

# **Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed**

**Life, Mission and Contributions**

**Dr. Shah Ebadur Rahman**

**Former professor of English  
Ummul Qura University, Makkah**

**Academy of  
Islamic Research and Publications  
Lucknow, India**

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Dedicated to  
*my parents*  
*(late) Shah Afzalur Rahman*  
*and*  
*(late) Asiya alias Ruqaiya Khatoon*  
*(May Allah grant them paradise!)*

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## Acknowledgment

For writing this book I am greatly indebted to late Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, the famous Islamic scholar and Rector of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema. It was his work on Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed that I read first and from his personal discourses I developed an appreciation of the contributions of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement. Once when I expressed to him my intention to write a book on Sayyid Ahmad, he encouraged me and gave me time to discuss the project with him. His interest in my humble project grew with time mainly because of his great love for Sayyid Ahmad, but also due to the fact that this work was taken up in Makkah where I was staying in those days, a city that he loved so dearly. He even mentioned in his private discourses, as I was informed, and at least once in a public speech, as he himself told me, that a book on Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed was being written in the holy city of Makkah. He also sent to me a copy of his book *A Misunderstood Reformer*, along with a copy of its Urdu translation, which dealt with the same subject, for reference. He also once kindly mentioned to me that he would like to share with me the cost of publication when the work was ready to go to press. May Allah richly reward him for his kindness and encouragement! During the period that I devoted to writing this book, he has been in my heart and mind all the time as an inspiring force.

I am deeply obliged to Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rabey Hasani Nadwi, present Rector of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema and President of the Muslim Personal Law Board, for writing the Introduction of this book. It is indeed a great encouragement to me. May Allah richly reward him!

Since I started working on this project, the availability of the source material remained a difficult problem for me. Most of the books dealing with the subject were not available in the libraries of Saudi Arabia where I wrote the whole manuscript. My friends who helped me in obtaining relevant books deserve my sincere

gratitude; to all of them I am sincerely thankful. Also my very personal thanks go to my family members whose encouragement made it possible for me to concentrate on this work. May Allah be pleased with all of them and reward them for the help they provided to me in writing this book. May He kindly accept this humble work of mine and grant forgiveness to me!

SER

## Introduction

Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds, alone deserves all praise. May His mercy and peace descend on the Prophet Muhammad, the leader and the seal of Messengers, and on his progeny, companions and true followers!

When Allah sent down the first human couple Adam and Eve, blessings be on them, to the earth, He made it known to them that if they and their progeny lived a life on earth in accordance with His commands, they would be allowed back to live in paradise, but if they chose to disobey, their abode would be the hellfire. The children of Hazrat Adam sincerely followed Allah's instructions in the beginning, but with the passage of time they, under the influence of the self and the Satan, started deviating from the right path. As Allah chose to be benevolent to them, He sent prophets to guide them to the truth. Thus came to mankind Allah's prophets from Noah to Jesus, blessings be on them, at different times. After Prophet Jesus, the descent of prophets was discontinued for sometime and human beings were left to follow the teachings of the previous prophets on their own.

Then Allah sent to mankind Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, as an ideal messenger with a comprehensive message for the entire world. Since he was destined to be the last prophet, Allah entrusted the pious from his followers to lead mankind to the path of truth and salvation after his death. Thus, at later times when the world was plagued with corruption and disobedience, pious Muslims were raised to do the job of the Prophet, although they were not prophets.

In India several such reformers appeared from time to time who, due to their reformist services, were called *Mujaddid* (Renovator). Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Ibn Irfan Shaheed, may Allah be pleased with him, occupies a prominent position among them. He was born in the thirteenth century of the Islamic calendar when Muslims had deviated from the Islamic Shariah, adopted un-Islamic values, and discarded religious teachings as fundamental as *Tawheed* (Islamic

monotheism) and *Sunnah* (Prophet Muhammad's traditions). His call had such a tremendous appeal that whichever places he visited, Muslims thereof were transformed into most sincere followers of Tawheed and Sunnah.

Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed soon realized that in his call he should also duly emphasize the importance of the eminent Islamic practices found in the early Muslims, in addition to preaching the value of moral reform and virtuous deeds. Accordingly, he also called Muslims to revive the traditions of *Hijrah* (Migration) and *Jihad* (Striving to support the religion). Sayyid Saheb (as Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed was popularly called) also came forward right in time to revive Hajj, the fifth fundamental pillar of Islam, which was being forsaken by Indian Muslims on the ground that the passage to Makkah from India was unsafe.

Due to his tireless efforts, a great transformation took place in the lives of Indian Muslims: values of Tawheed and Sunnah were very deeply imprinted in the minds and hearts of Muslims, thousands of non-Muslims embraced Islam, an unbelievably large number of Muslims returned to the teachings of Shariah, and fundamental prophetic traditions such as Hajj and Jihad were put back to practice under Sayyid Saheb's leadership (*Imarat*).

Authentic details about the life and Movement of Sayyid Saheb were carefully preserved by his followers in some books, but as they were quite voluminous, they were not published. They served as source books nevertheless, as several books were written by using them as references. Two such books which deserve special mention are Maulana Ghulam Rasool Mehr's *Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed* and Maulana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi's *Seerat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed* which won great acclaim. The original source books referred to above remained safe as manuscripts. *Waqae Ahmadi*, one such manuscript which contains 2,500 pages, holds a special place as a reference to Sayyid Saheb's life. Luckily, it has now been published by Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Academy, Lahore, Pakistan. A second manuscript *Manzooratus So'ada fi Ahwalil Ghuzat wash-Shohada* which was written by Maulana Sayyid Jafar Ali Bastawi, a

close associate of Sayyid Saheb, also remained a very reliable source of information. It is in Persian and its translation in Urdu is in progress. Maulana Ghulam Rasool Mehr has penned down three important books covering the details of Sayyid Saheb's Movement before as well as after his martyrdom. These books have also been published now in India by Maktabaul Haque, Jogeshwari, Bombay, in four volumes under the caption *Tahreer Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*.

Maulana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi also made very important additions to his book *Seerat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*, which is published now in two volumes by Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow. Then he wrote another book *Karwane Imano Azeemat* which covers the life and activities of Sayyid Ahmad's associates and deputies (*Khulafa*) and is published by Maktabae Islam, Lucknow. He also wrote a separate book in Arabic *Iza Habbata Rihal Iman* on Sayyid Saheb and his associates enunciating their lofty faith and virtuous deeds. This book, first published from Dare Arafat, Rae Bareli, and then from Moassasah al-Risalah, Beirut, won great appreciation from the Arab audience. It was translated into Urdu by Maulana Sayyid Muhammadul Hasani, nephew of Maulana Nadwi, under the title *Jab Iman Ki Bahar Aai* and was published in India by Maktabah Firdaus, Lucknow, and in Pakistan by Majlisc Nashriyate Islam, Karachi. This book also was very warmly received by the audience. But there still remained a dearth of information on Sayyid Saheb in Arabic as no book after Maulana Nadwi's was penned down which could inform the Arabic readers about Sayyid Saheb's personality, virtues, and mission. This need was, to a significant extent, fulfilled by Maulvi Muhammad Wazeh Rasheed Hasani Nadwi, my younger brother, who wrote a book in Arabic *Al-Imam Ahmad bin Irfan Al-Shaheed*, which is a research work and has been written in modern language and style.

The books written on Sayyid Saheb by Maulana Ghulam Rasool Mehr and Maulana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, which brought to the fore the great contributions and lasting influence of his Movement, regenerated an interest in him among Muslims. Hence,

research in the area ensued. Recently a collection of Sayyid Saheb's letters has been published by Maulana Sayyid Shah Nafees Husaini, a great admirer of Sayyid Saheb, from Maktaba Rashidiya Ltd., Lahore.

The orientalist who also wrote on this topic spread misinformation about Sayyid Saheb and his Movement. Muslim scholars have made sincere efforts to refute their charges, clear doubts, and push forth authentic information instead. Professor Mohammad Aslam, Department of History, Punjab University, comments on the situation in these words:

It is very important to be conversant with the political, cultural, and social backgrounds of India to fully understand and appreciate Sayyid Saheb's Movement. When Sayyid Saheb began his missionary work, the Mughal king Shah Alam was the ruler not even of the area defined as 'From Delhi to Palam.' His rule was, as a matter of fact, restricted within the four walls of the fort, known as Qilae Mu'alla. The city of Delhi was under the rule of the British Resident (Saheb Bahadur), while the whole country from the Bay of Bengal to the Sutlej River was governed by the British (Nawwab Sarkar Company Bahadur). The entire area on the other side of the River Sutlej, extending up to the Khyber Pass was under the rule of Ranjit Singh. The Jats and Rangar menacingly roamed around Delhi, in spite of the fact that the city was under the administrative care of the British. The life, property, and honor of the Muslims were safe neither in the areas under the control of the British nor in the region ruled by Ranjit Singh. The Sikhs in the Punjab had turned a good number of mosques into stables, from where the prayer calls (*Adhan*) sadly ceased to be proclaimed. Under these circumstances Shah Abdul Aziz declared India as *Darul Harb* (the Land of the Enemy) and consequently, Muslims who cared to

practice their faith started thinking of migrating from India.

Muslims had already lost the country; but now they also started feeling threatened in term of their religion. Unauthentic practices had taken the place of authentically prescribed teachings of Islam and the religion of Islam had become an amalgam of superstitions and rites. In this situation Hazrat Sayyid Saheb, along with his valiant associates, came forward to rescue Muslims from the yoke of the unscrupulous tyrants and to replace Bid'ah (Innovations) with Sunnah within the Muslim society. But the shrewd British tried to vilify Sayyid Saheb's mission with the help of their paid agents and psuedo-reformers in religion. Had Sayyid Saheb's mission succeeded, the subcontinent would have become free from the oppression of the British, and the other Asiatic countries would also have come out of the subjugation of Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Our Dr. Shah Ebadur Rahman (Neshat) deserves thanks and congratulations for having prepared the present book which is a significant addition to the research in the field. A book like this was needed in English to refute the misinformation spread by some English writers against Sayyid Saheb's Movement. It was for this purpose that Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi had to pen down a book *Tehqeeqo Insaaf ki Adalat mein Ek Mazloom Musleh ka Muqaddama* (translated into English as *A Misunderstood Reformer*), which was widely appreciated. Mohiuddin Ahmad also wrote a book in English on Sayyid Saheb under the direction of Maulana Nadwi, which was published from Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow and became an important addition to the reading material in English on the topic. But there

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction, Makaateeb Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed (Lahore: Maktaba Rashidiya), pp. 12-13.

was still the need that research should be taken further forward to present in modern English an account of the efforts of this great Renovator and Reformer. His influence is continuing to this day and offers solutions to social and moral evils of our time. It is a fact well established now that the environment of the places that fell en route to Sayyid Saheb's caravan was miraculously transformed - people renounced evil practices and repented from sins, and the values of the Islamic faith prevailed in the society. May Allah bless Dr. Shah Ebadur Rahman that he has stood up to face the great challenge of materialism by writing this book!

Dr. Shah Ebadur Rahman did his M. A. from University of Illinois at Chicago Circle and his Ph. D. in English from Northern Illinois University in the US. At Northern he also taught English for several years. He then joined the Department of English at Umm al-Qura University in Makkah Mukarramah. He later moved to King Khalid University at Abha, Saudi Arabia, where he taught English for several years and has taken retirement from there this year. During this long period of life he maintained a close relationship with Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi and benefited from his religious teachings, views and thinking. He is an open-minded person and keeps sound morals and character. He enjoyed the trust of Maulana Nadwi. He also benefited from Hazrat Maulana Nadwi in appreciating the personality and mission of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed. Consequently, he developed a desire to present to the modern readership an account of the Movement led by Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed in his own way. Hence, this book.

In the present book Dr. Shah Ebadur Rahman has discussed thoroughly the life, mission, Movement, and influence of *Amirul Momineen* Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed and has covered his moral, social, and political contributions (which led to the formation of an Islamic State on the pattern of the state established by the Rightly-guided Caliphs known in history as *Khilafate Rashida*). The result is a full and comprehensive coverage of Sayyid Saheb's Movement. He has also successfully argued that the



Movement in question did not simply earn short-lived achievements which evaporated as soon as Sayyid Saheb lost his life in Balakot. He has shown in this book that the influence of the Movement has continued to this day which can be discerned in the contemporary society. It is his thesis that Sayyid Saheb's was a truly Islamic Movement - calling Muslims to return to the pure and authentic teachings of the Shariah and proclaiming very powerfully the supremacy of the word of Allah - and that it was fully successful in achieving this aim. This Movement, he underscores, was absolutely free from all kinds of bias, religious or otherwise. It arrayed itself mainly against the British considering them as the chief enemy of the country, was in the forefront to generate a consciousness among Indians to expose the British plan to usurp political power in the country, and initiated a struggle for the freedom of India. I hope that this book will establish itself as a research document presenting the history of the time in the right perspective. May Allah richly reward the author and include him as a recipient of the blessings of the pious persons he discusses in this book. Ameen!

I congratulate Dr. Shah Ebadur Rahman for writing this book to express his sincere appreciation for Sayyid Saheb, a great *Mujaddid* (Renovator) of his time, who, with his associates, laid his life to support the cause of Jihad, moral reform of Muslims, and strengthening of justice, on one hand; and, on the other, reestablished the Islamic faith and morals by his extraordinary reformative endeavors. Sayyid Saheb occupies the status of a lighthouse for the Muslims of all times. It was needed that people benefit from his guidance, and this book is a promising attempt to help them in it. May Allah grant the author of this book a great reward, accept his effort, and make this book a source of benefit for people. Ameen!

Mohammad Rabey Hasani Nadwi  
Rector, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow  
President, All India Muslim Personal Law Board

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## Preface

When I started reading about Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed and his revivalist Movement and developed a fairly comprehensive acquaintance with his personality, mission, and contributions, I greatly wondered why this Movement, which was so recent, relevant and influential, was so little known in Indian history. As later readings convinced me, its main reason, in addition to other factors, lay in the repressive policy of the then British government of India. The British had overtaken power from the Muslims in India and, for safeguarding their political interest, they had to make sure that Muslims were crushed so totally that any fear of their rising again to challenge the British power was ruled out forever. In that background, a group of Muslims organizing themselves under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad to oppose the authority of the British was a genuine threat for them, and they did, whatever possible, to crush this Movement and to disparage the character of Sayyid Ahmad.

The British adopted several strategies for this purpose. They put the leaders behind the bars, deported them to the Andaman Islands (then known as *Kala Pani*), implicated the supporters in endless cases of litigation, confiscated their property, and created an environment in India in which even speaking favorably about Sayyid Ahmad and his Movement was tantamount to rebellion. Second, they organized a smear campaign against Sayyid Ahmad and his associates by wrongly calling them *Wahhabis*, thus associating them with Sheikh Abdul Wahhab, the puritanical leader of Saudi Arabia who was very much despised those days by common Muslims in India for the reasons that are not relevant to the thesis of this study. In addition, they wrote against Sayyid Ahmad, distorted facts, and felt free to call him "the free booter," a "robber," and a person born in "an obscure family", when actually

he was the most pious Muslim leader of his time and had a very noble lineage.<sup>2</sup>

The fear of persecution of the sympathizers of the Movement was so great and so real during the British rule in India that when Mohammad Jafar Thanasari, a devout leader of the Movement, wanted to write a biography of Sayyid Ahmad, he chose to tamper with the sources which went against the British: he changed the anti-British references in the letters of Sayyid Ahmad and inserted the words "the Sikhs" in place of "the British."<sup>3</sup> Similarly, when Sir Sayyid Ahmad wrote a rejoinder to William Hunter's *Our Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* he argued as strongly as he could to prove that Sayyid Ahmad's was not a Jihad Movement, and that it was never directed against the British.<sup>4</sup> Later, a book comprising a collection of articles on Shah Ismail Shaheed (Abdullah Butt, *Shah Ismail Shaheed* (reprt.), Lahore: Qaumi Kutub Khana, 1974) was published in the 1940s, a little before India's independence, in which it was acknowledged that it was just a beginning to accord due recognition to Sayyid Ahmad and his associates. Such a work by Muslim scholars became possible only when the end of the British rule in India became certain.

But, as it came to pass, vital information about the Movement was already collected and saved by the early biographers of Sayyid Ahmad. *Makhzane Ahmadi*, *Waqae Ahmadi*, and *Manzooratus So'ada* were accounts prepared by eyewitnesses. *Tazkerae Saadiqa* and *Tareekh-e Ajeeba* (also called *Sawaneh Ahmadi*) were also written by

<sup>2</sup> For details, see Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, "Introduction," *A Misunderstood Reformer* (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1979), pp. 42-52. It is a translation of Nadwi's Urdu book *Tahqeeq wa Insa'f ki Adalat me Ek Mazloom Musleh ka Muqaddama* by Mohiuddin Ahmad.

<sup>3</sup> Ghulam Rasool Mehr, *Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1981), p. 27. The book will henceforth be referred to as *Shaheed* for convenience. It must be acknowledged that Thanasari remained very sincerely committed to the Movement and its ideals until the last.

<sup>4</sup> Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, *Review on Dr. Hunter's Indian Musalman* (Lahore: Premier Book House, N.D.).

persons who were directly involved in the Movement. Also, letters containing important information about the Movement were extant. In addition, valuable references to the Movement and its leaders abounded in contemporary literature. The details about the personality, activities, and mission of Sayyid Ahmad were thus saved in the pages of history. These accounts, however, separately focused one aspect of the Movement or the other and could in no way provide a complete picture of it. There was a need that somebody wrote a comprehensive account of the Movement by using these sources and studied it in its historical background.

This important and difficult job was done by two writers of our time, Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi and Ghulam Rasool Mehr. They thoroughly researched all Persian, Arabic, Urdu, and English sources, and prepared the most comprehensive and truly authentic account of the Movement, dissecting facts from fiction in the most objective way. Nadwi began his writing career with an Arabic treatise on Sayyid Ahmad, which was published from Egypt. He remained committed to this topic all his life, contributing five independent books on the different aspects of the Movement. Mehr wrote three books on Sayyid Ahmad and the Mujahideen and maintained such a high standard of scholarship that placed him among the best historiographers in world literature. For writing his first book *Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed* alone, he took fourteen years in which he virtually read everything available on this topic he could lay his hands on. In fact, modern scholarship on Sayyid Ahmad owes a debt to these two researchers for not only making available relevant details about the Movement, but also putting the Movement in historical perspective which was lacking in earlier studies. Later writers have, of course, made important additions, but the works of these two writers remain seminal.

In this book I have tried to present a comprehensive account of the Movement, but the focus remains on its contributions in different areas. For this purpose I have written a rather long chapter, Chapter One, to introduce the personality and mission of Sayyid Ahmad, without which common readers might not have

been able to appreciate what was presented in the subsequent chapters. Chapter Two to Chapter Five cover the varied contributions of this Movement logically leading to Chapter Six which is the conclusion. In keeping with my objectives, I have emphasized the following points that I came upon during my research:

1. Sayyid Ahmad's Movement was purely Islamic. It aimed at bringing Muslims of the time back to the fold of Islam by calling them to practice its unadulterated teachings. Sayyid Ahmad's main objective was to win Allah's pleasure; his struggle in different fields remained means for him to achieve this end.
2. This Movement is wrongly referred to as merely a Jihad Movement. It was, in fact, a most comprehensive Islamic Movement that influenced all spheres of the lives of Muslims: religious, moral, social, political, and national. Jihad was, of course, an important part of it, but in order to appreciate the Movement, one has to look at all aspects of it.
3. This Movement evolved in stages: from a call for moral purification, to social reform, to Jihad, to political reform by establishing an Islamic state. In all its phases it stuck fully to the directions of the Islamic Law.
4. During the Jihad period Sayyid Ahmad had to challenge the Sikhs first due to the ongoing persecution of Muslims in the Punjab and in the Frontier. But he considered the British as the real enemy of Muslims. It was his opinion that the British wanted to destroy Muslims in India as effectively as possible so as to rule it without any fear of a Muslim uprising.
5. This Movement made a very valuable contribution to the national struggle for the freedom of India. The Mujahideen took an uncompromising stand against the British rule in India from the very beginning and fought with them a relentless war until India's independence in

1947. In fact, the Mujahideen were the only group that offered armed resistance to the British continuously for such a long time. Their role in the national struggle for the freedom of India has yet to be given due recognition in Indian history.

6. This Movement was free from all religious bias. It gave a call to the Muslims to return to the true teachings of Islam and made an effort to cleanse Islamic teachings from adulteration, whatever its source. But it never spread hatred against other religious communities in the name of Islam. If Sayyid Ahmad fought against the Sikhs and the later leaders fought against the Sikhs and the British, they did so in order to protect Muslims from their atrocities and defend Islamic values, not because these communities fostered a different faith.
7. It is a mistake to refer to this Movement as one that met with failure. In fact, it fully succeeded in achieving its aims. It brought about a religious, moral, social, and political revolution along the dictates of the Islamic Law in a very successful way, as this book aims to show.

As reading material on Sayyid Ahmad in English is still lacking, the present book may be seen as an effort to fill a small gap in scholarship, especially by highlighting Sayyid Ahmad's outstanding contributions in different fields. It is hoped that this book provides enough information needed for the appreciation of Sayyid Ahmad's personality and Movement, regenerates an interest in him for further reading and serves as an incentive for further research.

Shah Ebadur Rahman  
New Delhi, January 5, 2010

## Chapter One

### Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Life and Mission

It is a chapter of the history of Indo-Pak subcontinent pertaining to the period known as the era of decadence, but can any just and truthful person deny the fact that there is hardly any event of the days when Islam was triumphant, which is more illustrious and more dignified than it?

- Ghulam Rasool Mehr, *Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*

## Introduction

At a small village called Daera Shah Alamullah, situated on the bank of the River Sai, in Rae Bareilly, India, there lived a Sayyid family known far and wide for religious knowledge, noble conduct, piety and spiritual excellence. Following faithfully the teachings of the Islamic Shariah and etiquette of the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, the family lived under the spiritual influence of Shah Alamullah,<sup>5</sup> a great religious saint in India in the 17th century CE from whom the family had descended. In this family was born Sayyid Ahmad on the 29th November 1786 (6th Safar 1201 Hijri, henceforth)<sup>6</sup> to a pious couple, Sayyida Najiya (alias Naja) and Muhammad Irfan. It was this very fortunate child who emerged as the most powerful and influential Muslim leader of

<sup>5</sup> For details, see Muhammad al-Hasani, *Tazkira Hazrat Sayyid Shah Alamullah Hasani* (Lucknow: Maktaba al-Islam 1970).

<sup>6</sup> Ghulam Rasool Mehr, *Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1981), pp. 60-61. All further citations from this book are to this edition. The same practice is observed for all other sources used in this study. This book will henceforth be referred to as *Shaheed* in this study for convenience.

the early 19<sup>th</sup> century India and whose revivalist Movement now forms an important chapter in the then Muslim-Sikh-British history of the subcontinent.

The revivalist Movement of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, which is the subject of the present work, stands distinguished for its comprehensiveness, for it reached all aspects of the then Muslim society - spiritual, moral, social, political - and revolutionized them under the religious guidance of Islam. This Movement was very deep, very wide, and extremely powerful, which generated a long lasting renaissance in the Muslim Ummah of the time. Indeed, a leader of Sayyid Ahmad's stature is hard to find in the history of Islamic revivalism in the Indian subcontinent for centuries.

## Early Life

Sayyid Ahmad's schooling began at four, in the year 1791. Although education was much valued in the family and was considered a mark of distinction for it, Sayyid Ahmad did not show much interest in learning. During the initial three years he could memorize only a few short chapters of the Qur'an and learned to write Urdu alphabets.<sup>7</sup> But as he grew older, he excelled his peers in zeal for prayers and God-remembrance. He remained eagerly busy in post-night optional prayers (*Tahajjud*) and took great delight in supplicating to God, reciting the Qur'an, and meditating in the meaning and message of its verses. In addition, he exhibited an extraordinary interest in helping the needy and the poor. He used to visit his poor neighbors - especially the disabled, the widows, and the aged - inquire about their needs, and find rest and peace only after helping them. He fetched water for them from the well, brought firewood from the forest on his head to their houses, and did other household chores, never caring that such things did not match with his high family status.

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<sup>7</sup> *Makhzane Ahmadi* by Sayyid Muhammad Ali, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p.



Also, he had a great fascination for physical exercise and war games. As he advanced in age, his passion for physical sports and martial arts increased. He used to remain engaged in strenuous physical exercise for several hours at a stretch.<sup>8</sup> He also learned fencing, archery, and shooting and practiced them to perfection.<sup>9</sup> In swimming he was superb. According to Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla, ruler of the state of Tonk in India, he could adeptly swim against the strong currents of the river, an accomplishment even the professionals of the time envied.<sup>10</sup>

## To Lucknow

With the passage of time Sayyid Ahmad grew up and emerged as an attractive person - courteous, helpful, pious, strong and handsome. His father had died when he was twelve which obliged him to look for a job to support his family. He was seventeen or eighteen<sup>11</sup> when he decided to go for this purpose to Lucknow, which was forty-nine miles from Rae Bareilly. Seven relatives and friends joined him. They had to travel by road, walking mostly on foot. They had only one horse that they rode by turn and had to hand carry their luggage. The journey was arduous and tiring and the distance very long to cover on foot, but the exhausted travelers found great support in the presence of Sayyid Ahmad. In spite of severe opposition of companions, he tied their luggage as one piece and carried it on his head. He also offered his turn to ride the horse to his companions and chose for himself to walk all the way to Lucknow on foot.

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<sup>8</sup> Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Seerat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*, vol. 1, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., (Lucknow: Majlise Tahqiqat wan Nashriyat, 1977), p. 107. For convenience this book will henceforth be referred to as *Seerat*.

<sup>9</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> *Waqae Ahmadi* (henceforth referred to as *Waqae*), quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 68.

Lucknow did not offer a solution to the financial problems of Sayyid Ahmad and his companions as unemployment was widespread there. Sayyid Ahmad's companions had to struggle very hard to manage for their living. A rich person who had great devotion for Sayyid Ahmad's forefathers took him as guest. Meals for Sayyid Ahmad used to come from his house, which he always shared with his companions: he himself ate the inferior food prepared by his companions and persuaded them one way or the other to eat the good dishes that came for him from his host. When his friends did not have anything to eat, he fed his meal to them by offering some excuse. His host tried his best to find a job for them, but the situation was out of his hands.

## To Shah Abdul Aziz

Days dragged on this way for four long months. Sayyid Ahmad's companions were depressed, but he responded to the situation in a very unusual way. Those days his heart was set on Shah Abdul Aziz of Delhi, son of the famous Islamic scholar Shah Waliyullah Dehlawi, who was a renowned religious scholar and spiritual mentor of the time. With great eagerness Sayyid Ahmad talked with his friends about him and praised him as being a great living sign of Allah on earth. He encouraged his companions to accompany him to Delhi to benefit from the company and teachings of Shah Abdul Aziz, rather than tiring themselves in petty toils for finding a job. But the companions were so miserably devoid of means that none of them became ready to accompany him to Delhi. Greatly eager as he was to meet Shah Abdul Aziz, he one day set out to Delhi alone without informing anyone. He decided to walk to Delhi on foot, as he could not afford to take any conveyance. The meager amount of money that he had was not enough even for buying food during the journey.

During his journey, he once stopped at a place and bought food with the last part of the money he had. He was extremely hungry and had gotten the food after a long while. When he was about to

take his food, a poor person approached him and said: "I've been starving for four days which has brought me near my death. If you don't have mercy on me, I'll surely die." Sayyid Ahmad's extreme hunger and the fact that he had bought that food with the last part of his money urged him that he ignore the man and relieve himself of the pain of hunger. But the very next moment he overcame his weakness, gave all the food he had to the starving man and engaged himself in the remembrance of God.<sup>12</sup>

## Spiritual Initiation

When Sayyid Ahmad reached Delhi, Shah Abdul Aziz welcomed him warmly as he had very well known his uncle Sayyid Noman and his maternal grandfather Sayyid Abu Saeed, great scholars of their times and close associates of his revered father Shah Waliyullah Dehlawi.<sup>13</sup> Shah Abdul Aziz was pleased to hear that Sayyid Ahmad had come that long distance in the hope of attaining Allah-cognizance under his spiritual guidance. He entrusted him for the time being to the spiritual care of his brother, Shah Abdul Qadir, the famous scholar and first translator of the Qur'an in Urdu. At his instructions he started living in the Akbari Mosque<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 71.

<sup>13</sup> Some personal letters of Shah Waliyullah Dehlawi addressed to Sayyid Abu Saeed have recently been published for the first time in an anthology entitled *Nadir Maktoobat: Hazrat Shah Waliyullah Muhaddith Dehlawi*, translated from Persian to Urdu by Naseem Ahmad Faridee (Phulat, Muzaffarabad: Hazrat Shah Waliyullah Academy, 1998), pp. 405-09. The book will henceforth be referred to as *Nadir Maktoobat*.

<sup>14</sup> *Wasaya al-Wazeer 'Ala Tareeqatal Basheer wan Nazeer* (henceforth referred to as *Wasaya*), by Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla (Tonk: Matba' Muhammadi, 1284H), quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 81, footnote 2. As Mehr writes, the Akbari Masjid was built by E'zazun Nisa, wife of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, known more popularly as Akbarabadi Mahal, in August 1650 (Ramadan, 1061 H). It was also called the Akbarabadi Masjid. It was a very large and spacious mosque made of beautiful red stones. It had rooms attached to three sides of it constructed especially for students who came to Delhi from different places to study there. The neighborhood adjacent to it was destroyed by the British after the 1857 Revolution. The mosque survived. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan writes that the mosque was extant when he was writing his famous book *Atharus Sanadeed*.

in one of the rooms constructed for students and engaged himself in the remembrance of Allah. He also started taking lessons in Arabic and Persian from Shah Abdul Qadir.

One Friday Shah Abdul Qadir presented Sayyid Ahmad to Shah Abdul Aziz. Sayyid Ahmad entered into *Bai'ah* (spiritual apprenticeship by taking an oath of allegiance) with Shah Abdul Aziz.<sup>15</sup> Since then he devoted his days and nights to prayers, supplication, and God remembrance. Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla relates that for years in the early stage of his spiritual initiation Sayyid Ahmad used to offer Morning Prayer (*Salatul Fajr*) with the ablution (*Wudhu*) of preceding Night Prayer (*Salatul Isha*), thus remaining engaged all night in different kinds of devotional services.<sup>16</sup> His feet used to get swollen due to the observance of post-night prayers (*Tahajjud*) for long hours. His sincerity, selflessness, and devotion started showing signs of Allah's acceptance. Under the guidance of Shah Abdul Qadir and Shah Abdul Aziz, his spiritual excellence started shining bright. Shah

(*Shaheed*, pp. 74-76). For a picture of the mosque and the original inscription (*Kaiba*) carved on it, see *Nadir Maktoobat*, p. 128.

