5

ANTI-SAINT OR ANTI-SHRINE? TRACING DEOBAND'S DISDAIN FOR THE SUFI IN PAKISTAN

Charles M. Ramsey

INTRODUCTION

Today it is broadly accepted as axiomatic that the Deobandi in Pakistan are unequivocally antagonistic towards sufism. But how can this be when the founders of the eponymous *Dar ul-'ulum* were themselves prominent leaders in Sufi orders (*tariqa*)?

Established as a grassroots movement for religious education in the wake of the 1857 Sepoy Rebellion in India, the Deoband *'ulama* continue to flourish and to carry the mantle of "custodians of change" with increasingly activist vigour (see Zaman 2004). What are the repercussions of this growth, and how does this contribute to an understanding of the complex interrelation of sufism, pluralism, and democracy?

Much of the present literature on the Deobandi, or those with an expressed affinity with this sect (*firqa*), proceeds from sociological and historical methodologies and has not given sufficient attention to the theologically nuanced beliefs that unite this cohort. One result of this is that the movement is characterized as oppositional both to their mystical heritage and to shrine based devotionalism. An examination of the complex subdivisions within the group draws attention to the present theological fault lines and allows for a more textured understanding of their perceived disdain for the "Sufi."

It is necessary to reiterate from the start that the Deobandi are not a homogenous group. Earlier studies, like those by Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Arshad Alam, and Yoginder Sikand, have noted this but stopped short of qualifying this observation. Contextual differences in the sect, as expressed in Pakistan and India for example, are frequently mentioned as a caveat, but I know of no efforts to examine the internal differentiations. Thus, I proceed with the premise that the identification of such markers is necessary to make sense of the seemingly paradoxical experience of persons self-described as Deobandi but who participate in the devotional practices of Sufi shrines. In these pages we will draw from the vernacular literature, preaching, and digital media to map the taxonomy currently applied to different types of Deobandis in Pakistan.

In contemporary discourse those affiliated (formally or not) with Deoband are divided into two broad categories: Hayati (alive) and Mamati (dead). The nomenclature indicates the divisive issue as pertaining to the physical condition and abilities of holy persons after death. More directly stated: do prophets remain alive in the grave? Is there an enduring connection between their soul and the entombed corpse? The question raises a series of theological questions, but these revolve around a central issue: the efficacy of intercession (*shafa'a* and *tawassul*). Although this terminology has crystalized over the past 20 years, it is reflective of preceding theological differences and so we will begin our study by identifying these. We then proceed to clarify some of the diversity encompassed within the Deobandi grouping in order to note that the vast majority of these in Pakistan are neither anti-saint nor anti-shrine, though they share clear expectations of what devotion to these must not entail. We then conclude with some observations concerning the political implications of this group's increased popularity and social influence.

WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS REVIVALISM

The Deoband movement is now one of the most significant strands of Sunni Islam in the world. The loosely affiliated grassroots network of schools has become synonymous with traditionalist resurgence and resistance to Western cultural dominance and its accompanying knowledge economy (see Metcalf 1984). Metcalf's study of the school's 1866 inception has stimulated continuous academic interest and this has been strengthened by more recent work like those of Zaman and Ingran. Of particular interest is their respective studies of the schools' founders, like the writings of Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1905), Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (d. 1880), and subsequent luminaries such as Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri (d. 1927) and Ashraf 'Ali Thanwi (d. 1943) (see Ingram 2009, Sikand 2002: 2–12, Zaman 2007). Our central interest here is to elucidate the opinion of the Deoband *'ulama* concerning the practices and beliefs demonstrated at the shrines of revered Sufi masters (*'awliya*) who embody the mystical facets of Islam (*tasawwuf*).

It is important to note that there are those who dismiss the mystical heritage known broadly as Sufism as not authentically Muslim. But as Carl Ernst has aptly summarized, this is "little more than a political exercise based on contemporary culture clash" (Ernst 1996: 3). My aim is not to deny a historical conflict between juridical (*shari'ah*) and spiritual (*tariqa*) tendencies in Islam, but rather to emphasize that the border between these is porous. Care must be given that historiography not over-simplify the opposition between the Sufi and the Shari' for these have traditionally functioned as two sides of the same coin. As Shahzad Bashir succinctly observed, "Sufism forms an

integral and crucial part of the complex intellectual and social landscape [of pre-modern India]" (Bashir 2011: 10, 13). Islam in South Asian is inextricably colored by Sufism. This is incontestably the case with the founders of the madrasa in Deoband, and this remains clearly stated in their formal creed *'Aqaid 'ulema-i Deoband*:

> It should be known that we, as was the case of our teachers (*mashaykh*), adhere to the branches (*farohat*) of tradition schools of jurisprudence (*muqallid*) through Abu Hanifa, the principles and beliefs of Abul Hasan Ashari and Abu Mansur Maturidi, and to the lineage (*tariqa*) and methods of the Naqshabndiyya, Chistiyya, Qadriyya, Suhrawardiyya (Saharanpuri 1907).

Simply put, it is impossible to disambiguate the influence of *tasawwuf* from the study of Islam in South Asia in general, or from the study of the Deobandi movement in particular.

