab scholars⁴⁴⁰?

Yet again, there is further confusion as to what exactly the Deobandīs believe regarding the questionable text of their elders or that which they have stated in *Al-Muhannad*. The *Al-Muhannad* states exactly the opposite to what is in the book *Hifz-ul-Imān*. Essentially the

⁴³⁸ Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad (English Translation) p. 23

⁴³⁹ Thanvi, A. A. Hifz ul-Iman. Dar-ul-kutub Deoband. India. P. 15

⁴⁴⁰ Na'īm-Uddīn, M. Al-Tahqīqāt (Urdu). p. 15

Deobandīs agree with the edict of Imām Raza in *Al-Muhannad* yet they do not accept his edict stating exactly what they have said regarding to the text in *Hifz-ul-Imān*.

7.2.7. Celebrating the Birthday of the Holy Prophet

In Question Twenty-two, they are asked if they Have mentioned in a particular treatise that commemorating the birth of Prophet Muhammad is like Kanhaiya’s *Janmashtami* (birth festival) or not? They replied:

This is also from the slanders against us and against our elders from the Dajjālic⁴⁴¹ innovators. We have explained previously that commemorating him is from the best of recommended acts and the most virtuous of preferable acts, so how can it be suspected of a Muslim that he says, refuge is from Allah, that the commemoration of the noble birth resembles the practice of the disbelievers? They only invented this slander from a text of Maulāna al-Gangohī which we quoted in *al-Barahēin* on page 141. Far be the shaykh from saying the like of this, and his intent is far by miles from what they attributed to him as will become apparent from what we will mention, which announces in the highest voice that whoever attributes to him what they mentioned is a liar and a slanderer [...] The upshot of what the shaykh – Allah Exalted is He have mercy on him – mentioned in the discussion on *Qiyām* (Standing) when mentioning the noble birth is that whoever believes the arrival of his noble soul from the world of spirits to the world of seeing and believes with certainty in the very noble birth in the *Māwluḍī* function, so he behaves in a manner that would be required in the moment of the actual past birth, he has erred and imitated the *Majūs* in their belief of the birth of their deity known as Kanhaiya every year and their behaviour on that day in the way they would behave at the moment of the real birth [...] As for the justification of *Qiyām* due to the arrival of his soul from the world of spirits to the world of seeing, so they stand in veneration of him, this is also from their fooleries, because this reasoning demands standing upon the realisation of the very noble birth, and when does the birth recur in these days? Thus, this [belief in the] repetition of the noble birth is like the practice of the *Majūs* of India since they produce the exact story of the birth of their deity

⁴⁴¹ Dajjāl is known as the Anti-Christ in English

Kanhaiya or like the Rafidhīs who transmit (i.e., verbally and practically) the martyrdom of the Ahl al-Bāyt every year, Allah’s refuge is sought⁴⁴².

While discussing the concept of standing (*Qiyām*) in respect while praising the Prophet or during his blessed birthday celebrations. Ambētawī creates many scenarios which do not apply and then stated:

Or it has the reason that the pure soul (of the Holy Prophet) came from the world of souls to the world of seeing, so standing is done to honour this. This too is pure foolishness because in this case standing ought to be done at the time of the blessed birth occurring. Which birth is being repeated each day? Thus, this re-enactment of the birth each day is like the Hindus who observe the play-acting (sāng) of the birth of Kanhaiya each year, or like the Rawāfid who recreate (the events of) the martyrdom of the prophetic household each year. Allah forbid, they have established a play-acting (sāng) of his birth. Just this act is worthy of blame and is prohibited (ḥarām) and wickedness. In fact, these people have exceeded them (the Hindus and Rawāfid)⁴⁴³.

To claim that it is imitating people of other faiths when this has never been the stance of people of the Sunnat (Ahlē-Sunnah-wal-Jammah) and this statement also goes against the actual practice of their own Sufi Master, Hāji Imdādullah Muhājir Makkī who has stated:

So far as I am concerned, I not only participate in the birthday celebrations of the Holy Prophet (*Māwliḍ*) but also hold them regularly every year as a means of blessings and I also find pleasure and spiritually uplifting the practice of standing (*Qiyām*)⁴⁴⁴.

In regard to the standing and other Sunni practices which the Deobandis have opposed, it is stated in *Al-Muhannad* itself under the statement of Shaykh Ahmed b. Muhammad Khair-Shanqīzī of Madinah who stated the Māwliḍ to be permissible practice of the Muslims and the permissibility of the standing and also mentioned that the soul of the Holy Prophet is free to travel as the Prophets are alive in their graves⁴⁴⁵.

⁴⁴² Ibid. p. 25

⁴⁴³ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). P. 318

⁴⁴⁴ Hussain. I. *Advice from beyond the grave: Faisala-Haft-Masala* (English). P. 25

⁴⁴⁵ Ahmed. K. *Aqā'id-ē-Ahlē Sunnat-wal-Jammah* (Urdu). P. 106

The founding father of Deoband, Rashīd Ahmed Gangohī has stated about the celebrations of Milād:

1. Those Māwliḍ gatherings which do not have any unorthodox activity (*ghair sharī*), even in those gathering as a matter of precaution, people should not join in present times⁴⁴⁶.
2. Gangohī was asked: Is it permissible to join in those Māwliḍ gatherings in which only authentic narrations are read out and no weak or fabricated narrations are read out? He replied: 'It is impermissible to join these gatherings due to other reasons⁴⁴⁷.'
3. Gangohī was also asked: Is it permissible to participate in those death anniversaries (*urs*) in which only the Holy Qur'an is recited, and sweets are distributed? He replied: 'It is not allowed to join any such death anniversaries and birth celebrations of the Holy Prophet (māwliḍ) as all such gatherings are impermissible⁴⁴⁸.'

The Deobandī's state the *Māwliḍ* gatherings to be permissible in the *Al-Muhannad* yet they are discouraged all together by Gangohī and is something that is not celebrated by the Deobandī's generally.

7.3. Analysing the book *Fāysalakun Munāzirah*

The book *Fāysla-kun Munāzirah* was originally prepared as part of a debate by Maulāna Manzūr Nu'māni (d. 1997) in the year 1933 which would have taken place in the city of Lahore but didn't go ahead as the local authorities cancelled the debate as they thought it may cause havoc and lead to loss of life. This book demonstrates that Deobandī's never took the edicts of Imām Raza seriously and made mockery of the contexts of his accusations. The author stated in the introduction:

The differences between the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs is very strange in itself, this is not based upon some religious matters and their understanding but rather the

⁴⁴⁶ Ahmed. R. *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*. p. 115

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 131

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 134

truth and the history of this is Maulvī Ahmed Raza Khān Barēlwī had attributed some heretical beliefs and also provided the edict as you will find by reading in the following pages⁴⁴⁹.

It is clear that the later Deobandīs have not accepted or bothered to actually follow the reason for the edicts or have deliberately ignored the religious rulings on this important creedal issue within the Islamic faith made by Imām Raza. It is possible the attitude of the Deobandīs towards their leading figures is due to personality worship or otherwise known as the cult of personality which is usually characterized by the uncritical attitude towards those whom they follow or idolize.

7.3.1. About Barāhein-ē-Qātia

Nu'mānī explicitly stated that the Deobandīs did not take these edicts of Imām Raza seriously and thus they ignored them⁴⁵⁰ and this was the reason why Imām Raza was forced to issue religious edicts against these Deobandī personalities as they did not correspond to the letters sent to them by Imām Raza and it seems the same attitude towards the edicts of Imām Raza had followed to the next generation of Deobandī scholars who also thought nothing of them and totally ignored the issues that had been raised by Imām Ahmed Raza and the seriousness of the matter.

Nu'mānī mentioned that Nanōtawī clarified his beliefs in different books⁴⁵¹ about the finality of the Holy Prophet but this beats the object that these books are not the problem, but the problem was the book *Barāhein-e-Qātia* and even though these other books may contradict and conflict with the above-mentioned book, nowhere does Nanōtawī or his fellow Deobandīs object to the questionable statements in his book. Such justifications could be tactics used to create confusion and turn attention away from the actual matter at hand.

Regarding the question of the presentation of the whole sentences which have been deemed as blasphemous and unorthodox by Imām Raza have been answered in the above sections. Numānī stated:

⁴⁴⁹ Manzūr, M. *Faysalakun-Munāzirah* (Urdu). Dār-ul-Nafa'is, Lahore, Pakistan. P. 5

⁴⁵⁰ Manzūr, M. *Faysalakun-Munāzirah* (English Trans) p. 18

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. p. 48

A like-minded partner of Maulvī Ahmad Raza Khān Sāhib, Maulvī‘Abd al-Samī Sāhib, after proving the extent of the knowledge for Satan and the Angel of Death in his book *al-Anwār al-Sātiā* with proofs, analogised the Prophet of God with them, and based on this analogy, he affirmed expansive knowledge of the world for the Prophet. Hazrat Maulāna Khalīl Ahmad Sāhib, the author of *al-Barāhīn al-Qāti‘a*, refuted this analogy. *Al-Barāhīn al-Qāti‘a* is a reply to *al-Anwār al-Sāti‘a*⁴⁵².

The matter was not just about what Anbētūwī was replying to but rather the words used and how it was versed and the context of the paragraph. The problem with Numānī’s explanation was his continuous contradiction of his statements which contradicted what the actual author had written as stated above where Ambētūwī relates a false narration that the Prophet said I do not know what is behind the wall, which is negating knowledge of the unseen and that to at a close proximity would only mean that they do not accept the comprehensive knowledge for Prophet Muhammad.

7.3.2. Rashīd Ahmed Gangohi and Imkān-ē-Kizb

Imām Ahmed Raza sent Gangohī his book *Subhān-ul-Subūh* by registered mail, which he received about attributing God with lying. Imām Raza stated:

Then the state of wrongdoing and deviance persisted in him until he stated in a fatwa of his, which I saw with my eyes in his handwriting and with his seal, and it was printed many times in Mumbai and other cities along with its refutation, that the one who attributes an actual lie to Allah Almighty and explicitly states that He (Glorified and Exalted is He) has lied and that this enormity emerged from Him, then don’t attribute to him transgression, let alone deviance, and let alone disbelief, for indeed many of the Imāms have professed his opinion and the most that could be said is that he has erred in his interpretation⁴⁵³.

Imām Raza clearly found the same verdicts in more than one place and its rebuttals and thus the reason for his mentioning this. It does seem a fatwa was requested, and he replied, and it

⁴⁵² Ibid. p. 123

⁴⁵³ Khān. A. R. Hussam-ul-Haramain (English Trans) Alahazrat Network.ORG < <https://archive.org/details/hussamulharamainenglish> > [26.05.2021 17:49]. P. 51

was the copy of the edict in its paper format that was being circulated during that time that Imām Raza also got a glimpse of which could have been excluded from *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah* as it could have possibly been seen as a great religious error. As we do not have this original text, we can only go by the other documents on this issue by Gangohī who has stated in his *Fatāwa*:

The meaning of the possibility of (Allah) lying (*imkān-ē-kizb*) is that it is within the power of Allah to lie, meaning that whatever punishment has been promised by Allah, He has the Power to do the opposite of that even if He does not do it. Possibility does not necessarily mean occurrence, but only that it can occur [...] So the belief of all the scholars, Sūfīs and researchers (*Muhaqiqīn*) of Islam is that lies are within the power of Allah⁴⁵⁴.

Though Gangohī argues that God has the attribute of lying, he does not lie and then he also stated that whoever claims that Allah lies is a rejector and a heretic and makes it seem that attributing God with the attribute of lying is not objectionable, controversial and that it is something accepted by the Muslim world. Below is also from his *Fatāwa*:

Surely Allah is far above from being attributed with the characteristic of lying and neither is there ever any suspicion of lying in his words just as Allah has said “Whose speech could be truer than Allah’s?” (Q. 4:122) And whoever believes and expresses that Allah lies is a rejected disbeliever, an opposer of the Qur’an and Sunna and the Consensus (*ijmā*) of the Believers (*Ummah*), Allah is transcendent and above all that the transgressors say⁴⁵⁵.

Gangohī also defended the objectionable statement in *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* that Allah can lie and said, ‘The meaning of this is the possibility of telling a lie⁴⁵⁶ (*imkān-ē-kizb*) that Allah has the power of telling a lie, but this will not happen⁴⁵⁷’. Ambētawī further stated: ‘The question of (attributing Allah the power of) lying have not only been raised just now but there has always been a debate on this issue by earlier (Qudamā) theologians⁴⁵⁸’. As mentioned earlier Imām Raza had sent Gangohī his thesis on this subject of the impossibility of God lying or that Allah has the power to lie, this could not be found in any of the books written by Sunni theologians

⁴⁵⁴ Ahmed. R. *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*, p. 96

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 93

⁴⁵⁶ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). P. 10

⁴⁵⁷ Ahmed. R. *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah*, p. 96

⁴⁵⁸ Ahmed. K. *Barahēin-ē-Qātia* (Urdu). P. 10

on the topic of beliefs (*Aqā'id*) from an earlier period as suggested by Gangohī except for the Mu'tazilites.