<sup>15</sup> In one of his personal letters Shah Waliyullah writes about a dream which has an interesting reference to Sayyid Ahmad. He once saw in a dream that a young man, about sixteen years old, was presented to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a mosque (which was either the Jam'e Masjid of Delhi or the Akbari Mosque). The Prophet instructed Shah Waliyullah to bless the young man by adorning him with his dress (*kharqa*). Accordingly, Shah Waliyullah put his sheet on the young man. The Prophet also blessed the young man by giving him his own dress (*kharqa*). Shah Waliyullah did not recognize that person. He mentions in that letter, "Let's see whom the Friend loves and toward whom his heart inclines" (*Nadir Maktoobat*, p. 128). Maulana Noorul Hasan Kandhlawi has interpreted this dream in an article, "*Shah Waliyullah ke Ek Khab ki Tabeer: Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed*" (*Al-Furqan*, February 1990) in which he argues that the young man seen in the dream bears striking similarities with Sayyid Ahmad. Shah Waliyullah could not recognize Sayyid Ahmad in the dream as the latter was born after his death. When Sayyid Ahmad went to Shah Waliyullah's son and spiritual deputy Shah Abdul Aziz, Sayyid Ahmad was the same age as the person seen in the dream. He was also attached to both Akbari Mosque and Jam'e Masjid of Delhi during his spiritual training, the site of the incident in the dream, and benefited from the spiritual blessings of Shah Waliyullah through Shah Abdul Aziz, which was symbolized in the dream by his granting *kharqa* (dress) to the young man. Nisar Ahmad Farooqui writes that "apparently there is no reason for disagreement with this interpretation of Noorul Hasan Kandhlawi." (*Nadir Maktoobat*, vol. 1, pp. 126-28).

<sup>16</sup> *Mehr, Shaheed*, p. 831.

Abdul Aziz acknowledged the brilliance of the young Sayyid. He once mentioned to Shah Ismail, his nephew, that Sayyid Ahmad revealed a great affinity with the nature and manners of the prophets: he would not accept anything that was not authenticated by the Shariah.

Sayyid Ahmad's spiritual progress under the guidance of Shah Abdul Aziz knew no bounds. His soul was pious, his nature clean, his heart selfless. Those days he had several dreams hinting at his spiritual purification and enlightenment. Once he dreamed that Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth rightly-guided caliph, was giving him a bath as a father gives a bath to his son, after which Hazrat Fatima put an elegant dress on him. On another occasion, on the 27th of Ramadan in 1222 H (November 28, 1807, H stands for Hijri), he was suddenly awakened in the last part of the night. On opening his eyes he saw Abu Bakr Siddique, the first caliph in Islam, and the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. He was thus instructed: "Ahmad, wake up and take a shower. This is the Night of Power (*Lailatul Qadr*). Engage yourself in the remembrance of Allah, supplicate to the Lord Who fulfills needs, and duly glorify Him." He took a bath, made ablution, and engaged himself in prayers and supplication. That night turned out to be a night of great blessings for Sayyid Ahmad. He had strange revealing experiences. He found in himself a newborn but highly powerful spiritual sensitivity with which he could witness rocks and trees offering prostration to Allah and singing His hymn in a manner impossible to be expressed in words. This experience was so certain but so unique that he could not be sure if it was an experience in dream or in awakening. In the morning he narrated the whole incident to Shah Abdul Aziz. Shah Abdul Aziz was overjoyed to hear it and congratulated him by saying: "Extend thanks to Allah abundantly that He found you a pauper and made you a king." This incident has been versified by Sayyid Muhammad Ali, one of the early biographers of Sayyid Ahmad, and is recorded in his book *Makhzane Ahmadi*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p.p 122-23, and Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 82.

## Return to Rae Bareli

Sayyid Ahmad had come to Delhi from Lucknow all of a sudden: a quest for attaining Allah's cognizance under the spiritual guidance of Shah Abdul Aziz had urged him to walk on foot that long distance. Now that his objective was fulfilled, he took leave of Shah Abdul Aziz and returned home by the end of 1807 or beginning of 1808 (late 1222 or early 1223 H). He was twenty-two then. In 1808 (1223 H) he was married to Sayyida Zahra of Naseerabad. The following year, he was blessed with a daughter who was named Sarah.<sup>18</sup> During his stay at Rae Bareli Sayyid Ahmad must have been pondering upon the problems of Muslims in India and the possible ways to redress them. Unfortunately we do not have any definite information about his plans at that time, but we know that he lived at Rae Bareli until May 1811 (Rabiul Aakhir of 1226 H) and then left home to join the army of Nawwab Amir Khan.<sup>19</sup> He must have his plans to persuade Amir Khan to do the needful to protect the interest of the Indian Muslims.

## To the Army of Amir Khan

For a person like Sayyid Ahmad whose foremost commitment was to uphold the cause of Islam, the condition of the contemporary Indian Muslims was extremely frustrating. At that time there had emerged three strong anti-Muslim powers on the political scene

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<sup>18</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 85. Several theories have been put forth to explain what Sayyid Ahmad's main motive was in joining Amir Khan's army. Of all of them, the theory espoused by *Waqae Ahmadi*, *Manzoor*, and *Makhzane Ahmadi*, biographies of Sayyid Ahmad, claiming that Sayyid Ahmad went to Amir Khan due to a divine inspiration (*ilham*) seems to me most valid. First, Sayyid Ahmad himself related it, as *Waqae Ahmadi* reports. Second, some later events also show that Sayyid Ahmad made radical changes in his programs all of a sudden explaining that he did so according to the will of Allah revealed to him by divine inspiration. His sudden decision to go for pilgrimage instead of migrating to the Frontier for Jihad, which he had planned and announced earlier, is an example of it.

that had crippled the Muslim rule in India: the Marhattas, the Sikhs, and the British. Delhi was still ruled by Shah Alam, a descendant of the Mughal royal dynasty, but he enjoyed neither power nor freedom to act on his will. The Marhattas had established their states in the Central India and Deccan. Ranjit Singh had laid a Sikh state in the Punjab. The British had established themselves as a very powerful political force in India: they had subjugated Karnataka, Bihar, Bengal, and Orrisa and managed to take over the state of Mysore, the stronghold of Sultan Tipu Sultan. The other two significant Muslim powers - the Deccan ruled by the Nizam and the state of Oudh in the Northern India - had already surrendered to the British and entered into a peace treaty with them. The British had taken into complete control the affairs of the Mughal sultanate in Delhi and with it their interference in the religious affairs of the Muslims had started increasing every day. If there existed any independent and free Muslim leader on the Indian scene at that time who could have helped in safeguarding the interest of the Muslims in India, it was Amir Khan.

Amir Khan, son of a chief of the Afghans of Rohil Khand Mohammad Hayat Khan, was an ambitious person, fearless soldier, and able commander. At the age of twenty, he left home in search of fortune. Soon he gathered a strong army around him and became a powerful independent military leader. The Marhattas and the Rajput rulers used to take military help from him against each other. He sided with the party that paid him money. At one point his army consisted of fifty thousand horsemen, twelve thousand soldiers, and one hundred and fifteen canons. His fame for his powerful army and able command had, in fact, crossed the boundaries of the then India. In 1814 (1229 H) Shah Shuja, the king of Kabul, had called him to Kabul, and the wife of Naseer Khan, ruler of Baluchistan, had invited him to Baluchistan to help them against their adversaries.<sup>20</sup> Although Amir Khan's efforts were directed toward petty and immediate material gains, he was the

<sup>20</sup> *Amir Nama*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 128.

only Muslim leader then who was free from the influence of the Marhattas and the Sikhs and could have challenged the British power in India.<sup>21</sup> If he could have been persuaded to work for the revival of Islam in India, there was still a hope for the Muslims. Had he planned intelligently and wished sincerely, he could have induced Shah Shujaul Mulk, the king of Kabul, to help him in his fight against the British, or independently recruited hundreds of thousands of the Yusufzai youths from Attock who were his countrymen. As Mehr writes, he was well known for his love for Islam and was a practicing Muslim. In addition, he had known the family of Sayyid Ahmad and had respect for their religious background.<sup>22</sup> In this situation it was most appropriate that Sayyid Ahmad decided to work with Amir Khan.

Sayyid Ahmad soon attracted attention as a godly person in the army of Amir Khan. His selflessness, piety, and reputation for acceptance of his supplication made him very popular and respectable among the soldiers. Soon the sick and the needy among the soldiers started coming to him seeking his prayers: he consoled them, prayed for them, and took the opportunity to instruct them in religious matters. He, for example, said to a sick person, "Promise that you will not do anything forbidden by Allah and offer five obligatory prayers regularly; I'll then pray for your health." To a poor businessman who requested him to pray for abundance in his provision, he replied, "Change your name from Madaar Bakhsh (which meant 'a gift of a saint named Madaar' and was, therefore, *Shirk*) to Allah Bakhsh, give up all bad habits, offer five times prayers, don't tell a lie, never deceive or cheat anybody knowingly, and don't weigh goods less while selling and more while buying. Then I will pray for you to my Lord." To another person he instructed, "Give up the words and deeds of *Shirk*

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<sup>21</sup> In *Amir Nama* (p. 365) Amir Khan is reported to have expressed his desire to fight against the British and mentioned the options discussed above. See Nadwi, in *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 136-37. At one point he is reported to have said that he wanted to rule the whole India.

<sup>22</sup> Mehr, *Jama'ate Mujahideen* (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Ali & Sons, 1955), p. 18. Henceforth, this book will be referred to as *Jama'at*.



(polytheism); Allah will bless you in both worlds." By the will of Allah the sick were cured, the destitute provided with, and the needy relieved of their burden, but, above all, they adopted correct Islamic faith, relinquished bad habits, and acquired good manners and values in their lives.<sup>23</sup>

With Amir Khan Sayyid Ahmad had the same objective and he went ahead with it quite successfully. Soon after he joined the army, he impressed Amir Khan as a strong, bold, daring, intelligent and pious person. Amir Khan took him as one of his advisors. Sayyid Ahmad used to visit him every day. Amir Khan listened to his advice and accepted his recommendations.<sup>24</sup> We have no definite information of how Sayyid Ahmad tried to make Amir Khan mindful of his Islamic responsibilities in private meetings, but his presence in the army was a constant reminder to the Nawwab of the noble teachings of Islam. We can get a good glimpse of it in the event of the battle of Jaipur. Amir Khan asked one of his commanders, Muhammad Omar Khan, to open a front in a canal against the opposing army, which was quite a dangerous position in the battlefield. Omar Khan was reluctant. Sayyid Ahmad offered to go with him, but the Nawwab did not agree to part with him. Sayyid Ahmad then said to Omar Khan, "Don't be afraid. Remember Allah. Nobody dies before the appointed hour."<sup>25</sup> Then information arrived that Chand Singh of the Jaipur army was at a close distance from them with thirty thousand horsemen in his command. Sayyid Ahmad lifted his hands to Allah and said a moving prayer beseeching Allah for help. He then moved ahead with only six horsemen to assess the situation, and directed the Nawwab to follow him with the rest of the army when he signaled him to do so.

Here we see Sayyid Ahmad as a fearless soldier risking his life by marching ahead of the army and a confident advisor of the Nawwab determining an important military move in the battlefield.

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<sup>23</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 131-33.

<sup>24</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 101.

<sup>25</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 135.

But a deeper look into this event reveals how he sincerely projected Islamic values in the midst of action. His reminder to Omar Khan of the supremacy of Allah and of an appointed hour for death, and his offering a sincere prayer to Allah in a difficult moment while Amir Khan was there would have definitely changed the outlook and the mood of the soldiers, Omar Khan, and Amir Khan.<sup>26</sup>

But before Sayyid Ahmad could make Amir Khan realize his Islamic responsibilities, a major change in the political situation compelled Amir Khan to sign a peace treaty with the British. The Peshwa entered into a peace treaty with the British. After sometime Sindhiya followed suit. Then Holkar, a trustworthy ally and friend of Amir Khan, also signed a treaty with the British on January 6, 1818. Thus Amir Khan was left alone in face of the intrigue and might of the British. By that time the states of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota, Bondi, Kishun Garh, Karauli, and some other states had already entered into treaty with the British. After thus isolating Amir Khan, the British sent an army against him while he was engaged in a battle with the ruler of Madhupuri and surrounded him from three sides. Amir Khan could get help neither from Pindaras, nor from Sindhiya, nor from Holkar. In his army itself, there was an apprehension of a British-sponsored dissension against him - the same poison that the British had used against Sultan Tipu Sultan. As soon as the British army advanced against him, Faizullah Bangash, an ex-lieutenant of Amir Khan, joined it with his battalion.<sup>27</sup> Under such pressure Amir Khan decided to accept the offer of peace. He signed the peace treaty with the British and was made the Nawwab of Tonk and recipient of the sum of rupees one hundred-fifty thousand (Rs 150,000) annually for the area of Palwal.<sup>28</sup>

During Amir Khan's talk for the peace pact with the British, Sayyid Ahmad voiced his strong protest against it at several stages and tried to encourage him to fight against the British, but Amir

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<sup>26</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 101, 97-98.

<sup>27</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 138.

<sup>28</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 107-09.

Khan had lost confidence in his own men. Sayyid Ahmad then decided to part ways with him. When he met Amir Khan the last time to bid him good bye, the Khan's eyes splashed with tears and he said in an emotion-stricken voice: "Whatever was destined has taken place. There is no escape from the decree of God. Now that you are going to Delhi, travel with my son Muhammad Wazeer Khan."<sup>29</sup> Sayyid Ahmad then finally left Amir Khan and went to Delhi to meet Shah Abdul Aziz, his spiritual mentor.<sup>30</sup>

## Return to Shah Abdul Aziz

It seemed that the will of the Almighty had chosen that time to mark the beginning of an era of Islamic revival. During Sayyid Ahmad's stay in Delhi this time, people at all levels acknowledged his extraordinary spiritual merit. Even scholars from the family of Shah Waliyullah, such as Shah Ismail, Shah Abdul Hai, Shah Ishaque, and Mohammad Yusuf Phulati, who were the acknowledged leaders of the then Indian Muslim scholars, took him as their spiritual mentor and offered Bai'ah to him. When this news spread, Sayyid Ahmad immediately became the center of attraction for Muslims all over India. It seemed as if, by the will of Allah, a wind blew from Delhi east and west, north and south, and with its soft touch raised in the hearts of Muslims an unprecedented love for Sayyid Ahmad. People who could travel to Delhi came to him to offer oath of allegiance to him; those who could not, wrote to him requesting him to visit their places and grace their lives. When such invitation letters poured in a large number, Sayyid Ahmad sent them to Shah Abdul Aziz for his instructions.

<sup>29</sup> *Waq'a'e*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 140.

<sup>30</sup> Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla writes in his book *Wasaya*, vol. 2, that when the peace talk was going on between his father Nawwab Amir Khan and the British, Sayyid Ahmad had mentioned in advance by way of prophecy which specific areas would be given to the Nawwab. In fact, the same areas were given to him. (Mehr, *Jama'at*, p.190).

## First Reformist Tour

Shah Abdul Aziz was extremely happy to notice the growing popularity of Sayyid Ahmad. He not only allowed him to undertake the tour, but also honored him at the time of departure by offering him his dress (*Kharqa*), which was customary in those days to show one's trust in one's disciple. Sayyid Ahmad set out with twenty persons to tour the area of Doaba, which lay between the rivers Ganges and Yamuna. The famous places he visited were Ghaziabad, Meerut, Budhana, Phulat, Deoband, Muradnagar, Sardhana, Saharanpur, Muzaffar Nagar, Anbeth, Nanota, and Gangoh. He also visited neighboring areas of important places such as Meerut, Deoband, and Saharanpur. The tour took about six months and was undertaken, according to Mehr's calculations, in November 1818 and ended in May 1819.<sup>31</sup>

Wherever Sayyid Ahmad went, he was accorded an exceptionally warm reception. People in large numbers came out of their villages and towns in eagerness to welcome his caravan and thronged around him to offer Bai'ah to him. In Saharanpur, for example, Shah Abdur Raheem Wilayati, a very famous sheikh of his time, offered Bai'ah to him with all his disciples. When Sayyid Ahmad moved from one place to another, his followers accompanied him for miles to see him off and bade him farewell with tearful eyes. When he departed from Meerut, hundreds of people burst into tears. Sayyid Ahmad was himself deeply moved: he consoled them but at the final moment of departure his own eyes splashed with tears.<sup>32</sup>

During his tour Sayyid Ahmad noticed that in general Muslims all over were ignorant of Islamic injunctions and had, therefore, moved away from true Islamic teachings. Shirk (polytheism), Bid'ah (innovation) and other serious un-Islamic practices were prevalent among them at a large scale. He decided to call them to return to the true teachings of Islam. He spoke about the magnificence of the

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<sup>31</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 125.

<sup>32</sup> Details of the journey have been taken from Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 152-72.

teachings of the Qur'an and the prophetic Traditions (*Hadith*) in his private and public discourses and asked Maulana Abdul Hai, and on one occasion in Meerut Hafiz Qutbuddin, to take up these issues in their sermons. When people came to offer Bai'ah to him, he accepted them as his disciples only when they made a solemn promise for, first, following Tawheed and Sunnah and, second, renouncing all acts of Shirk and Bid'ah at once. Wherever he went, a spiritual illumination and religious enlightenment spread. The blessings of his visit could still be seen in the areas he visited, as Muslims in these places still show greater adherence to Islamic teachings.<sup>33</sup> Sayyid Ahmad, in the words of Maulana Zulfikar Ali, father of Sheikhul Hind Maulana Mahmoodul Hasan, was a divine light; wherever he went, the place was illuminated with his spiritual effulgence.<sup>34</sup> After completing his tour Sayyid Ahmad returned to Delhi.<sup>35</sup> From there he went to his home village Daera Shah Alamullah.

## Second Reformist Tour

Sayyid Ahmad made his second reformist tour of the area in which he covered some important places in the east of Rae Bareilly: Siron, Ahlad Ganj, Allahabad, Banaras (Varansi), and their neighboring areas. At all places Muslims were in general ignorant of Islamic teachings and considered the arrival of Sayyid Ahmad's caravan a much-needed blessing. He also visited several neighboring villages where people offered Bai'ah to him and repented from past transgressions. In this tour about one hundred and seventy followers were with him.

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<sup>33</sup> *Armoghane Ahbab* by Sayyid Abdul Hai, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 172.

<sup>34</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 129. For details of the journey, see pp. 124-30.

<sup>35</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 171.

## Third Reformist Tour

After some time Sayyid Ahmad undertook a tour to Lucknow to call Muslims toward moral and social reform. The whole society was plagued with moral degeneration and social corruption. But Sayyid Ahmad's arrival made a difference. Maulana Abdul Hai started giving sermons in the mosques and underscored the need for Muslims to return to the authentic teachings of Islam. Muslims from all sections of life responded to this call enthusiastically. In a few days nine to ten thousand Muslims repented from transgressions at the hands of Sayyid Ahmad and adopted a virtuous lifestyle. Encouraged by the positive response of the people, Sayyid Ahmad decided to stay there longer.

Soon the news about Sayyid Ahmad's stay in Lucknow attracted the residents of the city and its neighborhood. People thronged around him in a large number. On most occasions Maulana Abdul Hai addressed the audience. His sermons were based on the direct teachings of the Qur'an. The Muslims were deeply moved; every day a large number of them pledged at the hands of Sayyid Ahmad to return to the Islamic Shariah. The Ulema, the spiritual mentors (*Mashaekh*), and the commoners offered Bai'ah to him. The atmosphere of Lucknow saw a swift and sure emergence of Islamic practices in the Muslim society. The mosque where Maulana Abdul Hai spoke after Friday prayer was so thickly attended by the devotees that they had to make prostrations in prayer at the back of one another for lack of space.

Sayyid Ahmad was invited at several places. Wherever he went, he called the Muslims to return to the teachings of the Qur'an and prophetic etiquettes. At every place Muslims discarded un-Islamic practices and resolved their long-held disputes in the light of the teachings of Islam. Criminals and outlaws became good practicing Muslims. The eunuchs who lived in the society as cheap entertainers gave up their shameful profession. The Shias also used to attend Maulana Abdul Hai's sermons and were deeply influenced by the simple and pristine teachings of Islam, to the extent that

some of them chose to convert. The Prime Minister Motamedud Dawla invited him at his residence for feast and paid homage to him. He also offered repentance from un-Islamic practices.<sup>36</sup>

After returning from Lucknow, Sayyid Ahmad stayed at his village Daera Shah Alamullah for about one year. As his tour had generated in Muslims an eagerness to learn about Islam and practice its teachings, a large number of people, men as well as women, started coming to Daera to benefit from his company and teachings. He bore the expenses of his guests and associates who stayed with him. From the beginning he kept his associates with him so as to spiritually enlighten, morally discipline, and physically prepare them for the service of Islam.

### Sayyid Ahmad's Analysis of the Situation

The religious awakening that Sayyid Ahmad witnessed among Muslims as a result of his missionary efforts in the areas he visited did not conceal the fact from his eyes that the degeneration of Indian Muslims at that time was much larger and deeper. Due to the loss of political power the Indian Muslims were showing a sign of degeneration in all spheres of life and were put to humiliation in all walks of life. As mentioned earlier, the British had stifled the freedom and power of the Mughal Empire to the extent that Muslims could practice their faith only at the sweet will of the British. From Deccan to Delhi the life and property of Muslims were at the mercy of the Marhattas. From the Punjab to the border of Afghanistan ruled the Sikhs who kept on attacking the northern and central parts of India at their will. Delhi and its suburbs were very unsafe for Muslims due to the frequent attacks of the Marhattas, the Sikhs, and the Jats.

Especially in the Punjab the condition of the Muslims was extremely miserable. The Sikh government of the state had imposed ruthless restrictions on the Muslims residing there in practicing Islam. As Lapel Griffin puts it, "The ways of Muslims

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<sup>36</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 222-23.

were considered so detestable that the Sikhs were forbidden to wear caps so as to dissociate them from Muslims even in dress." He writes further that "the Maharaja had found it necessary to prohibit the call to prayer by the Muezzin, as it aroused the Akalis to fury."<sup>37</sup> Kanhaiya Lal writes that desecration and demolition of the mosques had become a common practice under the Sikh rule. Thousands of mosques were demolished and converted into residential buildings. The famous *Badshahi Masjid* of Lahore, which was once considered an architectural pride of the Punjab, was converted into a cantonment. The Mosque at the Masti Gate was turned into a gunpowder factory and later became known as *Baroodi Masjid* (Gunpowder Masjid). The *Sunehri Masjid* or Golden Mosque was turned into a Sikh shrine.<sup>38</sup>

The condition of Muslims in the neighboring areas of the Punjab was extremely miserable due to the high-handedness of the Punjab government. For example, the pathetic condition of the Muslims of the Frontier and Peshawar, from where Sayyid Ahmad started his Jihad Movement, is documented by a historian in these words:

The periodical visits of the Sikhs were calamitous to the people....Crowds of women and children fled frightened from their houses, and the country presented the appearance of an emigrating colony. As the hated host advanced, they overran the neighborhood, pillaging and destroying whatever came within their reach and laying waste the fields. There is scarce a village from the head of the valley to the Indus which has not been burnt and plundered by the Sikh commander.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Lapel Griffin, *Ranjit Singh*, p. 136, quoted by Mohiuddin Ahmad in *Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed: His Life and Mission*, (Lucknow: Academy of Research and Publication, 1975), p. 149.

<sup>38</sup> Kanhaiya Lal, *Tarikhe Lahore*, quoted by Mohiuddin Ahmad, p. 149. Since we use two authors with the last name "Ahmad," we will use their full names in citations in order to avoid confusion.

<sup>39</sup> Griffin, pp. 146-47, quoted by Mohiuddin Ahmad, pp. 150-51.



Similar was the misery of the Muslim population of Kashmir. As Carmichael Smythe writes, "All those who have heard, and 'Oh, who has not heard of the vale of Cashmere,' must have observed that every traveler who visited that place since it fell into the hands of Ranjit Singh, has heard the unfortunate inhabitants cry out against the oppression of the Seik [Sikh] Chieftain, and now their falling in the power of Goolab Singh is like escaping from Scylla into charybdis."<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the practice of forcing Muslim women to live in the houses of their Sikh captors as their mistress and young girls and boys to live in their houses in bondage and disgrace added insult to injury.<sup>41</sup>

This situation was very painful for Sayyid Ahmad and he considered it his duty to do whatever was within his means to uphold the sanctity of Islamic injunctions and protect Muslims from the atrocities of the hostile Sikh government in Punjab. During his stay at Daera this time this issue remained his greatest concern.<sup>42</sup>

## Fourth Reformist Tour

Sayyid Ahmad took the fourth reformist tour from Rae Bareilly at the invitation of the people of Kanpur and its adjacent areas. He visited Kanpur, Kaura, Jahanabad, Majhawan, Khajwa, and Fatehpur and took his reform message to the people living in that area. Everywhere people gathered around him in large numbers, offered oath of allegiance, gave up un-Islamic practices, and committed themselves to the teachings of the Islamic Shariah. Thus, Sayyid Ahmad spent 'a good deal of time in contacting Muslims on

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<sup>40</sup> Carmichael Smythe, *A History of the Reigning Family of Lahore*, p. 20, quoted by Mohiuddin Ahmad, p. 151.

<sup>41</sup> Kanhaiya Lal (Rai Bahadur), *Tareekhe Punjab*, p. 182, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 415.

<sup>42</sup> Information on the political situation of the then India has been taken from Nadwi's *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 65-68.

personal basis and winning their hearts and minds to follow the Islamic Shariah. That is why, as we will see later, Sayyid Ahmad's Movement survived for a long time in spite of the severest possible opposition.<sup>43</sup>

## The Hajj Journey

When Sayyid Ahmad was giving a call to Indian Muslims to return to the true teachings of Islam, a very serious threat to a fundamental pillar of Islam - the Hajj - was working its way in the Muslim society. The sea route to Makkah had become unsafe those days due to the incursions of the Portuguese and the English sailors on the ships of the pilgrims, and so sometimes ships were drowned in the sea and lives were lost.<sup>44</sup> On this pretext, some scholars of India issued a *Fatwa* (religious verdict) that Hajj was no more obligatory for Indian Muslims, as safety of passage, a condition for the obligatoriness of Hajj, was not available to them. This created a great confusion among Muslims. A copy of a *Fatwa* against the obligatoriness of Hajj for Indian Muslims was presented to Sayyid Ahmad when he was in Lucknow.<sup>45</sup> Naturally, he became very concerned about the situation. He came to the conclusion that somebody from India should perform Hajj with a large group of pilgrims and publicize it as widely as possible in order to establish that the threat to life and property in the Hajj journey was inconsequential.

Sayyid Ahmad was preparing then to migrate to the Frontier to establish a center for Jihad there. But he postponed his plan and decided to perform Hajj first with a view to establish its obligatoriness for Indian Muslims. He announced that he had decided to go for Hajj the following year and that everybody who wished to accompany him was welcome. He took the responsibility to meet the travel expenses of all who would join him for the

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<sup>43</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 254-55.

<sup>44</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 177.

<sup>45</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 176.

pilgrimage. In order to publicize his plan, he wrote letters to his followers at important places and asked them to encourage people to join him for performing Hajj and bring as many persons as would get ready for it.<sup>46</sup>

When preparations were afoot, some persons raised the question of financial resources, but Sayyid Ahmad remained composed and confident and replied: "If I invite people for Hajj, I do so with faith in Allah the Beneficent and Compassionate, and I have confidence that by His mercy this mission will be completed successfully."<sup>47</sup> To his relatives who knew his poor financial condition and were surprised at his offer to finance the trip, he used to say: "The present shortage of means is only up to the time that I am in Rae Bareli. As soon as I step out, people will see how Allah the Cherisher of the Worlds provides for us from unexpected sources and raises people for our help."<sup>48</sup>

On Monday the 30th of July 1821 (last day of Shawwal 1236 H) Sayyid Ahmad set out from his village Daera Shah Alamullah with about four hundred people. At the first stopover he asked Muhammad Yusuf Phulati, his treasurer, to bring the money he had. He distributed it all among the poor. Then bareheaded he lifted his hands and prayed to Allah for help. Later, at a stopover he asked Sayyid Zainul Abedeen, one of his associates, to bring to him whatever amount of money was left for the expenses of the caravan.

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<sup>46</sup> *Waqae*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 252.

<sup>47</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 182. Sayyid Ahmad's undertaking the Hajj journey with trust in Allah as his provision (*zaade raah*) is supported by such instances from the lives of other godly persons as well. For example, Shah Waliyullah, the great Islamic scholar, writes about his Hajj journey to Makkah in a letter to Shah Ahlullah Phulati, "I did not step out of Delhi until I knew for sure that Allah would bless us with convenience and sufficient means in the journey, and I learned it with certainty through repeated *Ilham* (intuition)...I have also been divinely inspired that this journey will be specially blessed by Allah. I do not know what [blessings] from the store of Allah will be granted to us, but Allah has assured me that we will be blessed with many apparent and hidden blessings. After this (divine inspiration), it would be cowardice and timidity to postpone the journey [of Hajj] due to the length of route and shortage of provision." *Nadir Maktoobat*, vol. 1, pp. 168-69.

<sup>48</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1. p. 256.

He brought five rupees, as this was the only amount left for the purpose by that time. Sayyid Ahmad gave out that money to the needy. When he was reminded that there was no money left to meet the expenses of the journey, he answered in confidence, "The treasure of my Lord is full," and ordered the caravan to proceed.<sup>49</sup>

As Sayyid Ahmad had said earlier, the moment he came out of Rae Bareilly with his associates, Allah's help and favor surrounded him. At the very first village called Dalmao two persons with fifty associates advanced two miles to welcome him and his caravan. They were brothers and both of them wanted to serve the first meal to the auspicious travelers to Makkah which had created a dispute between them. Sayyid Ahmad accepted the invitations of both of them and persuaded the younger brother to make a sacrifice for his elder brother for the pleasure of Allah and let him entertain the Hajj caravan first.<sup>50</sup>

One evening the boats stopped in an uninhabited area where there was no village or town around at a close distance. As the land by the bank of the river was wet and muddy and as it was also drizzling, the associates of Sayyid Ahmad were not able to cook for the night. They thought that perhaps they had to live without food that night. But only after a short while they saw some persons with candles coming toward them. The leader of the group turned out to be an English merchant of indigo living in that area who had come to know about the arrival of the caravan and had brought food for them. This was an unexpected provision from Allah. Sayyid Ahmad thanked the host and accepted the food he had brought.<sup>51</sup>

At Allahabad seaport a number of dignitaries welcomed Sayyid Ahmad, but Sheikh Ghulam Ali, a well-known dignitary of the town, became the main host. He served the most expensive dishes to them and offered very expensive presents to Sayyid Ahmad, his wives, family members, and religious scholars accompanying him. He also provided each member of the caravan with necessary

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<sup>49</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1. p. 264.

<sup>50</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1. p. 258-59.

<sup>51</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1. pp. 266-67.

articles, such as dress, footwear, sheet, cap, *Ihram* (two white sheets that pilgrims wear in Hajj) and money. He also presented to Sayyid Ahmad one large and twelve small tents for convenience in the journey. Other people also offered presents to Sayyid Ahmad in cash and kind. "Thus", as Mehr puts it, "it was by virtue of Sayyid Ahmad's sincerity and trust in Allah that although he had come out of his home empty-handed, all members of the group were duly provided with necessary articles when he was ready to proceed from Allahabad."<sup>52</sup>

In Calcutta<sup>53</sup> Munshi Ameen Ahmad, a distinguished lawyer in the service of the British government surpassed all others who were desirous of hosting Sayyid Ahmad's caravan. He sailed in a fast boat to meet Sayyid Ahmad as soon as he crossed the River Hugli and earnestly requested him to accept his invitation to be his guest: "Several persons have made arrangements in the city for your stay, but I have reached you first. Therefore, give me your word of acceptance for staying at my place."<sup>54</sup> He had purchased a large garden having several buildings in it to host Sayyid Ahmad and the pilgrims. It also had three ponds in it: one of sweet drinking water which was so rare in Calcutta, the other for taking a bath, and the third for washing clothes. He also bought footwear and dress for the pilgrims. Some others brought clothes and *Ihram*.<sup>55</sup>

The details of how Allah fulfilled the needs of the members of this caravan from His unbounded treasure form a very long story. Lack of space does not allow us to include even select details. A few instances are mentioned above for the sole purpose of showing that

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<sup>52</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 192.