How is it then that the Deoband *'ulama* have come to represent juridical opposition to Sufism, and particularly to the devotional practices in shrines? To understand such developments we must first place the movement against the backdrop of religious revivalism in pre-partition India. We will see that although formal allegiance to Sufi *tariqa-s* has decreased among the *Ahle Sunnah wal jamat*, both the Deobandi and Barelvi schools carry forward the central elements of *tasawwuf* and the underlying theological assumptions. In this light, the Deobandi continue to thrive as post-*tariqa* expressions of Sufi Islam: they are Sufis reforming Sufism.

The origins of the movement must be seen against the backdrop of developments underway in the social and intellectual environment. "In the late Indian medieval period," as Anna Suvorova has convincingly argued, "the idea that the only role of a saint is intercession before Allah and, consequently, that of only a link in the chain of healing, was forgotten" (Suvorova 1999: 12). There were many issues, but the heightened glorification of the saint was of central concern because for many this reeked of polytheism. In the absence of an institutionalized *'ulamā*', like that of the Ottomans for example, religious leaders such as Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), the "juridic Sufi master" sought ways to redirect the community away from a universalist trajectory and towards a more reified practice of Islam.[1] Sirhindī's Naqshbandiyya followers emphasized dogma (*'aqā'id*) and defined principles (*asūl-i sharī 'a*) derived from *sunnah* as the required remedy. Although there are many heirs to this spiritual and intellectual lineage such as Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762), the ubiquitous father of Indian revivalism, for our purposes here we underscore the importance of Shah Isma'il, Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi, and the Indian Mujahidin because of their efforts to put these ideas into action as an idealized political system.

This has immediate implications for our study here because the reform of shrine based spirituality was of central concern to the Mujahidin. As most clearly seen in *Taqwiyyat al-iman*, Shah Isma'il (d. 1831) was extremely critical of the excessive veneration of anyone other than Allah as sin of association (*shirk*), be he saint (*'awliya*) or even Prophet. Yet, although the Mujahidin came down heavily on shrine-based worship, it is vital to note that their leaders were actively Sufi. Barelvi's principle means for legitimizing leadership was to recount his spiritual authority derived through the *muraqaba* attained through initiation in the four leading Sufi *tariqas*: Naqhsbandiyya, Chīshtiyya, Qādriyya, and Suhrawardiyya. As Mahmud Hussein has convincingly argued, the movement drew from powerful and recognized Sufi idioms in order to redirect devotion away from the cult of the local saint and toward the direct veneration of God through the emulation and intercession of the Prophet. This was reform of Sufism by Sufis.

Challenges to local beliefs and practices, however, were met with stiff opposition from the entrenched nobility who were themselves relatives and beneficiaries (*mutawalli*) of the shrine system (see Haroon 2007: 43; Sanyal, 1996: 204–14). It is essential to comprehend that the entombed saints are regarded as mediators of divine blessing and knowledge (Liebeskind 1998: 226). The Sufi master is "hyper corporeal," and he "spreads himself through time and space in order to protect multitudes of disciples (*murids*)" (Bashir 2011: 187). Such exalted authority became a natural means for social influence, and it was not long before the substance of religious authority became a primary means for temporal power (Haroon 2007: 38). State patronage reinforced this social authority and enlarged its wealth. The *mutawalli* functioned (and continue to do so) as an intermediary elite with the power to legitimate both temporal and spiritual leadership, and to connect political leaders with large swathes of people (Gilmartin 1984: 39–42; Eaton 2003: 267). This dynamic continues to play out today in Pakistan, even as the balance gradually shifts towards an activist *'ulama'* who can leverage power in favor of their own social clientele (Alam 2006: 175–77).

The war of 1857 sets the stage for the formal beginning of the Deoband movement. In the wake of the "revolt," punitive measures were taken against the Muslim community in general, but against the *'ulama'* in particular Jaffer (1981).[2] Some like Sayyid Ahmad Khan integrated into the government systems of the British Raj, but others like Naunatwi and Gangohi, the founders of Deoband, resisted and were intent on promoting a parallel society that would preserve and sustain a communal leadership structure. As Metcalf observed, in the absence of wealthy patrons – the established nobility and estate owners – Deoband would have to create "a new clientele composed of ordinary lay Muslims who would fund this *madrasa* as well as be its social base" (Metcalf 1984: 97). Although space does not permit a larger description of their vision and works, it is important to reiterate that

these were Sufis, and that they have overtly carried forward the mantle of juristic Sufism from the preceding generations.

But is this the case today? The answer to this question depends on the definition of Sufism. Although there has been an obvious distancing between the Deobandi *'ulama'* and both formal initiation in Sufi orders (*tariqa*/silsillah) and certain practices of shrine based spirituality, Deobandis continue to draw from the same sources of authority as its founders. To address this question we now turn to some of the differences prevalent in the movement today. Here we reaffirm that the group is not monolithic: there is considerable diversity of response towards the various facets of spiritual belief and praxis. First we will explain that there is a spectrum, and then indicate how this serves to clarify the main camps within the Deobandi movement in Pakistan. Then, from within these we will draw particular attention to those that most virulently oppose "Sufism" and seek to understand what this entails. In this way we can question how a theological movement whose founding leaders were Sufi could mutate into its antithesis, at least in some popular understandings.

DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CAMP: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE DEOBANDI?