It is stated in *Al-Muhannad* regarding the *Maturīdi* position on this:

In *Tahrīr al-Usūl* by the author of *Fath al-Qadīr*, Imām ibn al-Humām, and its commentary by Ibn Amīr al-Hājj [they say], the text of which is: “Therefore – i.e., since whatever is conceived as a deficiency is impossible for Him – the decisiveness of the impossibility of attributing Him – i.e., Allah – with lying and the like of it (Transcendent is He beyond that) becomes apparent. Also, if His act being attributed with ugliness was possible, confidence in the integrity of His promise, the integrity of His speech besides it – i.e. [besides] His promise – and the integrity of His Prophets would disappear – i.e., in principle, His integrity would be uncertain⁴⁵⁹ .

This is the stance of the *Maturīdī*'s including that of Imām Ahmed Raza and majorities of the Sunni Muslims in South Asian who hold the *Maturīdī* Creed including the Deobandīs themselves but besides this, he goes further and stated:

In *Hawashi al-Kalnabwi 'ala Sharh al-'Aqā'id al-Adudiyyah* by Al-Muhaqqiq al-Dawwāni [it is mentioned], the text of which is: “In sum, lying being ugly in the uttered-speech (*al-kalām al-lafzi*), in the sense that it is an attribute of deficiency, is prohibited according to the Ash'arīs. That is why Al-Sharif al-Muhaqqiq (*al-Jurjāni*) said it is from the totality of the possibilities (*mumkināt*) and acquiring decisive knowledge of its non-occurrence in His speech by consensus of the scholars and the Prophets does not negate its intrinsic possibility like all decisive knowledge of normal occurrences (*al-'ulūm al-'ādiya*) and it does not negate what Imām al-Rāzī said,” to the end⁴⁶⁰ .

The Ash'arī's, unlike the *Maturīdīs* and the Mu'tazila believe that Allah has the power to act contrary to what He promised, so, to them, there is no problem with the phrase, ‘Allah has the power to act contrary to what He has ordered’, rationally speaking though, legally speaking, this is untrue according to them as it is untrue according to the *Maturīdīs* and the Mu'tazila but nowhere do they call or exemplify this power as lying and agree with the above. Allah is never

⁴⁵⁹ *Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad* (English Translation). P. 32

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p. 32

described as able to commit injustice (*dhulm*), nonsense (*safh*) and lies (*kizb*) as the impossible (*muhāl*) is not within His power and nor does He act contrary to what He has ordered in anyway constitute to what is called a lie (*kizb*), whether lexically, logically, or legally. Doing other than what He threatens (*mukhalafāt al-ē'ād*) is not called lying in the Arabic language. Nor the Ash'arīs⁴⁶¹, Maturīdīs or the Mu'tazila ever claimed that Allah can lie or that lying is possible for Him or that the theologians characterised the belief of possibility of lying (*imkān-ē-kizb*). Thus, there are a few issues Gangohī's religious position on the issue:

1. He chose the Ash'arī position over the Maturīdī position which is followed by most of the Sunni Muslims of South Asia.
2. He misinterprets the Ash'arī position in a scandalous way.
3. Using the term 'possibility of lying' (*imkān-ē-kizb*) in theology as which has never been applied before.
4. Lying that this is an age-old difference since the ancients.
5. The term possibility of lying for God was first used by Ismaīl Dehlawī as a religious innovation.
6. Expresses his position like Ismaīl Dehlawī in the public sphere for the public to read, even though they possibly would not understand the concepts without the expert training in theology.

This was the continuity of the ideas from Shah Ismaīl Dehlawī which the founders held onto blindly ignoring the age-old orthodoxy and creating a commotion which could have been avoided but Gangohī carried on regardless to the many disturbances that occurred due to these Deobandi controversies.

⁴⁶¹ In regards to the Asharī position on this matter, Imām Ahmed Raza related from the book, *Masāmīrah Sharh al-Musē'irah* which is an explanation of the creed of the Maturīdiyyah and Ashā'irrah, *Al-Musē'irah* by Kamāl - Addīn Muhammad b. Hammām Addīn al-Hanafī known as Ibn Hammān (d. 861 AH) and explained by Kamāl - Addīn Muhammad b. Muhammad al-Shāfi, al-Maqdisī known as Ibn Abi Sharīf al-Maqdisī (d. 906 AH), in which it is stated, 'There is no difference amongst the Ashā'irrah and others upon the matter that Allah is free from any attribute which has a fault (*naqs*) and it is impossible (*muhāl*) for him and lying is also a fault'. Ref: Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 15. P. 518

7.3.3. Khalīl Ahmed Ambēt̄wī and Prophetic Knowledge

Nu'mānī has gone to a lot of trouble in this section discussing the different types of knowledge and it is not important for the Prophets to be aware of petty or worldly affairs and then mentions many narrations about the Prophet not being aware of certain affairs but fails to deal with the issue and then gives examples of the extent of the knowledge of Satan and the angel of death stating:

Every Muslim understands that the angel of death oversees the deaths of all people. He has total knowledge in this regard, namely, who is to die when and where and how. It comes in the Hadīth that all mankind is in front of angel of death just as a plate of food is in front of a person [...] For the requisites for his satanic mission, essential for the misguidance of mankind, he has been given the knowledge of their passions and desires. He should know that in a place there is a young woman alone and a wandering youth can reach there with a certain plan. He must be aware of the dens of vice and evil to ply his trade of deception and immorality⁴⁶².

Nu'mānī decided that the Prophets do not require the knowledge as do Satan and the angel of death due to their lofty status without providing any textual support for his view, he stated:

The lofty Souls (i.e., of the Prophets and Saints) have no purpose to achieve such knowledge pertaining to evil and futility. Their duty is to provide guidance and to teach the Truth. The lofty and pure sciences which are needed for accomplishing their holy mission were given to them in full measure by Allah⁴⁶³.

According to Nu'mānī, the Prophets and the Saints have only knowledge they require to provide guidance and teach people and because they don't require other knowledge, they are not given such knowledge, this has no basis or any textual evidence to suggest this as there are narrations found stating otherwise and goes against the Deobandī creed stated in *Al-Muhannad* about the extensive knowledge of the Holy Prophet. After discussing the knowledge of Satan and the angel of death he goes on to discuss the point where Ambēt̄wī stated:

It ought to be contemplated: Seeing the state of Satan and the angel of death, affirming encompassing knowledge of the world for the Pride of the World, against

⁴⁶² Manzūr, M. *Faysalakun-Munāzīrah* (English Trans) p. 136

⁴⁶³ Ibid. p. 138

Qur'anic texts, without evidence, based purely on corrupt, if not shirk, which part of faith is it? This expanse has been established for Satan and the angel of death from the Qur'anic text. Which Qur'anic text is there for the expanse of knowledge for the Pride of the World, based on which all Qur'anic text will be rejected, and one shirk established⁴⁶⁴.

Nu'mānī argued that Ambētawī meant intrinsic knowledge here which is exclusive to Allah and therefore the word polytheism (*shirk*) has been used in the paragraph. And then explains 'because of the superiority of the Prophet of Allah, more knowledge of the world than this is certainly inherent in him. It is this assumption that the author of al-Barahēin ē-Qātia called it to be shirk⁴⁶⁵'. But when you read the paragraph it is clearly not speaking of intrinsic knowledge for the Holy Prophet but rather it is comparing the encompassing knowledge of Satan and the angel of death which is derived and attained and not inherent, if this is so then this cannot be polytheism for the Holy Prophet and trying to misinterpret clear text is an old habit of the Deobandīs as is possible to see in previous chapters and texts of their elders. The other reason being more knowledge of the world than what they think of the prophet should be polytheism. Then to blame the other as he has interpreted the apparent meaning of the text and not the hidden meaning as explained by Nu'mānī with terms like deception, distortion, and slander⁴⁶⁶ because their critical analysis is not befitting the status of the author that he can be said to make such a grave error. There are many issues with Nu'mānī's work on the matter firstly he tries to limit the Prophet knowledge to his understanding that the Prophet cannot have knowledge of the world as do Satan and the angel of death and then he argues:

The entire Ummah has the belief that affirming even one iota of knowledge more than the quantity of knowledge which Allah favoured for and imparted to the Prophet and all creation, is shirk. This is derived from all books of the law (*Sharī'ah*)⁴⁶⁷.

Both Ambētawī and Nu'mānī both restricting the knowledge of the Holy Prophet to that which is required for the Prophetic Mission and the knowledge of other particulars is not required or given by God to Prophets or Saints and this is based on their own logic without presenting any

⁴⁶⁴ Ahmed. K. Barahēin-ē-Qātia. P. 122

⁴⁶⁵ Manzūr, M. *Faysalakun-Munāzirah* (English Trans). P. 153

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 149

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 153

religious texts in evidence of the extent and limit of the Prophetic knowledge thus possibly creating further offence to many Muslims who would not agree with these interpretations.

After this, he tried to tackle the issue of not fully presenting the whole narration as quoted by Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhadith Dehlawī about the Holy Prophet not knowing what is behind the wall, Nu'māni said:

Here the author of Barahēin did not give the name of any book of the Shaykh. So, if this narration is mentioned in any book of the Shaykh without criticism and refutation then the reference of the author of Barahēin will be absolutely correct, and it will be understood that he quoted from there⁴⁶⁸.

Nu'mānī stating that Ambētawī did not mention an actual reference would mean to find any particular book is not the issue but misrepresenting the actual reference which is not hidden but a published work of Shaykh Abdul Haq. The issue which has continued from chapter one, and this can be found throughout the Deobandī works is their trying to interpret text which are clear in meaning and have no ambiguity at all and it is only then does further complexities appear when the indefensible is being defended.

7.3.4. Rewording of Hifz-ul-Imān

When analysing the text of *Hifz-ul-Imān* deemed blasphemous by Imām Raza: the text being:

Moreover, if it is correct to attribute the knowledge of the unseen for the Revered One (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), if thought to be correct by Zāyd, then further clarification is required. Is this unseen partial or complete? If it is referred to as partial knowledge of the unseen, then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? Such knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by Zāyd, Amr (i.e., just anyone), indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts: For every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual⁴⁶⁹.

The above text is obviously discussing the knowledge of the unseen about Prophet Muhammad which is said not to be intended to be offensive according to the Deobandī's. Below is an

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 161

⁴⁶⁹ Thanvi, A. A. Hifz ul-Iman. Dar-ul-kutub Deoband. India. P. 15

example from *Faysalakun Munāzira* where Nu'mānī is making mockery of Imām Ahmed Raza with similar style and as the above paragraph of Ashraf Ali Thānvī but with reference to the knowledge of Imām Ahmed Raza:

In the ten introductory principles, I have established that one will be more knowledgeable with respect to another in terms of the lofty perfecting sciences and the totality of knowledge; otherwise, it would entail that it is correct to say that a cobbler, and a driver, in fact, filth-eating insects are more knowledgeable than Maulvī Ahmad Raza Khān Sāhib. The details of this have passed in the eighth and tenth principles⁴⁷⁰.

These words were written intentionally to offend Imām Raza by way of comparing his knowledge with lower jobs like cobbler and a driver and then further comparison with filth-eating insects thus lower than that mentioned by Thānvī for the Holy Prophet. Surely if these words were and are clearly meaning to offend then surely the same language for comparison is used by Thānvī in way for comparison with the Prophetic knowledge would also be deemed offensive. After trying to defend the text of *Hifz-ul-Imān*, Nu'mānī concluded stating:

This is why in the Qur'an and Hadīth such dubious words which could create misunderstanding are forbidden⁴⁷¹.

Nu'mānī finally hits the nail on the head and this would conclude the argument of Imām Ahmed Raza that the texts are clear and not ambiguous but if this is not what was intended according to the other, this would make them dubious because they are indicating towards and are at the same time offensive according to the critical analysis of Imām Raza and thus such language and comparisons could have been avoided especially when writing about our Lord and Master, Prophet Muhammad that no consideration was given to His Majesty and religious status when such things were being written.