<sup>53</sup> As all reference books use this spelling of the name of the city, I have also used it instead of the modern spelling Kolkata, in order to avoid confusion. Other geographical names have been treated in the same way.

<sup>54</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 206. Also Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 308.

<sup>55</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 206-07. Munshi Ameenuddin's house was situated at the site where the famous Jame Masjid Nakhuda of Calcutta stands now. After his death his nephew Hasan Ali constructed a small mosque there. It was later transformed into a huge building, which shows Allah's acceptance of his sincerity. Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1. pp. 313-14, footnote 1.

Sayyid Ahmad's decision to take the pilgrimage journey without necessary material preparations was not emotional; it was intuitive and inspirational, based on trust in Allah and on cognizance of His approval and promise of favors. He once mentioned this fact to the pilgrims in these words: "The Lord of the worlds Who is the Master of resources and Absolute Cherisher has promised me that my companions in this journey are His guests and that I should not worry about their food and clothes in this journey."<sup>56</sup>

The states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Bengal, which fell en route to Sayyid Ahmad's caravan, saw an unprecedented moral, social, and religious revolution. Wherever Sayyid Ahmad stayed, all prevalent and popular rites of polytheism and innovation were eradicated, moral and social un-Islamic practices remarkably diminished, and Muslims returned to the fold of pure and simple teachings of Islam. Even non-Muslims were blessed with the teachings of Sayyid Ahmad and his associates and a large number of them willingly accepted Islam.

After a stay of three months in Calcutta, where final arrangements for renting ships had to be done, Sayyid Ahmad sailed to Makkah in ten ships with seven hundred and fifty-three associates.<sup>57</sup> On the day of his departure people gathered in such a large number to bid him farewell that the traffic on the main roads was blocked. Sayyid Ahmad distributed alms to the poor, said farewell greetings to the people who had come to see him off, and sailed in a boat to board the ship. People who wished to catch his glimpse until the last moment walked along the bank of the river as long as they could see his boat; some sailed in their personal boats to see him off and returned late evening only when darkness became thick.<sup>58</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad reached Jeddah on May 16, 1822 (23 Shaban 1237 H), where he stayed for five days. On May 20, 1822 (27 Shaban 1237 H) he proceeded to Makkah al-Mukarramah, entered

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<sup>56</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 261.

<sup>57</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 212-13.

<sup>58</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 342.

the holy city on the 21st of May, 1822 (29 Shaban 1237 H) and performed *Umrah*.<sup>59</sup> He spent the month of Ramadan in Makkah and utilized every moment of the holy month in performing *Umrah*, *Taraweeh*<sup>60</sup> and other virtuous deeds. For the last ten days of Ramadan he stayed in the al-Haram Masjid for *E'tekaf*.<sup>61</sup>

During his stay at Makkah, Sayyid Ahmad soon became the center of attraction for the scholars there. On the day of Eid al-Adha Muhaddith Sheikh Umar bin Abdur Rasool Hanafi, a scholar of great renown and piety of the Hanafi school, came to meet him. That day a large number of people paid visit to him. Scholars, dignitaries, and commoners all alike showed exemplary respect to him during his stay in Makkah.<sup>62</sup>

At last the time of Hajj, for which they had covered such a long distance, arrived. On the 8th of Zul Hijjah, 1237 H, Sayyid Ahmad said a very long and moving supplication at *Hateem* in al-Haram. All present were moved to tears. He then started for Mena with his associates and completed all rites of Hajj with great devotion and sincerity. In total he stayed in Makkah for about five months.<sup>63</sup>

After the Hajj was over, Sayyid Ahmad started making preparations for going to Madinah al-Munawwara, the city of the holy Prophet. Out of respect, he decided to leave arms at Makkah, although the danger of encountering the Bedouin outlaws attacking such caravans was there. He took this journey on the 5<sup>th</sup> of Safar and stayed at Madina until the 28<sup>th</sup> Rabiul Awwal 1238 H. On the 29<sup>th</sup> he left for Makkah and performed *Umrah* after reaching there.<sup>64</sup> Again, a large number of dignitaries and scholars visited

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<sup>59</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 342, and Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 220-21. *Umrah* is a devotional ritual performed by pilgrims at the entrance of Makkah. For details, see a relevant book.

<sup>60</sup> Special Ramadan prayers which are in addition to regular prayers.

<sup>61</sup> Seclusion in the mosque in the last ten days of Ramadan, which is a Sunnah.

<sup>62</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 355.

<sup>63</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 358.

<sup>64</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 366, footnote 1.

him to welcome him: the Imams of all four *Musallahs*<sup>65</sup> were among them. He spent the second Ramadan in Makkah.

## Return to India

On June 25, 1823 (15 Shawwal, 1238 H) Sayyid Ahmad started making preparations to return to India. He left Makkah on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Zilqada and reached Jeddah the other day.<sup>66</sup> On his way back to India he came through Bombay to Calcutta. Wherever he stayed, people gathered around him in large numbers and benefited from his teachings and discourses. Everywhere the hospitality accorded was warm, eager and exemplary. At Murshidabad, for example, the caravan stayed at the house of Diwan Ghulam Murtuza. Adjacent to the house was a market. The Diwan announced that he would pay for whatever the companions of Sayyid Ahmad bought from the shops. From Allahabad Sheikh Ghulam Ali's son advanced to a place called Mirzapur at the instruction of his father to receive Sayyid Ahmad. From Mirzapur till Allahabad Sheikh Ghulam Ali rendered exceedingly generous hospitality to Sayyid Ahmad and his caravan. To all the pilgrims, and also to the local people who had joined them in the way or had come from the neighborhood to meet Sayyid Ahmad, Ghulam Ali served very rich meals. When Sayyid Ahmad wanted to stop him from this lavishness, he submitted: "I couldn't serve you up to my aspiration. Whatever I do is for my hereafter."<sup>67</sup>

## Back to Rae Bareli

On April 29, 1824 (29 Shaban 1239 H), after about two years and ten months, Sayyid Ahmad reached back his home village.

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<sup>65</sup> Those days the followers of the four Imams – Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal - used to pray separately in the Haram following the rules of their jurisprudential schools.

<sup>66</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 367.

<sup>67</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 374.



According to Mehr, about one hundred thousand rupees in total were spent in that journey and there still were ten thousand rupees left with his treasurer.<sup>68</sup> The news of the safe journey of Sayyid Ahmad's Hajj caravan quickly spread far and wide; people wrote tributary poems about this Hajj caravan, and the voice of doubt raised against the obligatoriness of Hajj for Indian Muslims was discredited and died out forever. Sayyid Ahmad stayed at his home village Daera Shah Alamullah for one year and ten months, from May 1824 to January 17, 1826 (Ramadan 1239 to the 7<sup>th</sup> of Jamadiul Aakhir 1241 H). Several hundred followers stayed there with him. The environment of Daera Shah Alamullah was deeply charged with religious inducement due to the presence of Sayyid Ahmad there.<sup>69</sup>

## Forethought of Jihad

Jihad remained the most important concern of Sayyid Ahmad during his stay at Daera this time. He felt that the growing political power of the Sikhs in the Punjab, on one hand, and that of the British in other states as well as in Delhi, the capital of the country, on the other, were, in fact, death traps for the religious freedom and cultural integrity of Muslims in India. Shah Abdul Aziz felt the same way and wrote in a Fatwa: "In the city (Delhi) Islamic Law is not followed; instead, the law of the Christian overlords is enforced without check....From this city to Calcutta Christian rule prevails."<sup>70</sup> Responding to this situation Shah Abdul

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<sup>68</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 231.

<sup>69</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, P. 380.

<sup>70</sup> Mohiuddin Ahmad, pp. 115-16.

Aziz declared the then India as *Darul Harb* (Land of the Enemy).<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Sayyid Ahmad's analysis and understanding of the religious intentions of the East India Company turned out to be true in the later years to come. He had developed apprehensions about the ill-intentions of the British as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the British religious policy was still in the offing, but what we see in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century proves that his fear was genuine. Here are a few extracts from a recent book by a European writer (William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal: The fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2006), which document that the British rule in India was, to a significant extent, a Christian rule in disguise, which wanted to convert the Muslims as well as the Hindus of India to Christianity:

1. "Ever since he arrived in Delhi three months before Jawan Bakht's wedding [1852], Jennings [The reverend Midgeley John Jennings] had been working on his plan to convert the people of Delhi to Christianity....Jennings' plan was to rip up what he regarded as the false faiths of India, by force, if necessary." P. 59.
2. "Yet when Jennings went to the great Hindu festival, the kumbh Mela, and began trying to convert the millions of pilgrims who had collected by the banks of the Ganges, loudly denouncing their 'Satanic paganism', the Gazette [the Delhi Gazette] was moved to point out that Jennings and his two assistants should perhaps be a little more restrained in their approach." p. 60.
3. "Whatever his personal failings, however, Jennings' views and outlook were shared by increasing numbers of the British in India." P. 60.
4. "In Calcutta Jennings' colleague Mr. Edmunds was vocal in making known his belief that the Company should use its position more forcibly to bring about the conversion of India." p. 61.
5. "To the north-west of Delhi, the commissioner of Peshawar, Herbert Edwardes, firmly believed an empire had been given to Britain because of the virtues of English Protestantism....In this spirit, the district judge of Fatehpur, Robert Tucker, had recently set up large stone columns inscribed with the Ten Commandments in Persian, Urdu, Hindi and English and used 'two or three times a week to read the Bible in Hindustanee to large numbers of natives who were assembled in the compound to hear him'." pp. 61-62.
6. "Such Evangelical enthusiasm had even spread to the British Army in India. According to one trooper of the Dragoon Guards, 'a religious mania sprang up and reigned supreme'....It was a similar case in the Company's own army, where officers like Colonel Steven Wheler, commanding officer of the 34<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry, were in the habit of reading the Bible to his sepoy as well as proselytizing to 'natives of all classes....in the highways, cities, bazaars and villages....' p. 62
7. "Similar views were also echoed by the growing band of Evangelicals among other Company's directors, the first and foremost of whom was Charles Grant. Believing that 'it is hardly possible to conceive any people more completely enchained than they [the Hindus] are by their superstitions', Grant proposed hugely to increase missionary activity so as to convert a

To Sayyid Ahmad this situation was unacceptable. He believed that Muslims had a right to live in India with full freedom to practice their religion and that any interference in their religious life had to be opposed and, if there was no way out, challenged with armed resistance. He realized that the British were slowly destroying the religious structure of the Muslim society which was upheld with due respect in India up until the recent past. He felt that he had to redress the situation before it was out of control. For this purpose he wrote letters to the Muslim dignitaries, such as Ghulam Haider Khan, and non-Muslim rulers, such as Raja Hindu Rao of Gwalior, and explained the objective of his Movement in clear words.<sup>72</sup>

After due deliberation and consultations he decided to migrate from India to the Northwestern Frontier and establish a center for Jihad activities there. No Indian state was safe at that time for this purpose. If he had begun Jihad activities in his home state in India,

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people whom he characterized as 'universally and wholly corrupt...depraved as they are blind, and wretched as they are depraved'." P. 62

8. "The missionaries' main ally within India itself had been the Bishop of Calcutta, Reginald Heber....Heber was the man who oversaw the process of putting this regime into place; he also wrote a series of hymns which acted as rallying cries for the aggressively self-confident new mission. His stirring verses, still sung today, are full of the imagery of the Holy War and Christian militarism, as Christian soldiers battle their way to Salvation, Fighting the Good Fight 'through peril, toil and pain': 'The Son of God goes forth to war,' begins one hymn, 'his blood-red banner streams afar.'" pp. 62-63.

9. "In his first report to the Society for the Propagation of the gospel (SPG), Jennings had talked of his relish in taking on Delhi's '261 mosques and 200 temples' and had made no secret of his willingness openly to attack Islam and the Prophet. Nor did the earlier missionaries have the same degree of patronage as Jennings....As Delhi Chaplain, he also had his salary and travel arrangements paid for by the Company." p. 67

10. "There were other cases where the Company casually demolished revered temples and mosques to make roads - something that especially upset the influential theologian Shah Abdul Aziz. In a few cases land was taken from mosques and awarded to missionaries in order for them to build churches; on other occasions, with equally astonishing insensitivity, missionaries and the regular Christian clergy were given confiscated and ruined mosques to live in." p. 69.

<sup>72</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1. pp. 389-90.

the British would have easily infiltrated their paid men in his organization and caused dissension, as they had done with Sultan Tipu Sultan. Also, in a war situation the British and their allies would have encircled Sayyid Ahmad from all sides and imposed an effective blockade, as they had done with Amir Khan. In fact, the Northwestern Frontier was a very suitable area for carrying out his plans. It was the home of a people who were Muslims and were reputed for chivalry and love for freedom. They were aggrieved at Raja Ranjeet Singh's high-handedness and could have joined Sayyid Ahmad against him. Besides, in the north and the west of the Frontier there was a chain of independent Muslim states which, if joined together even loosely, could have been formed into a very powerful Muslim block. Furthermore, the geographical situation made the Frontier a very safe place for the Jihad activities because in case of an armed confrontation Sayyid Ahmad's enemy would have always been easily lured into a militarily disadvantageous position in the mountains.

Sayyid Ahmad decided to establish his center in the Frontier, unite the local chiefs who were divided on petty issues, and start his Jihad endeavors against the Sikh rule in the Punjab, to begin with, where Muslims were facing severe religious persecution. The state of the Punjab under Raja Ranjeet Singh was undoubtedly strong and powerful, but the rulers of Afghanistan and the Frontier could have formed a more powerful block if they were united. After all, all these rulers were brothers, sons of Pinda Khan of the Barakzai tribe,<sup>73</sup> and could have been united more easily than the chiefs from different family backgrounds.

In fact, this powerful family had in the near past fought a fierce battle against Raja Ranjeet Singh under the ruler of Peshawar Muhammad Azeem Khan and his brother Abdus Samad Khan in which they were able to bring out twenty thousand fighters against Ranjeet Singh. Although they had lost, the exemplary bravery of the the two brothers and their soldiers was still remembered in the area. There was, thus, a strong reason to believe that a call for

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<sup>73</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 424.

Jihad by Sayyid Ahmad could have again engendered a positive response in the residents of that area. In view of all these facts, Sayyid Ahmad's decision to select the Northwest Frontier as center for Jihad activities was, in fact, most prudent and practical.

## Migration to the Frontier

Sayyid Ahmad left his village for the Frontier on January 17, 1826 (Jamadiul Ukhra 7, 1241 H). When he crossed the Sai River, he offered prayers of thankfulness (*Salatul Shukr*) that he was on the way to revive the magnificent prophetic practice of migration (*Hijrah*). At that time he had five thousand rupees and five to six hundred Mujahideen with him. These Mujahideen were the best and trustworthiest among Sayyid Ahmad's associates and had been living in his company for a long time. That is why, as we see later, none of them deserted him ever, no matter how dear a price they had to pay for staying with him.

The journey from Rae Bareilly to the Frontier was very long, very difficult, very tiring, but Sayyid Ahmad moved from one stopover to another patiently and proceeded to his destination by giving the call for Jihad and moral reform. After having made several stopovers, he reached Gwalior which was then under the rule of Dawlat Rao Sindhiya. Sindhiya was sick and his brother-in-law, Raja Hindu Rao, conducted the affairs of the state. Hindu Rao himself visited Sayyid Ahmad to extend to him Sindhiya's invitation to a feast at his palace. When Sayyid Ahmad reached there, he was accorded exceptional reception. Formal courtesies, delicacies in eateries and generosity in offering valuable gifts reflected the Maharaja's respect for Sayyid Ahmad. But most importantly, Sayyid Ahmad had a detailed talk with the Maharaja and Hindu Rao in which he mentioned to them the growing threat of the British to the free rulers of India and explained to them his plans to challenge the British. Maharani Becha Bai, wife of Dawlat Rao Sindhiya, also attended the talk from behind the curtain and participated. They appreciated the mission of Sayyid Ahmad and

offered to arrange arms and other necessary amenities for his associates if he could stay in Gwalior for a year or so. Sayyid Ahmad thanked them, but he decided to proceed.<sup>74</sup>

From Gwalior Sayyid Ahmad headed toward Tonk and reached there in about two weeks. Nawwab Amir Khan, the ruler of Tonk, advanced with select dignitaries to receive him. During Sayyid Ahmad's stay at Tonk, which lasted for a month, Amir Khan did his best to entertain Sayyid Ahmad and the Mujahideen. He, his son and daughter-in-law, and a large number of dignitaries also offered Bai'ah to him. At the time of Sayyid Ahmad's departure, Amir Khan accompanied him with his dignitaries up to Jhalana and requested him not to forget to call him for help if a difficult time ever befell him.

From Tonk Sayyid Ahmad came to Pali via Ajmer. Between Pali and Amarkot lay the formidable desert of Marwar, a 280-mile long barren tract without regular pathways, sufficient water, or shady areas to rest.<sup>75</sup> Water wells were scarce, one at every ten to twenty miles, and contained so thick, black and unclean water that even the extremely thirsty wayfarers found it hard to drink. But most impressive was the forbearance of Sayyid Ahmad and his associates, some of whom had lived a very luxurious life back home: none complained or repented for having undertaken that strenuous journey. At a place named Soraha, they sighted the moon of Eid al-Fitr. Next morning Sayyid Ahmad and his associates offered Eid prayers, celebrating the festival in the desert so far away from their homes and relatives, and moved on to their destination.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 439.

<sup>75</sup> For further details, see Mohiuddn Ahmad, p. 156, footnote 8.

<sup>76</sup> Instances of such emotional sacrifice are found in the later leaders of the Movement as well. When Maulvi Naseeruddeen Dehlawi got ready to join the Mujahideen in the Frontier to support the cause of Jihad, he took permission from his aged mother and started his journey on the 3 Zil Hijjah 1250 H (2 April 1835), which was only a few days before the happy festival of Eid al-Adha. This was a journey from which he neither hoped nor wished to return alive. He could have delayed his departure for a few days and celebrated Eid with his relatives to make himself and his relatives happy. But, as Mehr writes, his commitment to his

At Katihar the desert terrain came to an end and the area of Sindh began. Making short stopovers at several places, Sayyid Ahmad reached Hyderabad, the capital of the state of Sindh which was an independent state and was ruled by four brothers from the same parents. Sayyid Ahmad met the rulers of Sindh and explained the impending dangers to them, but he found them heedless of the grimness of the situation and unenthusiastic about taking any practical step to safeguard their independence. Sayyid Ahmad left Sindh somewhat disappointed.

The broken heart of Sayyid Ahmad, however, got a healing touch when he reached Ranipur and met Sayyid Sibghatullah Rashidi, a famous religious and spiritual leader and founder of the *Hur Movement*.<sup>77</sup> A man of great foresight, he had sensed the impending dangers to the Muslims of the area and had already started organizing his spiritual followers on military lines. He wholeheartedly supported Sayyid Ahmad's mission and wanted to accompany him, but Sayyid Ahmad advised him to stay in his area, prepare Muslims of the area for Jihad, and strike the Sikhs when Sayyid Ahmad engaged them in armed confrontation, thus putting military pressure on the Sikh State from two sides.

Via Peerkot Sayyid Ahmad proceeded to Shikarpur, a large city and an important business center of Sindh. The Governor, Agha Mohammad Kazim, and the people of Shikarpur showed an exemplary love and respect for Sayyid Ahmad. Sayyid Ahmad also led the Eid al-Adha prayer there at the request of the Governor, which was attended by some twenty thousand people. Agha Kazim was deeply impressed by Sayyid Ahmad and wished to join him in the journey of Jihad, but Sayyid Ahmad asked him to stay at his place and join when called.

Sayyid Ahmad's next destination was Shaal, a long mountainous region, uninhabited for the most part and quite dangerous to cross.

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mission did not allow him to delay his departure even for a few days. Mehr, *Sarguzashi*, p. 133.

<sup>77</sup> In the Bloch tribe alone there were three-hundred-thousand (300,000) followers of Sayyid Sibghatullah. Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 458.

The weather was extremely hot, water wells were scarce, and routes could be determined only by the location of stars. Sayyid Ahmad was advised to delay his journey until the end of summer, but he decided to proceed. From Shikarpur he came to Jaagan where Sayyid Anwar Shah Amritsari, a powerful opponent of the Sikhs, joined him.<sup>78</sup> At places en route, people served Sayyid Ahmad and his Mujahideen as best as possible, offered Bai'ah and promised to join him as soon as Jihad started.

After making a few stopovers, Sayyid Ahmad reached Dhadar that brought him to the Bolan Pass. The Pass which served as a natural passage through the mountain between India and Afghanistan was about fifty-five miles long, at places quite narrow and dangerous. Sayyid Ahmad and his associates crossed it in four to five days and reached Shaal. The Governor of Shaal was a practicing Muslim and a strong administrator. Greatly impressed by the personality of Sayyid Ahmad, he wanted to accompany him, but Sayyid Ahmad instructed him to wait until the time was suitable for him to join him.

When Sayyid Ahmad reached near Kandhar, the emissaries of the ruler thereof advanced with dignitaries to receive him. Purdil Khan, the ruler of Kandhar, and the residents thereof proved to be very hospitable. During his stay there, which was for only four or five days, the whole city showed an unprecedented eagerness and enthusiasm to join him in his Jihad mission. As a large number of people started making preparations to accompany him, Purdil Khan became concerned and requested him to proceed to Kabul as quickly as possible and not accept anybody's request to accompany him. Sayyid Ahmad proceeded to Kabul without taking any resident of Kandhar with him. But although the outgoing passages of the city were sealed by the order of Purdil Khan on the day of Sayyid Ahmad's departure, some four hundred Kandharis managed to come out and joined Sayyid Ahmad at a place known as Qila Azam Khan. With the consent of Purdil Khan, Sayyid Ahmad took two hundred seventy persons with him, formed them into a

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<sup>78</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 468.



separate unit under the command of Sayyid Deen Muhammad Kandhari, and asked the remaining ones to wait and join when Jihad started.

From Qila Azam Khan Sayyid Ahmad proceeded to Qila Ramzan Khan which marked the beginning of the area dominated by the landlords and chieftains of the Ghilzai tribe. The chieftains of the Ghilzai tribe welcomed Sayyid Ahmad and offered all help. One Ghilzai chieftain Khane Khanan sent his word to Sayyid Ahmad that he would join him with forty to fifty thousand followers when called to participate in Jihad. Another chieftain Shahabuddin Khan made the same promise. Sayyid Ahmad thanked them and promised to call them at an appropriate time.<sup>79</sup>

From Kandhar Sayyid Ahmad proceeded to Ghazni. The people of Ghazni had heard about him and some dignitaries of Ghazni had paid a visit to him at Rae Bareli. People of all ranks came out of Ghazni to receive Sayyid Ahmad. Meer Muhammad Khan, the ruler of Ghazni, sent his son and his deputy to extend a courteous welcome to Sayyid Ahmad. He visited Sayyid Ahmad later, paid homage and offered formal Bai'ah. The fourth day Sayyid Ahmad proceeded to Kabul.

In Kabul the people as well as the ruler Sultan Muhammad Khan were eagerly awaiting the arrival of Sayyid Ahmad. Fifty horsemen and a number of infantry soldiers advanced outside Kabul to meet Sayyid Ahmad and accorded him a state welcome. The dignitaries, scholars, and common Muslims also came out in a large number to greet Sayyid Ahmad. The crowd grew so thick that free movement on the road became difficult. Sultan Muhammad Khan, accompanied by his three brothers and fifty horsemen, came to greet him at the entrance of the city. Sayyid Ahmad stayed there for a month and a half. He then proceeded to Peshawar and from there to Hushtnagar where again especially the common people accorded him a very warm welcome. Sardar Sayyid Muhammad Khan, Sultan Muhammad Khan's younger brother, came from Balahezar to meet Sayyid Ahmad. He, his companions,

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<sup>79</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 489.

and the local people offered Bai'ah to him in such a large number that all of them could not hold his hand as a mark of allegiance at the time of initiation; he had to stretch his turban for them to hold.

Thus we see that Sayyid Ahmad made the best use of the opportunity to meet the chiefs and the people of the areas he passed through and introduced to them the call of Jihad. The support that he got in the areas he passed through shows that people would have joined him wholeheartedly in his mission, had the unfortunate opposition of the rulers of the Frontier not thwarted his efforts, the details of which come later.

## Confrontation with the Sikhs

As soon as Sayyid Ahmad reached Charsadda in Hushtnagar,<sup>80</sup> a new development in the area demanded his immediate attention. Sardar Budh Singh, a Sikh commander of Raja Ranjeet Singh, had reached Khairabad and was heading toward Akawra to help Khawwas Khan against Amir Khan Khatak, the ruler of Akawra, as the two were fighting for power against each other. This created a panic in the area. Amir Khan Khatak came to Sayyid Ahmad, offered Bai'ah to him, promised to join him in his Jihad mission, and requested him to stop Budh Singh from bringing destruction to the residents of Sama.<sup>81</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad considered the whole situation carefully. First, if Sardar Budh Singh's expedition to subjugate the ruler of Akawra and put the residents of the Sama region to humiliation was allowed to go unchallenged, it would have directly put down the image of Sayyid Ahmad as a savior-to-be of Muslims against the Sikhs. Secondly, the situation had forced Amir Khan Khatak, the ruler of Akawra, to side with the Jihad campaign of Sayyid Ahmad against the Sikhs, which could have made it easy for Sayyid Ahmad

<sup>80</sup> Hushtnagar was a large area consisting of eight large villages. Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 324, footnote 1.

<sup>81</sup> Sama refers to the region stretching between the Indus River and the mountains at the border. Peshawar and Mardan are in the same area. Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 497, footnote 1.

to persuade other chieftains of the region to join him in his mission. Indeed, it was an opportune moment for Sayyid Ahmad to win the confidence of the Muslims of the region. He decided to help Amir Khan.

Sayyid Ahmad reached Nawshehra on 18 December 1826. By the time Budh Singh had entered Akawra, Sayyid Ahmad's arrival in the area was a genuine challenge to the authority of the Sikhs and they watched the situation with due caution. The two armies camped against each other: the 7,000 to 10,000-strong Sikh army at Akawra, and 1,500-strong Muslim army at Nawshehra.

## Night Attack on the Sikh Army

The Mujahideen decided to launch a surprise night attack on the Sikhs. This was a well-calculated decision as a night attack involved only a part of the Muslim army, leaving the rest of the army fresh, but creating in the entire Sikh army a sense of insecurity. Also, it would have allowed the Mujahideen to test the faithfulness of their local associates and understand the defense strategies of the Sikhs. Furthermore, as this was the first encounter, the attack had to be successful in order for the Mujahideen to win the confidence and support of the local people.

Accordingly, on December 20, 1826 (20 Jamadiul Ula 1242 H) a 900-strong troop comprising 136 Indians, 80 Kandharis and the locals crossed the river in boats at night and fell on the Sikh army. As the Sikhs were caught unawares, they could not offer an organized defense and lost heavily in terms of life and property. But the Muslim leadership soon noticed a weakness in their rank: the local Muslims engaged themselves in looting the property of the Sikhs and left the battlefield with their booty in the middle of the action, leaving all the pressure of fight on the Indian and Kandhari Mujahideen. Soon the Sikhs organized themselves and attacked the Mujahideen. The Muslim commander, Allah Baksh Khan, charged at the advancing Sikhs and pushed them back, but he lost his life in the encounter. Akbar Khan Bheildar took the command and

ordered a retreat in view of the fact that the purpose of the night attack was fulfilled. About 700 Sikhs and eighty-two Mujahideen lost their lives in the encounter.<sup>82</sup>

The encounter generated in the Sikh army a sense of insecurity. Budh Singh left Akawra and moved to Shaidu. He then decided to cross the river and retreat to Attock. Fearing an attack of the Mujahideen, Attock and Khairabad sent a request to Ranjeet Singh for military aid. The news of the local Afghans and chiefs of the powerful Yusufzai tribe joining Sayyid Ahmad had reached Lahore earlier. Ranjeet Singh immediately sent his son with a new dispatch of army equipped with canons, soldiers, and experienced military commanders and advisors.<sup>83</sup>

The success of the Mujahideen in the encounter of Akawra engendered a great confidence in the local chiefs and people in the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad. Among the chiefs Sardar Khadi Khan, the ruler of Hund, was first to come to Sayyid Ahmad and offer a pledge of joining him in Jihad. Sardar Ashraf Khan, the chief of Zaida, was next. Khadi Khan also proposed that Sayyid Ahmad should move to Hund and use it as his headquarters. As there was a strong fort at Hund and as Khadi Khan eagerly wished to host the Mujahideen, Sayyid Ahmad accepted the offer and moved first to a place called Bazaar, which was one mile east of Hund, and then to Hund.<sup>84</sup> At Bazaar people gathered from the whole area in large numbers and offered oath of allegiance to him. In one such day, four thousand people offered Bai'ah to him.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Mohiuddin Ahmad, p. 171.

<sup>83</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 343-44. See also footnote 2, p. 344.

<sup>84</sup> Hund is seventeen miles from Attock in the east on the bank of the Indus River toward the Frontier. Alexander had crossed the river from there. Jalaluddin Akbar, the famous Mughal emperor of India, had constructed a strong fort there which is still extant. Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 345, footnote 1.

<sup>85</sup> Abad Shahpuri, *Sayyid Badshah Ka Qafla* (Lahore: Al-Badr Publications, 1981), p. 44.

## Night Attack on Hazroo

After some time another attack was launched against the Sikhs. This time the target was a business town called Hazroo, which was about seven miles from the Indus River and fell in the jurisdiction of the Sikh rule. The attack was carried on with great success, but the local participants showed the same moral weakness: they became engaged in looting the valuables and fled from the field with their booty, leaving the Mujahideen alone to face the enemy. They also refused to distribute the booty in accordance with the injunctions of the Shariah. This was not only a show of military indiscipline, but also a sad ignorance of the real aim of Jihad. For the time being Sayyid Ahmad saw to it that the clash was averted, but he realized it the second time that a stricter control was needed to keep the participants responsible for observing necessary discipline in such expeditions.

## Sayyid Ahmad Elected as *Amirul Momineen*

The tribal chiefs and leaders of the area discussed the matter among themselves and with the religious scholars including Shah Ismail and came to the conclusion that the Movement must be run under the control of a leader, called in the Islamic terminology the *Imam* or *Amirul momineen*. The selection of an *Imam* was, in fact, a condition for the institution of Jihad. Also, an Imam was needed to maintain discipline in the soldiers and to unite the chiefs of different tribes under one leadership. It was unanimously decided that none fulfilled the conditions of *Imamat* better than Sayyid Ahmad. Thus, in a large gathering held on January 11, 1827 (12 Jamadiul Ukhra, 1242 H) the leaders, dignitaries, Ulema, Sayyids, and common Muslims of the area gathered at Hund, unanimously selected Sayyid Ahmad as their *Imam* and offered oath of allegiance (*Bai'ah* of *Imamat*) to him.<sup>86</sup> The following day his name was

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<sup>86</sup> The *Bai'ah* that people formerly offered to Sayyid Ahmad was *Bai'ate Tariqat*, which was of spiritual nature and was taken from individuals to help them

included in the sermon (*Khutba*) of the Friday congregational prayer.