To place our study in proper perspective, it is worth noting that nearly one third (over 484 million) of the world's 1.57 billion Muslims live in South Asia. Of the four historical schools of jurisprudence (*madhab*), the largest grouping in Pakistan is the Hanafi, which draws from the authority of Abū Ḥanīfah, or Nuʿmān ibn Thābit ibn Zūṭā ibn Marzubān (d. 772 in Baghdad). Although a thorough contrast cannot be made here due to space constraints, the other major Hanafi group is known as the Barelvi, named after the home of its founder Ahmed Raza Khan (d. 1921). This school is unapologetically Sufi and has continued some of the devotional practices that the Deobandis oppose. There is also a significant group called the Ahl-e Hadith, which does not conform to one particular school (*ghair muqalid*). Each of these traces its roots back to the legacy of Shah Wali Allah and his influential sons and students, and as such they provide a spectrum of positions that are differentiated by the manner in which divine grace is presently accessible.

Sunni mosques in South Asian population centers tend to self differentiate among these three schools of interpretation (*firqa*). Though accurate statistics are lacking, it appears that the Barelvi remain numerically larger, though Deoband has produced a greater number of leaders (*imams*) and the balance is shifting. According to Tariq Rahman's study charting the growth between 1988 and 2002 in Pakistan, enrolment in Deoband *dini madaris* has completely outpaced all other Sunni competitors. There was exponential growth across the board, but Deoband saw the most dra-

matic exponential growth from 1779 to over 7000 and there are no signs of abatement. This trend can be seen in all provinces, but growth in the Punjab outstripped all others. To place this into perspective, according to a 2002 report by Pakistan Human Rights Commission, over 250,000 of a total of 600,000 students in the Punjab are enrolled in *dini madaris* rather than private or public education (Jaffrelot 2015: 544–46). This statistic is important because it indicates that our subject concerns far more than the 'mercenary *madaris'* of the Afghan frontier, but rather represents what is increasingly the garden variety Muslim in Pakistan. In other words, the group discussed here, the Deobandi, is one of the largest and most dynamic groupings within Sunni Islam.

THE CURRENT TAXONOMY

As noted above, in contemporary discourse the Deobandi are divided into two broad categories: Hayati (alive) and Mamati (dead). The nomenclature indicates that the division is primarily derived from beliefs pertaining to the physical condition of the Prophet Muhammad after death. The central question, as Sheikh Muhammad Yasir explains, is whether persons remain alive in the grave, or not? "Is there an enduring connection between the soul and the entombed corpse"?[3] And, if one is alive, then can the person interact with those in the present physical world? The answer for the Hayati is: yes. The Prophet actively intercedes for persons. As he received the *durud* from angels traveling to his grave in Makkah, he mobilizes divine grace on their behalf. This raises the subsidiary question of whether this status of hyper-corporeality is divinely ordained to Muhammad alone, or has it been granted to all prophets, or also to holy persons such as the caliphs and saints (*'awliya*). The Hayati view is representative of the traditional Hanafi (*Ahle Sunnah wal Jamaat*) belief. These believe that persons remain alive and conscience in the grave, even while enjoying different degrees of access to the intermediary realm (*barzakh*). The Mamati, however, vehemently disagree and claim that death creates a division between these realms that cannot be crossed. The normative Deobandi view, as recorded in the creed (*aqidah*) is that of the Hayati. However, the steady increase of support for the Mamati position over the past decades indicates that disagreement on the issue of intercession has become a major faultline within the movement.

As is the case of most theological debates, there is textual support for both positions within the Qur'ān and Hadith. In the Qur'ān, references to intercession occur mainly in negative terms. The Day of Judgment, for example, is described as a day on which no intercession will be accepted (2:48, 23; 74:48–9; 82:19). We read there, "Guard yourselves against a Day when no soul will stand in place of another, no intercession will be accepted for it, nor

any ransom; nor will they be helped (2:48)." And again, "You who believe, give from what We have provided for you, before the Day comes when there is no bargaining, no friendship, and no intercession (2:54)." However, it is also stated that intercession is exclusively the domain of Allah. It is recited in Al-Zumar (39:44), "Say, 'All intercession belongs to God alone; He holds control of the heavens and the earth; in the end you will all return to Him'." There are also passages indicating that intercession is possible by divine permission (20:108–9; 2:254–5). Thus while intercession belongs solely to Allah, it is apparent that this may be extended through certain exalted persons (10:3; 20:109; 21:28; 19:87; 34:23; 4:64 12:97–8). Indeed Surah al-Ma'idah (Q5:35) seems to encourage one to seek such intercession: "O you who believe! be careful of (your duty to) Allah and seek means (*wasilla*) of nearness to Him and strive hard in His way that you may be success-ful." Historically, the majority Sunni view is that the Prophet's intercession (*shafa'ah*) on Judgement Day is the key to eternal bliss.

The Mamati, like the Salafis, hold that it is sinful to seek intercession from those who are no longer alive. They regard such belief as tantamount to polytheism (*shirk*). As Sarfraz Khan Safdar wrote in *Taskin us-sadur*, "The grave is empty, there is no one there… if the grave of any prophet is opened then the onlookers will see the prophet without any sense of feeling and without any movement" (Khan 2010: 37). This is a view shared by a significant cadre of contemporary Deobandi *'ulama* spread across the provinces of Pakistan. Some of the most notable include Maulana Ghulam Allah Khan, Mufti Muhammad Tahir, Nur Muhammad, Qazi Shamsud-din, Pir-i Tariqat Sayyid Inayatullah Shah Bukhari, and Muhammad Ameer Bandealwi. As to the issue of intercession these regard the tomb not as a nexus of spiritual power, but rather as a memorial for the departed. The deteriorated corpse is all that remains because the "soul" has departed to another realm. This is a rejection of the corporeality of the deceased, and of their ability to intervene in the affairs of this present age. To invoke the dead is to speak to an idol; it is harmful addition (*bi'da*) to Islam, and the practice should be avoided lest it cause confusion and erroneous belief (*fitna*).