Nu'mānī has further stated that a sincere person drew attention of Thānvī suggesting, 'although the passage of *Hifz al-Imān* in reality is completely sound and free of doubt, if the words with which the ungodly and obstinate people deceive the fickle simple-minded commoners were rephrased, these commoners who are susceptible to *fitnah* would not succumb to the deception, so for the sake of the fickle lay-people this would be best'. Thānvī made a prayer (*dua*) for the

⁴⁷⁰ Manzūr, M. *Faysalakun-Munāzira* (English Trans). P. 128

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.* p. 173

one who gave him this advice and wholeheartedly accepted the advice and changed the passage in the following way: In the old passage, the sentence which began as ‘such knowledge of the unseen’ (*āisa ilm-ē-ghayb*) was substituted for the sentence: ‘mere knowledge of some unseen matters has been attained also by non-Prophets (*mutlaq ba’z ulūm-ē-ghaybiyyah to ghair ambiya ko bi hāsil hēin*). Later Nu’mānī visited Thānvī who further suggested another change in the text at the beginning of the objectionable text stating, ‘what is the ruling of the knowledge of the unseen’ (*ilme-ē-ghayb ka hukm kya jāna*) to the following: ‘Furthermore, if unqualifiedly using knower of the unseen for the holy essence is sound according to the statement of Zayd’ (*pir ye kē Āpkī dhāt-ē-Muqaddasah par ilm-ē-ghayb ka itlāq agar baqaul Zayd sahīh ho*)⁴⁷².

After the suggested changes to the *Hifz ul-Imān*, the first revision made in September 1923 (Safar of 1342 AH) and then the second suggested change took place on August 1935 (Jumada al-Ukhra 1354 AH)⁴⁷³. After the requested changes approved by Thānvī himself, the objectionable statement read as:

Moreover, if it is correct to attribute the knowledge of the unseen for the Revered One (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), if thought to be correct by Zāyd, then further clarification is required. Is this unseen partial or complete? If it is referred to as partial knowledge of the unseen, then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? Some knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by those who are not Prophets: In this case everyone should be called knower of the unseen (*Ālim-ul-ghayb*)⁴⁷⁴.

Nu’mānī published the revision with the blessings of Thānvī in his publication *Al-Furqān* in September 1935 (Rajab 1354 AH)⁴⁷⁵. Nu’mānī categorically states that a person had advised Thānvi:

Although the passage of *Hifz ul-Imān* is completely sound and free of doubt, if the words with which the ungodly and obstinate people deceive the fickle simple-minded commoners were rephrased, these commoners who are susceptible to fitnah

⁴⁷² Ibid. p. 196

⁴⁷³ Ibid. p. 196

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 196

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 196

would not succumb to the deception, so for the sake of the fickle lay-people this would be best⁴⁷⁶.

It does seem that there was a lot of pressure that after just two years of the demise of Imām Raza, Thānvī was convinced to revise the words of the objectionable statement as it was in the Urdu language and the text is clear and did not need any interpretation to it and it could have started to affect membership of Deoband. After all, these changes to *Hifz-ul-Imān* by the author, were not on his own accord but by pressure of his own followers who thought it would help against the propaganda against Thānvī⁴⁷⁷. Even though changes have been made to the text, there is no regret or remorse for the original objectional text and thus this would not void the edict of Imām Raza upon Thānvī and his adherents. The rewording of the objectionable text was due to convenience and could be said to be a deception for the common man so they can be shown that the revision has been made, yet Thānvī had not retracted from the earlier text. The question is that why did the Deobandī's feel the need that the author should reword the objectionable text even though he had given an explanation in his letter earlier to a disciple in *Bast al-Banān*? And why hasn't the revision been implemented to the original book by Thānvī?

7.4. Analysing Imān, Kufr and Takfīr of Nūh Keller

The article of Shaykh Nuh Ha Mīm Keller namely '*Imān, Kufr and Takfīr*' which has created much controversy regarding the theological differences between the Deobandīs and the Barēlwīs, this article was written in the year 2007.

Shaykh Keller deals with the edicts (*fatwa*) of Imām Ahmed Raza upon the Deobandīs were a mistake and not legally viable. The article is based upon the question, '*Is someone who has an idea that is kufr or "unbelief" thereby an "unbeliever"?*⁴⁷⁸' Keller has answered:

A Muslim's having validly entered Islam by publicly pronouncing the testification of faith is a certitude, while the occurrence of a state of unbelief in his heart can only become a certainty if there is proof. So, in matters of faith, a Muslim is always

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 195

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid. P. 195

⁴⁷⁸ Keller. N. H. M. Imān, Kufr and Takfīr (English)
<<https://archive.org/details/nuhhamimkellerimankufrandtakfir/mode/1up>> [08/06/2021 10:34]. P. 1

presumed to be a Muslim until there is publicly observable and decisive proof that he has ceased to be one⁴⁷⁹.

Keller has clearly stated that a believer will be presumed as a Muslim until there is decisive proof that he has ceased to be one and it is exactly upon this principle that Imām Ahmed Raza based his edicts (*fatwas*) which were based upon no other reason but blasphemous statements which is a serious charge in the Muslim world. Keller has stated:

Words are judged by what the speaker intends, not necessarily what the hearer apprehends. If an utterance is unambiguous and its context plain, there is normally only one possible intention. But according to the Hanafi school, if a statement may conceivably be intended in either of two ways, one valid, the other unbelief (*kufir*), it cannot be the basis for a fatwa of the kufr of the person who said it. In the words of Imam Haskafi in his *al-Durr al-mukhtar*, A fatwa may not be given of the unbelief of a Muslim whose words are interpretable as having a valid meaning, or about the unbelief of which there is a difference of scholarly opinion, even if weak (*Radd al-muhtar*, 3.289)⁴⁸⁰.

Though there is no denial to the rule of the intention of the speaker or the written word and taking into account the local understanding of the words (*urf*) and to take the words out of context is universally considered dishonesty and this is something least expected by scholars of the religion unless the accused has committed explicit content which is apparent in word and especially when it is known and definite that the author of these texts were sane and were asked to repent and retract but the accused refused to reply and in such a situation the jurist (*Mufti*) is obliged after informing the accused and warning him or her of the seriousness of the matter that a ruling of heresy is given against them which is not done in haste but based on legal proof which is publicly observable and decisive. Keller further states:

It is incompatible with Allah's justice and the Qur'an that any scholarly position about which major authorities among the Islamic scholars differ could be the decisive criterion of any Muslim's faith⁴⁸¹.

⁴⁷⁹ Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 6

⁴⁸⁰ Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 12

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid*, P. 7

This is a very valid point that something which is not conclusive and there is difference of opinion on a position then it cannot serve as a criterion of any Muslim's faith. But there is unanimous agreement (*ijmā*) upon the issue of blasphemy of words with an apparent meaning.

Keller then stated that intentional insult of Allah and His Messenger is unbelief but regarding unintentional insults, he quotes the mujtahid Imām and hadīth master (*hafidh*) Taqī al-Dīn al-Subki says in his *al-Sayf al-maslūl*, a more than five-hundred-page work on the legal consequences of insulting the Prophet:

One must be aware of this rule, giving due consideration to the intention behind the offense (*adhā*). For a person might do or say something which offends another that he did not have the slightest intention to offend him by, but rather intended something else, not thinking that it might give offense to the other or understanding it would necessarily do so. Such cases do not entail the legal consequences of "giving offense"⁴⁸².

Keller has mentioned an ambiguous quote and has not stated the actual background and if this is something that can be accepted as when something is apparent, and the words are clear and do not require an interpretation then how can the intention be otherwise from what is written clearly and is not even ambiguous. Firstly, if what Keller claims from the statement of Imām Subkī to be true, even then it would not be accepted as it goes against the very principle of the Holy Qur'an itself. Allah said:

O Men of faith do not say. Rā'ina, but say humbly, respected Sir. "Look upon us" and from very beginning listen carefully, and for the disbelievers is a grievous torment. (Q. 2:104)

This Qur'anic verse is clear that any word which could mean or implies an insult to the Holy Prophet is condemnable, leading to apostasy. After mentioning his opinion about what constitutes blasphemy, Keller had not bothered to discuss what is the religious standing of the Muslims of the Sub-Continent upon blasphemy and what the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs thought about insulting Allah and His Prophet and making blasphemous statements towards them. Keller argued that had the Deobandis and Barēlwīs been aware of Imām Subki's principle the 'fatwa wars' could have been prevented⁴⁸³. Keller's article is biased as he only deals with edicts

⁴⁸² Ibid, P. 14

⁴⁸³ Keller. N. H. M. Imān, Kufr and Takfīr (English). P. 16

of Imām Ahmed Raza upon the Deobandīs but has not mentioned how according to the Deobandī's the majority of the Muslims of India are indulged in polytheism (*shirk*) and innovations (*bidah*). The irony of the fact of the matter being that Keller's opinion and his article does not really affect the age long differences of the two schools as both the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs disagree with his concept of unintentional insult towards Allah and His Prophet. Maulāna Anwar Shah Kashmīrī (d. 1933) has stated:

The guided scholars agree upon the matter that any derogatory remarks made towards the Prophets of God with the intention to humiliate or not will still be regarded as disbelief (*kufr*) and heresy (*irtidād*)⁴⁸⁴.

Maulāna Hassan Darbanghī (d. 1951) was a disciple of Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvī, who has stated:

This objection that the scholars denounce each other as heretics i.e., The scholars of Barēlly denounce the scholars of Deoband as heretics (*kāfir*). The answer to this is that according to Khān Sāhib (i.e., Imām Ahmed Raza Khān) some of the scholars do not believe in the finality of the Holy Prophet (*Khātām-ul-Nabiyyīn*), they compare the knowledge of the Holy Prophet with that of madman, and even by all animals and beasts and they say that Satan has more knowledge than that of the Holy Prophet and thus, they are heretics. All the scholars of Deoband state that this edict of Khān is correct as anyone who says such is a disbeliever (*kāfir*), a heretic (*murtad*) and cursed (*malūn*). Let us also sign your edict as anyone who does not call these heretics as unbelievers will themselves become a unbeliever, undoubtedly, these beliefs are heretical [...] If according to Khān Sāhib some of the scholars of Deoband were such as he had understood to be, then it was obligatory (*farz*) upon him to denounce them as heretics, and had he not done so, he would have become a heretic himself⁴⁸⁵.

It does seem that Keller was misinformed or due to lack of understanding or due to limited access to the original manuscripts in the Urdu language or was ill informed that he did not realise that the issues regarding blasphemy he was trying to defend of the Deobandīs have been stated to be heresy (*Kufr*) according to their own standards, thus by further providing his

⁴⁸⁴ Anwar. M. *Ikfār-ul-Mulhidīn* (Urdu). Maktaba Umr Faruq, Karachi, Pakistan. (2010). P. 219

⁴⁸⁵ Hassan. M. *Ashad-ul-Adhāb-ala Musailama-til-Khazāb* (Urdu). Matba Mujtabāī Jadīd, Delhi, India. P. 13

thoughts on just the translations shows that even when these objectionable words are translated into the English language Muslims would find them to be hurtful for the Holy Prophet. The comments of Keller regarding these objectionable statements are enough to understand that the apparent context of these works is clearly unacceptable and very offensive especially coming from senior religious personalities revered as founding fathers of Dār-ul-Ulūm Deoband.

7.4.1. Can Allah lie?

This is a major error of Keller as both the Barēlwīs, Deobandīs and the scholars of the two Holy cities saw these are belief (*aqīdah*) issues which is evident from their writings. While discussing if at all Allah can lie, Keller said:

Rashid Ahmad Gangohī of the Deobandīs seems to have held the latter position, that while a lie told by God is hypothetically possible (*ja'iz 'aqlī*) in the very limited sense of not being intrinsically impossible (*mustahil dhatī*), it is nevertheless contingently impossible, since He has informed us of His truthfulness in the Qur'an. Unfortunately for Muslim unity in India, Gangohī's concept of the *jawaz 'aqlī* or "hypothetical possibility" of God's lying was mistakenly translated into Arabic by Ahmad Reza Khān as *imkan al-kazib*, which in Arabic means the "factual possibility of [God's] lying" (Husam al-Haramayn (coo), 19)— a position that neither Rashid Ahmad Gangohī nor any other Muslim holds, for it is unbelief. Whether this mistranslation was due to Ahmad Reza Khān's honest misapprehension of Gangohī's position, or directly carrying into Arabic a similar Urdu phrase without understanding the resultant nuance in Arabic, or some other reason, is not clear. But it is plain that to Ahmad Reza, it seemed to amount to a denial of the basic Muslim belief that Allah never lies, something no Muslim denies, nor did Gangohī, if one but reflects for a moment upon what the above distinction entails. This mistaken construing of Gangohī's position in turn became the basis for Ahmad Reza's declaring that Gangohī was a kāfir, nicknaming those who subscribed with him to this view Wahhābiyyah Kadhdhābiyyah or "Wahhābī liars," and giving the tragic fatwa that all who did not consider Gangohī to be a kāfir themselves became kāfir. Muslims can rest easy about this fatwa because it is simply mistaken. The fatwa's deductions are wrong because its premises are based on inaccurate observation and inattention to needful logical distinctions that

exculpate Gangohī from the charge of kufr— even if we do not accept the latter’s conclusions. So, while Ahmad Reza should be regarded as sincere in his convictions, in his own eyes defending the religion of Islam, and morally blameless, he did get his facts wrong, and it is clearly inadmissible for Muslims to follow him in his mistake, even if made out of sincerity⁴⁸⁶.