The election of Sayyid Ahmad as the Leader of the Faithful (*Amirul Momineen*) engendered a spirit of confidence and enthusiasm among the Muslims of the area. People from all around came to Hund and offered oath of allegiance to him. Letters about the election of Sayyid Ahmad as *Imam* were sent to prominent religious scholars in India and to scholars, chiefs, Sayyids, and dignitaries of the Frontier. All of them responded to the news with great happiness, approval and enthusiasm. The rulers of Peshawar, Sardar Yar Muhammad Khan and Sardar Sultan Muhammad Khan, advanced in a ceremonious way with about five hundred soldiers and a number of canons to a place called Sarmai to greet Sayyid Ahmad. Sarmai was close to Nawshehra where Sayyid Ahmad was staying at that time. He proceeded to Sarmai with prominent chiefs of the area to meet Yar Muhammad Khan. Yar Muhammad Khan and Sultan Muhammad Khan offered *Bai'ah* of *Imarat* to Sayyid Ahmad and took oath of allegiance at his hands for serving the cause of Islam under his leadership.

## Battle of Shaidu

In a meeting which was attended by the important chiefs of the area it was decided that Muslims should defy the high-handedness of Ranjeet Singh in the Sama region and, as a token, challenge the Sikh army stationed at Shaidu under the command of Sardar Budh Singh. Shaidu was about four miles from Akawra. Preparations were made enthusiastically and in two months about 80,000 Muslims gathered under the banner of Sayyid Ahmad to fight against the Sikhs. This was a historic moment, for a Muslim army so large in number had never before gathered under one leadership

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improve morally and guide them to lead an Islamic life. *Bai'ate Imamat* was of different nature. It was to elect a religious leader as Leader of all Muslims of the area (*Imam or Amirul Momineen*) whose authority in implementing the Islamic Law had to be honored by all Muslims.

in that area. According to Mason, Sayyid Ahmad had such an extraordinary success in bringing the fighters of the Yusufzai tribe to the battlefield that the rulers of Peshawar were forced to enter into a dialogue with him. The tribes supporting Sayyid Ahmad were countless. Although his success was not certain, it was, according to Mason, not impossible either.<sup>87</sup>

The two armies camped against each other near the village Shaidu.<sup>88</sup> The army of Budh Singh was about 35,000-strong, well equipped and very well trained. In addition, some experienced and trusted military commanders of Ranjeet Singh were with Budh Singh. But it was a truly difficult and dangerous situation for the Sikh army for they had to meet 80,000 Muslim warriors in the battlefield whose morale was very high. Budh Singh stealthily communicated with Yar Khan and tried to intimidate him. He succeeded in persuading him to desert Sayyid Ahmad in the battlefield. A treacherous plan was hatched by Yar Khan against Sayyid Ahmad which was to be executed in two parts: poisoning Sayyid Ahmad and deserting the Muslim alliance in the battlefield to give an advantageous position to the Sikhs.

A night before the fateful day of the Battle of Shaidu, meal for Sayyid Ahmad was sent by Yar Khan, who was hosting him those days. After taking the meal, Sayyid Ahmad fell ill. He started collapsing into fainting fits and began to vomit frequently. The symptoms clearly showed a case of poisoning.<sup>89</sup> But before anything could be done to help him recover, the night passed and the day of encounter arrived. When the two armies moved to the battlefield in the morning and started organizing themselves, Yar Khan sent an elephant for Sayyid Ahmad to ride and proceed to the

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<sup>87</sup> Quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 361.

<sup>88</sup> As Mehr reports in *Shaheed*, p. 372, no historian mentions the date of the battle.

<sup>89</sup> Hunter writes about the incident of poisoning Sayyid Ahmad: "In 1829 the lowlander trembled for the safety of Peshawar itself, their Frontier Capital, and the Governor [Yar Muhammad Khan] basely attempted to put an end to the war by poisoning the prophet [Sayyid Ahmad]" (*The Indian Musalman*, p. 7). Yar's two servants were later arrested who confessed to having poisoned Sayyid Ahmad at Yar's instruction. (Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 398)

battlefield. Sayyid Ahmad was very sick, intermittently collapsing into unconsciousness, but he rode the elephant and advanced to the battlefield. Considering the seriousness of the situation, Shah Ismail rode the elephant with Sayyid Ahmad to help the ailing leader.

The Sikhs started the battle by opening fire. The Muslim army advanced and launched an attack from several strategic sides. The soldiers of the cavalry attacked the Sikh positions that they had formed in a dry canal. Amir Ahmad Khan Bajouri advanced with 500-strong battalion of the infantry and charged the front line of the Sikh army. The Sikh positions were seriously shattered and a number of Sikh soldiers were killed. The Sikh soldiers left the canal and moved back to take new positions. The Muslim soldiers attacked the retreating Sikh soldiers and pushed them further behind. They then attacked the main part of the Sikh army, while from the other side appeared Gudri Shahzada,<sup>90</sup> an ally of Sayyid Ahmad, and fell on the Sikh army and broke the defense line of the Sikhs. For a while the Sikh canons became silent and the Sikh army started retreating in an organized way. It was a clear sign of victory for the Mujahideen. A Muslim soldier even conveyed the news of victory to Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>91</sup>

But at the crucial hour when the defeat of the Sikhs was almost certain, Yar Khan, who had remained at a standstill in the battlefield all the while, suddenly fled from the battlefield with his soldiers.<sup>92</sup> Sultan Khan and Peer Khan, brothers of Yar Khan,

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<sup>90</sup> Mehr writes on the authority of *Waqae Ahmadi* that Gudri Shahzada was a descendent of a religious saint of the area. *Shaheed*, p. 362, footnote 2.

<sup>91</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 370-71.

<sup>92</sup> As Mehr writes, an article by Mason in *Calcutta Review*, details mentioned in a book by Mason and Pegeot, and a report in *Peshawar Gazetteer* confirm that Yar Muhammad Khan fled the battlefield in accordance with an agreed upon plan to help the Sikhs (*Shaheed*, pp. 374-75). Also, Sohan Lal writes in his book *Umdatut Tawaareekh*: "Yar Muhammad Khan, in compliance with his friendliness and alliance with Ranjeet Singh, poisoned Sayyid Ahmad and fled from the battlefield, his army fleeing with him" (Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 373-74). About Yar Muhammad Khan deserting Sayyid Ahmad in the battlefield, Hunter writes, "On one occasion, an important tribe of these borderers had deserted [Sayyid Ahmad] on the eve of battle...." (p.8). Hunter identifies the tribe in a



followed him. Then confusion and panic gripped the whole Muslim army. The soldiers from Sama were next to flee the battlefield and soldiers from other tribes ran away with them. Gudri Shahzada did not leave the battlefield. He and his associates fought a pitched battle with the Sikhs till they all lost their lives.

The Indian Mujahideen gathered around Sayyid Ahmad who was very sick all the while. Shah Ismail assessed the situation and retreated with Sayyid Ahmad from the battlefield. His main concern at that time was to take his sick leader to a safe place. For some time he rode the elephant with Sayyid Ahmad but fearing that the Sikhs may try to capture Sayyid Ahmad, he quickly sent him to a village called Babra on a horse in the care of some trusted soldiers. He, however, remained on the elephant moving in the other direction to mislead the Sikhs. Sayyid Ahmad was safely taken to Babra where Shah Ismail joined him later. At Babra Sayyid Ahmad's condition deteriorated so much that he could not ride a horse and had to be moved to Changlai on a cot which was hand carried by four men. At Changlai he remained sick for eight days, but he finally recovered. After learning about the details, he called his Mujahideen, who were then staying at Panjtar and Toroo, to Changlai and consoled them. Along with them, he prayed to Allah, offered repentance to Him, and beseeched Him to keep them steadfast in His path. Pleasure of Allah was what he was seeking and the deceit of an associate leading to a defeat could not dampen his courage and enthusiasm.

## Rising Again

Undaunted, Sayyid Ahmad toured the area covering the districts of Chamla, Bonair and Swat, calling Muslims to rise against the oppressive policy of the Sikhs and return to the true teachings of Islam. He also sent letters to this effect to various tribes of the Afghans. The tour was a great success. The people of the area very

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footnote on the same page as "the Barakzais, at the engagement with the Sikhs near Saidu [Shaidu]." (footnote 2, p. 8)

well received the call of Jihad. Contacts with the leaders and people of the area were revived and reinvigorated. Wherever Sayyid Ahmad went, people offered covenant of allegiance to him in large numbers. In this period several things happened which had a significant impact on the Movement. Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Phulati fell ill at Oach and breathed his last. His death was a personal loss to Sayyid Ahmad and a great bereavement to the Mujahideen, for he was a trusted friend of Sayyid Ahmad, treasurer of the Muslim army, in-charge of supplies, and a very pious Muslim.

It was during this tour that the first group of the Mujahideen arrived from India to join the Jihad Movement; several other groups arrived later. Maulana Mohammad Ishaque also sent several dispatches of money from Delhi.<sup>93</sup> This was a message that India had risen to support the mission of Sayyid Ahmad. In addition, Maulana Abdul Hai arrived from India and joined Sayyid Ahmad. Sayyid Ahmad personally advanced to receive him. His arrival, which was after the death of Maulana Muhammad Yusuf, was a great consolation to Sayyid Ahmad and his associates.

After this tour Muslims regained strength and self-confidence. The Yusufzai tribes were ready to extend all possible help. The Ghulzai chiefs of Afghanistan also conveyed their word of allegiance and promise of all help. The new groups of Mujahideen from India started arriving. In addition, the Muslims of Hazara, who were suffering greatly under the subjugation of Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, a ruthless military chief of Ranjeet Singh, also contacted Sayyid Ahmad and wished to join him. Also, several Muslim leaders whose states fell en route to Kashmir approached Sayyid Ahmad and promised to join as soon as he advanced toward Kashmir.

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<sup>93</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 57.

## The Hazara Expedition

Sayyid Ahmad sent Shah Ismail to Hazara to establish contacts with the Muslim chiefs of the area and prepare them to rise against the Sikhs. Shah Ismail advanced to Hazara with 150 Mujahideen and invited the leaders of different tribes there to join the mission of Sayyid Ahmad, but their response was not very positive. First, they did not want to side with Sayyid Ahmad against the Sikhs unless they were sure of his chances of success, and, second, there were local differences among them which had to be resolved before they could be expected to fall in one rank.

## Night Attack on Dumgala

This trip, however, provided Shah Ismail with an opportunity to strike the Sikhs at Dumgala where several thousand of them were stationed. Shah Ismail ordered a night attack on them. The number of the Mujahideen was small, but about fifteen hundred local people joined them. Shah Ismail stayed near a place called Shinkiyari with a small number of the Mujahideen. Miyan Muqem, the commander, was a person of exceptional valor. He led a very successful night attack against the Sikhs. The Sikhs were taken unawares and before they could organize themselves, about three hundred of them had lost their lives. Only a few Mujahideen met with martyrdom and two or three were injured.<sup>94</sup>

## The Shinkiyari Encounter

But before Miyan Muqem returned to Shah Ismail, another encounter took place at Shinkiyari. As mentioned earlier, Shah Ismail was stationed near Shinkiyari. Suddenly, a troop of Sikh soldiers came out of the fortress of Shinkiyari where they were stationed and challenged the Muslims. A fight ensued. Though on a

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<sup>94</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 48-50.

small scale, it was a fierce fight in which two hundred to two hundred fifty Sikhs were killed. On the Mujahideen side six or seven lost their lives. Shah Ismail's finger was also injured. After some time the Sikhs left the field.<sup>95</sup> Both encounters took place in September or October of 1827.<sup>96</sup> These encounters, though small, boosted the morale of the Mujahideen.

## Hostility of the Durrani

But before the Mujahideen could organize themselves, the Durrani opened a new front against them. They had deserted Sayyid Ahmad in the Battle of Shaidu and changed the victory of Muslims into a defeat, but now they started to oppose Sayyid Ahmad actively. First, they blocked the supply line of Sayyid Ahmad and stopped the passage of men and money to Panjtar from India. Second, they pressurized the private bankers in Peshawar and its vicinity not to exchange private money orders (*Hundi*) coming from India for Sayyid Ahmad. Third, they launched a campaign to instigate the chiefs and influential people of the area against the Mujahideen and intimidate those who had joined Sayyid Ahmad. And last, they started making military maneuvers against the Mujahideen. On one occasion when Sayyid Ahmad was going to Khahar, the Durrani sent an army to challenge him. Sayyid Ahmad changed the route and thus avoided a clash with them. He tried his best to normalize the situation but in vain.

Soon the news reached Sayyid Ahmad that the Durrani had crossed the Lunde River and brought an army against Alam Khan of Otmanzai, who was an ally of Sayyid Ahmad. It was suspected that they actually wanted to attack the Mujahideen. Sayyid Ahmad responded to the situation as a sincere religious leader. He called the chiefs and religious scholars of the area and asked the Ulema for a *Fatwa* (religious verdict) on what to do about the situation. The religious scholars came to a consensus that as the rulers of

<sup>95</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 426.

<sup>96</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 427.

Peshawar had in the past sided with the Sikhs and caused a great loss to the Muslims in the Battle of Shaidu and as they were currently actively opposing the elected *Ameerul Momineen* (the leader of the faithful), it was Islamically lawful to fight against them to protect the future of Islam in the area.

## Night Attack on the Durrani Army

At that time the Durrani army, which was about 4,000 strong, was stationed at Otmanzai. Sayyid Ahmad decided to take necessary steps to reduce the negative influence of the Durrani that they were exerting on the local Muslims by instigating them against the Mujahideen. He persuaded the tribes living in the area of Khyber not to help the Durrani and then moved to a place called Totai. From there he organized a night attack against the Durrani and appointed Shah Ismail as the commander. He himself took strategic positions near the village Otmanzai so that he could block the escape of the Durrani from that side.

The night attack was carried on very successfully. The Durrani fled the field; the Mujahideen captured two of their cannons.<sup>97</sup> The Durrani could not retreat to the village Otmanzai as Sayyid Ahmad had taken positions there. They were thus forced to gather around a hillock and started exchanging fire with the Mujahideen. As Sayyid Ahmad's mission to mildly castigate the Durrani was fulfilled, Sayyid Ahmad did not feel the need of extending the encounter any further. He called off his attack and returned to Panjtar.

## Implementation of Shariah

Sayyid Ahmad returned to Panjtar and planned to intensify his efforts for reconstructing the society in the Frontier on the principles of the Islamic Shariah. Numerous un-Islamic practices

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<sup>97</sup> Husain Hasani, *Shaheede Balakot* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1986), p. 132.

were still flourishing within the social fabric of the Afghan traditions. Sayyid Ahmad toured the area with this message and after doing the groundwork called an open meeting on February 6, 1829 (Shaban 1, 1244 H) to invite the leaders and the chiefs to implement the Shariah in their areas. Fatah Khan, the ruler of Panjtar and the host of the Mujahideen, was first to announce in the meeting his full readiness to implement the Shariah in his state. All other chiefs and Ulema welcomed the call, agreed to implement the Islamic Shariah in their areas and offered an oath of allegiance to Sayyid Ahmad to this effect. They also submitted a written pledge to this effect to Sayyid Ahmad. On February 20, 1829 (15 Shaban 1244 H) Fatah Khan Panjtari called a meeting of his tribesmen and invited them to follow the injunctions of the Shariah. All his people gladly agreed.

This important point should not be overlooked here that even after the decision to implement the Shariah in their areas, the chiefs and the Khans remained the rulers of their states in the same way. Sayyid Ahmad did not intend to interfere with their internal affairs. He simply wanted the rulers to take the responsibility that the injunctions of Islam were not ignored or discarded in their areas.

Soon necessary preparations for the implementation of the Shariah were completed. Sayyid Mohammad Meer was appointed as judge of Panjtar and its adjacent area. Sayyid Muhammad Habban,<sup>98</sup> a religious scholar from the Frontier, was appointed the Chief Justice (*Qaziul Quzat*). Mullah Qutbuddin Nangarhari was made in-charge for supervising the implementation of the Islamic Shariah. Thirty armed soldiers were put in his command. Records show that the people living in the area soon noticed the blessings of the Shariah. Crimes done in the name of tribal traditions were reduced to the minimum, life, property and prestige of people became safe from the high-handedness of the transgressors, people

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<sup>98</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 148-51. Sayyid Ahmad appointed Sayyid Muhammad Habban, a local scholar, as the Chief Justice (*Qaziul Quzat*), which shows that he sincerely wished and tried to make things as much agreeable for the Frontier people as possible by giving responsible positions to deserving local persons.

adopted the injunctions of Islam and the word of Allah reigned supreme in the area. Panjtar, the headquarters of the Mujahideen, emerged as an ideal example of an Islamic community.<sup>99</sup>

## Hostility of Khadi Khan

But the work of the Islamic renaissance could not continue in the area smoothly. Khadi Khan, the ruler of Hund who had hosted the Mujahideen first in the area, unfortunately turned against Sayyid Ahmad and started indulging in hostile activities. His sudden change in attitude had two main reasons. As the headquarters of the Mujahideen was moved from Hund to Panjtar for strategic reasons, Fatah Khan, the ruler of Panjtar, became more popular than Khadi Khan in the area, which Khadi Khan took as a personal loss. Also, he did not like the implementation of the Shariah in his area as it challenged his absolute power as a ruler there and invalidated the tribal system that was the source of his strength. Sayyid Ahmad tried his best to win him back, but his hostility kept on increasing. He started openly challenging Sayyid Ahmad: he tried to disrupt the supply line of the Mujahideen from India by looting and harassing the Mujahideen coming from India to Panjtar through his territory. He also attacked Ashraf Khan of Zaida, his father-in-law, for the simple reason that Ashraf Khan was a sincere ally of Sayyid Ahmad. When he realized that alone he could not do any serious harm to Sayyid Ahmad, he joined hands with the Sikhs.

He contacted Ventura,<sup>100</sup> a military commander of Ranjit Singh, and convinced him of the need of subjugating the chiefs of the Sama

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<sup>99</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 85-87.

<sup>100</sup> "Jean Baptiste Ventura, born in Italy or France, was commissioned into the Modenese contingent of the Italian Army, raised by Joseph Bonaparte for Napoleon. He served in various campaigns including the Russian campaign of 1812 and the Battle of Waterloo. He came to Lahore with Allord in 1822, by way of Kabul and Peshawar and entered the service of Ranjeet Singh. Ventura participated in the Battle of Nowshera in 1823, captured Peshawar, and was also present with Sher Singh in the Battle of Balakot. He rose to become the most

area who had become rebellious against the Sikhs due to the support of Sayyid Ahmad. He promised him his full support and surrendered his brother Amir Khan to the Sikhs to ensure his fidelity. Ventura crossed the Indus River with an army and demanded from the Muslim rulers of the Sama area gifts for the Maharaja that they used to present to show their submission to him. They, of course, defied. Ventura immediately understood that they had joined Sayyid Ahmad and would not bow to him. He thus wrote a letter to Sayyid Ahmad challenging his military presence in the area and alleged that he was instigating the loyal subjects of Ranjeet Singh against him. Sayyid Ahmad wrote back that the Muslims of the area were free to decide about their alliance and that the Maharaja's policy of forcibly subjugate them was unfair. He also mentioned in the letter the sufferings that the Muslim subjects of the Maharaja in the Punjab were undergoing owing to religious discrimination.

Ventura decided to attack the Mujahideen and thus a situation of armed confrontation between the Sikhs and the Mujahideen became unavoidable. Immediately Sayyid Ahmad deputed three hundred Mujahideen under the command of Maulvi Khairuddin to guard the mountainous passage to Panjtar. They stationed at a distance of some four kilometers from the army of the Sikhs. The Sikhs took it as a show of readiness on the part of the Mujahideen to fight the Sikhs. At night a rumor spread that the Mujahideen were going to launch a night attack on the Sikhs. Ventura did not feel confident to face the situation and immediately ordered his army to retreat. He crossed the Indus River and entered the territory of Punjab. He left tents and other articles behind in a hurried escape. In fact, Ventura had always seen the chiefs of the Sama area running for life to the safe resorts in the mountains at the arrival of the Sikh army and was not prepared to see them ready for an encounter.

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trusted lieutenant of Ranjit Singh, next only to Sher Singh, and was appointed as governor of Lahore. In 1837 Ventura proceeded on leave to Europe and returned at a time when Ranjit Singh's condition was critical. He finally left the Punjab again for France in November 1844, after the assassination of Sher Singh." Mohiuddin Ahmad, p. 213, footnote 3.



Khadi Khan did not regret his hostile behavior against the Mujahideen and continued his policy of hostility against them. Once Sayyid Ahmad sent a troop of the Mujahideen to capture the fort of Attock, which was under the control of the Sikhs. It was a secret mission. The Muslims of Attock had promised to help the Mujahideen and, thus, a victory was certain. Khadi Khan somehow learned about it and alerted the Sikh officer Lala Khazana Mal, in-charge of the fort. He thus foiled a very important move of the Mujahideen. Lala Khazana Mal arrested the supporters of Sayyid Ahmad in Attock and put all of them to death. This loss of life was caused by Khadi Khan.<sup>101</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad did not wish to nourish hostilities against Khadi Khan. He tried his best to dissuade him from hostile activities, but in vain. He then called a general meeting of the Ulema and chiefs of the area to discuss the matter. Some 3,000 distinguished persons attended it. The scholars unanimously agreed that as Sayyid Ahmad was an elected Imam of the Muslims, a Muslim turning against him and joining the enemies of Islam was a rebel and thus liable to be challenged with power, and if needed killed. They also put their signature and seal on the written version of the verdict and submitted it to Sayyid Ahmad. Khadi Khan was also present in the meeting. He showed his disregard for this consensus as clearly as he could: he left the meeting before it was over and walked out in defiance. At night Sayyid Ahmad called him and tried to persuade him to give up his animosity, but he remained defiant. Next morning Sayyid Ahmad called him again and requested him not to destroy the Muslim alliance. But he stood unyielding and left Panjtar in a hostile mood.

## Attack of the Sikh Army on Panjtar

About a month passed without any significant event, but that was a lull before the storm. The Sikhs decided to attack Panjtar, the

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<sup>101</sup> For details and documentation, see Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 485-89.

headquarters of the Mujahideen. Ventura was in command. As soon as the Sikh army arrived in the area, Khadi Khan joined it. Sayyid Ahmad was advised by his supporters to retreat to Changlai to avoid a confrontation with the mighty army of the Sikhs, but he preferred to fight. He wrote letters to important Ulema and chiefs of the area and called them to help him stop the Sikhs at Panjtar. He mentioned in the letter that if the Mujahideen were defeated at Panjtar, the Sikhs would surely destroy the other important towns in the area, such as Chamla and Bonair, as well. The local people responded to the call and assembled at Panjtar from different places to fight against the Sikhs.

There were two paths leading to Panjtar. Sayyid Ahmad ordered to erect strong walls around Panjtar to block both the passages for the Sikh army. He himself participated in constructing the walls. After the completion of the walls, he established four military posts at suitable positions and stationed his armed men there. When the news of the arrival of the Sikh army was confirmed, Sayyid Ahmad divided the Muslim army in three parts: one part of it was posted on the mountain at the right side of the main passage to Panjtar, the other unit was deputed on the mountain at the left side of the passage, while the third part of it was to face the advancing Sikh army from behind the walls. Both units on the mountains were instructed to let the Sikh army advance and engage with the third unit of the Muslim army behind the wall and then attack it from both sides. Including the local people who had joined the Mujahideen the total number of the Muslim soldiers was not more than 2,500 to 3,000;<sup>102</sup> the Sikh army was 10,000 strong, trained and well equipped. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Shah Ismail recited the Qur'anic verses relating to the event of Bai'at al-Ridhwan and all the Mujahideen took an oath at the hands of Sayyid Ahmad to fight until death. All three flags used by the Mujahideen in a battle were brought out and unfurled, and the Qur'anic verses carved on them filled the hearts of the Mujahideen with enthusiasm and valor.

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<sup>102</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 499.

The advancing Sikh army reached a place called Saleem Khan. Khadi Khan was with it. He attacked with his soldiers a village called Totali and set the village on fire. The Sikh army set on fire two other villages, Maneri and Sawabai. Ventura attacked Panjtar from the front and started dismantling the wall. The Muslim horsemen advanced to challenge him from the front. Then from the right and left sides of the hills, the Muslim troops raised slogans of attack and started descending to launch an attack on the Sikhs. This was a dangerous situation for the Sikhs, for they were thus surrounded from three sides. They could not do better than fighting a defensive battle that was not what Ventura had planned. The three parts of the Muslim army were located at safe positions: two wings were stationed at hills and the third was at Panjtar protected by strong walls. The Sikh army, in contrast, was in the open. In addition, Ventura could not assess the number of the Mujahideen who were stationed on the mountains and he certainly did not know how many more were behind the walls at Panjtar. He realized that the more the Sikh army stayed in the battlefield, the greater would be the loss. He accused Khadi Khan of misinforming him about the number of the Mujahideen and ordered the Sikh army to retreat. He crossed the Indus River and entered the territory of the Punjab.

## Attack of the Mujahideen on Hund

This incident left no doubt that Khadi Khan had attached his fate with the Sikhs and was openly up in arms against the Mujahideen. Although there was no hope now that he would take heed, Sayyid Ahmad personally went with Shah Ismail to Saleem Khan to meet him. Shah Ismail met him first and tried to convince him that Sayyid Ahmad would rectify anything in him or his associates which was against the Islamic Shariah and that Khadi Khan should join the Mujahideen again or at least abstain from fighting with them. Khadi Khan was not ready to yield and the meeting failed. Khadi Khan left Shah Ismail with the words: "We are chiefs and

rulers, not Mullah or Maulvi like Sayyid Badshah. Our ways are different from his. How can we the Pathans follow the Shariah of Sayyid Badshah? Let him do whatever he can against us.”<sup>103</sup>

When nothing worked with Khadi Khan, Sayyid Ahmad was forced to take a disciplinary action against him, for he was setting a bad example encouraging others to rebel. Sayyid Ahmad ordered an attack on Hund. Shah Ismail was in command. The Mujahideen attacked Hund one morning and captured the fort of Hund. Khadi Khan was killed with a stray bullet when he was running in panic on the upper floor of his house.<sup>104</sup> Besides Khadi Khan and a farmer, no life was lost and no property suffered destruction in this expedition. Everybody at Hund was given full protection of life and property. The dead body of Khadi Khan was handed over to his relatives who buried him in their family graveyard.

Sayyid Ahmad declared that if the brother of Khadi Khan promised to remain peaceful with him and observe the injunctions of the Islamic Shariah, he would willingly handover the fort of Hund to him. Khadi Khan's brother Amir Khan expressed his willingness to accept the conditions and wished to be made the ruler of Hund. Sayyid Ahmad was pleased to receive his message as he surely wished to establish a friendly relationship with Hund.

## Battle of Zaida

The matter would have ended there. But Amir Khan, brother of Khadi Khan, followed a treacherous policy of double talk: he sent to

<sup>103</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 502.

<sup>104</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 507 and 511. Mehr refutes a wrong statement by Henry Walter Bellew (1834-1892) about the death of Khadi Khan in these words: “God knows why Bellew wrote that Sayyid Saheb [Ahmad] attacked Khadi Khan, but when he did not succeed in it, he initiated a peace talk with him with the help of the Akhund of Swat. The Akhund persuaded Khadi Khan to come. When he was away from his bodyguards, Sayyid Saheb got him killed and then left for Panjar. This statement is totally wrong and baseless.” (p. 11, footnote 4). Mehr supports his account of the death of Khadi Khan with *Manzoora*, *Waq'a'e*, and *Ibratul Ulil Absar* by Sayyid Abdul Jabbar Shah. The attack on Hund was carried on 8 August 1829 (7 Safar 1245 H).

Sayyid Ahmad his word of allegiance but also started making efforts to arouse the chiefs of the area to avenge the death of Khadi Khan. Soon his hostility to the Mujahideen became clear. On one occasion his men even attacked a group of the Mujahideen who were transporting arms to Hund in which some twelve to fourteen Mujahideen lost their lives.<sup>105</sup> He also contacted Yar Muhammad Khan, the Durrani chief, and invited him to help him militarily against the Mujahideen. Yar Muhammad Khan agreed and started making preparations at a large scale. He sent a small troop of soldiers under the command of Haji Khan Kakar to Haryana, which was the center of Amir Khan's territory. With the help of Haji Kakar, Amir Khan carried a series of attacks against the Mujahideen. The Mujahideen were victorious in all encounters, but a final engagement was awaiting the arrival of Yar Muhammad Khan and his formidable troops from Peshawar. The chiefs of the area were clearly divided. Sardar Fatah Khan of Panjtar and Fatah Khan of Zaida remained faithful to Sayyid Ahmad; the other chiefs turned hostile or remained neutral.

Yar Muhammad Khan reached Haryana with 9,000 to 10,000 soldiers, six canons, several Shaheen (small canons), horses, camels, and an elephant. The Mujahideen were no match to the military might of the Khan, but they remained undaunted. At a place close to Zaida the two armies stationed near each other for a final engagement. Suddenly, four religious scholars from the army of Yar Khan came to Sayyid Ahmad and brought a message of peace on the condition that Sayyid Ahmad should evacuate the fort of Hund and return to Panjtar. Sayyid Ahmad welcomed the peace initiative but defended his military action against Khadi Khan on the ground that the latter had turned rebellious against the Muslims and had brought the Sikh army against the Mujahideen more than once. Sayyid Ahmad pleaded that Yar Khan's attack on the Mujahideen to avenge the death of Khadi Khan was unjust and requested the Khan to return to Peshawar and not cause bloodshed among the Muslims. Yar Khan refused to accept peace on this term

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<sup>105</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 515.

and closed all peace talks from his side. He even declared that any other peace envoy coming from Sayyid Ahmad to him would simply be put to death. There was then no other way to avoid an armed clash.

The Mujahideen launched a night attack on the Durrani. The Durrani were, of course, ready and alert, with horsemen patrolling around. But the Mujahideen suddenly fell on them and in a calculated move made a sudden push toward the canons and captured them. This stunned the Durrani. A fierce and pitched fight ensued. Suddenly, Yar Khan was hit by a bullet and was quickly moved out of the battlefield. This unnerved the Durrani and they left the battlefield in great confusion. Three hundred Durrani soldiers, including seven high-ranking officers, lost their lives in the battle. Yar Muhammad Khan also died while he was being taken to Peshawar. His army scattered in disarray. The Mujahideen captured one elephant, sixty to seventy camels, about 300 horses, six canons, and fifteen or sixteen Shaheen. Swords and guns were too many to be counted.<sup>106</sup> The Mujahideen also found some important papers, including a letter of Ranjeet Singh addressed to Yar Khan instructing him to drive out Sayyid Ahmad and the Mujahideen from the area and hand over the fort of Hund to the relatives of Khadi Khan, or face military action from the Sikh chief.<sup>107</sup> The Battle of Zaida was fought on 4 or 5 September 1829 (5 or 6 Rabiul Awwal 1245 H).<sup>108</sup>

## Back to Shariah

After the death of Khadi Khan and Yar Muhammad Khan, the Mujahideen breathed a sigh of relief and were able to concentrate on establishing the Islamic Shariah in the region. Once the negative influence of these leaders was over, the people of the area showed willingness to follow the injunctions of Islam. Fatah Khan of

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<sup>106</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 527.