Nida-i haqq by Muhammad Hussain Neelvi is a key source for ascer-taining the Mamati contentions. Neelvi takes to task eminent Deobandi luminaries like Rafi 'Uthmani (brother of Taqi 'Uthmani) and Amin Safdar Okarwi for being "too close to Barelvi: you became Sufis, you worship graves" (Neelvi n.d.: 18–19.)[4] He emphasizes four particular points of con-tention: the location and condition of the spirit after death (*hayat ar-ruh*); the permissibility of listening to the dead (*sama' muat);* the intercession of others (*tawassul*); and, the relation of the soul and the body after death (*azab-i qabr*). He is adamant that the dead depart to another realm and cannot intercede.

> To attempt to listen or invoke them is to place faith upon that which is other than Allah. To seek this intercession is to deviate from the clear teachings of the founders of Deoband, who directly opposed this Barelvi view and practice (Neelvi nd: 2010).

The "Sufi," by this definition, is one who believes in the viability of the deceased and the intervention of the departed in the affairs of the living. The belief in intercession, and the practices with seeking mediation are singled out as the central difference, the focus of their disdain.

However, as already noted above, the majority Deoband position is that of the Hayati. This is not unexpected in light of the strong ties of the founders to Sufi *tariqas* and particular shrines as was normative in South Asian Islam. With regard to the belief in intercession, the Hayati claim that the Deoband founders were unambiguously clear that holy persons remain alive in the grave and are able to intercede for the living. The foundational source most often cited is *Al-muhannad ala al-mufannad* by Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri, which has been translated in Urdu as *'Aqaid 'ulema-i Deoband* (the creed of the scholars of Deoband) or simply as *'Aqaid ahle sunnah* (the Sunni creed):

> It should be known that we, and our teachers (*mashaykh*), conform (*muqallid*) to the branches (*farohat*) [of traditional authority] of Abu Hanifa, the principles (*asulon itiqadat*) of Abul Hassan Ashari and Abu Mansur Maturidi, and to the linked paths (*tariqa intessab*) of the Naqsha-bandiyya, Chistiyya, Qadriyya, Suhrawardiyya. We do not accept anything without reference to Qur'ān, sunnah, *ijma*, or statement (*qol*) of an Imam (Saharanpuri 1907: 8).

Furthermore, as Saharanpuri proceeds to explain, this is in accordance with the chain of authorized guidance:

> For us, and our *mashaykh*, it is permissible in prayer to seek intercession from prophets, saints (*'awlya*), martyrs (*shahid*), and the righteous (*siddiqain*) during their life or after death… [In this], by the mediation (*wasilla*) of an esteemed person (*fulan buzurgh*), the acceptance and efficacy of your prayers to Allah may increase (Saharanpuri 1907: 31).

The authority of the 1907 text is attested by no less than 18 *'ulama'* of the Masjid Haramain (Makkah); and more recent editions include signatories from the highest echelons including Muhammad Yusuf Banauri, Abdul Haq Haqqani of Akhor Khattak (JUI-S), Muhammad Sadiq of Bahawalpur, Zafar Ahmad 'Uthmani of Sindh, Shamsul Haq (President, Vafaq ul-madaris al-Arabiyya Pakistan, Muhammad Idris (Jamia Ashrafiyya Lahore), and Mufti Muhammad Shafi (father of Taqi 'Uthmani of Dar ul-'ulum Karachi). These are the most senior *dini madaris* leaders in the nation. This is incontestably the standard and mainstream Deoband position.

The attestations are important because the Mamati argue that the founders' position has been misrepresented. One reason for this is that the founders are assumed to carry the mantle of Shah Isma'il and to be on a mission to establish the domain of true faith by expunging harmful innovation (*bi'da*) (for a summary of these points see Isma'il (Isma'il 1924: 14–17). The rationale is that Gangohi linked *bid'a* with *shirk*, the sin of association. This can occur in three ways: a practice that opposes *sunnah*; a practice done with the similar purpose or consistency as *sunnah*, though it is not included within the remit; or by conflating the permissible with the obligatory. The application of this definition has been applied to forbid a number of activities, festivals, and traditions, which though not mentioned in Hadith, are regarded as harmful. As Ingram explained, Gangohi was averse to a range of practices, including the adorning of certain clothing, not because these are forbidden in Islam, but because they reflect a confusing affinity with other traditions, whether Hindu, Jewish, or Christian. These practices are deemed as *fitna*, and are "*haram*" and "acts of unbelief (*kufr*)" (Ingram 2009: 483).