Though the issue about the possibility of attributing the possibility of lying has been discussed earlier, in the above statement it is obvious that Keller has not studied the edicts of Imām Raza upon the issue and that this was not something that was initially discussed by him but was something that had been written by Ismaīl Dehlawī in his booklet ‘*Yak Rouzi*’. It is also important to understand that the edict (*fatwa*) of Imām Raza was not upon the Deobandī erroneous belief about the possibility of God lying being intrinsically contingent (*imkān-ē-dhātī*) but rather upon the edict of Gangohī which stated that God had lied and its actual occurrence (*Wuqū’-ē-kizb*). Keller’s further confusion could have been due to the statement negating the edict of Imām Raza by stating in question twenty-three in *Al-Muhannad*:

That which they attributed to the eminent and incomparable shaykh, the scholar of his time, the peerless of his age, Maulāna Rashīd Ahmad Gangohī, that he said that the Creator actually lied and that the one who says this has not erred, it is a fabrication about him and is from the lies concocted by the deceptive and lying devils (Allah confound them! How they are perverted!). His respected person is innocent of such heresy and disbelief. The fatwa of the shaykh that was printed and published in volume one of his *Fatawa Rashīdiyyah*⁴⁸⁷.

It is thus evident that like previously where the Deobandīs have denied other edicts against them by Imām Raza, it is not surprising that this was the case in regard to this issue too, but the interesting matter is that the edict that Imām Raza refers to is not present in the published *Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah* and this is not surprising as nothing is known when Gangohī started his writing career, but his earliest known work was on the refutation of the Shia sect⁴⁸⁸ in the year 1288 AH/1871 CE. Gangohī completed his studies and started serving the religion by teaching, preaching, and giving edicts then onwards and his early edicts have not survived and one of

⁴⁸⁶ Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 20

⁴⁸⁷ *Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad* (English Translation). P. 27

⁴⁸⁸ Ahmed. R. *Baqiyāt Fatāwa Rashīdiyyah* (Urdu) compiled by Nūr-al-Hassan Rāshid Kāndlawī. Published by Hazrat Mufti Illāhi Baksh Academy (U.P.) India. 2012. P. 24

the earliest surviving monographs is from the year 1859⁴⁸⁹. The collection of the edicts of Gangohī started when he returned from his second Hājj pilgrimage around the year 1868 and the compiler of the first volume of his edicts (*Fatawa*) is not known⁴⁹⁰. The collection and sorting of the edicts had carried on after his death. The first known compilation of some edicts was by Maulāna Ashraf al-Haq of Delhī in the year 1885 and another small collection of Gangohī's edicts were collected by Maulāna Abdul Ghafūr Chandyanvī in the year 1894 and other edicts were collected by a few others⁴⁹¹. It has been noted that Gangohī was not in the habit of writing the year the edict was written in and few edicts have the actual dates written on them and the first volume was published after Gangohī's death in the year 1905 and the second volume was published in the year 1906 and the third volume was published in the year 1910⁴⁹². Even though the collection of his edicts had started during his lifetime, but he lost his eyesight in the year 1896⁴⁹³. There is even disagreement into some of the edicts found in the *Fatawā Rashīdiyyah* if they were ever written by Gangohī himself⁴⁹⁴. A copy of the monograph of the edict which Imām Raza referred to in which Gangohī stated that God had lied has survived and a copy of this can be found with Gangohī stamp in the Library of Murādabad⁴⁹⁵ in India about which Imām Raza stated:

The fatwa in which the author clearly said that Allah has lied and whose original which carries the signature and seal is preserved to this day. Photocopies of this edict have been made; and the copy I had taken to the blessed sanctuaries to show to the scholars is preserved in the library of Madīnah until now. This disgusting edict was published together with a refutation in the booklet *Siyānat-ul-Nās* in 1308 AH/ 1891 CE from Hadīqat-ul-Ullūm Publishers, Meerut. It was published again by Gulzār-ē-Hassanī Publishers, Bombay, in 1318 AH/ 1900 CE along with a more detailed refutation. Thereafter, in 1320 AH/ 1902 it was published once again with another refutation by *Tuhfat-ē-Hanafīyyah* Publishers, Azīmabad, Patna. The person (i.e., Gangohī) who gave this fatwa died in Jumāda-al-Ākhirah 1323 AH/ 1907CE and remained silent until his last breath. Neither did he deny that it was his own fatwa, even though disowning this fatwa was easier than disclaiming a

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 110

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 111

⁴⁹¹ Ibid. p. 112

⁴⁹² Ibid. p. 141

⁴⁹³ Ibid. p. 151

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 151

⁴⁹⁵ Khān. A. R. *Tamhīd-ē-Imān (The Preamble to Faith)*, English Trans by Abu Hasan. P. 93

published book. Nor did he say that the meaning of his words were not that which the scholars of Ahl-us-Sunnah describe; rather that he meant something else. Was this explicit heresy (*kufir*) deemed of no importance that he did not bother about it. An edict by Zayd, that carries his seal is being circulated openly in his lifetime and his being in good health [...] being published for many years; and people have published refutations of this edict; and declared Zayd to be a heretic on this account and Zayd lived further for fifteen more years, he sees and hears all this and does not publish a denial or disapproval concerning this edict and stayed silent until his last breath [...] And those who are alive (i.e., Khalīl Ahmed and Ashraf Ali) are silent until this moment; neither can they deny that they have said such things which are present in published books; nor can they find fancy explanations for such explicit insults⁴⁹⁶.

It is clear that Imām Raza did not receive any correspondence from Gangohī or others in defence that it was not true, but this was not the case. Maulāna Murtaza Hassan Darbangi has stated:

In the year 1323 AH/ 1905 CE I had found out by receiving a magazine (*risāla*) from Abdul Rahmān Pukaharwī that this allegation was false, and I then wrote to Gangoha (i.e., the city) asking Gagohī regarding the matter in question and he replied that he has no idea in regard to this. The connection of this edict made towards me that Allah has lied is wrong, could I say such a thing. So Hazrat Gangohī had not known about this until 1905⁴⁹⁷.

This is the same scenario of Ashraf Ali who had been written to by Imām Raza and Thānvī did not reply and incidentally replied to the same Murtaza Hassan regarding *Hifz-ul-Imān*. Here again it is Murtaza Hassan who writes to Gangohī this time regarding yet another Deobandī controversy. In regard to the edicts (*fatwas*) of Gangohī, which had not been fully published till after his death, and many had not been widely available, and he was not in the habit of putting dates upon his edicts which doesn't help either. According to Imām Raza this edict was widely available and had been refuted in various publications and was a serious creedal issue and it was circulated to the extent that there was no cause of doubt as no rebuttal or statement

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, P. 67

⁴⁹⁷ Hassan. M. Majmu-al-Rasā'il Chandpurī (Urdu). Article Tazkiyyah-ul-Khawātir. Anjuman Irshād-ul-Muslimīn. Lahore, Pakistan, 1978. P. 106

from the said author of this edict had been published and yet the Deobandīs are ignorant of its presence and refutations for over 15 years and more. The typical attitude of the Deobandīs had been to ignore any such matters as stated by Nu'mānī in his book *Faysala-kun-Munāzira*. The rebuttals of Khalīl Ahmed in *Al-Muhannad* is said to be first published in 1907⁴⁹⁸ according to new prints of the book⁴⁹⁹ but there is no date of the first publication mentioned in older versions⁵⁰⁰ and the mentioned date seems to be incorrect as the first known publication of this was 1926⁵⁰¹ and all the rebuttals to *Al-Muhannad* are written by the students and spiritual successors (*khulafāh*) of Imām Raza signifying a much later date of the publication of this book by the Deobandīs, also, the same with the replying in regard to Gangohī's edict of God lying seem to have started after the demise of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān as there was no correspondence or written replies from the Deobandīs before this. All these works had crept up after the demise of Imām Ahmed Raza giving the Deobandīs more freedom to further demonise the person of Imām Raza and ridicule his edicts by baseless propaganda⁵⁰².

7.4.2. Khalīl Ahmed & Barahēin-ē-Qātia

While discussing the insulting words which were deemed blasphemous by Imām Raza, Keller stated:

This final rhetorical question, denying any evidence of the Prophet's vast knowledge after affirming it of the Devil and the Angel of Death, was what made Ahmad Reza Khān Barēlwī say that Khalīl Ahmad Sahāranpurī had thereby demeaned and insulted the Prophet and left Islam⁵⁰³.

As discussed earlier, any Muslim would find such words hurtful for the Holy Prophet, that this is how you deem the knowledge of the Prophet of Allah or rather the Pride and Master of God's creation. Keller then further comments upon this section as the error of Ambēwī:

⁴⁹⁸ Ahmed. K. *Al-Muhannad alal-Mufannad* (Urdu). Al-Mīzān, Lahore, Pakistan, 2005. P. 14

⁴⁹⁹ The possible reason why the Deobandīs have tampered with the date of the publication is to make it seem that it was written during the life time of Imām Raza and that there was no reply from him.

⁵⁰⁰ Ahmed. K. *Aqā'id-ē-Ahlē Sunnat-wal-Jammah* (Urdu). Dār-ul-Ishā'at, Karachi, Pakistan

⁵⁰¹ Hassan. A. The Killer Mistake. < <https://archive.org/details/the-killer-mistake/page/n2/mode/1up> > [05.10.21 12:16]

⁵⁰² Zaheer. E. I. Bareilwis: History & Beliefs. trans by Dr Abdullah. Idara Tarjuman Al-Sunnah. Lahore. Pakistan. P. 41

⁵⁰³ Keller. N. H. M. Imān, Kufr and Takfīr (English). P. 25

To imply however that Ahmad Reza's whole argument hinges on this erroneous analogy is attacking a straw man. Even if the analogy was adduced by Reza, his belief in the Prophet's vast knowledge did not depend on "proceeding solely from false analogy" from the Prophet's merit, but rather on the saḥīḥ hadīths of eyewitnesses who heard the Messenger of Allah relate such wonders as the events of the world from beginning to end [...] Khalīl Ahmad's claim that belief in the vastness of the Prophet's knowledge is baseless because "the Qur'an and hadīth establish the contrary" is also incorrect. All of the texts Khalīl Ahmad has cited about the limitations of the Prophet's knowledge can be interpreted, as Ahmad Reza did, to refer to before Allah disclosed to him the vast knowledge that he affirmed of himself and patently demonstrated in the above saḥīḥ hadīths [...] The texts from the Qur'an and hadīth about the Prophet's not knowing things do indeed bear the possible interpretation that they refer to an earlier part of his life before Allah revealed to him the vast knowledge attested to by other rigorously authenticated texts, so they are invalid as evidence for the limitations of the prophetic knowledge that Khalīl Ahmad is trying to prove [...] Moreover, it is difficult to see how the attribute of knowledge that Khalīl Ahmad ascribes to Satan and the Angel of Death should become "shirk" when affirmed of the Messenger of Allah: either it is a divine attribute that is shirk to ascribe to any creature, or it is not. But even if we overlook these mistaken innuendos, Khalīl Ahmad's point as a whole, denying that the Prophet had vast knowledge, after affirming it of the Devil and the Angel of Death, is erroneous, for at least three reasons. First, the Qur'an in its entirety is "vast knowledge" which Allah taught the Prophet, containing everything important for mankind to know in this life and the next, as well as things about the unseen world, past nations, and their prophets that no one but a prophet could possibly know. This is explicit in the Qur'an. Second, many unequivocal verses command us to follow the sunnah of the Prophet, which is equally vast, answering all questions about the ethical implications of every possible human action until the end of time. Third, it is disingenuous for an Islamic scholar to mention the lack of explicit textual evidence in the Qur'an without mentioning that there is such evidence in hadith. The above-mentioned rigorously authenticated hadiths of Tirmidhī, Bukhārī, and Muslim about the Prophet knowing everything

from the beginning of creation to the end of time, to even the debates within the Supreme Assembly of the archangels, conclusively decide the question⁵⁰⁴.