<sup>107</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 529-30.

<sup>108</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 529.

Panjtar and Fatah Khan of Zaida together came to Sayyid Ahmad and requested him to appoint Islamic judges (*Qazi*) in their areas to settle the disputes of the people according to the Shariah. They also wrote letters to other rulers in the Sama region and invited them to implement the Islamic Shariah in their areas. Many of them gladly accepted it. They also agreed to pay *Ushr* to Sayyid Ahmad as the Imam of the believers.<sup>109</sup> Sayyid Ahmad deputed Islamic judges in the area: the chiefs themselves recommended suitable local Ulema to work as *Qazi* in their areas, which Sayyid Ahmad approved. When the next harvest season came, the chiefs of the Sama area sent *Ushr* to Panjtar. Sayyid Ahmad accepted whatever was sent without questioning the amount.

## Renovation of the Islamic Army

Sayyid Ahmad got an opportunity now to renovate his army and put the Mujahideen under a military training program. He appointed Abdul Hameed Khan, a distinguished military man, to train the Mujahideen in riding, spear handling, shooting, and fencing. Fatah Khan Panjtari also participated with his soldiers in military exercises. Several other centers of martial arts and physical training were established under specialists. Sayyid Ahmad also participated and practiced different martial arts for hours regularly for two months. He also appointed Abdul Hameed Khan as Commander of the cavalry, who very ably organized the mounted soldiers into a powerful unit of the Muslim army.

## Relation with Sittana

While Sayyid Ahmad was staying at Khabbal, Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sittana visited him and invited him to Sittana. When Sayyid Ahmad went there, the whole family offered Bai'ah to him. As this

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<sup>109</sup> *Ushr* is the share of the Islamic state as enunciated in the Islamic Shariah which is used for meeting the financial obligations of the state. For details, see an authentic book on this topic.

family was highly respected in the area, their association with Sayyid Ahmad proved to be a valuable support to the campaign. In the words of Mehr, "This is the only family in the Frontier that sacrificed all it had to support the mission of Sayyid Ahmad."<sup>110</sup>

## Alliance with Painsa Khan

When Sayyid Ahmad was at a place called Khabbal, he received emissaries from Sardar Painsa Khan, the ruler of Amb, who extended his regards to him and wished to meet him. Sardar Painsa Khan was the most powerful chief of the Tanowli tribe and had been fighting with the Sikhs for long to defend his independence. Sayyid Ahmad accepted the invitation and went to meet him at the appointed place. Painsa Khan promised to let the Mujahideen pass through his territory to Hazara and Kashmir. Sayyid Ahmad gave the Khan an elephant and a canon as gift. In fact, this treaty was absolutely essential for the Mujahideen because a passage to Hazara and onward to Kashmir was not possible without crossing the territories of the Amb state. Luckily, Painsa Khan was at war with the Sikhs and became gladly ready to cooperate with the Mujahideen.

## Attack of Sultan Muhammad Khan

All this paved the way for the Mujahideen to strike the Sikhs again. But while Sayyid Ahmad was still touring the area, he received the news that Sultan Muhammad Khan had attacked and captured the fort of Hund, which was in the control of the Mujahideen, and was planning to attack Panjtar. Once again Sayyid Ahmad had to give up his effort to fight against the Sikhs and turned back to a Muslim rebel. He decided to move from Chanai to Panjtar and called Maulana Shah Ismail to join him at Gandaf, en route to Panjtar. The Durrani were stationed at Hund. The situation demanded

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<sup>110</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 537.



that Sayyid Ahmad should proceed toward Hund to attack the Durrani, or stay at Panjar to fight a defensive war against them. But in an intelligent military move Sayyid Ahmad ordered 500 horsemen to launch a lightning attack on Peshawar, the center of the Durrani state.<sup>111</sup> This was an unexpected situation for the Durrani, as Sultan Muhammad Khan had made no arrangements for the protection of Peshawar. He and his soldiers became worried about their homes and families. They made an immediate decision to retreat to Peshawar, and, handing over the fort of Hund to Amir Khan, brother of Khadi Khan, rushed back to Peshawar. As Amir Khan was not strong enough to defend Hund against the Mujahideen, he sided with the Sikhs and managed to receive 700 Sikh soldiers to protect the fort.

## The Kashmir Expedition

Kashmir was now the target for Sayyid Ahmad. Nasir Khan Bhatgarami, Sardar Baland Khan Tanowli, Kamal Khan Agarwari, Amanullah Khan of Ashra, Madad Khan, brother of Pinda Khan, and Raja Zabardast Khan of Muzaffarabad had invited Sayyid Ahmad to attack Kashmir and promised to help. Sulaiman Shah, the ruler of Chitral, had also promised to join him with his soldiers through Gilgit when Sayyid Ahmad attacked Kashmir. Contacts were also established with Sayyid Zamin Shah of the valley of Kaghan to gain his support in this expedition.<sup>112</sup> Sayyid Ahmad made consultations with his Advisory Board. It was decided that in order to assess the situation Shah Ismail should first be sent with a small group of the Mujahideen to Muzaffarabad, which was considered the entrance to Kashmir.

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<sup>111</sup> The attack on Peshawar was not meant to be carried out. It was announced only to make the Durrani nervous and pressurize them to return to Peshawar.

<sup>112</sup> Qamar Ahmad Usmani, *Bareilly se Balakot* (Lahore: Idara-e-Islamiyat, 1983), p. 231.

## Hostility of Painda Khan

Shah Ismail had to cross a river at Amb in order to go to Muzaffarabad. Painda Khan, the ruler of Amb, who had given his word of allegiance to Sayyid Ahmad, declined to permit the Mujahideen to cross the river from his territory on the pretext that the Sikhs would get antagonistic to him. This argument was not convincing because, first, Painda Khan was already at war with the Sikhs, and, second, this was the only basis of his alliance with Sayyid Ahmad that he would let the Mujahideen pass through his territories and allow them to use his facilities. Shah Ismail wrote to Painda Khan that he would not cross the river at Amb nor would he use his facilities but would instead cross the river at Bhetgali. He requested the Khan to allow him and his men to go to Bhetgali, which was not in the State of Amb, through his territory since there was no other way to reach there. Painda Khan harshly turned down the request and warned Shah Ismail that any attempt on the part of the Mujahideen to enter his territory would lead to a military confrontation between them. Shah Ismail halted there and informed Sayyid Ahmad of the situation.

This was an extremely unpleasant situation for Sayyid Ahmad. He did not ever like to fight Painda Khan as he was a Muslim, but complying with his orders would have forced the Mujahideen to give up the Kashmir expedition forever. Also, the news was circulating that the presence of the Sikh army stationed at Hund to support Amir Khan, brother of Khadi Khan, served as a moral support to those chiefs of the Sama area who had developed ill-will against the Mujahideen for one reason or another. Any weakness shown by Sayyid Ahmad against Painda Khan could have helped the insurgent chiefs of the area in getting bolder. The Mujahideen could not change the route and could not accept a meaningless standstill position. But as Sayyid Ahmad did not like an armed confrontation with a Muslim chief, he asked Shah Ismail to return to Punjtar and called a meeting with his advisors for consultation on the matter.

It was decided in the meeting of the Advisory Board that the Mujahideen had no choice except to try to proceed to Kashmir through Amb and fight against Painsa Khan if he opposed. Sayyid Ahmad, however, wrote once again to Painsa Khan seeking his permission to cross his territory en route to Kashmir and explained that his expedition was solely against the Sikhs with whom Painsa Khan himself was at war. Painsa Khan turned down the request of Sayyid Ahmad once again with a stern warning of armed opposition if the Mujahideen did not take heed. Painsa Khan also started making preparations to fight with the Mujahideen. A war between Painsa Khan and the Mujahideen, therefore, became imminent.

## Expedition against Painsa Khan

Sayyid Ahmad proceeded with his army and surrounded Painsa Khan at Amb from four sides, reducing for him the scope of all armed maneuvers. Finding no way to escape and no chance to win, Painsa Khan decided to involve the Mujahideen in a peace talk and attack them unawares. He sent a peace mission to Shah Ismail, the commander-in chief, and offered to personally see him at Baanda next morning. Shah Ismail welcomed the peace initiative and sent instructions to Arbab Bahram Khan at Koh Kanereri and Sayyid Ahmad Ali at Sittana to postpone all military advancements till further instructions. He decided to go to Baanda as soon as he was informed about the arrival of Painsa Khan there.

Thus involving the Mujahideen in peace mission, Painsa Khan launched a massive surprise attack against the Mujahideen at Kanereri. But due to the timely help from Farosa, the Mujahideen defeated Painsa Khan. Demoralized, the Khan beat a retreat and vacated his strongholds one after another. The Mujahideen captured Ashra, Kotla and Amb. Painsa Khan escaped to Chatrbai and then further back to Baroti.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 552-563.

Unfortunately, Painsa Khan did a great harm to the Muslim cause by engaging the Mujahideen in hostility at Amb when they could have advanced to Kashmir, as the opportunity to strike the Sikhs at Kashmir was very favorable then. The Sikh Governor Diwan Ram Dayal was summoned to Lahore to answer for charges of mismanagement, high-handedness and corruption against him and, therefore, Kashmir was without a proper administrator at that time. It was a most suitable time to attack Kashmir but the opportunity was lost due to the shortsightedness of Painsa Khan.<sup>114</sup>

## The Phulra Expedition

After Amb and Ashra were conquered, Sayyid Ahmad turned to the Pukhli expedition again for advancing toward Kashmir. First, in April 1838 (Shawwal 1245) he sent his emissaries to the tribes residing around Muzaffarabad and won their alliance. Then in the same month he sent an expedition to capture Phulra which was under the Tanowli rule and was of great strategic importance. Under the command of Sayyid Ahmad Ali, the Muslim army advanced to Phulra and captured it. Painsa Khan ran away from Baroti to Shergarh, and then to Agrwaur, and sent his request to Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa to help him against the Mujahideen.

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<sup>114</sup> The Mujahideen never wanted to fight against any Muslim leader of the area. They fought only when a battle was imposed upon them. Their attitude toward Painsa Khan after the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad is a clear proof of it. When the Mujahideen were staying at Sittana under the leadership of Sheikh Wali Muhammad and Maulvi Naseeruddeen, Hari Singh Nalwa, the prominent Sikh leader, offered to give them a vast area in Hazara worth the income of 15,000 rupees annually, in addition to 15,000 rupees in cash, and expressed readiness to acknowledge the rule of the Mujahideen in the mountainous area stretching to the right of the Indus River that they had captured, provided they attacked Painsa Khan from one side and thus helped the Sikhs attacking him from the other side to destroy him. Hari Singh Nalwa tried to justify this alliance by mentioning that Painsa Khan was a dishonest and treacherous person and had also ill-treated the Mujahideen in the past. Sheikh Wali Muhammad and Maulvi Naseeruddeen Dehlawi unanimously turned down this offer and replied to Hari Singh's envoy, Sayyid Hasan Shah, that they would never attack a Muslim in favor of the Sikhs, no matter how much he had hurt them in the past. Mehr, *Sarguzashi*, 114-15.

Painda Khan also surrendered his son Jahandar to Hari Singh to ensure that he would not forsake his alliance with the Sikhs.

The army under Sayyid Ahmad Ali had camped in the open field outside Phulra and was, thus, exposed to attacks. Hari Singh Nalwa took advantage of its vulnerable position and fell upon it one morning before sunrise. The Sikhs reached there very swiftly as they were on horses and attacked the Mujahideen suddenly. The Mujahideen could not organize themselves and faced the Sikhs individually or in small groups. They fought bravely, but the Sikhs were able to inflict a severe blow to them. Many Mujahideen, including the Commander Sayyid Ahmad Ali, lost their lives in the battle.<sup>115</sup> As the Sikhs had not intended to capture Phulra or dislodge the Mujahideen from there, they returned as swiftly as they had come. The death of Ahmad Ali was a great loss to the Mujahideen, but it was more so to Sayyid Ahmad because Ahmad Ali was his nephew, a life-long companion, a selfless supporter, and a wise advisor. But to his pride he had received all wounds in the front part of his body.

Ranjeet Singh was fully aware of the growing power of Sayyid Ahmad in the Sama area and considered him a potential threat. He decided to use diplomacy and sent a delegation consisting of his two trustworthy deputies, Hakeem Fakeer Azeemuddin of Delhi and Wazeer Singh, who met Sayyid Ahmad at Amb and delivered a letter of the Maharaja to him. The Maharaja had offered to Sayyid Ahmad a state across the Indus River rendering the revenue of 900,000 rupees annually and the revenue of the area of Sama that the Sikh army used to collect on the conditions of peace and

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<sup>115</sup> Sayyid Ahmad had given one of his horses called Azdar to Sayyid Ahmad Ali for this expedition. After Sayyid Ahmad Ali fell in the battle, the Sikhs caught the horse and wanted to take it away. A Mujahid named Muhammad Khan saw it and restlessly called out to the Muslim soldiers, "This is Amirul Momineen's horse. Don't let the enemies take it away." With these words he attacked the Sikhs alone. Others joined him and took the horse back from the Sikhs. The Sikhs attacked again to recapture the horse. The horse was killed in the combat. Muhammad Khan also lost his life in recapturing the horse. This incident and several others of this kind show how deeply the Mujahideen loved Sayyid Ahmad. (Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 572)

alliance. This was a lucrative offer, but Sayyid Ahmad did not consider it even for a moment. He replied that his main aim was to deliver Muslims from the tyrannical yoke of Ranjeet Singh and proclaim the Word of Allah to people, not to acquire a piece of land and become its ruler. He added that if the Maharaja accepted Islam and ruled his country with justice, he would gladly surrender to him the areas that were in his control. He treated the delegation with due respect and sent a letter to the Maharaja of the same content."<sup>116</sup> Perhaps Ranjeet Singh had thought that a setback at Phulra might have dampened the ambitions of Sayyid Ahmad and an offer of a large state might do the rest. But he realized that the mission of Sayyid Ahmad was different.

## The Sikh Army in the Sama Area Again

After the above-mentioned mission failed, a 12,000-strong army of the Sikhs entered the Sama area for the collection of the annual revenue for Ranjeet Singh. The officers in command were Ventura and Allord. But the presence of Sayyid Ahmad in the area meant a dwindling influence of the Sikhs. They, therefore, contacted Sayyid Ahmad and wanted to open a dialogue with him. Maulvi Khairuddin Sherkoti and Haji Bahadur Khan represented Sayyid Ahmad. Ventura questioned them about Sayyid Ahmad's mission. He then wished to know if Sayyid Ahmad would agree to collect revenue for the Maharaja from the Sama area and enter into alliance with him. Khairuddeen declined on behalf of Sayyid Ahmad. When both of his offers were turned down, he expressed his wish that Sayyid Ahmad accept a gift from him and offer him a horse for the Maharaja. He thought that on the basis of the exchange of gifts he would spread the news that Sayyid Ahmad had surrendered to the Maharaja, as offering a horse as gift was considered then a token of submission. But Maulvi Khairuddin refused to accept this offer, too. The talk ended with a clear indication that the Sikh army would attack Panjtar, the

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<sup>116</sup> *Waqae*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 218-20.

headquarters of the Mujahideen. Sayyid Ahmad was informed accordingly.

## Attack of the Sikh Army on Panjtar

The Sikhs crossed the river at night, moved toward Panjtar, and camped at Zaida, some twelve miles from Panjtar. At sunset, a rumor somehow spread in the Sikh army that the Mujahideen would attack the Sikhs at night. The Sikh soldiers stayed awake all night. They had not gotten enough time to prepare adequately for their defense yet, and so a sense of uneasiness prevailed among them. They wanted to retreat to a safe place. Allord and Ventura tried to pacify them, but the tense and anxious soldiers became unorganized and retreated crossing back the Lunde River by bridge. They moved from there to Attock. The retreat of the Sikh army created a positive image of the Mujahideen in the local Muslims. The power of the Mujahideen was once again recognized in the region.

## Reestablishing Authority in the Area

As a direct collision with the Sikhs had already started, it was necessary for Sayyid Ahmad to tour the area, support the chiefs who were loyal to him, and castigate those who had grown rebellious. A show of authority was absolutely necessary as several chiefs of the Sama area had once again accepted subjugation to the Sikhs. Sayyid Ahmad deputed Qazi Sayyid Habban to tour the area to renew contacts with the people and the chiefs and reestablish authority. He was given 300 horsemen and 250 infantry soldiers under his command. Maulana Shah Ismail was appointed the Advisor and Guide to Qazi Habban. Abdul Hameed Khan accompanied as commander of the cavalry. Sayyid Ahmad instructed Qazi Habban to fear Allah and never indulge in any excesses in dealing with the people of the area. At Panjtar Sayyid Habban gathered the chiefs of the area and held a meeting with

them with a view to organize them under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad. The response of the chiefs was quite positive. Fatah Khan of Panjtar announced that he would start paying *Ushr* to Sayyid Ahmad as the Imam of the faithful and encouraged all others to do the same. They also agreed that they would fight with the Sikhs to take back their lands that the Sikhs had forcibly captured (in which the Mujahideen would help them) and then pay *Ushr* to Sayyid Ahmad on the produce. This was, of course, an important decision, as paying *Ushr* could have united the chiefs of the Sama area with the headquarters of Panjtar in a yet another new relationship – mutual support and unity under one leadership.

Qazi Habban then left Panjtar and regained control of several places, such as Khalabat, Marghuz, Thandkui, Kadi, and Panjpeer. He also recaptured Hund, which was taken over by the brother of Khadi Khan with the support of the Sikhs. The people of Nawakali and Sheikh Jana also expressed readiness to pay *Ushr*. But the Khan of Hooti, Sardar Ahmad Khan, decided to put up an armed resistance against the Mujahideen. He left the fort of Hooti under the care of his brother Rasool Khan, and rushed to Peshawar to seek military help from the Durrani chiefs. The Mujahideen advanced and captured the fort. The people of Marda also put up armed resistance and started shooting at the Mujahideen when they reached there. The Mujahideen moved forward braving the gun shots and captured Marda. But a bullet hit Qazi Habban and he breathed his last in the battlefield. Shah Ismail took command after the death of Qazi Habban. The Mujahideen then moved to Amanzai, Suddam, and Shewa and made necessary arrangements for the collection of *Ushr*. Once again, the laws of the Shariah were established in the whole Sama area.

## Battle of Mayar

But before the Mujahideen could make good of this situation, Sayyid Ahmad was informed that Sultan Muhammad Khan, ruler of Peshawar, had already set out from Peshawar with his army to



attack the Mujahideen to show his support to Sardar Ahmad Khan, ruler of Hooti. This was again another occasion when a Muslim chief of the area caused a setback to the reformist efforts of Sayyid Ahmad. Sayyid Ahmad was further informed that Painda Khan and his Sikh allies were planning to attack Ashra and Amb, which were under the control of the Mujahideen.

Sayyid Ahmad had no choice but to face the Durrani army in an open battlefield. He moved with the Mujahideen to Charsadda; the Durrani army camped at Mardan. Sayyid Ahmad then sent a peace mission and expressed his wish to clarify any misunderstanding about him to avert the war. But Sultan Muhammad Khan insisted on avenging the death of his brother Yar Muhammad Khan and winning back Hooti for its ruler Ahmad Khan. The peace talk failed and a war was imposed on Sayyid Ahmad once again.

The two armies engaged each other at Mayar, which was between Toroo and Hooti. The Durrani army was 12,000 strong: 8,000 cavalry and 4,000 infantry soldiers. They also had six canons. The Mujahideen were 3,500, out of which only 500 soldiers were mounted. They had no canons at their side. They were heavily outnumbered by the Durrani and were poorly equipped, but their morale was very high as Sayyid Ahmad was himself participating in this battle. Soon the battle became very heated. Suddenly the cavalry of the Mujahideen fighting under the command of Risaldar Abdul Hameed Khan became disorganized. Abdul Hameed Khan received several injuries and fell off the horse. The local allies of the Mujahideen deserted them at the very outset. The Mujahideen were thus hard-pressed and received serious setback. Maulana Shah Ismail realized the seriousness of the situation. He, along with Sheikh Wali Muhammad, rushed toward the canons of the Durrani with one hundred Mujahideen, and after a pitched battle captured the canons. He then immediately turned the direction of the canons toward the Durrani and fired on them. The Durrani could not withstand the strike of the canons and left the battlefield in an unorganized way. The battle thus ended in victory for the Mujahideen, but a large number of them were injured and quite a

few of them were martyred. Risaldar Abdul Hameed Khan, commander of the cavalry, also succumbed to death. Sultan Muhammad Khan left the area and returned to Peshawar.

## Peshawar Captured

Sultan Muhammad Khan's provocative acts had crossed all limits. He now could not be allowed to retreat to Peshawar, make up for the loss his army had suffered, and attack the Mujahideen again. After consulting with his advisors, Sayyid Ahmad decided to pursue him and attack Peshawar, his capital where he was staying after the battle of Mayar. When Sayyid Ahmad proceeded, several chiefs of the Sama area joined him with their armies, thus increasing the number of the soldiers to six to seven thousand. When Sayyid Ahmad reached close to Peshawar, Sultan Muhammad Khan evacuated Peshawar and moved with his army to an unknown place. From there, however, he sent Arbab Faizullah Khan, brother of Arbab Bahram Khan, to Sayyid Ahmad to express his regrets. He sought forgiveness, promised to redress and offered to pay rupees 40,000 to compensate the expenses incurred on that expedition. He also requested Sayyid Ahmad to return to Panjtar and let him rule Peshawar. Sayyid Ahmad replied to him in an appropriate way, reminding him how his unqualified insurgence had hurt the cause of Islam on several occasions, but he moved on and captured Peshawar.

## Sultan Muhammad Khan Reinstated

As an emissary of Sultan Muhammad Khan, Arbab Faizullah Khan visited Sayyid Ahmad several times. He brought Sultan Khan's message that he sincerely regretted his past conduct and was ready to appear personally before Sayyid Ahmad to renew his oath of allegiance to him. Sayyid Ahmad pondered on all aspects of the matter. The local businessmen, some of whom were Hindus, were against the idea that Sayyid Ahmad return Peshawar to the

Durrani. They offered to Sayyid Ahmad full financial support to run the state. Some of Sayyid Ahmad's advisors were also not sure if Sultan Khan could be trusted. But Sayyid Ahmad showed an inclination towards accepting the apologies of Sultan Khan and returning Peshawar to him. He wanted to act in the light of the injunctions of the Shariah and believed that because Sultan Khan repented, he deserved forgiveness. He said in this regard, "Sultan Muhammad Khan has repented. Only Allah knows what is actually in his heart. The orders of the Shariah are applicable to what is apparent. How can I turn down his request for forgiveness? What justification do I have to do so? If a pious and God-fearing religious scholar convinces me otherwise, I will change my decision."<sup>117</sup>

Practical implications of the local situation also supported Sayyid Ahmad's decision to accept the apology of Sultan Khan. Sayyid Ahmad's aim was to persuade Sultan Khan, like others, to serve the cause of Islam, not to alienate him. Capturing Peshawar would have surely led Sayyid Ahmad into an endless hostility with Sultan Khan. In addition, Pinda Khan, the ruler of Amb who had a grudge against Sayyid Ahmad, would have readily extended him all help. Above all, he would have opted to seek help of the Sikhs that the latter were so willing to offer, which would have been the worst defeat of Sayyid Ahmad's mission. The matter was finally discussed in the Advisory Board (*Shoura*) and it was decided that Sultan Khan should be given another chance. As Mehr writes, "It was in the interest of the area and the local community that they [Sultan Muhammad Khan and his brothers] were taken along as allies. Justice demanded the same and the guidance of the Qur'an also supported it."<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 651-52. It is related that Arbab Bahram Khan proposed that if he was appointed as the ruler of Peshawar, he would rule it according to the injunctions of Islam and use the resources of the state to help Sayyid Ahmad in the cause of Jihad. Sayyid Ahmad did not accept the proposal, as giving Peshawar to Arbab, his close associate, was like keeping it under his own rule. Arbab immediately understood the implication and felt sorry for making such a proposal to Sayyid Ahmad.

<sup>118</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 654.

Sayyid Ahmad, however, took all possible precautionary measures to make sure that Sultan Khan was sincere. First, Arbab Faizullah Khan was made responsible to satisfy himself that Sultan Khan meant to keep the promises he was making. Arbab Faizullah Khan paid several visits to Sultan Khan and then expressed his full satisfaction to Sayyid Ahmad. He also gave his word to Sayyid Ahmad that if Sultan Khan and his brothers followed the past conduct of treachery, he would leave them forever and join Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>119</sup> Second, Shah Ismail met Sultan Khan twice at the instruction of Sayyid Ahmad and exchanged views with him. In the last meeting Sultan Khan took a formal oath of allegiance on his hands for Sayyid Ahmad. Third, Sayyid Ahmad called him for a final personal meeting. This was a very practical approach, for if he had rebelled due to a genuine grievance, Sayyid Ahmad could have tried to redress it, or if there was a misunderstanding, Sayyid Ahmad could have clarified it, but if Sultan Khan was just trying to buy time, Sayyid Ahmad could have found it out.

In this meeting Sultan Khan showed Sayyid Ahmad a letter which was written by some pseudo-religious *Peers* from India and had their stamps on it to authenticate it. The letter was addressed to the chiefs of the Sama area and contained the following message:

You Chiefs and Khans are being informed that a person named Sayyid Ahmad has taken some religious scholars with him and is visiting Afghanistan with a small group of followers. Apparently, he espouses the cause of Jihad, but in reality he is a deceitful person. He is against your religion and ours and has created a new religion. He does not respect pious saints and denounces them. The British has sent him as a spy on a mission of collecting information about your country. Don't be deceived by his words, for he will make you lose your country. Destroy him and his companions in

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<sup>119</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 647.

whatever way it is possible. If you show slackness in this matter, you will have to repent.<sup>120</sup>

Sultan Khan told Sayyid Ahmad that he was misled by that letter. He accepted his mistakes, promised to remain faithful to him and implement Shari'ah in his area. Obviously, what he was saying was supported by the document he produced. Sayyid Ahmad accepted his apologies and gave him his word to reinstate him as ruler of Peshawar.<sup>121</sup> Sayyid Ahmad, however, was struck with deep sorrow by seeing the letter of the selfish descendants of some Peers in India who for petty gains had struck him from behind and caused such a disaster to the Muslim cause. Sultan Khan promised to remain faithful to Sayyid Ahmad and implement the Shariah in his area. At his request, Sayyid Ahmad appointed Maulvi Mazhar Ali Azeemabadi as *Qazi* of Peshawar and left some ten to twelve Mujahideen there to help him.

With the conquest of Peshawar and consequent submission of Sultan Muhammad Khan, Sayyid Ahmad virtually ruled the entire area from the Khyber Pass to the state of Amb. The income of the area that was returned to Sultan Khan alone was one million rupees

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<sup>120</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 659.

<sup>121</sup> The decision of Sayyid Ahmad to return Peshawar to Sultan Muhammad Khan has been criticized by some later historians, among whom the name of Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi tops the list. He writes in his book *Shah Waliyullah ki Siyasi Tahreek* (p.169), as quoted by Mehr: "On this occasion all the Mujahideen, commoners and the select, were unanimous that the decision [to return Peshawar to Sultan Muhammad Khan] was wrong. Maulana Ismail and other Indian and Afghan advisors tried their best that Amir Shaheed [Sayyid Ahmad] did not make this mistake, but he did not listen to anybody." Maulana Sindhi does not give any source to authenticate his statement. Mehr writes about his statement: "This is totally wrong that Maulana Shah Ismail, Afghan and Indian advisors, and all commoners and the select of the Mujahideen considered this decision of Sayyid Ahmad to be incorrect" (*Shaheed*, p. 656). Mehr writes at another place, "As far as I have been able to research, except Hafiz Imamuddin Rampuri, no Indian Ghazi disagreed with Sayyid Ahmad on this issue. All of them were satisfied after listening to Sayyid Ahmad's argument. Maulana Shah Ismail said nothing about it at that time or later." (*Shaheed*, p. 653). Qamar Ahmad Usmani refutes Maulana Sindhi's statement in these words: "[To say so] is totally wrong and a worst attempt to distort facts....At no point he [Shah Ismail] felt the need of saying anything against it." (p. 260).

annually. With these material resources and manpower Sayyid Ahmad was in a strong position to launch a massive strike against the Sikhs. As Mehr comments, this was the most suitable time for Sayyid Ahmad to enter into a decisive war with the Sikhs.<sup>122</sup>

## The Brutal Conspiracy

But before Sayyid Ahmad could organize his resources, Sultan Muhammad Khan and the Mullahs of the area hatched a shameless conspiracy against him. The messengers of Sultan Khan started running from one corner of the Sama area to the other to arouse the chiefs and leaders against the Mujahideen. They used the same letter of the *Peers* of India that Sultan Khan had earlier shown to Sayyid Ahmad to instigate the common people against the Mujahideen. This was done swiftly and secretly. After a secret union was thus formed, they planned to attack and kill all the Mujahideen deputed in the Sama area for different administrative purposes at one and the same time.

The Mujahideen did not get any first-hand feel of the changing mood of the tribesmen. Nevertheless, Arbab Faizullah Khan sensed the danger and asked Mazhar Ali, the *Qazi* of Peshawar, to immediately inform Sayyid Ahmad about the situation. As the matter was very sensitive, Mazhar Ali decided to confirm the news first. One day he was called by Sultan Khan in his court and questioned about the Islamic justification for killing Yar Mohammad Khan. He then realized that there was truth behind the apprehension of Arbab Faizullah and informed Sayyid Ahmad about it. Sayyid Ahmad became worried, but it was not proper to take any action against the rulers of Peshawar in a hurry. Shah Ismail, however, wrote to Mazhar Ali defending in the light of the Shariah the actions taken by Sayyid Ahmad against Yar Muhammad Khan and Khadi Khan, asked him not to initiate a discussion of this sort from his side, and instructed him to return with his people to Panjtar if the situation deteriorated.

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<sup>122</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 668.

But Mazhar Ali could never return to Panjtar. One day Sultan Khan called him and invited him to a room where he had hidden his swordsmen who at once fell upon him and killed him. All other Mujahideen at Peshawar, except Munshi Imamuddin who was not at his residence at the time of the attack, were assassinated. Arbab Faizullah Khan was also put to death because the Durranis felt that he would side with Sayyid Ahmad. After all he had given his word of honor to Sayyid Ahmad to guarantee the faithfulness of Sultan Khan. After this incident a message was sent from Peshawar to all allies in the neighboring areas that on the third day from the incident the Mujahideen deputed anywhere in the Sama area should be massacred at night. When the news of the incident of Peshawar reached Panjtar, Sayyid Ahmad was thunderstruck. He had never thought that Sultan Khan could go to that extent. A meeting of the Advisory Board (*Shoura*) was immediately called in which it was decided that early next morning the Mujahideen from all parts of Sama should be called back to Panjtar.