This position with regards to intercession, however, is difficult to sustain against clear statements made by other founders that present a far more dynamic relationship between the deceased and those who remain. Qasim Nanautvi, for example, explicitly addresses this issue in stating:

> Concerning the issue of the present life of the Prophet, the elders of Deoband are unanimous in this pronouncement. Concerning the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and all revered prophets, the elders of Deoband believe that these remain alive in their graves; and their holy bodies (*abdani muqadsa*) remain safe; and their elements (*ansar*) are in the realm of *barzakh* in a state similar to that of this world, the only difference is that they are no longer bound to the principles of shar'iah, but they pray (*namaz*), and the *darud* prayed during the holy fasts are heard without the necessity of mediation. This is the consensus of the hadith scholars (*muhadisn)* and theologian (*mutakalamim)* of the Ahle sunna wa jamat Khan 2010: 37–39).

This founder again sustains the view that holy persons remain alive and responsive from within the grave. In his depiction the grave functions as a portal to the intermediary realm of *barzakh*; the soul remains connected with the body and responsive to the living. It is for this reason that Deobandi stalwarts like Ibn al-Hassan 'Abbasi have concluded that,

> it is right (*jaiz)* to seek intercession (*wasilla)* from the Holy Prophet and the righteous elders (*buzurghon); * it is meritorious (*sawab)* to go on pilgrimage to the grave of the Holy Prophet; and it is meritorious and right to request intercession (*shafa'at*) and to petition (*istagasa*) the Prophet for justice, or to cry out to someone other than Allah (for greater detail see Nanautivi 1992).

In summary, although the body remains confined to the vicinity of the tomb in the present world, the soul of the righteous remains active and mobile within another realm. This is not limited to the exalted, but includes even the less righteous who can avoid the stifling darkness of the grave and have a window opened to the other realm through the prayers of others. The prevalent view is that all believers who have committed sins must undergo temporary punishment after death, but that all Muslims are destined to eventually enter paradise. The question then is how best can this punishment can be remitted or shortened. As we will consider below, reflection on this subject is helpful both for understanding theological trends but also for establishing a more nuanced understanding of the spectrum of ideas currently under discussion, but also in defining the broad category of Sufism.

SUB-CATEGORIES

Within the majority Hayati group, there are also sub-categories. One major distinction therein is that between the Farohi (lit. branches) and the Asuli (lit. root, or principle). The term Farohi does not pertain to an organized faction, but rather is a descriptor applied to those that do not ascribe to a defined set of principles for reifying Sunnah. These adhere to a variety of opinions – like the branches of a tree – for determining what specifically is required in the multifarious activities of daily life such as what to wear, how to groom, where to pray, and what to do at a shrine. The Asuli, on the other hand, derive a set of principles from the commentaries and teachings on Sunnah of the leading Deoband scholars to establish prescribed norms. Authorized traditions (*khabar*) of the Prophet and of the *rashidun*, the first four caliphs, once deemed as conclusively authentic (*hujjat*), are accepted as Sunnah and accepted as revealed guidance (*wahy ghayr matlu*).

The determinant power of these principles becomes more clear in light of a further distinction between the Asuli, that of the Tanzihi and Takfiri. The vast majority of those associated with the Deoband movement can be categorized as Tanzihi, including each of the Hayati representatives listed above. The descriptor is self-styled by *'ulama*, and it refers to their emphasis upon correct behavior. These take a hard line against *fitna*, that is disorder, error and sinful activity.[5] The Takfiri (from *kufr*) share the concern, but carry this name because of the willingness to declare someone as no longer Muslim because of a particular issue. Maulana Fazulllah of the Taliban and Shah Abdul Azziz of Lal Masjid in Islamabad, to name two of many possible examples, claim that to depart from Sunnah, the conclusive guidance ascertained from the established principles, is to commit *kufr buwa* and to depart from Islam (Sial 2012: 10–15). This is a highly sensitive issue in traditional jurisprudence that is never taken lightly particularly because the verdict can carry the penalty of death. Once someone is declared to be openly opposed

to Islam (*kufr buwah*), then the burden of explanation shifts to why they should not be killed rather than spared. Hence, Tanzihi and Takfiri opinion on intercession may be identical, but these differ in response to the implications of disagreement. According to my respondents, the Hayati Takfiri regard the Mamati not as misinformed, but rather as *kufr* because they reject the guidance of Sunnah on the issue of intercession.

This leads to a final difference observable among the mainstream Hayati Tanzihi. This is the difference between the Mutashadat and Mutadil. The former will seek to implement the required behavior with force if necessary, whereas the latter seek to "lovingly" convince others of the necessity of compliance to a particular belief or practice as necessary for Muslim fidelity. Highly recognized public figures like Tariq Jameel of the Tablighi Jamaat and Siraj al-Haq of Jamaat-e Islami, for example are Mutadil, and this also includes the vast majority of *'ulama* serving in a government capacity, whether in the *awqaf* or in government mosques.