Keller thus concludes the objectionable paragraph of Ambēt̄wī with the following words:

In sum, Khalīl Ahmad Sahāranpurī's disadvantageously comparing the Prophet's knowledge to Satan's, the vilest creature in existence— regardless of the point he was making— is something few Muslims can accept. Whether Khalīl Ahmad regarded it as a feat of ingenuity to show that because the Prophet's knowledge was less than the Devil's, it was a fortiori less than Allah's, or whatever his impulse may have been, he badly stumbled in this passage. In any previous Islamic community, whether in Hyderabād, Kābul, Baghdād, Cairo, Fez, or Damascus— in short, practically anywhere besides the British India of his day— Muslims would have found his words repugnant and unacceptable⁵⁰⁵.

As Keller has stated that these words by Khalīl Ambēt̄wī were not acceptable, and this was why Imām Ahmed Raza had issued an edict against words which were not befitting the Honour and Status of the Holy Prophet.

7.4.3. The words of Shaykh Thānvī

As we have discussed the objectionable words of Ashraf Ali Thānvī from his book *Hifz-ul-Imān*, Keller states his opinion regarding to the paragraph of Thānvī where he makes comparison of the blessed knowledge of the Holy Prophet to lower creatures: '*Thanvī's artless comparison of the highest of creation with the lowest*⁵⁰⁶'. Even Keller found the words of Thānvī distasteful coming from a Muslim scholar. And in conclusion stated:

Looking back, one cannot help wondering why Khalīl Ahmad's and Ashraf Ali Thānvī's own students and teachers and friends did not ask them, before their opponents asked them: When did any Islamic scholar ever compare the knowledge of the Prophet to the depraved, to the mad, or to animals— even to make a point?

⁵⁰⁴ Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 28

⁵⁰⁵ Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 28

⁵⁰⁶ Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 29

Few Muslims would suffer such a comparison to be made with their own father, let alone the Emissary of God⁵⁰⁷.

There are several issues with the article of Keller which could be due to not having full access to the primary sources in the Urdu language or understanding of how the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs both understood the issue of blasphemy⁵⁰⁸. Dismissing the religious edict of Imām Raza based on his own presumptions⁵⁰⁹. Keller’s use of theological rulings of blasphemy between apparent and ambiguous texts⁵¹⁰ causing further confusion and his misunderstanding in the concepts between independent reasoning (*Ijtihād*) and that of core beliefs (*Aqā'id*)⁵¹¹. Regarding the difference between the Deobandīs and the Barēlwīs, Keller stated:

⁵⁰⁷ Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 31

⁵⁰⁸ Keller has stated on page 16 of his article, *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr*: ‘Knowledge of the above principle could have probably prevented much of the “fatwa wars” that took place around the turn of the last century in India between Hanafi Muslims of the Barelwi and Deobandi schools’. This would imply that either he was not aware of the prophetology of the Deobandi and Barēlwī on the issue of blasphemy or he had deliberately ignored it to accommodate a new concept regarding blasphemy which had not been previously known.

⁵⁰⁹ Keller said on page 29 of *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr*, ‘Now, the temperament of Ahmad Reza Khan, with his acknowledged brilliance, doubtless played a role in this judgement, as did his love of the Prophet, which entailed withering scorn of those who did not share his somewhat exotic prophetology, and finally outright anathema (takfir) of those who had emphasized the Prophet’s humanity with what appeared to be at the expense of his dignity. His fatwa of kufr against the Deobandis, however, was a mistake. It was not legally valid in the Hanafi school’. There are at least two issue with this statement as Keller becomes quite personal and attacks Imām Raza as the Fatwa being based on his temperament and his love for the Holy Prophet whereas this is untrue as anyone who has studied the works of Imām Raza will find that his legal edicts are based on the Hanafi legal system and a consensus and secondly Keller accuses him of not following the Hanafi system as he stated that It is not valid in the Hanafi school.

⁵¹⁰ Keller has stated on page 12 of his article, *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr*: ‘If an utterance is unambiguous and its context plain, there is normally only one possible intention’, and then Keller quotes Ibn Ābidīn, ‘A fatwa may not be given of the unbelief of a Muslim whose words are interpretable as having a valid meaning, or about the unbelief of which there is a difference of scholarly opinion, even if weak’, and then concludes this with the following, ‘Only when the intention entails kufr do such words take the speaker out of Islam’. Abu Hassan has stated regarding this, ‘This is not absolute, and is valid only in cases of ambiguity. Keller is mixing up things, even if it not unintentional: First, he mentions that express statements are taken face-value; second, he mentions how to deal with ambiguous or statements open to interpretation; and third, he switches to the intention of the speaker – notice that the above statement surpasses the ‘nuance’ that regardless of intention, when explicit, express and unambiguous statements of kufr are uttered, that person becomes an apostate’. Ref: Hassan. A. The Killer Mistake < <https://archive.org/details/the-killer-mistake/page/n56/mode/1up> > [Accessed on 13/06/2021 18:17]

⁵¹¹ Keller has stated on page 8 of his article, *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* under the section of what entails leaving Islam, ‘(1) reviling the religion of Islam, or Allah Most High, or the Prophet [...] (9) sarcasm about any ruling of Sacred Law, or quoting a statement of unbelief—even jokingly, without believing it—when one’s intention is sarcasm [about religious matters] [...] (10) demeaning any prophet, or saying that prophethood is acquired [by spiritual works]; [...] —in any of which cases a man is an apostate, and must be asked to re-enter Islam. But then later in the article he reiterates, ‘The latter verse shows that offending the Prophet amounts to opposing Allah and His messenger, which is without question unbelief’. And then stated, ‘The vehemence of Deobandi writers “defending Islam against shirk,” however misplaced, plainly affected the way they spoke about the Messenger of Allah’. Earlier he stated the principle that demeaning the Prophet is apostasy but later he defends the Deobandīs with mere excuses based on his own independent reasoning (ijtihad).

Any issue that has been debated back and forth between two parties of Islamic scholars, both of whom know the Qur’ān and hadīth, Hanafi jurisprudence, and the ‘aqīda of Islam, is by that very fact not a central religious principle that is “necessarily known to be of the religion of Islam,” but rather can only be something peripheral that is “disagreed upon by ullaama.” As such, it cannot be the criterion for anyone’s unbelief (kufr) or faith (īmān)⁵¹².

Here again giving Keller the benefit of the doubt that he wasn’t fully aware of the religious polemics of South Asia but he was aware of the consensus upon the blasphemy laws regarding insulting the Prophet of Allah. He may not have had full access to the materials as mostly being in the Urdu language. Here Keller seems to have disregarded the universal accepted principle of blasphemy which both the Deobandī and Barēlwīs accepted that anything intentional or unintentional said to be insulting or blasphemous about the Prophet is disbelief as mentioned above and saying that because this issue was being debated back and forth, this could not be something that is a major concern to the religion but Keller has ignored that the difference between the two groups is not the principle of blasphemy but rather the words that even Keller found offensive to be acceptable or are they not in the court of the honourable Prophet of Islam. It is also noteworthy to add the words of the deputy of Imām Ahmed Raza, Shaykh, Syed Naīm Uddīn Muradabādī (d. 1948) has stated:

The reason why Imām Ahmed Raza announced those mischiefs as heretics was because they turned away from necessary articles of faith (*dururīyyat-ē-dīn*), they are rejected by the teachings of the Qur’an, Sunnah and by consensus. Imām Ahmed Raza had not issued a verdict of heresy (*kufr*) from himself. He has related definitive sources (*nusūs*)⁵¹³.

It is clear that Keller had tried to turn the tide of heresy (*kufr*) away from the Deobandī founding fathers and for what reason it is not clear as stated above that the whole endeavour of Keller is wasted because firstly it goes against the consensus (*ijmā*) on the issue as attested above by the deputy of Imām Ahmed Raza and secondly both the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs disagree with his reasoning and see it as a form of apostasy.

⁵¹² Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 16

⁵¹³ Na’īm-Uddīn, M. *Al-Tahqīqāt* (Urdu). Anjuman Furūgh-ē-Millat, U.P. India. P.

From this work of Keller and his endeavours on creating a new principle which even the Deobandīs had not dared to delve into but as the Deobandīs had earlier created a loophole for the Qādiānīs on creating another prophet without affecting the finality of Prophet Muhammad now due to their arguing on the context of their objectionable statements have opened the doors to another innovation (*bidah*) thus opening the doors to openly making blasphemous and insulting statements towards Allah, His Prophets, Angels etc., and then defending those blasphemies under a new independent reasoning of context and intention.

A Senior Barēlwī scholar of Pakistan, Syed, Saīd Ahmed Shah Kazmī stated:

In the chapter (*sūrah*) of Repentance (*tawbah*) in the Qur'an, it said: 'They swear by Allah that they said nothing (*evil*), but indeed they uttered blasphemy, and they did it after accepting Islam; (Q. 9:74), 'Make ye no excuses: ye have rejected Faith after ye had accepted it' (Q. 9:66). There is no consideration of the question of intention if the insult is clear. Allah has declared this in the Holy Qur'an and forbidden words which could be used as a direct or indirect insult to the Prophet. If a companion (*sahābi*) of the Holy Prophet had used such a word for the Messenger, he would have been deserving of the Qur'anic warning, 'listen carefully (to him), and for the disbelievers is a grievous torment' (Q. 2:104), which is clear proof that the use of insulting words for the Holy Prophet is infidelity, even if these words are used without any intention to insult the Holy Prophet. Imām Shahāb-Uddīn Khajāfī al-Hanafī said, "The verdict of infidelity for insulting the Holy Prophet will depend upon the apparent words and no consideration will be given to the intention and the purpose of the person committing the insult and the circumstances of the time', if this wasn't so, the door to insulting the prophet would never close, because every insulter would be acquitted, saying that his intention and objective was not to commit contempt⁵¹⁴.

It seems that except for the author of *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr*, even the Hanafīs would disagree with Keller as he has confused many of the issues that involve blasphemy and then tried to use illogical arguments to prove otherwise: for example:

1. Reviling the religion of Islam, or Allah Most High, or the Prophet.

⁵¹⁴ Khan. A. R. The penalty for insulting the Holy Prophet (English Trans by Matlub Hussain). Raza Academy, Manchester, UK. 1995. P. 28

2. Denying any matter necessarily known to be of the religion of Islam, that is established by a text from either the Holy Qur'an or *mutawatir* hadīth, provided the text is incontestable as evidence and there is no pretext (*shubha*) for disagreement about it.
3. Denying any matter established by unanimous consensus of all the prophetic Companions (*Sahāba*), provided its unanimity is unquestionably established, and it was explicitly stated by all, not merely tacitly agreed to.
4. Denying a matter of unquestionable scholarly consensus (*ijma' qat'i*).
5. Demeaning any prophet or saying that prophethood is acquired [by spiritual works].

In any of the above cases according to Keller, a man is an apostate. So, from the above-mentioned conditions, does context and intention matter when blasphemy and the insult is clear and apparent in the words:

- a) Reviling the Prophet.
- b) Denying any matter necessarily known to be of the religions of Islam i.e., to '*Honour and revere Him*' (Q. 48.09).
- c) Ibn Taymiyyah stated in his book '*Mukhtasar Sarim al-Maslul Ala' Shatim ar-Rasul*' (The summary of the unsheathed sword against the one who insults the Messenger) that there was unanimous consensus of all the prophetic Companions (*Sahāba*) and those after them (*tābi'īn*) as to whoever insults Allah or the Prophet, he should be killed⁵¹⁵.
- d) There is agreement (*ijmā*) of the Muslims that anyone who insults the Prophet is an apostate and an unbeliever.
- e) Qādī Ayād has stated that insulting Allah or His Messenger, then, indeed they have disbelieved whether they regarded such an act permissible or didn't regard it as permissible. So, if he says, 'I did not regard it as permissible' that is not accepted from

⁵¹⁵ It is stated in the book, '*As for the consensus of the companions of the Prophet that it is narrated from them in numerous judgements scattered far and wide, and no one from amongst them has disapproved or rejected that so it has become a consensus*'. Ref: Ahmed. T. The summary of the unsheathed sword against the one who insults the Messenger (English Trans by Abū Sālih Eesa Gibbs). 5 Pillars Publishing, London, UK. 2013. P. 59

him with regards to the outward ruling in one narration, and such a person is an apostate and the ruling upon his disbelief is outwardly⁵¹⁶.