Learning that the Mujahideen spread in the area were being called back to Panjtar, the rebels advanced their massacre plan and executed it the following night. It began from a place called Ismaila where Haji Bahadur Shah Khan, a very pious Mujahid, was put to death in prostration while he was leading the Isha prayer. With it the drum was beaten at Ismaila; the other villages followed and within no time the whole area began to resound with the echo of drum beating. This was a signal for the local people that the time for action against the Mujahideen had arrived. The Mujahideen were attacked at different places more or less the same time. Some were taken unawares; some fought and fell; only a few could escape the brutal treachery.

The local people had turned savage and did not respect any relationship, religious or human. At a place called Saddam all of the Mujahideen were mercilessly slaughtered with knives and swords. Some were forced to the ground and slaughtered like sheep and goats. At another place called Munai the Mujahideen took refuge in a mosque. Some Ulema and Sayyids and even some local women

and Hindus tried to persuade the rebels to spare the Mujahideen, but in vain. The rebels decided to set the mosque on fire. The Mujahideen finally came out of the mosque and fought: some twenty-five of them lost their lives, eight could escape. At other places some Mujahideen escaped murder only by sheer chance. At so many other places not a single Mujahid was spared. Mehr quotes Manzoora:

At the time of Isha prayers when some of them [the Mujahideen] were offering prayers and the others were getting ready by making ablution, they [the rebels] surrounded them and attacked. Some Mujahideen were killed in villages at midnight; the others were put to death before Morning Prayer, or while engaged in it. Only a few could escape or were able to take refuge at a safe place.<sup>123</sup>

This event was extremely shocking for Sayyid Ahmad and a very great loss to his mission. Those who were put to death so recklessly were the most sincere Muslims of their time, and, ironically, they were massacred by those whom they had relieved from the yoke of the shameless subjugation to the Sikhs.

## Migration from Sama

Sayyid Ahmad had never thought that the local Muslims could go to that extent. This raised a serious question before him whether to stay in that area and continue his reformist efforts, or move to some other area where he could work without such a ceaseless chain of deceit and dissension. He strongly felt that he should move toward Kashmir that had been in his mind for a long time and informed his companions about his intent.

But before making a final decision, Sayyid Ahmad wanted to find out why the rebels had assassinated his associates without ever bringing any charge against them to him. He, therefore, asked Sayyid Mian of Takhta Band to meet the rebels and find out the

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<sup>123</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 696.



cause of rebellion. Sayyid Mian, along with Akhundzada Qabil of Mangal Thana, toured the area and met the rebel leaders. The local people told them that as the Mujahideen punished them for petty faults and transgressions, they decided to revolt against them. Sayyid Mian and Akhundzada did not find this reason for mutiny acceptable and told them that a deed punishable in the Islamic Shariah had to be dealt with according to Islamic injunctions and that as they had accepted the implementation of the Islamic Shariah in their areas, they should not complain. The rebels also told that because the *Qazis* ordered them to quickly perform the marriage of their girls, they were forced to rebel. Sayyid Mian and Akhundzada Qabil rejected this argument too as they found out that force of law was used only in such marriages in which the tribesmen practiced the un-Islamic tradition of delaying the marriage of their girls for dowry. They also confirmed that no girl was married to any Mujahid; all girls were married to men from their tribes.<sup>124</sup>

The rebel leaders then told that they were shown a letter of religious scholars from India which mentioned that Sayyid Ahmad was a hypocrite and an agent of the British. The letter that they showed to Sayyid Mian and Akhundzada Qabil was a copy of the same letter that Sultan Muhammad Khan had shown to Sayyid Ahmad. The first time there was reason to believe that the letter had misguided Sultan Khan and others, but now it was clearly a case of conspiracy. All the above reasons were weak and could not in any way justify the massacre of the Mujahideen. It was surely a conspiracy against the best soldiers of Islam who had devoted their lives to uphold the cause of Islam in that area. Sayyid Ahmad decided to migrate from there.

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<sup>124</sup> Also, if this was a reaction against the excesses of some Qazis, it should have been restricted to the areas where such excesses were committed. It could not have happened against all Qazis; it should not have happened against all Mujahideen. Besides, if the massacre of the Mujahideen was not motivated by revenge, why was Mazhar Ali accused at the Peshawar court that the Mujahideen had unjustifiably slain Yar Muhammad Khan? Why was Mazhar Ali killed? If he, the Qazi of Peshawar, had committed any such excesses, Sultan Khan was there to question him or report the matter to Sayyid Ahmad.

This decision may have been painful for many, and many others may not have seen the justification of it, but facts show that Sayyid Ahmad's decision was right. The following details may shed light on this issue:

1. The uprising was not against any specific person or policy where a change, readjustment, or redress could have helped. It was, in fact, a rebellion against the implementation of the Shariah, which meant that the local people were not ready to accept the basic tenets of Islam although enough time and energy were spent to introduce the Shariah in stages in the area. On the authority of *Manzoor*, Mehr writes that after massacring the Mujahideen the rebels trampled down their dead bodies under the hooves of their horses and shouted: "Rise, call us for prayers and collect *Ushr* from us."<sup>125</sup>

2. This time it was not a Khadi Khan or a Yar Muhammad Khan who had turned insurgent; they were the chiefs, Mullahs and people of the Sama area under the influence of the rulers of Peshawar. Although the Mujahideen were still powerful enough to crush the rebellion and punish the chiefs of the Sama area, but defeating them could not have fulfilled Sayyid Ahmad's mission. His aim was to win them to serve Islam by considering it their religious obligation, which he could not have achieved by vanquishing them.

3. Even Panjtar was not safe for the Mujahideen, as the faithfulness of Fatah Khan, the ruler of Panjtar, had also become doubtful. At the time of the massacre of the Mujahideen he was out of Panjtar, but when he returned, he remained somewhat scrupulous. One day he called his tribesmen in a large number to Panjtar without consulting Sayyid Ahmad. On another occasion when the residents of Panjtar gathered to request Sayyid Ahmad not to leave, Sayyid Ahmad told them that if Fatah Khan asked him to stay, he would stay even if all the chiefs of the area wanted him to leave, but if he wanted him to migrate, he would do so even if all others requested him to

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<sup>125</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 696.

stay. As there were so many people around, Fatah Khan moved very close to Sayyid Ahmad and in a voice inaudible to others he spoke to Sayyid Ahmad for a long time. Perhaps he mentioned to Sayyid Ahmad his helplessness against the united force of the rebellious chiefs of the Sama area, as right after that conversation Sayyid Ahmad told those present that his decision to migrate was final. When he migrated and reached a place called Kabul Gram, he told his associates: "Now I tell you that the bloodshed that took place in Sama was all due to Fatah Khan's mischief."<sup>126</sup>

4. Had Sayyid Ahmad decided to attack the rulers of Peshawar and chiefs of the Sama area in retaliation, which he was powerful enough to do, they would have surely sought an alliance with the Sikhs. Khadi Khan, Yar Muhammad Khan, Painsa Khan, and Khadi Khan's brother had all did that in the past. This would have been a more painful defeat of Sayyid Ahmad's mission.

5. Although moving to a new place like Kashmir involved a gigantic task of beginning the work from scratch again, the possibility of finding a suitable place and people was not impossible. Kashmir had always been one of the most important targets of Sayyid Ahmad. He had been preparing for advancing toward it and had taken steps in the past in this regard. Also, as discussed earlier, the rulers of Chitral and the valley of Kaghan had already assured him of help in his incursion over Kashmir. Moreover, there were four chiefs present at Panjtar whose areas fell en route to Kashmir. Although they were driven out of their states by usurpers, they still had considerable following in their areas and were ready to extend all possible help.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 378.

<sup>127</sup> For names of these Khans and details about them, see Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 33.

In the light of above-mentioned reasons, Sayyid Ahmad decided to move from Sama toward Kashmir.<sup>128</sup> His wives were staying at Sindh. He wrote a letter to the rulers of Sindh and to Peer Sibghatullah informing them of his decision of migrating from Sama and requested them to take care of his family. He also wrote to his wives that in case of his martyrdom they should go to Hijaz in Saudi Arabia and live for the rest of their lives in Makkah or Madinah, for, as he thought, one could live safely with his faith in those days of trials only in these cities.

One day he gathered his companions - those who had come with him and the local Muslims who had sincerely supported him in his mission - thanked them for bearing hardships with him for the cause of Jihad and told them that as his new destination was uncertain and future insecure, those who did not wish to continue with him were gladly allowed to return home. By hearing these words of Sayyid Ahmad the Mujahideen burst into tears and sobs and replied, "We are all with you and will go with you wherever you go." Not a single Mujahid parted with him to return home. The family of Arbab Bahram Khan - his wife, five sons out of whom two were minor, one daughter, and a nephew - was with him at that time. He told them that he had decided to stay with Sayyid Ahmad all his life and asked them to return home and live with his brother Juma Khan. But none agreed to part with Sayyid Ahmad and said in one voice: "All of us are going together, whatever the odds."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Sayyid Ahmad's decision to migrate from Sama has been discussed above in detail. In fact, all his associates agreed to his decision. Mehr writes that Mullah Sher, teacher of Qazi Sayyid Habbani, one day questioned Sayyid Ahmad about the Islamic justification of his decision to migrate from the Sama area, in reply to which first Shah Ismail and then Sayyid Ahmad discussed the matter with him and convinced him. Mehr then adds a footnote to the text and comments, "This shows that Maulana Shah Ismail agreed with Sayyid Ahmad on his decision to migrate" (*Shaheed*, p. 700, footnote 1). Nadwi also narrates this incident and writes that Mullah Sher was convinced and joined Sayyid Ahmad in his migration from the Sama area (*Seerat*, vol. 2., pp. 369-70).

<sup>129</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 702-05.

## Toward Kashmir

In December 1830 (Rajab 1246 H) Sayyid Ahmad set out from Panjtar to Kashmir and in nineteen to twenty days reached Raj Dowari, which was a large place with enough resources needed to fulfill the needs of an army. Sayyid Ahmad made a stopover there. It was winter and the heavy snowfall made any military movement in the region extremely difficult. Sayyid Ahmad, therefore, decided to stay at Raj Dowari for the time being. The chiefs of the area were faced with two main problems: antagonism among them and atrocities of the Sikhs. First, Sayyid Ahmad had to attend to the problem of division in the Muslim rank. Second, the Sikhs, who used to rampage the area every year after the winter season in search of booty, had to be repulsed so that the Muslim chiefs of the area could develop confidence in him. The estates of these chiefs were in the way to Kashmir. With their help it was easy to reach Kashmir and with their participation it was possible to take it over.

## Sojourn at Raj Dowari

After settling down at Raj Dowari, Sayyid Ahmad resolved the dispute between two powerful chiefs of the area, Habeebullah Khan and Nasir Khan. They buried their hatchet and decided to work together to organize and strengthen the supply line of the Mujahideen. After that Sayyid Ahmad called a general meeting of the chiefs of the area to discuss future plans to defend themselves against the Sikhs. The local chiefs decided to resolve their differences, take Sayyid Ahmad as Amirul Momineen, pay *Ushr* to him, implement the Islamic Shariah in their areas and fight against the Sikhs under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad if they attacked them.

Accordingly, Sayyid Ahmad dispatched his men to control the passes through which the Sikhs used to enter the area. Shah Ismail was given the charge. He deputed the Mujahideen at strategic points. Sayyid Ahmad stayed at Raj Dowari. Thus from Raj Dowari

to Balakot the whole area came under the control of the Mujahideen.

## The Muzaffarabad Expedition

When Shah Ismail reached Balakot, several local chiefs suggested to him that as Sultan Najaf Khan, who had driven out Sultan Zabardast Khan out of Muzaffarabad and had usurped power, was out of Muzaffarabad with Sher Singh, commander of the Sikh army in the area, Muzaffarabad could easily be captured. Zabardast Khan who was with Sayyid Ahmad at that time promised to arrange for fresh supplies of arms and ammunition. The Mujahideen attacked Muzaffarabad and captured the entire commercial area and the palace of Sultan Zabardast Khan, but the Sikhs held control of the fortress and the cantonment.<sup>130</sup> In the meanwhile Sayyid Ahmad moved from Raj Dowari to Sachon.<sup>131</sup>

After capturing parts of Muzaffarabad the Mujahideen wanted to advance to the fortress and to the cantonment, but for that they needed arms matching with those of the adversary. Sultan Zabardast Khan did not do anything in this regard and kept on playing delaying tactics. The Mujahideen were growing impatient because the Sikh army in the command of Sher Singh was in the area and so they wanted to take all of Muzaffarabad as soon as possible. They also learned that Zabardast Khan had already entered into a secret peace talk with the Sikhs. This upset and angered the Mujahideen and they launched an attack on the cantonment in order to defeat his intriguing policy. After a fierce fight the Mujahideen captured the cantonment and the Sikhs took refuge in the fortress. The Mujahideen again pressed Zabardast Khan to arrange for arms and ammunition for them so that they

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<sup>130</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 730.

<sup>131</sup> At Sachon Sayyid Zamin Shah, the ruler of Kuwai in the Kaghan valley who had been corresponding with Sayyid Ahmad and had assured him to help in his attack on Kashmir, visited him, offered Bai'ah to him, and joined him in his mission. (Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 723)

could capture the fortress, but he kept putting it off. By that time the Sikh army under the command of Sher Singh reached Garhi Habeebullah with Sultan Najaf Khan, the ally of the Sikhs, and headed toward Muzaffarabad. A sure opportunity of taking all of Muzaffarabad was, thus, lost due to the double-mindedness of Zabardast Khan.

At the news of the arrival of the Sikh army, Zabardast Khan immediately reached Maulvi Khairuddin, the commander of the Mujahideen, and sought his help. Maulvi Khairuddin was extremely unhappy with his scrupulous policies, but this was not a time to dispute. He decided to help. He deputed the Mujahideen at strategic points and asked the Khan to place his men at other places and fight against the Sikhs. But the next morning the Khan lost his heart. He vacated Muzaffarabad and took refuge in the mountains without even informing Maulvi Khairuddin. When the latter learned about it, he virtually could not do anything to save the situation. He, therefore, collected the Mujahideen and set out to Balakot by taking a long mountainous route so as to avoid any direct clash with the Sikh army.

As Zabardast Khan had already vacated Muzaffarabad, Sher Singh did not find any difficulty in recapturing it. He then collected more men and material from Garhi Habibullah for a massive attack against the Mujahideen, headed to Balakot and camped at the distance of two and a half miles from it. When Sayyid Ahmad noticed that Sher Singh wanted to attack Balakot, he decided to assemble his military strength at one place and moved to Balakot to join Shah Ismail there. The two armies thus stood face to face with each other.

## Battle of Balakot

Sayyid Ahmad made necessary arrangements to block all possible passages for the Sikhs to reach Balakot. He also deputed one hundred Mujahideen to guard the pathway leading to Mittikot. Another troop was stationed at Mittikot itself to guard it. He also

ordered the construction of a wooden bridge over the Kunhar River. The Sikhs also constructed a bridge for them to be able to go to the other side. A group of the Mujahideen was placed between the two bridges at a safe place which guarded their own bridge and kept an eye on the movement of the Sikhs through the other bridge.

One day the Sikh army crossed the river, but instead of advancing to Balakot it took a different direction and went out of sight. Their camps remained intact and a part of the Sikh army stayed there to guard them. A rumor spread that they were returning to Peshawar. The Sikh army, in fact, took a very long route and after crossing the distance of about twenty-one miles it all of a sudden appeared on the pathway leading to Mittikot. The Mujahideen guarding the pathway that day, who were seventy in number, fiercely charged the Sikhs but were run over by the overwhelming number of the Sikhs. The Sikhs started climbing the mountain to reach Mittikot from various directions. Sayyid Ahmad immediately sent four reinforcements one after another, but once the Sikhs had reached the outskirts of the mountain, the Mujahideen could not stop them. They reached Mittikot early evening. The troop of the Mujahideen deputed at Mittikot held its positions.

The same evening Sultan Najaf Khan, an ally of the Sikhs who had captured Muzaffarabad with their help, sent a confidential letter to Sayyid Ahmad. In the letter he expressed his regard for Sayyid Ahmad and stated that he had brought the Sikhs to capture Muzaffarabad, not to fight Sayyid Ahmad. He informed Sayyid Ahmad that Sher Singh had 12,000 gunmen in his command<sup>132</sup> and suggested that if Sayyid Ahmad was not able to fight the Sikh army so superior in arms and large in number, he should retreat to the mountains and get out of their reach. He also suggested that as Sher Singh had left arms and ammunition in the camp in his custody, Sayyid Ahmad could launch a night attack to capture it, in

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<sup>132</sup> The Mujahideen were less than 1,000, and since they had come from Panjtar to that area through the mountains, they had not brought heavy weapons with them.



which he would help him. The letter was read to a number of chiefs in order to obtain their views.

After due deliberation, Sayyid Ahmad decided not to launch a night attack. He had not personally known Najaf Khan and could not be sure of his sincerity. After all Najaf Khan was an ally of the Sikhs. He also decided not to retreat to the mountains to avoid a clash with the Sikhs. Such a step was neither honorable nor beneficial in the long run. If he had done so, the Sikhs would have ravaged the whole area, thus inflicting a heavy loss to the local people, in which case he would have lost the confidence of the local Muslims as a leader to protect them against the Sikhs. Also, as he assessed the situation, if a war had to be fought with the Sikhs, it had to be fought there. The Mujahideen had at least a base and the local chiefs were with them. As Mehr puts it, "it was appropriate at that time that the call of bravery should prevail over the dictates of foresightedness."<sup>133</sup> As Nadwi comments, "in the course of battles, there definitely comes a time when a decisive fight becomes unavoidable."<sup>134</sup> That moment came for Sayyid Ahmad at Balakot.

Also, Sayyid Ahmad was quite hopeful about his victory. He had written in his last letter to Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla, ruler of Tonk in India, only a few days before the Battle of Balakot stating that Balakot was quite safe as it was very difficult for the Sikhs to reach there. He had also mentioned that the Mujahideen planned to attack the Sikhs in a few days in which they hoped to achieve victory: "We hope that with the blessings of Allah the door of victory will open for us. If Allah helps and we achieve victory in this battle, then God-willing, the control of the Mujahideen over the Jhelam River will extend up to Kashmir."<sup>135</sup> Thus, after pondering over all options Sayyid Ahmad decided that he would fight the final battle with the Sikhs at Balakot: "This battlefield will lead us to Lahore, or take us to paradise."<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 756.

<sup>134</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 420, footnote 1.

<sup>135</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 750-51.

<sup>136</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 753.

As the Sikhs had to cross a field in order to reach Balakot from Mittikot and then climb toward Balakot which was at a higher level, Sayyid Ahmad ordered a large quantity of water to be released in the field to make it muddy and therefore difficult for the Sikhs to cross. He then set up new positions for his troops at suitable strategic places. Sayyid Ahmad decided that he would himself take command. Also, the Mujahideen were called back from the positions that had become strategically irrelevant after the Sikhs had reached Mittikot. Sayyid Ahmad also ordered that the bridge that the Mujahideen had constructed earlier be destroyed so that the Sikhs might not use it to attack the Mujahideen. And, finally, he turned to his Lord Who was his ultimate support and instructed the Mujahideen to supplicate to Allah at night and seek His forgiveness as much as possible.

In the later part of the night Sayyid Ahmad woke up as usual for *Tahajjud* prayers and remained engaged in prayers and God-remembrance. He went to the mosque for Morning Prayer and led the congregational prayer. He then individually remained engaged in the remembrance of Allah there. After sunrise he offered optional prayers (*Salatul Ishraq*) and came out of the mosque. He then started making preparations for participating in the Jihad. He had his moustache trimmed, combed his hair, wore kohl (*Surma*), changed the dress, put on arms and came to the mosque located at the uppermost part of Balakot. Two rifle-bearing soldiers followed him; he usually kept two soldiers with him in the battlefield to load his rifles for he was very swift in firing at his target.

Soon the information reached that the Sikhs had started advancing toward Balakot from Mittikot and had also started firing at the Mujahideen's positions. Sayyid Ahmad ordered that the Mujahideen should also open fire on the Sikhs from their positions, but that for a full-fledged attack they should wait for his final command. Then he retired for a short while to the main hall of the mosque alone for supplicating to Allah. After some time he came out and advanced toward the battlefield, Arbab Bahram Khan was walking a few steps ahead of him. Dada Abul Hasan raised the

Islamic banner and started walking in front of him. Then a group of gunmen with long-range guns took positions a few steps ahead of him; a group of Qarabeen (short guns) bearers also joined him. Sayyid Ahmad said *Allaho Akbar* (Allah is greatest) aloud, announcing that he was joining the battle and took positions in the front line under the cover of a large stone. From there he was able to see the advancing Sikh army. The Mujahideen were firing from their positions, but as instructed, they waited for the word of Sayyid Ahmad for an all-out attack.

By that time a large number of the Sikhs had come down to the field and were advancing toward the positions of the Mujahideen. The remaining part of the Sikh army was descending down from the hills of Mittikot. When the front line of the Sikh army reached close, Sayyid Ahmad ordered the gunmen accompanying him to fire. The gunmen and the Shaheen (a firearm larger than a gun) bearers shot at the advancing Sikh soldiers. As the Sikhs were in the open field, a large number of them were hit and killed. Two standard bearers of the Sikh army also received bullets in the chest and fell dead. Although the Sikhs picked up the standard again, this incident puzzled and disheartened the Sikh army for the time being. Sayyid Ahmad grabbed this moment of disorder and confusion among the Sikh rank for an all-out attack. He called aloud the Islamic slogan *Allaho Akbar*, came out of his place, and rushed toward the Sikh army.<sup>137</sup> At this moment all the Mujahideen came out of their positions and fell on the Sikhs.

The attack of the Mujahideen was so integrated and severe that the Sikhs who were down in the field could not resist it. They retreated and wanted to climb back. According to Sayyid Jafar Ali Naqwi, "the Sikhs had come down from the hill and could not speedily climb back. Thus all those who had come down were killed."<sup>138</sup> The Sikhs who were still on the hill were firing, but their bullets hit indiscriminately both the Mujahideen and the Sikhs.

<sup>137</sup> Mahtab Singh, *Tawarikhe Hazara ba 'Ahde Sarkar Dawlat Madar* (Persian), quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, pp. 851-52.

<sup>138</sup> *Manzoora*, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 773.

Mian Abdul Qayyoom, a Mujahid, reported later, that when the Sikhs were at a distance of some fifteen to twenty steps from them, the gunmen from the Mujahideen fired on them; the second round was fired by the Qarabeen bearers. From these two rounds of firing a large number of the Sikh soldiers were killed; the remaining Sikh soldiers became unorganized and ran back. The Mujahideen benefited from the situation and killed many more Sikh soldiers.<sup>139</sup> Muhammad Amir Khan Qasoori, another Mujahid, narrated that "the attack of Sayyid Ahmad pushed the remaining Sikhs to the foot of the mountain. They tried to climb back up to the mountain. The Muslim soldiers pulled them down and killed them by striking them with sword."<sup>140</sup> Mahtab Singh writes that in the beginning the Sikhs were forced to retreat. Seeing that, Sher Singh, who was on the hill, advanced toward the retreating soldiers and tried to stop them by hitting them with stones and calling them names.<sup>141</sup> He also sent word to his commanders to fire at the Mujahideen, but as the Mujahideen and the Sikhs had gotten mixed up, the bullets of the Sikhs hit the Sikhs too.

When the Mujahideen had dealt a severe blow to the Sikh army, something unexpected happened that turned the battle against them. The Mujahideen realized that they could not locate Sayyid Ahmad or his flag in the battlefield. A Mujahid named Muhammad Amir Khan Qasoori narrated: "In the midst of the fighting when we looked back, we saw neither the flag of Amirul Momineen [Sayyid Ahmad] nor him."<sup>142</sup> This alarmed the Mujahideen and they started inquiring from one another about the whereabouts of Sayyid Ahmad. Apprehending that he might have been injured, they restlessly came out of their safe positions and started looking for him. Ilahi Bakhsh Rampuri related that Hafiz Abdul Lateef Nanotwi came to him crying and inquired, "Where is Amirul Momineen?" When we told him that we did not know, he went

<sup>139</sup> *Waqae*, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 772.

<sup>140</sup> *Waqae*, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 773.

<sup>141</sup> *Tawarikhe Hazara*, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 853

<sup>142</sup> *Waqae*, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 777.

toward the canal of Satbanna in search of him. Amiruddeen Budhanwi said that when he was engaged in the battle, Hafiz Abdullah of Imalya came to him to inquire about Sayyid Ahmad and learning that Amiruddeen did not have any information about him, he went crying toward the rear positions. Najmuddin Shikarpuri related that during the battle Mirza Ahmad Beg Punjabi came to him in a state of utter misery and asked him, "Where is Amirul Momineen?"<sup>143</sup>

In the beginning the Mujahideen thought that Sayyid Ahmad was somewhere in the canal of Mittikot where the most severe fighting was going on. Sher Muhammad Khan Rampuri asked Sheikh Wazeer Phulati, "Do you know where Hazrat [Sayyid Ahmad] is?" to which he replied, "People say that he is in the canal somewhere." Sheikh Hafeezullah Deobandi saw Maulana Shah Ismail firing at the Sikhs and called him out from a distance, "Where is Amirul Momineen?" Shah Ismail replied, "Don't shout. The Sikhs can hear you. Hazrat is in the canal. Go there."<sup>144</sup>

This confusion among the Mujahideen helped the Sikh army to overcome the shock of the first stunning attack of the Mujahideen. They organized themselves and attacked the Mujahideen afresh. For the Mujahideen it was impossible to concentrate on the battle as they apprehended that their leader - whom they loved more than their lives - might have fallen wounded or dead in the battlefield. This, therefore, made them easy targets for the Sikhs. Sayyid Jafar Ali Naqwi writes, "At the news of Sayyid Ahmad's disappearance in the midst of the battle, his loving and faithful associates pulled themselves out of the battle and restlessly started looking for him in all directions. In this state they were hit by the bullets of the Sikhs which brought to them the blessings of martyrdom and took them to the fold of Allah's mercy."<sup>145</sup>

Mian Abdul Qayyoom related that when the Sikhs attacked again after recovering, a small number of the Mujahideen stayed

<sup>143</sup> Mehr has quoted all these details from *Waqae*. See Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 776-83.

<sup>144</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 781-82. For important details, see pp. 776-86.

<sup>145</sup> *Manzoora*, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 787.

against them in the field; the rest were engaged in looking for Sayyid Ahmad in the battlefield. When the Mujahideen did not find Sayyid Ahmad behind the rock where he was seen last, they started searching for him in anxiety everywhere in the battlefield. The Sikhs were firing due to which a large number of the Mujahideen lost their lives.<sup>146</sup>

## Martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad

As facts were known later, Sayyid Ahmad attacked the Sikhs and reached the foot of the Mittikot hill where there was a canal and from where the Sikhs were trying to climb back to the hill. Lal Muhammad Jagdishpuri related, "Hazrat [Sayyid Ahmad] reached the canal where there was a heavy concentration of the Sikhs. The two sides started using guns and swords." Hafiz Wajeehuddin Baghpati related that he saw Sayyid Ahmad in the canal fighting against the Sikhs. When Sayyid Ahmad put his gun to his shoulder to fire, Hafiz Wajeehuddin saw a bloodstain in Sayyid Ahmad's finger and understood that he was wounded. Others reported that Sayyid Ahmad was also hit in his head with a stone. Baba Bahram Khan Tanowli related that he saw Sayyid Ahmad standing on a rock in the midst of his battalion in the outskirts of the hill. Then there came a volley of bullets from the Sikhs. When he looked around after it, Sayyid Ahmad was not on that rock. He added, "All of his associates were also martyred. I did not see him falling or lying dead, nor did any other Mujahid."<sup>147</sup>

Because nobody saw Sayyid Ahmad falling in the battle (as those who were with him did not live to report the incident), the Mujahideen kept on looking for him restlessly without caring for their lives. Shah Ismail shared the same restlessness. Lal Muhammad Jagdishpuri reported that Shah Ismail came to him in the battlefield with a rifle hanging by his shoulder and a sword in his hand. He was injured; blood was streaming down his forehead.

<sup>146</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 789.

<sup>147</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 783.

He inquired, "Where is Amirul Momineen?" Lal Mohammad pointed toward a place where a heavy fight was going on. Shah Ismail immediately headed toward the place. It is not known how he received martyrdom.<sup>148</sup>

Suddenly news spread among the Mujahideen that Sayyid Ahmad had gotten injured and was taken out of the battlefield by some friendly tribesmen known as *gojar*. A caller, probably a *gojar*, called the Mujahideen aloud and instructed them to move out of the battlefield as Sayyid Ahmad was wounded and was carried to the mountain. A large number of the Mujahideen, thus, moved to the mountain; a very small number of them continued fighting in the outskirts of Mittikot. This was a clear sign of defeat for the Mujahideen. Some influential leaders of the Mujahideen, such as Sayyid Jafar Ali, Amanullah Khan Lakhnawi and Sheikh Wali Muhammad, made a quick consultation among themselves to review the situation. They decided to gather the Mujahideen and move them quickly to Balakot to form a defense line there. But before they could reach Balakot, a battalion of the Sikh army had already entered there. The Mujahideen then tried to assemble at a place across the canal of Satbanna, called so locally, but the Sikh army was present in that area too. It was at that time that the Sikhs set on fire the houses in Balakot. The Mujahideen had no choice except to move to safe directions thinking that Sayyid Ahmad must be somewhere around and that in his leadership there would be new opportunities, new battlefields, and new encounters.

After the battle was over and the Sikhs were in control of the situation, Sher Singh wanted to confirm the death of Sayyid Ahmad. He wanted to see his dead body. This was important for

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<sup>148</sup> *Manzoor*, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 791. Mehr has categorically refuted the details of the death of Sayyid Ahmad provided by Bellew, Deewan Amar Nath, and Mirza Hayrat on p. 784-85, footnote 1. For example, Deewan Amar Nath writes in *Zafar Nama* that Shah Ismail and Maulana Abdul Hai fell before Sayyid Ahmad. In fact, Maulana Abdul Hai had died much earlier in Khahar. He also writes that Sayyid Ahmad entered the battlefield riding a horse. This is also not true. In fact, nobody used a horse in the battle of Balakot as it was fought in the hilly area.

him because the survival of Sayyid Ahmad would not have given that battle the edge of a final victory. He ordered his men to find out the dead body of Sayyid Ahmad in the battlefield and identify it with the help of the Mujahideen who were taken prisoners. A dead body was found which several people identified to be that of Sayyid Ahmad. Gentlemanly, Sher Singh paid homage to his martyred foe, covered his dead body with a sheet, and gave some money to the local Muslims and the Muslim soldiers of his own army to perform the final rites and bury the dead body of Sayyid Ahmad Islamically. He also asked an artist to sketch a picture of Sayyid Ahmad which he took to Lahore and showed to Ranjeet Singh. Ranjeet Singh said words of admiration and praise for Sayyid Ahmad upon seeing the picture. Deewan Amar Nath writes in his book *Zafar Nama* that he had seen that picture.<sup>149</sup>

Thus came to an end the first phase of the struggle of Sayyid Ahmad. He died at Balakot, but the fire he had ignited in the hearts of his companions did not die out with his death. They loved him more than their lives, but they loved his mission more than they loved him. The Mujahideen united themselves again after his death and continued their struggle for more than a century with the same enthusiasm and valor - a history which requires treatment in a separate book. Instead of attempting to write the history of the struggle of the subsequent leaders, we shall try to assess the varied and wide ranging contributions of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement in the forthcoming chapters and study its depth and comprehensiveness.