In order to further clarify these descriptive terms, it is helpful to consider the issues pertaining to a visit, for example, to the Datta Sahib shrine in Lahore. This is one of the most frequented in the region, and one is certain to encounter a large number of Hayatis on a visit there. Of course, these will not approve of visitors who partake in hallucinogens or hashish, or who dance and play drums (*dhol*) in order to invoke some form of ecstacy. The entombed saint, though revered, is not to be worshiped, so songs and prostrations should clearly be directed to Allah alone. They will not approve of those that kiss the shrines, nor will they like those who bow or prostrate towards the marble tomb. They will certainly abstain from such activity. However, one will lay flower wreaths on the grave, and perhaps purchase an ornate sheet (*chador*) that was laid over the tomb or request an amulet (*tawiz*) from one of the initiates. He will be happy that the shrine is divided into male and female sections so that modesty (*purdah*) can be protected, and will likely have explained all of this to those accompanying on the visit. He also may seek opportunities at the shrine to preach and instruct others in these matters. Some will even dedicate multiple days to this task as a form of religious service so that others can benefit from correction. The Takfiri, on the other hand, will regard those who break these rules as incomplete Muslims, and like the Tanzihi Mutashadat will most likely not seek confrontation in such an established venue. In smaller shrines though, or in areas where they have greater control, these may indeed intimidate or attack the shrine or its leadership in order to communicate the severity of illicit behavior. All of these, however, while firmly believing that the correct procedures should be followed, will seek the intercession of the saints and the Prophet to support their petitions to Allah for success and eternal bliss for themselves and their loved ones, both living and departed.

THE PARADIGM APPLIED

A presentation of the descriptors applied among the Hayati is indicative of diversity within the tradition. It also draws attention to the varying degrees of severity by which different persons go about implementing the demands of faith. However, belief in the corporeality of the prophets and saints, and the blessing of their propinquity, remains a commonality amongst the majority of Deobandis. Further, this is a commonality shared with the Barelvi. This observation generates an important question: if there is agreement on such a central issue, why then is there such animosity between these two camps?

The differences are subtle but important. The Hayati concern is that the clear guidance of Qur'ān and Sunnah not be diluted by an effused spirituality that might come close to worship of the person, whether saint or prophet. As Maulana Rafi Uthmani, Grand Mufti of Pakistan and Director of Darul 'ulum Karachi, explained in his open letter to the Barelvi in 2009, "Deobandi and Barelvi schools agree upon the fundamental principles and sources of Islamic law…the nature of the Deobandi's conflict with the Barelvis concerns the ways of implementing of rules and laws" (Hayat 2012: 18–19). In this estimation, the problem is not belief but boundaries. Behavior and belief, even that passed down through revered *mashaykh*, must be sieved through the Sunnah and Qur'ān. The Hayati guard against the exaggerated exaltation of a saint's power – and of the heirs who carry this grace – to a greater degree than their Barelvi counterparts.

Underlying these differences is an enduring philosophical difference on the "Unity of Being" (*wahdat al wujud*) and the pre-existent "light of Muhammad" (*nur-i Muhammadiyya*). Though some western literature projects these as peripheral and outdated, this is not the case for much of South Asia. As Tahir Tanoli, Director of the Iqbal Academy in Lahore, has explained: "Belief in the 'unity of being' (*wahdat al-wujud*) was seen as obligatory for all Muslims" (Tanoli 2013: 202–204).[6] The Persianate world accepted Ibn al-'Arabi's doctrine of *tawhid* as axiomatic. This paradigm provided the forum to consider and experience the interrelation of the Creator and the created. However, there are diverse perspectives on what *tawhid* actually entails. This was the case for Shah Wali Allah and his Nashbandiyya Sufis, and it is the case amongst the *'ulama* today. What these share in common is the realization that the utter differentiation between the Creator and creation, or 'master' and "servant," is a logical impossibility. Belief in the efficacy of intercession in the present world, by persons dead or alive, infers that the divine attributes remain active in the cosmos and can – in some way – be wielded as embodied grace.

The central conflict, however, is not between the Hayati and Barelvi, but rather between these and the Mamati. There is a growing effort, whether from the Ahl-i Hadith or Wahhabi, to invalidate this view of intercession.

One way that the Hayati and Barelvi have pushed back is through the rhetoric pertaining to the honour of the Prophet. On the 40th day (*chalea*) after Mumtaz Qadri's execution, for example, there were mass movements to demand that he be beatified as a national hero for assassinating Governor Salman Taseer. As Syed Hamad Ali has explained, though it may seem counterintuitive, this was not a move to overthrow the government but rather to establish the severity of tampering in any way with matters pertaining to the exalted status of the Prophet. "The Barelvis have for years been touted in certain western and liberal Pakistani circles as the more moderate answer to Saudi-exported Wahhabi or Salafi versions of Islam," he writes, "[but] in fact, the Barelvis came out more fiercely than others in condemning the death sentence to Qadri. This is due to their supposedly stronger attachment to the Prophet Muhammad."[7] Although a blasphemy case has not been brought as of yet against the Mamati, this is not altogether beyond the realm of possibility. In essence, the contestations between the Barelvi and Deobandi, and with their opponents, revolve around the degree of devotion to be given to the Prophet of Islam.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLITICAL SOCIETY

What does this mean for society and governance? First it is imperative to note that the term "Sufi" in Pakistan today does not refer to glorified mystics but rather to mendicant deviants. Many Deobandis indeed disdain this latter connotation, even while maintaining a high estimation of the former. It was to elucidate this complex historical heritage that I have sought to introduce distinct terms of reference that are reflective of the internal heterogeneity. As a component portion of the Ahle Sunna wal Jammat, the Deoband *'ulama* are part of a long tradition of Sufis who are reforming Sufism. I am not saying that the political hopes of this modern nation state rest upon the wandering mendicants, the *malang* and *qalandars*, but rather that perhaps there is something in the broader spiritual heritage that has stimulated a resilient social cohesiveness and aspiration to pluralism. If Sufi is not the current term to describe the advocates of such values, then Deobandi is also not the term to describe those who oppose such aspirations.