Keller has not only created a new principle regarding context and intention which is not new but rather it is something that the early Muslim theologians have not only disagreed with but also see it as heresy and going against the actual teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Allah said, 'O believers! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Communicator of unseen (the Prophet) and speak not loudly in presence of him as you shout to one another, lest your works become vain while you are unaware'. (Q. 49:02). This verse is clear that God Himself is teaching etiquettes of how the believers should present themselves before the Holy prophet. And we know that deeds or actions only go in vain by disbelief and heresy as God said, 'Whoso denieth the faith, his work is vain' (Q. 5:5). If by raising one's voice in the court of the Prophet, it is deemed as disrespectful, and disbelief as stated by God Himself in the Holy Qur'an then surely any clear text which is apparent in its meaning and is demeaning the Messenger of God is without a doubt heresy and open blasphemy. The only case which could be argued is in case of the text being ambiguous and then the writer could argue intention but when the text is clear in its meaning there is no case for context and or intention. And God said about His Prophet and Messenger in the Holy Qur'an; 'And may honour Him and may revere Him' (Q. 48.09). The other major blunder which Keller has made is regarding his opinion that Imām Raza had made a mistake upon calling the Deobandīs as heretics as this was based on his independent reasoning (*Ijtihād*) whereas he should have known that an edict (*fatwa*) of heresy (*kufṛ*) cannot be given upon something that is based upon this and an edict of heresy can only be given in case of something that is from something that is decisive (*nusūs*). It is thus evident that Keller had possibly not read the edicts of Imām Raza or ignored their content and context and also ignored the consensus (*ijmā*) upon this and thus creating further confusion for the English-speaking public who have no background in theology and Islamic Studies.

7.5. Defending the undeniable

The insensitive and religious blunders by the founding fathers of Deoband have hurt the feelings and religious sentiments of majority of the Muslims of world if not just the Muslims

⁵¹⁶ Ahmed. T. The summary of the unsheathed sword against the one who insults the Messenger (English Trans by Abū Sālih Eesa Gibbs). 5 Pillars Publishing, London, UK. 2013. P. 82

of South Asia. While discussing this continuous issue, what does the Holy Qur'an have to say about the honour and respect towards the Prophets, saints, believers. Allah said:

1. 'Make not the summoning of the Messenger among yourselves, like one calls the other among you'. (Q. 24:63)
2. 'O believers! Exceed not over Allah and his Messenger and fear Allah. Undoubtedly Allah Hears, Knows'. (Q. 49:01)
3. 'O believers! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Communicator of unseen (the Prophet) and speak not loudly in presence of him as you shout to one another, lest your works become vain while you are unaware'. (Q. 49:02)
4. 'O Men of faith do not say. Raina, but say humbly, respected Sir. "Look upon us" and from very beginning listen carefully, and for the disbelievers is a grievous torment.'

(Q. 2:104)

5. 'And if when they do injustice unto their souls, then O beloved! They should come to you and then beg forgiveness of Allah and the messenger should intercede for them then surely, they would find Allah Most Relenting, Merciful'. (Q. 4:64)
6. 'And Allah is not one to chastise them, till ('O beloved Prophet) you are in their midst. And Allah is not to chastise them, whilst they are begging forgiveness'. (Q. 8:33)
7. 'That ye (mankind) may believe in Allah and His messenger, and may honour Him, and may revere Him, and may glorify Him at early dawn and at the close of day'. (Q. 48:09)

And then God stated in the Holy Qur'an about the honour of the people of faith: 'And surely the honour is for Allah, His Messenger and the believers, but the hypocrites know not' (Q. 63:08).

The Holy Qur'an is teaching the believers etiquettes of how to present and to act in the presence of the Prophet and Messenger of Allah, how to call and to not to raise your voices before him and to listen attentively when he is speaking. And not only this but God honours his subjects and honour is truly for them and not only this but anything that becomes attached to his Prophets and saints also becomes sacred to the extent that God call the mountains that Lady Hagar, the wife of Prophet Abraham ran between a sign amongst His sign, God said, 'No doubt, Safa and Marwa are among the symbols of Allah'. (Q. 2:158) and not only this but the place

where Abraham stood to build the Ka'bah, God said, 'And make the station of Ibrahim a place of prayer'. (Q. 2:125). And when Prophet Zakaria saw the blessings in the room where Lady Mary was pregnant receiving the blessings of heavenly fruit, he made a prayer therein, God said in the Qur'an: 'Whenever Zakaria went to her place of prayer, he found new provision with her. He said! O Mary! Whence came this to you? She spoke, 'that is from Allah,' No doubt, Allah gives whomsoever He pleases without measure. Here Zakaria called his Lord, said, 'O my Lord! Give me from Yourself pure offspring; no doubt, You only are the Hearer of prayers. (Q. 3:37-38). So essentially God is not jealous of respect and honour towards other than Him, yes as can be seen clearly from the verses above, God honours the places that are touched by his Prophets and saints and calls them His signs (*She'air Allah*). So, Monotheism taught by God is to respect and honour his Prophet's and Saints and to seek their intercession as all this is from Him and means to get closeness to Him by means of those who taught His oneness and spread monotheism to the people. And God did not teach to disrespect and dishonour those who bought faith and honoured His religion. The Prophet said in a Hadīth Qudsī:

Allah said, 'I will declare war against him who shows hostility towards my friend (*Walī*). And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing *Nawāfil* (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him; (i.e. give him My Refuge) and I do not hesitate to do anything as I hesitate to take the soul of the believer, for he hates death, and I hate to disappoint him. (Sahīh Bukhārī. 6502)

It is clear from this authentic narration that those who are hostile towards God's friends, God Himself declares war against such a people because of His love for those who become connected to Him and spend their lives dedicated to His remembrance. These are just a few examples that God does not ridicule and nor does He defame His obedient servants due to His sovereignty. All belongs to God but those who gain closeness to Him, God develops a spiritual closeness to them and opens their third eye so they can see His kingdom with and have access to the angelic realm due to this special relationship with God as they become His friends.

To help understand the concept of respect and honour before God, a Qur'an example would suffice. Allah said:

It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels prostrate to Adam, and they prostrate; not so Iblīs; He refused to be of those who prostrate. (Allah) said: "What prevented thee from prostrating when I commanded thee?" He said: "I am better than he: Thou didst create me from fire, and him from clay. (Allah) said: "Get thee down from this: it is not for thee to be arrogant here: get out, for thou art of the meanest (of creatures) (Q. 7:11-13)

While discussing the prostration of respect (*sajda-ē-ta'zīmī*) to Prophet Adam. From this one example it is possible to see how God commanded the angels to prostrate towards His Prophet and Messenger, the father of humanity, Adam. To show respect and honour has been shown and taught by God in the Holy Qur'an and is deeply inherent in the Islamic tradition. From these Qur'anic verses it is possible to understand that Satan, though he refused to obey God's order, he still believed in God and was a monotheist and did not reject this reality, but he was arrogant and disobeyed God and did not show respect and honour to God's vicegerent which led him to be out casted from the heavens.

Since this contentious issue is about the difference on the statements of the founding fathers of Deoband then it is only fair that we understand what constitutes blasphemy from them as we have mentioned above the edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza and their rebuttals. Shah Ismāil Dehlawi stated:

It is improper to accept that the meaning of the inappropriate words may be taken differently to that which was explicitly uttered, to say confusing things is set aside for a different occasion. No person will speak punned or coaxed language in front of his father or king, for this the friend of his may be aware of the meaning but not the father or the king⁵¹⁷.

⁵¹⁷ Ismail, M. Taqwiyyat-ul-Iman (Urdu). p. 93

7.5.1. What constitutes blasphemy

In this section I will discuss the issue which has divided the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs for over a century and also created confusion of the issues within the Muslim community.

A lot of people get confused when dealing with the generalised meaning of disbelief (*kufṛ*) and when this is applied in the case of causing disrepute to the Holy Prophet of Islām. Each is dealt with differently, the first having scope of interpretation of meaning and intention of the offender but in second instance when concerning the Holy Prophet, there are no concessions in the case of the offender, neither the intention and nor an alternative meaning is taken into account and will be taken on face value and dealt with according to the literal meaning which will also take into account the language and its local usage. And this was what Imām Ahmed Raza had done but not only this, he even approached and asked the Deobandīs to retract which didn't obviously happen.

One can only really understand the difference when you comprehend the above-mentioned criteria of what constitutes blasphemy as applied by Imām Ahmed Raza and understood by the Muslim theologians.

7.5.2. Clarity of the objectionable statements

It is important to understand that the on-going saga between the two schools of Hanafī descent in India has escalated for over a hundred and fifty years. The dividing and heart of the debate is more emotional for one group than the other. For the Barēlwīs, it is a matter of something of religious value, an issue of faith and honour of the Prophet of Islam. As for the Deobandīs, it is a matter of their founding fathers as a cult of personalities, the status of the *Dār-ul-Ulūm* of Deoband and the honour of the grandson of the Shah Wali-Ullah.

According to Imām Ahmed Raza, the edicts of blasphemy have given after several letters and messages were sent to Deoband and were ignored and made mockery of and were not taken seriously at all as mentioned earlier. The Deobandīs for the last hundred years have been writing that Imām Raza had lied and his accusations as based on no credible arguments or facts. Though the original objectionable texts were written in the Urdu language, the English translations of these texts are self-explanatory and do not need further explanations. There seems to be no ambiguity in the texts at all. After issuing of the edict against them, the

Deobandīs tried to provide explanations and commentaries of the objectionable texts causing further confusion especially for the uneducated masses in theology. Above mentioned are clear contradictions of the Deobandīs where their beliefs in *Al-Muhannad* contradict with the actual texts of their elders, making them devious and troublemakers as trying to hide the blasphemy of their elders. It is mind blowing how the Deobandīs have managed to play victim and blamed Imām Raza for causing disunity and discord amongst the Muslims of India and continue this propaganda against him to this very day.

For a hundred years, the Deobandīs have argued that the objectionable texts of their elders have been misinterpreted by Imām Ahmed Raza. The first question in case of misinterpretation would be on the text itself, are these texts clear in their meaning or were their ambiguous? The obvious answer being that the texts were clear and straightforward that would be understandable for the ordinary person of the day, and they were not written in a language alien to the people or that which would need further clarification to understand. So, the edicts of Imām Raza are thus based upon the clear and understandable Urdu language of the day and the expressions and comparisons used by the elders of Deoband according to Imām Raza were not befitting the honour and status of the Holy Prophet, but this was also the case according to the Deobandī leadership. They did not disagree with his edicts in principle but with the apparent and obvious meaning of the text of their elders which was a matter of concern by Imām Raza. Many examples have been stated above, the following is from *Hifz-ul-Īmān* of Thānvī:

If it is referred to as partial knowledge of the unseen, then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? Such knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by Zāyd, Amr (i.e., just anyone), indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts: For every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual⁵¹⁸.

The above text is self-explanatory and does not require any further text to interpret it by any means and it was exactly what is apparent from the text that Imām Ahmed Raza has used to present his argument upon it being unworthy and the comparisons not befitting the honour of the Holy Prophet. When the initial edict was given against the objectionable statement of Thānvī, he replied to a friend explaining:

⁵¹⁸ Thanvi, A. A. *Hifz ul-Iman*. Dar-ul-kutub Deoband. India. P. 15

I have not written any such wretched content in any book, never mind writing such a matter, it has not even crossed my mind; such content does not necessitate any such meaning from my statement because I will mention this in the end. When I think of such content as wretched and such a meaning has not even crossed my mind then how can I have meant it such. Whoever holds such a belief, knowingly, clearly or to hint such a thing, I think such a person to be outside the fold of Islam and that he is contradicting the authentic scriptures and being blasphemous towards His Majesty, the leader of creation, the pride of the children of Adam (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), this is the answer to your question⁵¹⁹.

Thānvī had not thought it befitting to write or reply to the letters of Imām Raza but wrote to a friend to explain that it is not meant in the actual text but otherwise. About the actual text, Keller stated:

Looking back, one cannot help wondering why Khalīl Ahmad's and Ashraf Ali Thānvī's own students and teachers and friends did not ask them, before their opponents asked them: When did any Islamic scholar ever compare the knowledge of the Prophet to the depraved, to the mad, or to animals— even to make a point? Few Muslims would suffer such a comparison to be made with their own father, let alone the Emissary of God⁵²⁰.

Because of the dangers and further restrictions of movement and travelling in certain parts of India and other institutions, the Deobandīs did not retract to the objectionable statements and thus devised another plan to cause further confusion by stating in *Al-Muhannad*:

We are convinced that any who believes that the knowledge of the Prophet is equal to Zayd, Bakr, beasts and madmen, is an absolute disbeliever⁵²¹.