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<sup>149</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 808-09.



## Chapter Two

### Religious Revival

#### Revival of the Fundamental Tenets of Islam

Sayyid Ahmad's Movement was purely religious. He had risen not to conquer empires for Muslims to rule, but to make them true Muslims.

- Ghulam Rasool Mehr, *Jama'ate Mujahideen*

### Introduction

In this chapter we will discuss only those aspects of Sayyid Ahmad's reformist work which directly deal with the fundamental religious tenets of Islam. His contributions in the moral, social, and political spheres will each be covered in a separate subsequent chapter. This organization will be maintained for the sake of clarity and convenience.

### 1. IMAN (FAITH)

Sayyid Ahmad gave a call to the Muslims of his time to repose full and unflinching faith in the Oneness of Allah (*Tawheed*) and to adopt with utmost sincerity the model of the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be upon him. As W. C. Smith remarks, the Movement "began as an attack on the religious corruption, taking form of a puritanical rejection of all accretions to and all declensions from the 'pure' Islam, with a desire to return to the simplicity of faith (and society) of Prophet's Arabia."<sup>150</sup> His insistence on preaching and propagating Islam in its purity was so eminent and brought so far-reaching results that a large number of

<sup>150</sup> W. C. Smith, *Modern Islam in India* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1972), p. 11.

Muslim scholars consider him a *Mujaddid* of his century in the light of the following Hadith: Every one hundred years Allah will raise a person who will purify the religion for its followers.<sup>151</sup> Karamat Ali Jonepuri, for example, calls him "the *Mujaddid* of the thirteenth century [of the Islamic calendar]" and "the spiritual mentor of all Muslims of his time."<sup>152</sup>

### Sayyid Ahmad's Exemplary Character

Sayyid Ahmad's personal life was most sincerely modeled on the teachings of the Qur'an and the precept of Prophet Muhammad. According to Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla, one of the most distinguishing qualities of Sayyid Ahmad was his knowledge of the Qur'an and adherence to its teachings.<sup>153</sup> He was blessed with a nature that did not ever accept even the slightest deviation from the true teachings of Islam. To please Allah was his one and the only aim which controlled all his actions throughout his life. On one occasion he acknowledged it in these words: "Throughout my life I have never done anything...in which I did not have the intention to please my Lord. I did not ever do anything for the pleasure and satisfaction of my ego."<sup>154</sup>

Thus as Sayyid Ahmad emerged as "a true model of the Shariah and a paragon of the Sunnah,"<sup>155</sup> prominent scholars of the time, such as Maulana Abdul Hai of Budhana, Shah Muhammad Ismail of Delhi, and Maulana Muhammad Yusuf of Phulat who were all

<sup>151</sup> The term *Mujaddid* is used to refer to a Muslim who discredits unauthentic additions to and omissions from the original teachings of Islam and reinstates the faith in its pure and original form.

<sup>152</sup> Karamat Ali, *Makashifate Rahmah*, p. 15, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 528-29. Also, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani refers to him as *Mujaddid* (Introduction by Abdullah Abbas Nadwi in *Tazkirah Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed* by Muhammad Hamza Hasani, pp.13-14), Hakeem Sayyid Fakhruddin mentions him as "the *Mujaddid* of the thirteenth century Hijri in his book *Mehr Jahantab* (Nadwi, *Karwane Iman Azeemat*, p. 148), and Maulana Sikhawat Ali Jonepuri calls him "the *Mujaddid* of his time" in his book *Nasaeh*, (Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 535), to name only a few.

<sup>153</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 510.

<sup>154</sup> *Wasaya*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 511.

<sup>155</sup> *Wasaya*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 513.

related to the distinguished Islamic scholar of the time Shah Waliyullah of Delhi, unequivocally took him as their spiritual mentor and guide. These scholars served Sayyid Ahmad as menials and ran barefoot behind his palanquin simply because, to the best of their knowledge, no one followed the model of the Prophet Muhammad as closely, fully and sincerely at that time as Sayyid Ahmad did. That is why when once Sayyid Ahmad told Maulana Abdul Hai to warn him if he ever noticed in him anything against the Sunnah, he replied, "If I notice anything against the Sunnah in you, I will not stay with you any longer [to tell you about it]."<sup>156</sup>

### Rejecting Polytheism and Innovation

The natural inclination and strong adherence to the Shariah and Sunnah set Sayyid Ahmad against all forms of *Shirk* (polytheism) and *Bid'ah* (innovation). He called the people of his time in an unwavering way to follow the Islamic Law (*Shariah*) and give up all forms of polytheism and innovation. Wherever he went, he took this message to the people. When people came to him to offer *Bai'ah* and pledge a commitment to mould their lives in accordance with the teachings of Islam, he asked them to strictly follow two instructions: adopt Tawheed (Oneness of Allah) and discard all forms of polytheism (*Shirk*), and follow Sunnah (Prophet Muhammad's precept) and discard all kinds of innovation (*Bid'ah*).

Sayyid Ahmad preached against *Shirk* and *Bid'ah* with utmost zeal and sincerity and called on his associates to discredit them fully in all spheres of life. In a letter to one of his disciples he defined *Shirk* and *Bid'ah* and encouraged him to oppose and eradicate them in whatever form they were prevalent in the society. He wrote about *Shirk*:

Renouncing *Shirk* (polytheism) requires that a Muslim should not take angels, jinns, spiritual mentors, teachers, prophets or saints as entities having independent power to relieve anybody of his

<sup>156</sup> Muhammad Ashiq Ilahi Meerathi, *Tazkiratur Rasheed* (Saharanpur: Kutub Khana Isha'atul Uloom, 1977), p. 272.

distress, protect him from calamities and grant him favors. He should consider them utterly helpless and ignorant like himself in front of Allah's authority and knowledge and never beseech them for the fulfillment of their needs.

In the same letter he writes further about Bid'ah:

The meaning of relinquishing *Bid'ah* (innovation) is that in all forms of worship, dealings, and monetary affairs the precept of Prophet Muhammad, seal of the prophets, should be followed with determination and zeal, and additions committed by people after the Prophet, peace be upon him, such as the rites prevalent on occasions of ceremony or sorrow, or practices of decorating the graves, constructing buildings on them, spending money on *Urs* (celebrating the date of birth or death of a saint), and building *Taziya* (a wooden structure made to commemorate the martyrdom of Iman Husain) should be rejected.... First, a person should himself discard them, and then he should call on all Muslims to do so.<sup>157</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad's personal model and sincere preaching exercised an extraordinary effect on the society of his time in general and on his associates and followers in particular. Maulana Wilayat Ali mentions that by virtue of Sayyid Ahmad's missionary work Muslims in general became concerned about identifying the deeds of polytheism and innovation with an intention to discard them, as a result of which un-Islamic rites as old as five hundred years were eradicated from the society and Islamic values were established in their place. He writes: "Even a commoner who has offered Bai'ah to any one in this group takes for himself three things as compulsory: avoiding *Shirk* (polytheism), offering *Salah* (obligatory prayers) regularly, and respecting *Shariah*."<sup>158</sup> With new vigor people

<sup>157</sup> *Risalah D'awat*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 533-34.

<sup>158</sup> *Risalah D'awat*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 535.

started learning about the true teachings of Islam as a result of which "even such religious books that were rare and scarce became available to people everywhere in towns and villages."<sup>159</sup>

## Extent of Sayyid Ahmad's Influence

Sayyid Ahmad's followers worked day and night to eradicate polytheism and innovation and establish Tawheed and Sunnah in the lives of Muslims. The result was tremendous. As Nawwab Siddique Hasan Khan, a scholar of the recent past, writes, "preaching of Sayyid Ahmad's deputies cleansed the Indian subcontinent from Shirk and Bid'ah and put the people on the path of the Qur'an and Sunnah."<sup>160</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad's influence was not limited to any particular class of people: dignitaries and commoners, rich and poor, businessmen and cultivators, men and women, young and old, all alike received the blessings of this change in the society. Nor was his influence restricted to his time. Nawwab Siddique Hasan Khan acknowledges this fact: "The blessings of the sermons and discourses of Sayyid Ahmad's deputies (*Khulafa*) are still continuing."<sup>161</sup> Nor was his influence limited to the then India only: it crossed international boundaries and spread far and wide to several other countries. This aspect of his missionary work will be discussed later at an appropriate place.

Individual examples from the followers of Sayyid Ahmad reflecting their adherence to Tawheed and Sunnah abound in literature so richly that it is impossible to cite here even the representative instances. We will, nevertheless, mention here two instances - one referring to a male and the other to a female - so that we may have an idea of how dear the true teachings of Islam had become to the hearts of his followers.

Sayyid Qutb Ali, father of Sayyid Jafar Ali Naqwi and a follower

<sup>159</sup> Karamat Ali Jonepori, *Mukashifate Rahmat*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 529.

<sup>160</sup> *Tiqsaro Joyudil Ahrar*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 531.

<sup>161</sup> *Tiqsaro Joyudil Ahrar*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 531.

and *Khalifa* of Sayyid Ahmad, wrote his last will only a few hours before his death in which he put down the following instructions for his family members: "1) Remain steadfast to Tawheed and never relinquish practicing Sunnah, 2) Do not follow any Bid'ah after me, otherwise I will complain against you to Allah on the Day of Judgment, 3) Do not mourn or observe any un-Islamic practice at my death."<sup>162</sup>

Nawwab Khan Alam Khan Bahadur Tahawwur Jang's daughter was married to the ruler of Arkat. Influenced by the reformist teachings of Sayyid Ahmad she had given up all un-Islamic practices. Her husband pressurized her to follow some un-Islamic practices that were prevalent in his family, but she refused and said: "I am your wife and am wholeheartedly ready to obey all your orders. But the matters relating to the grave and the hereafter will have to be faced separately by every individual. I cannot do anything forbidden in the Islamic Shariah to obey your orders."<sup>163</sup>

Thus in the society which was so badly infected with the rites of polytheism and innovation, the values of Tawheed and Sunnah were once again established due to the tireless efforts of Sayyid Ahmad and his associates.

## 2. SALAH (PRAYERS)

Sayyid Ahmad started his reformist work at a time when the Indian Muslims, under the negative influence of the society, had started looking down upon Islam. They felt ashamed of their religious identity and showed repulsion against Islamic practices as important as prayers and fasting. As Haider Ali Rampuri puts it, "They used to say openly that Salah (Prayers) was not the order of the [East India] Company, nor was Sawm (Fasting) mentioned in

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<sup>162</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 192.

<sup>163</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 182-83.

the British Constitution. Zakah (Poor-due) and Hajj (Pilgrimage) were not considered even worth mentioning."<sup>164</sup>

## Negligence toward Salah

In order to understand the extent of the negligence of Muslims toward Salah, we can take a look at some pertinent cases. When Maulana Karamat Ali Jonepuri offered Bai'ah to Sayyid Ahmad and returned to his hometown Jonepur, the situation there was unbelievably disappointing. In those days *Adhan* (prayer call) was not called in Jonepur in the day; it was called only for Morning and Evening prayers (Salatal Fajr and Salatal Maghrib) with the aim that people might know the times of sunrise and sunset.<sup>165</sup> The famous City Mosque, Jame Masjid of Jonepur did not hold daily or Friday congregational prayers. Instead, it was used as a community center for matrimonial celebrations, parties and get-togethers. It was also used for erecting Taziya. When Maulana Karamat Ali Jonepuri tried to establish five times Salah in the mosque, he had no option but to walk half a mile from his house to the mosque at the time of each prayer, call Adhan and hold congregational prayers there. His act was so much disliked by the local people that one day they made an attempt on his life when he was going to the mosque for Morning Prayer.<sup>166</sup>

The story of Sheikh Hasan Ali, one of the disciples of Sayyid Ahmad, reflects the same bleak ignorance of Muslims about Islam in his area. He belonged to a village called Kema which was close to Allahabad. The whole area was in the grip of ignorance. According to Nadwi, "Persons observing fast and offering prayers punctually were few and far between and those paying poor-due (Zakah) and

<sup>164</sup> Haider Ali Rampuri, *Siyanatunnas 'an Waswasul Khannas*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, 530.

<sup>165</sup> One day a lady threw an unclean pot on Maulana Karamat Ali accusing him of starting a new practice of calling Adhan in the day. Mujeebullah Nadwi, *Tazkira Hazrat Maulana Karamat Ali Jonepuri* (Dare Arafat, Takia Kalan: Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Academy, 2006), p. 36.

<sup>166</sup> Nadwi, *Karwane Imano Azeemat* (Lucknow: Maktaba Islam, 1984), pp. 113-14. This work will be referred to as *Karwan* henceforth for convenience.

performing pilgrimage (Hajj) were as rare in that society as alchemy." When Hasan Ali tried to stop people from Shirk and Bid'ah, his relatives considered him insane and put him in chains."<sup>167</sup>

Maulana Karamat Ali Jonepuri, who later launched an Islamic revolution in Bengal, writes that from appearance the Muslims of Bengal did not look like Muslim at all. Also, "they had fully relinquished offering Friday prayer, regular prayers in congregation, and prayers of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha....The call of Adhan was not heard....The *Huffaz* were almost extinct as a class. The facility of offering *Taraweesh* was not available even in large cities."<sup>168</sup>

### Revival of the Practice of Salah

Salah, the first and the foremost commandment in Islam after faith, acquired a very prominent place in the reformist scheme of Sayyid Ahmad. Respect for Salah and regularity in offering it with care and concentration became a distinguishing mark of the associates of Sayyid Ahmad. Be it the palace of Maharaja Sindhiya in Gwalior, or the bank of the River Hugli in Calcutta, or the desert of Rajasthan, or the mountainous passage of the Khyber Pass, or the safe surroundings of the mosque, or the dangerous expanse of the battlefield, Sayyid Ahmad and his associates eagerly offered prayers and bowed their heads in front of Allah the Almighty at appointed times. Be it the state of starvation or affluence, fear or hope, defeat or victory, captivity or freedom, prayers ever remained the coolness of their eyes.

People once again started showing love for Salah in an exemplary way. As Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi writes, "due to the efforts of this group a very large number of people started offering prayers regularly." He writes further that the influence of Sayyid

<sup>167</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 93.

<sup>168</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, pp. 115-16. *Huffaz* are those who commit the whole Qur'an to memory. *Taraweesh* are special prayers offered at night in the holy month of Ramadan.



Ahmad's Movement was so powerful that even the pseudo-religious leaders started instructing their followers to offer prayers regularly so that their followers did not desert them.<sup>169</sup> Karamat Ali Jonepuri also acknowledges that under the influence of Sayyid Ahmad, "Prayers and fasting became very well established among men and women in this country." He further writes that this became possible only because Sayyid Ahmad himself had a great devotion for Salah. For years he offered Isha and Fajr (Night and Morning) prayers with the same ablution (with the ablution of Isha).<sup>170</sup> We find the same kind of love for Salah in Sayyid Ahmad's followers. In fact, extreme care for offering Salah on time and with concentration had become their distinguishing mark as a group. A few representative examples are given below to help us see how much the associates of Sayyid Ahmad cared for this mandatory tenet of Islam.

In his Hajj journey when Sayyid Ahmad and his associates were proceeding to the seaport in Calcutta to board the ships, the time of the Asr Prayer approached. They immediately stopped at a large field and decided to offer prayer first. They made *Wudhu* from the river. Then Adhan was called and the huge throng of devotees fell in rows. Each row was stretched as far as human eyes could see. Sayyid Ahmad stepped ahead and led the prayer. As the gathering was very large, hundreds of people were calling *Takbeer* aloud behind Sayyid Ahmad so that the people praying in rear rows might follow the Imam.<sup>171</sup>

When Sayyid Ahmad was on his way to the Frontier, he made a stopover at Gwalior where he was invited by the ruler Maharaja Dawlat Rao Sindhiya to the palace for feast. His associates were also invited. When the time of Asr prayer arrived, they were still in the palace. Sheikh Baqar Ali, the *Muaddin* of the Muslim army, called Adhan aloud at the main gate of the palace. Since Adhan was

<sup>169</sup> *Risalah D'awat*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 528.

<sup>170</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 831.

<sup>171</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 342. "Calling *Takbeer*" means that designated persons from the rear rows repeat the calls of the Imam in prayers to make them audible to the devotees in the rear rows so that they could follow him.

called in the palace for the first time, it created curiosity and surprise among the people there. Women climbed up to the roof and the employees in the palace left their engagements and gathered around to see the Muslims offering prayers. Hindu Rao, the Prime Minister, immediately sent instructions and accordingly porters appeared with water containers. The Mujahideen performed Wudhu, spread the prayer rugs that they always carried with them and formed rows. Sayyid Ahmad stepped forward and led the prayer.<sup>172</sup>

Later, when the Mujahideen were proceeding toward Balakot under the command of Shah Ismail, the mountainous passage was extremely difficult to walk due to heavy snowfall and strong chilly wind. The Mujahideen who were not used to such weather conditions were so exhausted that they lost interest in their lives due to the unbearable hardships and suffering of the journey. But when the time of Salah arrived, they all stopped to pray even in that condition. At the later part of the Asr prayer time when the snowfall stopped and the sun became visible, people quickly made Wudhu with the snow and offered prayer wherever they found a place, some individually, some in congregation. The journey continued and the Mujahideen felt as if they were going to meet their death there. But when the time of the Maghrib prayer came, they stopped wherever they were and offered prayer. Some of them were so exhausted that they offered prayer by gesture.<sup>173</sup>

A similar scene was witnessed at Phulra where the Mujahideen were camping in an open field and were caught unawares in a sudden attack by Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, the Sikh commander. They were making preparations for the Fajr prayer when suddenly they heard the gunfire coming from the direction of the main road and immediately understood that the Sikhs had attacked. It was expected that they would lose no time in collecting their arms and take positions to fight the Sikhs. But they had not offered the Morning prayer yet. They, therefore, "quickly offered the

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<sup>172</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 438.

<sup>173</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 388-89

obligatory Salah (*Fard*) individually or in small groups, collected their arms and rushed to face the enemy."<sup>174</sup>

Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla, a close disciple of Sayyid Ahmad, offers another example of keeping Salah above all considerations of loss or gain. After the abortive Revolution of 1857 for the freedom of India, the British Governor-General of India held a session (*Darbar*) in Agra on a Friday. The Nawwab was invited to attend. As the time of the session coincided with that of the Friday prayer, the Nawwab decided to ignore the Governor-General's call for the meeting. His well wishers, Nawwab Yusuf Ali Khan, ruler of Rampur, and Sikandar Begam, ruler of Bhopal, tried very hard to convince him to attend the meeting and told him that as he was a traveler, the Friday prayer was not obligatory for him. They also reminded him that he was under the charge of having sympathy for the rebels against the British and so it was necessary for him to attend the meeting so as to clarify his position. The Nawwab appreciated their concern, but he decided not to remain absent from the mosque in order to appear before a worldly ruler. Fearlessly, he sent his word to the Governor-General that he was unable to attend the session as that would cause him to miss his Friday congregational prayer. Because the date and time of the session were announced earlier, the Governor-General had no choice but to schedule a special session for the Nawwab at a later time.<sup>175</sup>

When Muhammad Jafar Thanasari, a leader of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement, was arrested by the British on the charges of conspiracy against the British government and helping the Mujahideen, he was taken from Aligarh to Delhi in chains in a horse carriage under the escort of two British Police Inspectors. The British officers were extra careful and did not stop anywhere during the journey. Muhammad Jafar knew very well that a very difficult time was lying ahead for him, but neither the sadness of imprisonment nor fear of punishment stopped him from offering

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<sup>174</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 206.

<sup>175</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, pp. 128-29.

prayers on time. When the time came, he made *Tayammum*<sup>176</sup> and offered prayer by gesture. "The carriage continued its journey," writes Muhammad Jafar, "and they [the Inspectors] silently watched me engaged in prayers."<sup>177</sup>

Once Muhammad Jafar was transferred from the Multan prison to another place in a boat in which he and his associates lay under such a heavy weight of iron chains that they were virtually unable to move. Although a river was flowing under them, they could not rise from their place to make Wudhu. They, therefore, made *Tayammum* at the time of Salah and offered prayers by gesture.<sup>178</sup>

When Muhammad Jafar, Maulana Yahya and others were presented in the court on the charge of conspiracy against the British government, they knew that they could be sentenced to death. In fact they were. But nothing, not even the fear of death, could deter them from offering Salah on time. When the time of Asr prayer arrived during the court session, they sought the judge's permission to offer prayers. The request was turned down. Hearing this, they performed *Tayammum* wherever they were and offered Salah in sitting posture right in the face of all those who were giving final legal touch to their death sentence.<sup>179</sup>

In fact, love for Salah had become second nature of the Mujahideen which was sometimes not affected even by an impediment, sickness or senility. Sayyid Abdul Hai, father of Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, had a chance to meet one of the disciples of Sayyid Ahmad called Muhammad Husain who was 110 years old at that time. He had directly offered Bai'ah at the hands of Sayyid Ahmad and joined him in the battle in the Frontier. Due to old age he had developed the problem of acute forgetfulness: he used to

<sup>176</sup> *Tayammum* is allowed in place of *Wudhu* if water is not available or the Muslim concerned is not allowed to make use of it. Details may be checked in a proper source book.

<sup>176</sup> Muhammad Jafar Thanesari, *Kala Pani* (Faisalabad: Tariq Academy, 1977), p. 53.

<sup>176</sup> Thanesari, pp. 61-62.

<sup>177</sup> Thanesari, p. 53.

<sup>178</sup> Thanesari, p. 85.

<sup>179</sup> Thanesari, pp. 61-62.

forget things in a minute. But this weakness never disturbed him in Salah. Maulana Abdul Hai slept at night close to Muhammad Husain. When he woke up late night, he saw him offering *Tahajjud*.<sup>180</sup> One of Muhammad Husain's disciples told Maulana Abdul Hai that Muhammad Husain used to rise quietly at night and go to the mosque without anybody's help.<sup>181</sup>

Maulana Ahmadullah Azeemabadi, a prominent leader of the Movement, breathed his last in the Andaman Islands (*Kala Panu*) where the British had exiled him. In his last days in which he was unconscious, he remained engaged in uttering words glorifying Allah. He also kept his hands folded even in the state of unconsciousness as if he was in prayers.<sup>182</sup>

Maulana Imamuddin, whom Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla specially mentions in his book *Wasayae Wazeeri* for his spiritual excellence, offered Bai'ah to Sayyid Ahmad, but immediately after the Bai'ah he fell unconscious and remained in that state for three days. Nevertheless, at the time of prayers he used to regain consciousness and offer Salah in full consciousness.<sup>183</sup>

This was true of women as well. Sayyida Waliya, second wife of Sayyid Ahmad, manifested the same love for Salah even in her sickness. It is related that after remaining sick for a day and a night she breathed her last at midnight while she was reciting Kalimah. Whenever the time of Salah arrived, she performed Tayammum and offered Salah.<sup>184</sup> In the Hajj journey when Sayyid Ahmad and his associates were going to Madina from Makkah, a group of the Bedouin outlaws attacked the caravan. Even in such a threatening situation "the women in the caravan quickly offered Salah. Men offered Salah after them."<sup>185</sup> In those days women, even with a religious background, did not pray in journey as they considered saying prayers in front of men immodest. Due to the influence of

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<sup>180</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 120.

<sup>181</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 121.

<sup>182</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 410.

<sup>183</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 84.

<sup>184</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 823.

<sup>185</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 362.

Sayyid Ahmad this un-Islamic practice was discarded. During the Hajj journey Maulana Abdul Hai asked his wife to say Salah in front of other pilgrims. She came out of boat covered in proper dress and performed Salah. In order to encourage other pilgrims, Maulana Abdul Hai pointed her out to others and said, "Look! Abdul Hai's wife is offering Salah." Others also followed his example and made their wives pray in the same way.<sup>186</sup>

The deputies of Sayyid Ahmad continued to emphasize the importance of Salah in their preaching in the same way. Maulana Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi, for example, used to hold study circles to educate Muslims regarding Faith and fundamental Islamic practices. That is why, as Mehr relates on the authority of *Tazkerah Sadiqa*, "even the illiterate learned very well the meaning of the Qur'anic chapters usually recited in Salah and that of supplications."<sup>187</sup> Maulana Inayat Ali, who did an extensive reformist work in Bengal, used to tour a lot and visited different places in that state. If there was a mosque at a place that he visited, he used to appoint a regular Imam there. If there was no mosque there, he used to get a mosque constructed.<sup>188</sup>

Also, Sayyid Ahmad was very particular about offering Tahajjud (post-night prayers). For a very long period in his life Sayyid Ahmad spent the last part of night in just two *Rak'ats* of Tahajjud. He used to remind his associates to carefully observe the practice of offering prayers in the last part of the night.<sup>189</sup> In fact, all Mujahideen used to wake up and perform Tahajjud with Sayyid Ahmad. Maulana Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi, a great leader of the Movement, also used to remind people about prayers, especially about Tahajjud. It is related that he and his companions were especially particular about supplication and prayers.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 283.

<sup>187</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>188</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 218-19.

<sup>189</sup> *Waqae*, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 831.

<sup>190</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 47.

## Concentration in Salah

In fact, Sayyid Ahmad was able to let his followers feel the glory of Salah only because he had himself acquired it by making sincere efforts. As Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla relates in *Wasaya al-Wazeer*, one of the chief characteristics of Sayyid Ahmad was his ability to offer Salah with concentration.<sup>191</sup> Sayyid Ahmad always offered prayers with exemplary concentration and eagerness to the extent that "the devotees who offered Salah behind him felt love for Allah rising in their hearts."<sup>192</sup> Once, for example, when he led the pilgrims in Salah in the ship while they were sailing to Makkah, they were overwhelmed with love for Allah and said later that the ecstatic bliss experienced by them in praying behind Sayyid Ahmad was beyond expression.<sup>193</sup>

This influence of Sayyid Ahmad was so very well reflected in the event of Haji Abdur Rahim's taking Sayyid Ahmad as his spiritual guide. He was a famous spiritual leader of his time and had a very large following. When he met Sayyid Ahmad, he not only offered Bai'ah to him and took him as his spiritual guide, but also asked all his followers to do the same. On one occasion when he was asked why he, in spite of his acknowledged spiritual excellence, took Sayyid Ahmad as his spiritual mentor, he gave the historic answer: "I did not know how to offer Salah and observe fast. Due to the blessings of Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad] I learned how to offer Salah and observe fast."<sup>194</sup> Of course, Shah Abdur Rahim was not referring to the physical form of Salah, but to its excellence that was revealed to him only after his association with Sayyid Ahmad. He realized what he had been missing in spite of observing the

<sup>191</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 510.

<sup>192</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 516.

<sup>193</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 348.

<sup>194</sup> *Amirur Riwayat*, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 553. This was a common acknowledgement by the spiritual leaders (*Mashaekh*) of the time. Hafiz Mustafa, a student of Shah Abdul Aziz, offered Bai'ah to Sayyid Ahmad at an advanced age. He used to acknowledge the blessings of his new relationship with Sayyid Ahmad in these words, "Whatever we used to do before was coarse; it was Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad] who refined it." Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 251.

physical form of it and acknowledged it in these words: "Had I died [before associating myself with Sayyid Ahmad], I would have died a bad death."<sup>195</sup>

Shah Ismail, the closest associate of Sayyid Ahmad, used to thank Allah for being able to offer Salah with concentration and said: "I do not ever have any distraction in Salah. If I have any, Allah immediately lets me realize it."<sup>196</sup> In the last Ramadan of his life he was so sick that he could not attend congregational Taraweeh prayers. One day he attended the Taraweeh and led the prayers in which he recited the chapter *Isra* of the Qur'an. Jafar Ali Naqwi narrates that the bliss that the people offering Salah behind him experienced was never experienced by them before.<sup>197</sup>

### Salah Reinforced in the Islamic State

When Sayyid Ahmad established an Islamic state in the Frontier, he made laws and other necessary arrangements to make sure that the Muslims offered obligatory prayers regularly and on time. He deputed a group of the Mujahideen to tour the area and supervise that Muslims did not miss obligatory Salah or indulge in anything forbidden in Islam. It is related that all Muslims became punctual about Salah in the areas under his control to the extent that when the Mujahideen deputed by him used to reach a village, the residents thereof came out and said, "There is not a single Muslim in this village who does not offer Salah."<sup>198</sup>

## 3. HAJJ (PILGRIMAGE)

Hajj, an obligatory tenet of Islam, has always been performed by Indian Muslims with great love and care. But, as discussed in Chapter One, in the days of Sayyid Ahmad there emerged some

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<sup>195</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 553.

<sup>196</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 32.

<sup>197</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 32.

<sup>198</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 38.



pseudo-scholars who gave a Fatwa that Hajj ceased to be an obligatory duty (Fard) for Indian Muslims.

### Obligatoriness of Hajj for Indian Muslims Questioned

Those days the sea route to Makkah was unsafe as the Portuguese and British sailors, who were inimical to Muslims, sometimes attacked the pilgrims' ships and drowned them, and sometimes the ships got drowned due to natural causes. Thus, some scholars with shallow knowledge of Islam argued that as the safety of passage, a condition for the obligatoriness of Hajj, was not available to the Indian Muslims, Hajj was not obligatory for them any more. They further argued that it would be, in fact, an act of disobedience to Allah to try to sail to Makkah for Hajj in such conditions and thus expose themselves to dangers threatening life. They also wrote a Fatwa to this effect.

The logic was seemingly convincing and so many Muslims for whom Hajj was obligatory lived in confusion and died without having performed it. Maulana Abdul Hai, Shah Ismail, and Shah Abdul Aziz refuted this view strongly by writing in support of the obligatoriness of Hajj for Indian Muslims. Shah Abdul Aziz criticized the ignorance of the above-mentioned pseudo-scholars by arguing that they would next issue a verdict (Fatwa) excusing Indian Muslims from Salah, Sawm (fasting), and Zakah on one ground or the other.<sup>199</sup> This danger was very serious because if unchecked, it could have destroyed the roots of Islam in India.

### Sayyid Ahmad Reinstates Hajj

Sayyid Ahmad took notice of this potential danger to Islam in India. In those days most of his prayers and supplications were focused on Hajj. But in order to establish the obligatoriness of Hajj, he decided to take a practical step by setting a personal example. He announced that he was going for Hajj next year and gave out an open call that anybody who wished to perform Hajj was welcome to

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<sup>199</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 251.

join his caravan. He also took the responsibility of meeting the travel expenses of his co-travelers. He wrote letters to people in different towns and cities in India and disseminated the news of his intended Hajj journey as much as possible.