Again there is a range of political views represented among the Deobandi *'ulama*. The Takfiri – whether theologically Hayati or Mamati – regard their coreligionists as being in the process of becoming fully Deobandi. Dissonant leaders are those who have not actualized the ideals inherent in the teachings of the elders. As the name implies, this is the inherent belief that those who do not embrace the breadth and depth of changes required for fidelity to the divine plan demonstrated in the reification of Sunnah are in fact inimical to the actualization of Islam. The political outworking of this

is *khoruj* (lit. departure, or exodus): resistance to the system of governance and its leadership. This can be violent or non-violent, but it entails direct opposition because the government is regarded as un-Islamic. Some adhere to this view, but most do not.

There are also those from among the Tanzihi that seek to impose a change of system from within the current constitutional framework. This is the effort of many involved in the Jamiet-e-Ulema-Islam (JUI). Even here there are two branches. The JUI-S, named for Sami ul-Haq is active along the Afghan frontier and has consistently supported the Taliban. Their *dini madaris* have provided recruits to many factions intent on bringing about regime change and further institutionalizing this version of *shar'ia.* The JUI-F, led by Fazlur Rahman, is more integrated into the current system and often serves as an intermediary to mediate dialogue and greater national cohesion in the most restive areas. The move towards greater participation is recent, but very important. Islamist supporters have worked to undermine the government systems so as to create instability. This has led to the creation of parallel systems and economies in these regions.

Both factions idealize the political ideology implemented by the Taliban in Afghanistan prior to the NATO invasion, but disagree on how this is to be brought about in Pakistan. According to Hassan Madni, Director of Islamic Studies Department at Jamia al-Islamia in Lahore,

> The Taliban achieved power in Afghanistan through their individual struggle and enforced an ideal Islamic system there. Our religious scholars fully supported it. In contemporary Islamic history, if we see Islam enforced anywhere and peace achieved it was in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime (Sial 2012: 88).

He would like to a similar system in Pakistan so that the country no longer functions as a Muslim majority democracy founded upon western ideas, but rather as an Islamic state established according to traditional jurisprudence. The difference, as again Madni explains, is that, "I have a clear opinion about this democratic system but I do not believe in armed or violent struggle to change it." However, as the ballots reveal, this idea has not found popular support. The Takfiris, however, regards the current means of legislation as analogous with *taghut* (idol/despot), and apply the commands ordained in the Qur'ān and Sunnah for condemning false deities (Sial 2012: 63). There is no shortage of evidence for this party's disdain for its competitors, and the vitriol has resulted in an inventory of attacks against shrines across the country. But as argued throughout this chapter, this is a particular sub-group within the larger movement. If this were the majority view then the landscape in Pakistan would look radically different.

This is not to deny, however, the obvious distancing between most Deobandi *'ulama'* and traditional Sufi orders (*tariqa/silsillah*), or the differ-

ences in emphasis and practice that exist between the Deobandi and Barelvi. Differences in style, emphasis, and practice continue to divide communities and it often plays out in heated contestation over the appointment of mosque leadership. However, the belief of the Hayati Deonandi with regard to belief in the efficacy of intercession by the prophets and saints, both living and dead, in the present life and in the hereafter, is practically identical to that of the Barelvi. It would be of benefit for future studies to explore the theological differences in a more systematic and extended manner than what could be attempted here. The effort is to provide some texture to the broad category of Deobandi that appears so frequently in the literature. A taxonomy points towards the need to differentiate between the mercenary *madaris* of the Afghan frontier bent on establishing the Taliban government, and the quietist views of some of their Indian counterparts like Syed Arshad Madani, President of Jamiat Ulema-i Hind (India), who claim they are ready to give "even to the last drop of blood for the secular constitution."[8]

Deobandi refers to a large and dynamic group that does not have an innate or predetermined political agenda. Though they would never use the term secular, it is important to recall that constitutional democracy endures in Pakistan because of Deobandi support. Were the entire movement to shift positions and see the officials and the system from a Takfiri position and call for *khoruj*, then the government could not persist apart from civil war. But this is not the case. The senior elected officials in the present as and previous governments hail from prominent shrine families (*mutawalli*) and continue to draw from an extensive and interconnected relational network. The bounds between these and the political center remain strong despite the growing rejection of the feudal landlord system that has crippled institutional development. Perhaps if a greater number of the *'ulama* sense a clarity in position, similar to that of the JUI-F, then these custodians of change could leverage their pulpits for greater advocacy and accountability in local governance.

The roll of the *'ulama* and the *dini madaris* in Pakistani's electorate will continue to increase. As already noted, the ratio of students enrolled in *dini madaris* compared with private and public schools is indicative of the importance of this form of education in determining the agenda and priority of national development. From all indications this percentage continues to increase. For some this is a matter of belief, but for many it is a basic practicality. Children need food and basic schooling, and religious learning opens the possibility for employment and status. This form of education directly affects childhood development and has unalterable consequences upon the nation's workforce. According to Tariq Rahman's study, there has been exponential growth in enrolment over the past two decades across the board, but Deoband has outpaced the other Sunni schools. This trend can be

seen in all provinces, but the highest rate of growth was seen in the Punjab. Although affiliated political parties have not done well in the polls, this young crop of voters and activists may yet change the game.