To argue upon the meaning of a text which is obvious and clear is something that both the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs agree is not something that is applicable unless it is ambiguous. It would be illogical to try to provide alternate meanings to objectionable texts which are clear and obvious which are deemed as disrespectful, hurtful, dishonouring and unworthy of the status and person of Prophet Muhammad.

⁵¹⁹ Thanvi, A. A. *Hifz ul-Iman*. Dar-ul-kutub Deoband. India. P. 22

⁵²⁰ Keller. N. H. M. *Imān, Kufr and Takfīr* (English). P. 31

⁵²¹ *Al-Muhannad alal Muffannad* (English Translation) p. 23

With the continuous propagation and printing of the objectionable statements of the Deobandīs and their new ideas, Maulāna Hashmat Ali Khān⁵²² (d. 1960) decided to show the collective support for the *Husām-al-Haramāyn* of Imām Ahmed Raza which was then sent around India and was signed by 268 eminent Sunni scholars⁵²³ upon the confirmation of the edict of Imām Raza and was compiled and named '*Al-Thawārim-al-Hindiyyah-Ala-Makrē-Shayātīn-al-Deobandiyyah*' (The Indian Sword on the mischief of the Satanic Deobandīs).

Though both the Deobandī and Barēlwī schools agree to what constitutes Blasphemy, yet they disagree upon the interpretation of clear text which could be seen as blasphemous and disrespectful. The Deobandī's argue that they have a right to interpret what they elders have written rather than what has been stated by their opponents and it has been this that has caused the divide in the issue of the use of words deemed disrespectful towards the Holy Prophet and the edict of heresy by Imām Ahmed Raza to whom they refused to cooperate or reply to his religious enquiries regarding these issues. The *Husam-ul-Harāmayn* and *Al-Muhannad* are still seen as representations of each of the two schools and their standing on these matters.

7.6. Conclusion

From the above arguments it is clear that after the initial publication of the *Husam-ul-Haramayn* about which the Deobandīs had been unaware until it was published upon the return of Imām Ahmed Raza to India. There would have been much they would have to answer regarding their previous interpretations of the questionable works as there was not a unified Fatwa against these works until the *Husam-ul-Haramayn* was written. For the next fifteen years

⁵²² He was born in 1902 (1319 Hijri) in Ameti, Lucknow, India. From a young age he had a thirst for knowledge. He qualified as a Hafiz ul Quran at the age of 9, Qualified in Qur'anic dialects (Qirat-e-Saba) at 12 and as young as 14 was already tackling other fields of learning. No sooner did his father send him to Dar al-Uloom Manzar-e-Islam in Bareilly. He also studied under Sadrush Shariah, Maulana Amjad Ali and Maulana Haamid Raza Khan, the son of Imam Ahmed Raza. Hashmat Ali Khan soon became a lecturer at the Uloom, then as a Mufti of Jamaat-e-Raza-e-Mustafa in Bareilly Sharief & then as Principal of Darul Uloom Ahle Sunnat Miskeenia. Later he became the preacher (Khatīb) at the Zeenat-ul-Masjid in Gojra Waala. Due to his great intelligence & learning, he excelled in the field of debating & A'la Hadrat had a special liking and preference toward him. He soon earned the title of "Abul Fatah" from the great Imam who bestowed him with his turban & cloak. He was well-known for his wisdom and debating techniques. There was none like him in this field in his era. Approximately sixty of his debates have been recorded in written format and also published and scores of other debates have been narrated by witnesses who heard his debates and informed those after them about these. Based on his determination and dedication, he was as firm as a mountain in his striving. He passed away on the 8th of Muharam 1380 Hijri (3 July 1960) in Pilibhit Sharief, India, where his Shrine stands today in Hashmat Nagar. He was said to be poisoned.

⁵²³ Khan. H. A. *Al-Thawārim-al-Hindiyyah-Ala-Makrē-Shayātīn-al-Deobandiyyah (Urdu)* Ajmer, India. 2008. P. 117

the Deobandīs did not know how to deal with the issue as the scholars of the two Holy Cities were aware of some of these controversies even before Imām Ahmed Raza had taken the issue to them and this was possibly why they did not hesitate in signing in favour of the Fatwa issued by Imām Ahmed Raza and secondly it was nothing personal but only what Imām Ahmed Raza saw as defence of the Holy Prophet from the attacks of the Deobandīs.

It was only after a few years of the death of Imām Ahmed Raza that the *Al-Muhannad* was penned in India as questions sent by the Ullama of the two Holy Cities but the interesting is that no such questions were sent when the book *Anwār-ul-Satia* was written by Maulāna Abdul Sami and shown to the scholars of the two Holy Cities including the work of *Taqdīs-ul-Wakīl an Tauhīnīl -Rashīd-wal-Khalīl* by Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr Qusūri. This book was written after the debate and a transcript was also prepared in Arabic for the Sunni Arab scholars and especially to be presented to the scholars of Makkah and Madīnah. Maulāna Ghulām Dastagīr has also listed the names of over twenty scholars from the Holy Cities of Makkah and Madīnah who agreed with the contents of the book, and all this was before the fatwa upon the Deobandīs by Imām Ahmed Raza.

The *Al-Muhannad* is a questionable document as to how it was collected, the signatories and when the if all scholars actually agreed to it or were they forged from other documents as stated by Maulāna Naīm-Uddīn Murādabadī. There are no witnesses to the production of the *Al-Muhannad* and its actual representation of the Arab scholars including those who signed the original *Husam-ul-Haramayn* of Imām Ahmed Raza.

The difference between the Deobandīs, Ahlē Hadīth and the Barēlwīs are essentially based upon the issues mentioned above which are things that are at the heart of each school and will not easily go away until they decide to sit and resolve the issues by means of dialogue but this has not worked in the past as the Deobandīs have a lot to lose by agreeing to the fatwa of Imām Ahmed Raza that they had made errors and this would possibly mean the end of the prestige of the founding fathers of Deoband.

CONCLUSION

The importance of this thesis has been to understand the sensitivities concerning respect and honour and the use of words which could not only hurt a person's feelings but also effect the whole community especially when it concerns religious personalities, God, His Messengers, the Saints or even relics and religious places. The use of the monotheism (*Tawhīd*) card to dishonour the creation before God is something that would not make it permissible in any circumstances. The focus of this thesis has been to analyse how leading figures of the Wahhābī School have made such blunders in the name of honouring God. About this very concern and different levels of respect and honour, Imām Ahmed Raza Khān has stated:

Those that hold religious significance like our Master, leader of the Prophets (i.e., Muhammad), then the other Prophets (*Ambiyah*), the angels (*Malāika*) and the saints (*Awliya*), the Prophet's household (*Ahle Bayt*) and His companions (*Sahāba*), then the scholars (*Ullamā*) and the pious (*Sulahā*) and righteous (*atqiyā*), then the Muslims rulers (*Salatīn-ē-Islām*), then the ordinary believers (*Āam Mu'minīn*), then religious texts (*Musāhif-ē-dīniyyah*) like that of the Holy Qur'ān, the books of jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and Prophetic narrations (*Hadīth*), good attributes (*Sifāt-ē-Jamīla*) of faith (*Īmān*) and knowledge (*Ilm*), good deeds (*Ā'māl-ē-Sāliha*) like pilgrimage (*Hajj*) and prayer (*Namāz*), elevated characters (*Akhlāq-ē-Fādila*) like piety (*Zuhd*) and humility (*Tawādu'*) religious sites (*Amakin-ē-Muqadasah*) like the Holy Ka'bah (*Ka'bah Mukarama*) and the enlightened Chamber (*Rawdah Munawwarah*) therefore all peoples (*Ashhās*) and things (*Ashya*) which are in close proximity (*Illāqa-ē-Qurb*) with the Lord, Almighty⁵²⁴.

In essence, the respect and honour of the sacred is to honour and show reverence to God Almighty as these are those matters which are in His proximity. No Muslim or sane person would disagree that using words which would be hurtful to another personal or religious personality should be avoided.

The Deobandīs have for over a hundred years tried to avoid and discredit the edict (*fatwa*) of Imām Raza by firstly denying the texts in *Al-Muhannad* and then trying to interpret text that is clear and does not require any explanation in the Urdu language. But we now have all the monographs of the texts in question and the rulings upon such statements from both schools of

⁵²⁴ Khan. A. R, *Fatawa Rizwiyyah*. Vol. 15. P. 561

thought, which can help to conclude the old age debate if the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs wish to do so.

Over a hundred years ago when Imam Ahmed Raza wrote to the Deobandīs regarding the questionable statements of their elders, they refused to entertain him which in turn lead to the writing of the famous *Husām-al-Haramāyn* which caused chaos and a lot of confusion amongst the Sunni community and forced the Deobandīs to write a reply to the fatwa of Imām Raza. And until today, while the Barēlwīs uphold the fatwa of their Imām regarding the heresies of the Deobandīs, the majority of the these have resorted to ignore the fatwa as if it will just go away. The matter of the fact that both sides need to try to resolve the divide or work towards this for the greater good, to bring unity amongst the two schools based upon factors that can unify them instead of any further divisions.

One resolution to the divide between the Deobandīs and Barēlwīs is to move beyond personality worship, who see their founding fathers as immune from making mistakes and errors. Both sides need to look at the edicts upon the founding fathers of Deoband and though these were not written by the present day Deobandīs but are still defended and these books still printed by them until this very day. In conclusion, according to the Barēlwi School, the Deobandi's would need to distance themselves from the offensive and blasphemous statements of their elders and retract and agree to the blunders made by their elders and reaffirm their faith according to Imām Raza and the Deobandīs too. Though both factions are followers of Imām Abū Hanīfah and agree that any blasphemy or words that are offensive and clear in any language regardless of intention being heresy but the Deobandīs have failed to apply this same rule for the blunders made by their founding fathers resorting to making excuses when the meaning of those statements is clear in the Urdu language and does not require an alternative interpretation and the seriousness of such an issue cannot be overlooked according to Imām Ahmed Raza. An example of a disliked comparison between women and dogs can be found in the following hadīth:

Lady Āisha narrated: The things which annul prayer were mentioned before me (and those were): a dog, a donkey, and a woman. I said, "You have compared us (women) to donkeys and dogs. By Allah! I saw the Prophet praying while I used to lie in (my) bed between him and the Qibla. Whenever I needed something, I

disliked sitting and troubling the Prophet. So, I would slip away by the side of his feet.⁵²⁵"

From the above example of the hadīth that states how offended Lady Āisha felt when she heard women being compared with dogs and this was the exact reason for the objection in case of *Hifz-ul-Imān* by Imām Ahmed Raza and many Deobandī followers have been feeling uneasy with the statements seen as objectionable by Imām Ahmed Raza can be found in the monthly *Tajjālī magazine* published from Deoband, August edition, 1957.

A Deobandī namely Muhammad Idrīs of Lahore sent statements from the books *Siratē-Mustaqīm*, *Barahēin-ē-Qātia*, *Hifz-ul-Imān*, *Risāla Imdād* and *Marsēha Mahmūd-al-Hasssan* which he stated that on face value seem objectionable and adulterated. And he stated that though I agree with the subjects of the books and follow the writers of these books, but I do not feel easy with these statements within them. In response, the editor replied [...] I say clearly that there are parts in their written works and style which can be revised, changed, and even omitted⁵²⁶.

There is some understanding that there are at least some issues with the statements made by the founding father of Deoband which need addressing. In recent years, one of the most senior scholars and representatives of the Barēlwī School had made many attempts of unity through dialogue with the Deobandīs. Most of these have been documented on video for reference and as an open invitation for the Deobandīs to discuss and see how the 150 years age old differences can be resolved by discussing the issues one by one. Shaykh Saīd Ahmed Asad⁵²⁷ (d. 2023) of *Faisalābad* (Pakistan), had made many attempts by contacting and personally going to world famous Deobandī personalities within Pakistan, the likes of Maulāna Tāriq Jamīl⁵²⁸, Mufti Rafī

⁵²⁵ Sahīh Bukhāri, Book 8, Hadith number: 161

⁵²⁶ Mahānna Tajjālī-e-Deoband (Urdu), Central office District Sahāranpur, UP, India. August 1957 < <http://www.tajjali.in/pdfs.asp> > [13.07.2023 00:35], p.42

⁵²⁷ Maulāna Saeed Ahmed Asad was born in a scholarly family belonging to the Barelwi School of thought, He completed his studies and became active in teaching Darse-Nizami, lecturing and debating and was given the title 'Imam-ul-Munazirin'. He was involved in in Tahreeqe Mustapha movement in 1974 with Shah Ahmed Nurani and Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi. He was Shaykh-ul-Qur'an-wal-Hadith in Jamia-Ameenia, Faisalabad, Pakistan. He died on the Wednesday, 11th of January 2023.

⁵²⁸ Tariq Jameel was born in the year 1953 in Mian Channu, Pakistan. Jamil completed his primary education at Central Model School, Lahore and went to Government College University, Lahore and received his Islamic education from Jamia Arabia Raiwind. He belongs and is the leader (Amir) of the Tablighee Jamaat which is part of the Deobandi movement. He is a famous Deobandi orator and travels the world to preach his teaching.

Uthmānī⁵²⁹ and Maulāna Ilyās⁵³⁰ Ghuman⁵³¹ (b. 1969). All he received was that it is a good idea and that they support the initiative but that was it, there was no further correspondence even though the late Shaykh Saīd Ahmed Asad tried to contact them on several occasions with no response. This only shows that the Deobandīs are reluctant to dismiss the questionable statements of their elders and help resolve the age-old differences.

It is clear from the works and edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza that he always took his role as a Jurist (*Muftī*) seriously and always used religious sources to prove a point and in cases of independent reasoning (*ijtihād*), he would never take opinions to the level of necessity but of opinion and reasoning but as the issue of blasphemy towards the person of Prophet Muhammad is at the heart of the religion, this cannot be confused with independent reasoning as both are two separate matters. Because the issue was a matter of faith and thus the reason it was taken seriously by Imām Raza but not by the Deobandīs until the official edict was issued by Imām Ahmed Raza and this time instead of retracting from the objectional statements as it seems the Deobandīs assumed themselves immune that they tried to manipulate and misuse the general rulings of heresy which are different from those of blasphemy thus creating confusion for those who do not understand the differences and fall for the excuses and arguments used by the Deobandīs. After analysing the edict of Imām Ahmed Raza and the reasons for coming to the conclusions he came to were based on words which he deemed as derogatory and were explicitly blasphemous towards Allah and His Messenger Muhammad made by the founding fathers of the Ahlē Hadīth and Deobandī Schools. When the edicts were made against these Schools, the Deobandīs did not initially respond until after the demise of Imam Raza when they initiated a response, even then, they did not object to the edict of Imam Raza but instead they stated he misinterpreted the words but the sentences which Imām Raza had quoted were not ambiguous in any way but clear in their meaning in the Urdu language. The Deobandīs created further confusion when they wrote *Al-Muhannad*, in which they totally denied they every wrote any derogatory statements but the fact that this book was misleading in itself as the books

⁵²⁹ Muḥammad Rafi Usmani was born on 21 July 1936 into the Uthmāni of Deobandi, in British India. He was named by Maulāna Ashraf Ali Thānvi. His father Maulāna Shafi Deobandi was the Grant Mufti of Deoband and Mufti Taqī Uthmāni is his younger brother. He completed his studied at Jamia Karachi 1960. Uthmani taught *Darse-Nizami* in Karachi and authored many books. He died after a prolonged illness after COVID on the 18th of November in 2022 aged 86.

⁵³⁰ Muhammad Ilyas Ghuman was born on the 12th April 1969 in Sargodha District, Pakistan. He graduated from Jamia Binoria, which is a Deobandi Seminary. He is Deobandi Preacher, debator and is known in his circles as Mutakallim-e-Islam and is the discple of Pīr Aziz ul-Rahmān Hazarvi. He has also authored many books.

⁵³¹ Meeting with Deobandi Elders for sake of Unity < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqDIHnqMQVM>> [03.09.2021 17:03]

referred to by Imam Raza had indeed derogatory statements, yet the Deobandīs stated otherwise in the *Al-Muhannad*. It was the deputy of Imam Raza, Shaykh Naeem Uddīn that exposed the reality of *Al-Muhannad* and then later due to further pressure Thānvī was forced to make some changes to *Hifz-ul-Iman* to counter negative reputation as stated by Nu'manī. As the Deobandīs refused to take the matter seriously and ignored the edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza, so do the Deobandīs to the present day and they even have refused to have dialogue with the Barēlwīs to help resolve the age-old differences.

Until the matter is taken seriously by the Deobandīs, it will not be resolved, and the divide of faith will remain and the Barēlwīs who do not stand by or Hero worship Imām Ahmed Raza as they deem him to be a Sunni Reformer and prone to mistakes unlike his rivals who instead of retracting from blasphemy of the Holy Prophet until this very day. There seems to be no quick resolution to this matter as the Deobandīs refuse to discuss these issues to the open.

The Barēlwī position is clear regarding the questionable words and statements made by the elders of the Deobandī and the Ahlē Hadīth schools. As these differences are not personal but based upon what constitutes blasphemy and the ruling upon the use of words when dealing with God, His Messengers and religious personalities. A discussion forum could be organised to help resolve age old differences, trying to get to a possible resolution which has divided the Hanafī's into two groups amongst the South Asian Muslim communities for many generations. If both Deobandī and Barēlwī scholars interacted and conversed through dialogue, it is possible they could reach a satisfactory resolution.

Until now, there have been many underlying issues and facts that were not clear regarding the edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza upon different schools of thought and the reasons for these edicts and the stance of the other schools. It has been my endeavour to bring to light the theological standing of Imām Ahmed Raza and his religious positions based on the many historical and theological materials based on his understanding of orthodox Sunni Islam. I am confident this contribution will help in gaining a better understanding of these long-standing issues and the reason for the divide within the two schools of thought and in turn bring a better understanding of the edicts of Imām Ahmed Raza Khān upon the Deobandīs and the Ahlē Hadīth Schools.

Further research is required to investigate the teachings and the religious standing of the Dehlawī family from which the Deobandī, Ahlē Hadīth and Barēlwī Schools look up to and how the works of particular renowned Islamic personalities has been corrupted used to show the authenticity of certain schools of thought. I have presently a few examples of this, but

further research is needed in this area to find which works have been corrupted and by whom. Another area of research is the geography of religious schools during the British Raj and prior to this.

Appendices. Urdu transliterations

Appendix 1. Taqwīyyat-ul-Īmān

1. Yanī mein bī aik din mar kar matti mein milnāy wāla hōen.

(In other words, I too shall die one day and turn to dust).

2. Zina waswasē, apnī bibi kī majāma'at ka khayal behtar hey aur sheikh ya aisē bazurghōen kī taraf khā Janab Risālat ma'āb hī hōen. Apnī himat laga dāena apnē bael aur ghadē kī sūrat mēin mustaghraq hōenē sē burā hēy. Chūenkē sheikh ka khayal to ta'zīm aur buzurghī kē sāt insān kē dil mēin chimat jāta hēy aur baēl aur ghadē kē khayal ko na to is qadr chēpīdgī hotī hēy aur na ta'zīm balkē haqīr and zdkīk hota hēy aur ghāir kī ta'zīm and buzurghī jo namāz mē malhūz ho wo shirk kī taraf kīnch kat lay jātī hāy.

(During Salah, it is far better to concentrate on making love with your wife with the intention of adultery rather than to contemplate on the thought of the Shāykh or other such holy personalities and may this even be the Prophet (i.e. Muhammad) himself which is worse than overwhelming oneself in thought of donkeys and cattle; because the thought of the Shaykh is due to his respect and honour and gets attached to the inner most element of the heart, whereas the thought of a donkey or cattle is insignificant and without any due respect. The respect and honour of the other in the state of worship (*salah*) will take a person towards polytheism (*Shirk*)).

3. Jis ka nām Muhammad ya Ali hēy wo kissī chīz ka mukhtar nahīen.

(Whose name is Muhammad or Ali has no power whatsoever).

4. Allah kī shān bohot barī hēy kē sab Ambīyya aur Awliya uskē rūbarū aik zara nachīz sē bī kamtar hēin.

(The Majesty of Allah is so great that that all the Prophets and the saints are lesser than the smallest of particles in his sight).

5. Har Makhlūq barī hoy a choetī, wo Allah kī shān kē āgēy chamar sē bi zayāda zhalīl hē.

(All the creation, big or small (including prophets and saints) are more disgraceful than that of a cobbler before the glory of Allah).

Appendix 2. Tahzīr-ul-Nās

1. Awām kē khayal mēin to Rasūlullah ka Khātīm hōēna baiēn ma'nā hēy kē āp ka zamāna ambiyya sābiq kē zamāna kē ba'd aur āp sab mēin akhirī nabī hēin. Magar ahlē feham par raushan hogā ke taqadum ya ta'akhur zamānī mēin bil-zāt kuch fazīlat nahī pir maqam mada mēin 'wala kir rasulallahi wa khataman nabiyyīn' farmaya, is sūrat mēy khoēnkar sahih hosakta hey.

(In the understanding of the common people, the Messenger of Allah being the "seal" is with the meaning that his time comes after the time of the previous prophets, and he is the last of all prophets. However, it is clear to men of understanding that there is no intrinsic virtue in coming earlier or later in time. Then, how can it be valid, in this case, that" but the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of Prophets" (Q. 33:40) is in a context of praise?).

2. Agar bil farz ba'd zamāna nabawī koī nabi paeda ho to pir bī khatamiyyatē Muhammadi mēin kuch farq na āey ga, chēy jaēy kē āpkē ma'āsir kisī ayr zamīn mein, ya farz kijē'ēy isi zamīn mēin koī and nabi tajwīz kiya jaēy, biljumla thobūt athar mazkūr hōēna musbat thābit khatamiyyat hēy.

(Therefore, even if hypothetically after the time of the Prophet any prophet is born, even then there would be no difference to the finality of Prophet Muhammad even though there be another prophet contemporary to him on another earth, even if you hypothesise of another prophet on this earth).

Appendix 3. Qarahēin-ul-Qātia

1. Khud fakhrē Ālam farmātē hein aur sheikh Abdul Haqq Riwayat kartē hēin kē mujko diwār kē pechēy ka ilmbī nahī.

(Shaykh Abdul Haqq Muhadith Dehlawi has reported that the Prophet of Allah said, ‘I do not have knowledge of what is behind the wall’).

2. Al-Hāsil, ghāur karna chaīey kē shaytāno malkul maut ka hāl daek kar ilmē muhīt zamīn ka fakhrē Ālamko khilāfē nasūsē qatīa kē bila dalīl mahz qiyāsē fasida sē thābit karna shirk nahī to kāun sa imān ka hissa hēy. shaytāno malkul maut ko yē wusat nas sē thābit hāunī, Fakhrē Ālam kī wusatē ilm kī kaunsī nasē qatī hēy kē jissē tamām nusūs ko rad karkē aik shirk thābit karta hēy.

(It ought to be contemplated: Seeing the state of Satan and the angel of death (*Malak-al-Maut*), affirming encompassing knowledge of the world for the Pride of the World, against Qur’anic texts, without evidence, based purely on corrupt analogy, if not shirk, which part of faith is it?. This expanse has been established for Satan and the angel of death from the Qur’anic text. Which Qur’anic text is there for the expanse of knowledge for the Pride of the World, based on which all Qur’anic text will be rejected, and one shirk established?).

3. Ab har rāuz kāunsī wiladat mukarar hōtī hēy bas yē har rāuz I’ada wilādat ka to mithl hunūd kē hey kē sang Kanīyyah kī wilādat ka har sāl kartēin hēin ya mithl rawafiz kē naql shahadat ahlē bayt har sāl banātē hēin.

(It is not that the blessed birthday (of the Holy Prophet) is every day but doing of the Mawlid every day is like that of the Hindu’s celebrating the birthday of (the demigod) Kaneya every year or like that of the Shi’is who make models of the martyrdom of the family of the Holy Prophet every year).

Appendix 4. Hifz-ul-Imān

1. Pir yē kē Āpkī zātē Muqadassah par ilmē ghaib ka hukm kya jāna,agar baqāuk zaid sahih ho to daryaft talab yē amr hēy kē is ghaib sē murād baz ghaib hey ya kull gjaib. Agar baz ulūme ghaibiyah murād hēin to ismē huzūr kī hī kya tahsīs hey, aisa ilmē ghaib to zaido amro balkē har sabī-o majnūn balkēy jamē’ haiyawānāt-o baha’im kēliyē hāsil hēy, kyoen kē har shahs ko kissi na kissi aesī baat ka ilm hota hey.

(Moreover, what is the ruling if it is correct to attribute the knowledge of the unseen for the Revered One (i.e., Prophet Muhammad), if thought to be correct by Zāyd, then further clarification is required. Is this unseen partial or complete? If it is referred to as partial knowledge of the unseen, then, what is uniquely special in this for His Majesty (i.e., Prophet Muhammad)? Such knowledge of the unseen is also possessed by Zāyd, Amr (i.e., just anyone), indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts: For every individual knows something that is hidden from another individual).

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