An increase in political participation from the Deobandi social base is not something to be feared but rather encouraged. The group is composed primarily of the rural and urban poor, and this demographic remains greatly underrepresented in a political arena that continues to be dominated by a feudal elite. It is important to recognize that an increase in participation does not correlate with votes for militant extremism. Recent research indicates that the most radical extremists are not the product of Deoband madrasas, but rather of modern and westernized universities.[9] As Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, former Chairman of Pakistan's Ulema Council, explains:

> [youth] are absorbing new religio-political ideologies which are distinct from those held by Deobandi, Barelvi, and Ahl-e-Hadith schools of thought. Takfiri ideology is gaining ground among students of mainstream educational institutions. This is, however, not the case in madrasa where religious scholars at least guide their students on critical religious issues (Sial 2012: 88).

If Ashrafi is correct, then a shift in perspective needs to come about to where the traditional religious leaders, the *mullah* and the *'ulama*, are not regarded as the problem but rather as a vital part of the solution to Pakistan's quest for peace and sustainable development.

CONCLUSION

In contemporary discourse those affiliated (formally or not) with Deoband are divided into two broad categories: Hayati (alive) and Mamati (dead). The terminology indicates that one of the most significant faultlines in the movement concerns the efficacy of intercession (*shafa'a* and *tawassul*). Although this terminology has recently crystalized over the past 20 years, it is reflective of established differences within South Asian revivalist literature concerning the physical condition and abilities of holy persons after death. Our observations, preliminary as these may be, indicate that the vast majority of the Deobandi in Pakistan are neither anti-saint nor anti-shrine, though they share clear expectations that behavior and beliefs associated with types of Sufi behavior and shrine based activity not lead to *fitna.* The term Sufi remains ambiguous but it is increasingly understood to promote syncretistic practices and involvement with the occult. Nevertheless, present leaders understand fidelity to tradition to incorporate elements of *tasawwuf.* This adds further agreement to the classification of the Deobandi as an example of post-*tariqa* Sufism. It also identifies the continued centrality of hyper-corporeality as a core element of faith.

About the Author

Charles M. Ramsey is dually appointed as Assistant Professor of Religion and Public Policy at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), Lahore, Pakistan. He has lived and worked in the Indian Sub-Continent since 2000. He holds a PhD in Islamic Studies (University of Birmingham, UK, supervised by David Thomas), an MA in the History of Religion (Baylor University, TX, USA where Clinton Bennett was his first reader), and PGC in Poverty Reduction (Centre for Development, Environment, and Policy at University of London, SOAS). Ramsey is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Dialogue and Action at Forman, a member of the Common Word Movement, and has served as Advisor to the National Peace Committee for Interfaith Harmony in Pakistan. Current research interests include Islam and Modernity, South Asia, Peace Building, Spiritual Theology, and Scriptural Hermeneutics. He has been awarded grants from the British Library and from the US Institute for Peace, and the Institute for International Education. Some of his works include: *God's Word, Spoken and Otherwise: Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898), Revelation, and Coherence* in the History of Christian-Muslim Relations series edited by David Thomas (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*, eds. Clinton Bennett and Charles Ramsey (London: Continuum, 2012); and "Orientalist: Friend or Foe?" *Responses Towards 9/11: South Asia and Beyond*, ed. Nukhbah Langah (New Delhi: Routledge, 2016).

Notes

1. See Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998. Born in rural Punjab, Sirhindi's insight and acumen led many to accept him as the *mujaddid-i alf-i thani,* the anticipated millennial restorer of the *umma.* His influence was such that within two generations Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi practice supplanted practically all prior expressions of the vast Naqshbandiyya order.

2. This is a descriptive account of life in the prison camps set up for religious clerics on the Andaman Islands following the 1857 war.

3. Sheikh Muhammad Yasir, "Are the Mamatis part of Ahlus Sunnah?," available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMX2s_nl2vE, *Hanafi Fiqh Channel* (accessed 22 April 2016).

4. Neelvi is a student of Hussain Ali from his home city of Mianwali in Pakistan, who began his education in 1884 in Deoband with Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and Mahmood Mazhar Nanautvi, a student of Shah Abdul Aziz son of Shah Wali Allah.

5. *Tanzihi* also has a theological meaning but that is not the case here. In that usage the term refers to the absolute difference between God and human, as opposed to *tashbi* that signifies closeness or similarity. These are the theological terms applied in discussion of the *wahdat al-wujud* (Unity of Being) with reference to

the interrelation of the creator and creation. I was assured by respondents in this research that this is not the meaning here.

6. This position was not seriously challenged, according to Tanoli, until 1897 when Sayyid Mehr 'Ali Shah (d. 1937) composed *Tahqiq ul-haqq fi kalimat al-haqq.*

7. http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2011/oct/12/pakistan-moderate-salman-taseer-mumtaz-qadri

8. http://sadaewatanjadeed.com/national-integration-conference/, New Delhi, 12 March 2016 (accessed 23 April 2016).

9. Raheem ul-Haque, "Youth Radicalizaion in Pakistan," *Peacebriefs,* no. 167, United States Institute of Peace, 26 February 2014, available at http://www.usip.org/publications/youth-radicalization-in-pakistan