Sayyid Ahmad's call for Hajj was received with eagerness and appreciation by the Muslim mass: those who wished to perform Hajj tried to join the caravan; those who couldn't, tried to serve the pilgrims in whatever way possible; many others traveled for miles just to take a glimpse of the caravan. Maulana Abdul Hai arrived from Budhana with a large group of pilgrims. Maulana Shah Ismail brought with him about 250 pilgrims, men and women, from Delhi, Phulat, and Saharanpur. From the vicinity of Rae Bareilly gathered 100 men and women. Some forty family members of Sayyid Ahmad also joined the caravan. When the caravan began its journey on Monday, July 30, 1821 (Shawwal 1236 H), it comprised 405 or 407 pilgrims.<sup>200</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad told his associates in the very beginning that the Hajj journey should be undertaken with piety and trust in Allah. On one occasion he thus instructed them: "None should ask others for even a petty thing. We will never ask anybody for the expenses of the journey. If needed, we will work as laborers, spend half of our earning on our food and save the other half to pay the fare of the ship."<sup>201</sup>

The caravan of Sayyid Ahmad passed slowly through the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal and generated confidence in the people about the practicality of Hajj. At Dalmao, for example, Maulana Abdul Hai spoke consecutively for four days on the value of Tawheed and Sunnah and on the virtues of Hajj and Umrah. On one occasion Sayyid Ahmad himself spoke on the etiquette of Hajj in detail. When Sayyid Ahmad reached a place called Gutni, he was informed that a so-called scholar named Maulvi Yad Ali living at a nearby village called Gadh believed that Hajj was not obligatory

<sup>200</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 257. Mehr gives the English date of the departure in *Shaheed*, p. 182.

<sup>201</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 263.

for Indian Muslims (for the reasons discussed above). Sayyid Ahmad sent Maulana Abdul Hai and Maulana Shah Ismail with forty persons to Gadh and instructed them to collect the Muslims of the area and explain to them the obligatoriness of Hajj for Indian Muslims in the light of the Qur'an and Hadith. All this had a very deep effect on the minds and hearts of Muslims. Those who opposed the obligatoriness of Hajj were convinced of the weakness of their logic, and those who were confused or afraid of the dangers of the passage saw a precedent in the practical example set by Sayyid Ahmad and his associates.

### Eagerness for Performing Hajj

Sayyid Ahmad and his associates undertook this journey with great sincerity and observed exemplary patience, eagerness and self-restraint in all circumstances in the Hajj journey. Nadwi writes on the authority of *Makhzane Ahmadi* that the members of the Hajj caravan patiently bore the hardships of the passage and covered the distance with gratefulness for Allah in heart and words of Zikr on their tongues. For most of the part they walked on foot and passed through marshy tracts, muddy river beds, and canals, but they always remained patient, nay grateful to Allah that He gave them a chance to travel to Makkah for Hajj.<sup>202</sup>

When Sayyid Ahmad saw the mountains of Aden from the ship during his Hajj journey, he was deeply moved and thanked Allah for showing him the land of Arabia. He said to Maulana Abdul Hai that he would offer special prayers of thankfulness (*Salatul Shukr*) after landing.<sup>203</sup> While he was sailing to Makkah, an associate once found him standing alone on the roof of the ship and watching the panorama of the vast expanse of the sea. He was uttering words of praise and glory for Allah and was also reciting some verses of Hafiz, the Persian poet, while tears were streaming down his cheeks and his voice was choked with emotion.<sup>204</sup> When the

<sup>202</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 258.

<sup>203</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 346.

<sup>204</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 348.

pilgrims reached Makkah, their hearts were filled with love, gratitude, and gratification. As Nadwi writes, "all of them were moved to tears at the time of entering Makkah."<sup>205</sup> When the caravan was on way to Madinah and reached a place from where the tomb of the Prophet, peace and blessings be on him, was in sight, "all of them were overwhelmed by love and eagerness."<sup>206</sup> More than anybody else, Sayyid Ahmad was all love in the journey. At the time of returning from Makkah, "everybody was in tears and felt sad at the separation of the House of Allah (*Baitullah*)."<sup>207</sup>

Throughout the journey Sayyid Ahmad and his associates remained extremely careful in avoiding all acts of disobedience to Allah, especially quarrel (*Jidal*), transgression (*Fisq*), sin (*'Isyan*), and licentiousness in any form, as the pilgrims are instructed to do in the Qur'an. As Nadwi writes, "By virtue of Sayyid Ahmad's presence no incident of quarrel among the travelers took place."<sup>208</sup> In fact, no case of transgression was ever reported concerning the pilgrims during this journey. They also adorned their pilgrimage journey with deeds pleasing to Allah and remained engaged in prayer, supplication, Dhikr, recitation of the Qur'an, learning and teaching of Islamic knowledge, and serving each other. In the ship every morning Sayyid Ahmad used to recite *Hizbul Bahr* (a special Du'a) and then listen to the first portion (*Ruku*) of the Chapter *Al-Zukhruf* from the Qur'an which a companion recited to him. After that the pilgrims joined him and a discussion on the meaning and intent of a Qur'anic verse or a Hadith was held for the benefit of the audience in general.<sup>209</sup> At his instruction Maulana Abdul Hai and Shah Ismail held regular teaching circles at al-Haram for the benefit of common Muslims: Maulana Abdul Hai started giving lessons in *Mishkat Shareef*, a famous book of authentic Hadith, and Shah Ismail taught *Hujjatullahil Baligha*, the famous book by Shah

<sup>205</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 353.

<sup>206</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 363.

<sup>207</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 367.

<sup>208</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 345.

<sup>209</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 344-45. Mohiuddin Ahmad mentions the name of Maulvi Muhammad Yusuf as the one who recited the Qur'an, on p. 89 in his book.

Waliyullah of Delhi. *Sirate Mustaqeem*, the book composed by Shah Ismail and Abdul Hai containing the teachings of Sayyid Ahmad, was translated into Arabic for the benefit of Arabic-speaking people during this journey. The second Ramadan approached when they were still at Makkah. All members of the caravan eagerly became engaged in prayers, fasting, Umrah and Tawaaf.<sup>210</sup>

### Commitment for Future

The Hajj journey strengthened the pilgrims' commitment to Islam, as it was supposed to do. They made a determination to spend their whole life for the pleasure of Allah. After returning to India, Sayyid Ahmad spoke words of profuse thankfulness to Allah, expressed his sincere gratitude to Him for granting him and his associates the opportunity to perform Hajj and Umrah, thanked Him for the safe trip, and offered a long supplication culminating in these words: "May our lives and properties be spent in Your way, O Allah." He was repeating these words again and again while tears welled up in his eyes and streamed down. All his companions were deeply moved and were crying bitterly.<sup>211</sup> This pilgrimage was for Allah and Sayyid Ahmad and his associates never wished to gain any worldly benefit out of it. That is why one of the prayers of Sayyid Ahmad was: "O Allah, let none of us be ever called Haji."<sup>212</sup>

Thus we see that Sayyid Ahmad and his associates established the obligatoriness of Hajj in India at a time when it was very seriously threatened. When Sayyid Ahmad and his associates returned from the Hajj journey safe and sound, the issue of the safety of passage and other related objections to the obligatoriness of Hajj died out for ever. The Muslims residing in the areas which fell en route to Sayyid Ahmad's Hajj caravan saw the pilgrims returning safe and happy; the others heard about it. The poets wrote tributary poems about the successful mission of Sayyid Ahmad's Hajj caravan. Since then the Indian Muslims have been

<sup>210</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 366.

<sup>211</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 373.

<sup>212</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 357.

performing Hajj regularly, and each year they travel to Makkah and perform this religious duty with eagerness and enthusiasm.

#### 4. DU'A (SUPPLICATION)

Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla mentions in his book *Wasaya al-Wazeer* that Sayyid Ahmad's supplications were very sincere and were urgently accepted.<sup>213</sup> Realizing the fact that Allah alone could fulfill the needs of human beings, he always turned to Him in hours of need and beseeched Him for help in a very moving way. He offered supplications individually as well as collectively, in dearth as well as in abundance, in happiness as well as in misery, in victory as well as in defeat. Some representative instances are cited below to show how important a place Du'a had in his life and mission.

##### Revival of the Practice of Supplication

Once when he was staying at his village Daera with a number of his followers, his family members and guests starved for two consecutive days. Muhammad Ali, Sayyid Ahmad's nephew and the author of *Makhzane Ahmadi*, could not bear the pangs of hunger and restlessly approached Sayyid Ahmad for Du'a. At that time Sayyid Ahmad was engaged in God-remembrance in the mosque with his followers. He smiled at the restlessness of his nephew and asked his followers to pray. It was raining heavily at that time. As soon as they lifted their hands to supplicate, the rain stopped, and before they finished their prayers, some persons called from the other side of the River Sai informing that they had brought grain for Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>214</sup>

One night Sayyid Ahmad and his army made a halt in a mountainous region in the Frontier where there was no shelter from cold and no food to eat. The Mujahideen felt that they had to live without food that night. Sayyid Ahmad offered the Maghrib prayer with his associates and began to talk to them about Allah's

<sup>213</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 510.

<sup>214</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 178-80.

absolute power to grant provision to His bondsmen. Until the Isha prayer he talked about the great value of Allah's pleasure and His attribute of being the sole provider. His words were so sincere and moving that his companions burst into tears and felt a spiritual ecstasy dawning upon them. Then Sayyid Ahmad laid his head bare as a mark of humility and began to supplicate to Allah in a very moving way by referring to His noble attributes. After sometime some persons who were unknown to them came unexpectedly to meet him. They brought milk for them in a large container, a cot for Sayyid Ahmad, a bed to be spread over it, and blankets.<sup>215</sup> Thus Allah provided them with everything they needed at a place where no human resources were available for such facilities.

When he was in the Frontier, we see him and his associates engaged in entreating Allah in a different set up. One day he expressed his desire to Maulana Muhammad Ismail that for a few days he and his associates should engage in offering supplication as much and as sincerely as possible. He suggested that he should retire to seclusion alone and engage in supplicating to Allah, while Shah Muhammad Ismail should take all the Mujahideen to a suitable place in the adjacent forest and offer supplication to Him collectively there. Accordingly, every day after Asr prayer Sayyid Ahmad retired alone to a room to supplicate to Allah and Shah Ismail took all the Mujahideen outside the village to a canal, said first a few words relating to the value and etiquette of supplication and then prayed to Allah bare-headed in tears and sobs and in utter humility for a long time. When they returned, Shah Ismail informed Sayyid Ahmad every day of his experience of how he and others felt in making Du'a. This practice continued for five to seven days.<sup>216</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad prayed to Allah for help and guidance before he started any work. In Calcutta, for example, when he wanted to deliver a sermon, he began it with a sincere supplication: "Lord! I will speak whatever I know, but the guidance of people is in Your

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<sup>215</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 408.

<sup>216</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 403.

hands. Guide them to the right path by Your mercy and grace, protect them from polytheism and innovation and disobedience and transgression, and help them adopt Sunnah and Tawheed."<sup>217</sup> Similarly, when he finished any good deed, he immediately turned to Allah and supplicated to Him beseeching Him to accept it. On one occasion he advised a Sunni Muslim family to dismantle the *Chabootra* and *Taziya* that they had constructed adjacent to their house and also remove from their house the decoration pieces bearing human or animal images. The family members complied and all un-Islamic relics were destroyed. This made Sayyid Ahmad turn to his Lord to supplicate to Him for ultimate help: "O Allah! Bestow Your guidance upon all of them and make them firm on the straight path."<sup>218</sup> He prayed when he started his journey for Hajj and he prayed when he returned from it. He prayed before a battle and he also prayed after it. In fact, he did so because everything he did was first and last for the pleasure of his Lord.

### Earnestness in Supplication

Sayyid Ahmad was blessed with an extraordinary ability to invoke Allah's mercy in a very moving way, especially by mentioning His magnificent names. Like the Prophet of Allah, blessings and peace be on him, he used to get moved and was charged with sincere emotion while praying. He often supplicated bare-headed to show his humility to Allah and said words that were so simple but so earnest. Once when he said a prayer for a group of his followers from Java, they were very impressed with the sincerity, nobility and novelty of his supplication and remarked: "We never saw or heard of anybody supplicating to Allah as you did for us now, nor did we ever read such words!"<sup>219</sup> Similarly, once a Muslim<sup>220</sup> who

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<sup>217</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 316.

<sup>218</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 294.

<sup>219</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 356.

<sup>220</sup> Such instances refer to Sunni Muslims who had been erecting Taziya and doing such other things considering them essential teachings of Islam. Sayyid Ahmad did not directly interfere with the faith and practices of the Shia Muslims unless they themselves decided to adopt the teachings of the Sunni faith.



had constructed an expensive Chabootra for raising the Taziya repented at his hands and asked him to demolish it, he demolished it, laid the foundation of a mosque there, gave two rupees as his contribution for constructing the mosque, offered two Rak'ats of Salah there and appealed to the local people for financial contribution. Finally and most importantly, he spread his hands in front of Allah and said a very long and moving supplication. People present there joined him in his supplication and felt a conviction arising in their hearts that their supplication would certainly be accepted.<sup>221</sup>

### Supplication for All

Sayyid Ahmad prayed for all. He prayed for Muslims, even for those who were up in arms against him. In one of the battles with a Durrani chief who had imposed a war on him, he supplicated: "If in Your knowledge we are right, bless us with victory; but if they are right, grant them victory over us."<sup>222</sup> He also prayed with the same sincerity for non-Muslims, even for those against whom he was arrayed in the battlefield. As Mehr writes, he used to supplicate to Allah for the Sikhs after each obligatory prayer, five times a day: "O Allah! Bestow guidance on them and make them our brothers by granting them Faith and Islam."<sup>223</sup> In fact, he used to pray for the whole mankind. His disciples from Java acknowledged the same when they said, "What a good supplication you offered for us and for the entire creation."<sup>224</sup>

### Supplication in the Lives of Sayyid Ahmad's Associates

Sayyid Ahmad's associates learned from him the value of supplicating to Allah and adopted the practice of calling upon Him in the hours of their needs.<sup>225</sup> Selected examples alone will cover a

<sup>221</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 266.

<sup>222</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 255.

<sup>223</sup> Manzoora, quoted by Mehr in *Shaheed*, p. 835.

<sup>224</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 356.

<sup>225</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 206.

book of considerable length. We, therefore, cite only a few representative instances here.

It is related about Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla that he always prayed in the beginning of a work and at the end of it. He had such a great inclination for saying supplications that at times when he was holding the court as a ruler but had an urge to supplicate to Allah, he stood up from his seat, put off his head cover, turned toward Makkah, and started praying to his Lord. He had instructed his courtiers that in such moments they should not rise from their seats to pay formal respect to him. It is also reported that throughout his life he never prayed against anybody, even his enemies.<sup>226</sup>

In the Battle of Phulra, Hari Singh Nalwa, a Sikh commander, launched a surprise attack on the Mujahideen who were preparing for Fajr prayer. They were caught unawares and had to do so much as quickly as possible to save the Muslim army from military loss, but Sayyid Ahmad Ali, the commander of the Muslim army, decided to supplicate to Allah for help first. He stood at a place facing Ka'ba and became engaged in offering supplication to Allah. He also asked some of his associates to call others to join.<sup>227</sup>

Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi had a great faith in supplication and found in supplication a healing balm for his wounded heart. When he was forced to return home from the Frontier by the British, he was very restless. He came out of his house at noon or in the dead of night, fell in prostration on the ground in distress and begged Allah to help him join the Mujahideen in the Frontier where his leader Sayyid Ahmad had fallen a martyr.<sup>228</sup>

## 5. DA'WAH (PREACHING)

Calling people toward the correct faith and virtuous deeds and dissuading them from polytheism, innovation and transgression

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<sup>226</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 137. Also, *Jama'at*, p. 190.

<sup>227</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 206.

<sup>228</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, pp. 48-49.

occupied a very prominent place in the missionary program of Sayyid Ahmad. There was an unprecedented appeal in his preaching. He was able to engender in the people true love for Islam because he had developed this precious quality in him by devoting the best part of his life and energy.

### Characteristics of Sayyid Ahmad's Missionary Work

The first and most striking characteristic of Sayyid Ahmad's missionary work was the sincerity (*Ikhlas*) with which he extended his call to the people. Like all other endeavors in life, he carried on his *Da'wah* solely for the pleasure of his Lord and never wished to get any recognition or reward from the people. Words of admiration and praise meant nothing to him; gifts and presentations had no attraction for him. When the wife of Sheikh Imam Bakhsh, a rich merchant of Calcutta, presented to him an expensive residential building constructed in the midst of a beautiful garden, he gave it back to Imam Bakhsh and said these memorable words: "We are the indigent travelers. Allah provides us daily with fresh food, fresh water, and a new place to live. What shall we do then of this house? I give the building to you from my side."<sup>229</sup>

Second, he did not sit and wait for the people to come to him to learn about Islam. Like the Prophet, peace be upon him, he himself went to them and conveyed the message of Islam. His extensive tours in the area of Doaba, his missionary tour in the area east of Rae Bareilly, his missionary trip to Lucknow, his missionary work during his pilgrimage journey, his reformist endeavors in the Frontier, which are so wide in range and deep in effect, were all taken up in the same spirit. He also encouraged his followers to take their call for Islamic revival to the people by going to them. On one occasion, he told a large group of landlords: "For the sake of Allah alone go to the villages in your areas, teach Muslims

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<sup>229</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 321.

Tawheed and ways of Islam and save them from polytheism and innovation. Allah will bless you with a great reward."<sup>230</sup>

Third, Sayyid Ahmad prepared himself and his associates to patiently bear any ill treatment met in discharging the duty of preaching with. To a group of Tibetans whom he had persuaded to return to Tibet and preach among the people there the true teachings of Islam rather than perform Hajj with him, he instructed: "Teach Muslims the injunctions of Tawheed and Sunnah there and persuade them to give up polytheism and innovation." He then gave the final advice to them in these words: "But you must not forget one thing. Even if they hit you with a stick or stone, or kick or punch you, observe patience and do not say anything to them in retaliation. Simply continue preaching in the same way."<sup>231</sup> Also, to a group of his disciples from Bengal he instructed: "Tour different places and teach the tenets of Tawheed and Sunnah that you have learned here to people, and dissuade them from acts of polytheism and innovation. And if anybody hits or hurts you in any way, observe patience and don't give up preaching."<sup>232</sup>

Fourth, Sayyid Ahmad always remained steadfast in his missionary work. Once when he was in Lucknow, a number of the Shia Muslims converted to the Sunni faith. Nawwab Motamedud Dawla, the Prime Minister of Lucknow, sent a stern warning to him that he stop preaching to the Shias or leave Lucknow immediately. The Nawwab also threatened to take disciplinary action against him if he ignored his orders. But Sayyid Ahmad remained steadfast and continued his Da'wah work in Lucknow in the same way. He said later, "If we were simply asked to leave the city, we would have readily complied as we were the subjects. But because we were forbidden from preaching, it would have been against the teachings of Islam to accept such a commandment." He made his perspective further clear in these words: "Whoever comes

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<sup>230</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 275.

<sup>231</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 301.

<sup>232</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 324.

to me, a Shia or a Sunni, I will tell him what is Islamically right and what is wrong."<sup>233</sup>

Fifth, Sayyid Ahmad's way of preaching was essentially humane, marked with extraordinary wisdom suited to human nature. He hated the sin, but he was a true well wisher of the transgressor, always trying and hoping for his transformation for the better and eagerly awaiting any good opportunity to show him the right path. When he was in the army of Amir Khan, he always showed care and indulgence to the soldiers who came to him for his advice and prayers and tried to encourage them to practice the teachings of Islam in a pleasant way. Similarly in Lucknow he received Amanullah Khan and his associates, who were outlaws and criminals, with due respect and showed them the beauty of Islam in such a way that all of them gave up the criminal life and became pious Muslims.<sup>234</sup> Also, at Topai he brought back a notorious robber called Phulela to the fold of Islam in the same way. Instead of treating the transgressors with disdain, he helped them transform their lives. That is why, we see among his beneficiaries notorious criminals, professional beggars, eunuchs, and the prostitutes who became the best specimen of practicing Muslims after reversion.

Sixth, Sayyid Ahmad's mission was open to all: everybody was invited to join and contribute in his own way. He did not call everybody to participate in Jihad; he invited everybody, nevertheless, to adopt the true teachings of Islam, contribute to the renaissance of Islam in whatever way possible and attain Allah's pleasure. He asked the rulers, like Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla, and chiefs, like Fatah Khan Panjtari, to rule over their subjects according to the Islamic Law. He deputed others, like Maulana Abdul Hai Budhanwi and Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi, to do the missionary work. He encouraged poets like Momin Khan Momin and Khurram Ali Balhouri to write poems in order to raise the morale of the Mujahideen: Khurram Ali's famous poem *Qasidae*

<sup>233</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 220.

<sup>234</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 213-16.

*Jihadiya* was sung in the battlefield to boost up the morale of the Mujahideen. Some other poets were asked to compose short and simple poems containing the teachings of Islam for the benefit of less educated Muslims. In the Frontier qualified aged persons were given the responsibility of teaching the Qur'an to the Mujahideen. The chiefs of the Delhi and Patna centers were responsible for collecting money and recruiting men. Others were given responsibilities like transferring money and men to the Frontier. When he found a capable person interested in learning, he spared time to personally teach him. As narrated in *Wasaya*, Maulvi Imamudeen Bengali had taken lessons in *Sirate Mustaqeem* directly from him and had gone over the book with him several times.<sup>235</sup>

### Means Adopted for Preaching

Sayyid Ahmad followed the prophetic tradition of adopting necessary means available to achieve his end. He made long tours, resorted to sincere supplications, accepted followers in Bai'ah, offered personal advice, delivered short discourses and public sermons, organized study circles such as those of Shah Ismail and Maulana Abdul Hai at Makkah, wrote letters to different persons, and used all these for the success of his missionary work. Some other means that he adopted for this purpose deserve special mention here.

In order to prepare his followers for his mission, Sayyid Ahmad selected capable persons and kept them in his company to train them. He then sent them to the areas where missionary work was needed. This brought into existence a very effective network. As Maulana Haider Ali Rampuri writes, "in many countries the righteous deputies [of Sayyid Ahmad] toured and showed hundreds of thousands of people the straight path of the religion of Islam."<sup>236</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad's Movement was supported by well-developed missionary literature - books, short and long. Mehr mentions that

<sup>235</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 254-55.

<sup>236</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 529-30.

the following books were prepared under the personal care of Sayyid Ahmad: *Sirate Mustaqeem*, *Tambihul Ghafileen* (Persian), *Risalah dar Namaz-wa-Ibadat* (published from Calcutta under the caption *Haqiqatus Salah*, also reprinted in Al-Rahim, September 1965 Number, Hyderabad, Sindh), and *Risalah dar Nikahe Bewagan*, Persian, unpublished.<sup>237</sup> His associates followed the same path. Shah Ismail's *Taqwiyyatul Iman*, Wilayat Ali's *Durre Manthoor*, Jafar Naqwi's *Manzooratus So'ada*, Maulana Abdur Rahim's *Tazkerah Sadiqa (Al-Durrul Manthoor fi Tarajime Ahle Sadiqpur)*, Jafar Thanesari's *Tawarikhe Ajeeb* and *Kala Pani*, and above all, *Waq'a Ahmadi*, which contains the narrations of several of those associates of Sayyid Ahmad who survived the battle of Balakot, are only a few titles from the long list of books which were written by his followers.

Haider Ali Rampuri acknowledges that in doing the Da'wah work some deputies of Sayyid Ahmad concentrated on delivering sermons while others "wrote books based on the teachings of the Qur'an and authentic sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) through which they transformed thousands of illiterate people...into an educated lot."<sup>238</sup> These books were very widely circulated by the centers that the Mujahideen had established all over India. Small booklets were printed and circulated in large numbers. Shah Ismail's *Taqwiyyatul Iman* and *Tazkeerul Ikhwan*, and short writings of Sayyid Awlad Hasan Qannawji, Maulvi Khurram Ali Balhowri, Maulana Wilayat Ali, Maulana Inayat Ali and scores of others were made available at a cheap price.<sup>239</sup>

The later leaders of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement also established printing and publishing houses to support the Movement. Sayyid Abdullah Sarampuri, a follower of Sayyid Ahmad, established a printing press in Sarampur from which many important religious books were published. He also published the translation of the Qur'an by Shah Abdul Qadir Dehlavi first and made it available to

<sup>237</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 839-40.

<sup>238</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 530.

<sup>239</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 434-35.

common Muslims.<sup>240</sup> Similarly, Maulvi Badeeuzzaman of Burdawan, Khalifa of Maulana Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi, bought a press and published several books to support the missionary work.<sup>241</sup> This was the first press established under a missionary program in the Indian sub-continent. Thus the Mujahideen soon developed their own missionary literature to support their cause.<sup>242</sup> Mehr also acknowledges that the Mujahideen established printing press at different places from where missionary literature was published regularly.<sup>243</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad also followed the prophetic policy of sending letters to the chiefs of different areas to call them to support Islam. He wrote long letters to the chiefs, the Sayyids and the Ulema to explain to them the Islamic perspective of his mission and used his letters to strengthen his missionary work. His letters are a very valuable contribution to the Islamic literature and have been published in book form. A collection of his letters is preserved now in the British Museum. Ghulam Rasool Mehr writes that all letters of Sayyid Ahmad are not available now; some are lost. But he mentions the names of thirteen rulers and thirty-two chiefs and Khans of the Frontier whom Sayyid Ahmad wrote personal letters. He does not include in this list names of common Ulema and chiefs of India and the Frontier whom Sayyid Ahmad sent such letters. Mehr concludes that, in fact, there was no important person from the state of Sindh to the borders of Kashmir to whom Sayyid Ahmad did not contact to support Islam.<sup>244</sup>

The Mujahideen also established Da'wah centers all over India for supporting their mission. Such centers were set up in most of the villages; some large villages had two such centers. Large centers were established at district level. A town or a city had several centers. At one time in the Hyderabad city alone fourteen

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<sup>240</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 297-301.

<sup>241</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 217.

<sup>242</sup> Shahpuri, pp. 122 and 146.

<sup>243</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 434-35.

<sup>244</sup> Mehr, *Shahed*, pp. 403-06.



Da'wah centers were run by the deputies of Maulana Wilayat Ali.<sup>245</sup>

The Mujahideen also used mosques for supporting their Da'wah work: they constructed new mosques and activated the old ones to make sure that the local Muslims attended congregational prayers regularly and were united as a well-knit community. They also appointed such Imams there who could discharge the duty of educating the local Muslims in religion and settling the disputes among them. These mosques were managed by the centers run by the Mujahideen.<sup>246</sup>

### Extent of Sayyid Ahmad's Missionary Work

Sayyid Ahmad toured and covered a very wide area during his stay in Delhi and Rae Bareilly, in his Hajj journey, and during his missionary work in the Frontier, and in each instance an unbelievably large number of Muslims offered repentance for their past sins at his hands and pledged to live by the true teachings of Islam. Where he himself could not go, he sent his vicegerents to convey his message. In the words of Maulana Nadwi, "No place in India was left untouched where the blessings of his message did not reach."<sup>247</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad sent Sayyid Muhammad Ali Rampuri and Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi to Hyderabad, Bombay and Madras.<sup>248</sup> In Bengal Inayat Ali Azeemabadi introduced and established the missionary work. Later, Karamat Ali Jonepuri was sent to Bengal.

<sup>245</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 434-35 and 169-70.

<sup>246</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 434-35

<sup>247</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 539.

<sup>248</sup> When Sayyid Muhammad Ali Rampuri reached Hyderabad, he was accorded an exceptionally warm reception by the government of the state. Thousands of people offered Bai'ah to him. Nawwab Mubarezud Dawla, brother of the ruler Nawwab Nasirud Dawla, became his follower and was blessed with *Khilafat* (Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 40). Sayyid Ali Rampuri left Hyderabad for Madras after some time, but Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi stayed there until the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad at Balakot. Due to his preaching the environment of Hyderabad changed tremendously. Hundreds of thousands of people offered oath of allegiance at his hands and adopted pious conduct. (Nadwi, *Karwan*, p.46).

He reached Calcutta and covered Bengal and Assam extensively with an exemplary success.<sup>249</sup> Sayyid Awlad Hasan Qannawji was sent to Utter Pradesh for preaching.<sup>250</sup> Jafar Ali performed the missionary work in Nepal. In Afghanistan Sayyid Ahmad's vicegerent Habibullah Qandhari conducted the reformist work, whose vicegerent Abdullah Ghaznawi covered the Punjab with a great success. Muhammad Qasim was sent to Bombay for the purpose of preaching. Hafiz Qutbuddeen, Sayyid Hameeduddeen, Sayyid Ahmad's nephew, and Sayyid Abul Qasim, son of Sayyid Ahmad's nephew Sayyid Ahmad Ali, were also sent back to India from the Frontier for the work of preaching.<sup>251</sup> Sayyid Mardan Ali Shah of Jhajjar was also among those whom Sayyid Ahmad had appointed to preach for Jihad.<sup>252</sup>

Maulana Wilayat Ali, the main leader of the Movement after Sayyid Ahmad's martyrdom, appointed Shah Muhammad Husain as Imam for Jame Masjid of Nanmohiya in Patna and made him responsible for missionary work in Chapra, Muzaffarpur, Tirhat, and Patna and its vicinity. He also sent Zainul Abedeen Hyderabad to Allahabad and Muhammad Abbas Hyderabad to Orissa on the same mission.<sup>253</sup> In fact, Sayyid Ahmad's "devoted disciples took his message from house to house in all parts of the country."<sup>254</sup> Sayyid Ahmad, and after him his vicegerents, used to visit even small places, teach the Muslims there the commandments of the Islamic Shariah, encourage them to perform prayers in congregation in the mosque, and establish a viable program there for conducting the work of preaching.

Sayyid Ahmad's message spread outside India as well. To Tibet, he dispatched a group of nine Tibetans, including one lady, who

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<sup>249</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, pp. 117-18.

<sup>250</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 255.

<sup>251</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 60.

<sup>252</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 271.

<sup>253</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>254</sup> Nadwi, *A Misunderstood Reformer* (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publication 1979), pp. 32-33. For further citations this work will be referred to as *Reformer*.

took the message of Islam upto China. A number of scholars from Java, Bulgaria, and Morocco offered Bai'ah to him and became engaged in calling people there toward the true teachings of Islam. When Sayyid Ahmad was in Calcutta on his way to Makkah, Sayyid Hamza, a gold trader from Pegu, Burma, met him and became his disciple. He took the message of Sayyid Ahmad to Burma.<sup>255</sup>

## 6. JIHAD (STRUGGLE TO SUPPORT ISLAM)

The background in which Sayyid Ahmad decided to rise for Jihad against the repressive policies and practices of the British and the Sikhs has been discussed earlier in Chapter One in detail. Here we devote ourselves to the study of the nature and spirit of his jihad endeavors.

### Definition of Jihad

Mehr, the most reliable biographer of Sayyid Ahmad, discusses the concept of Jihad in the background of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement and defines it in these words:

The word *Jihad* is derived from the root *juhd*, which means 'to strive, undergo hardships, and become fully ready to bear severe afflictions for a cause.' In Islamic terminology, *Jihad* means 'efforts, external and internal, exploiting all available means to defend against the attacks of the enemy.' *External efforts* means that 'in face of an armed attack by an enemy, one should offer an armed resistance, pursuing it incessantly until the danger is over, remaining ready to spare even one's life for the just cause, if needed, and working day and night to suppress the power of untruth and support the cause of truth and justice.' *Internal efforts* means 'to safeguard oneself from the

<sup>255</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 211.

lure of evil insinuations and harms of transgression.<sup>256</sup>

A close look at Sayyid Ahmad's Movement shows that the main emphasis in it, as it is in Islam, was to find out peaceful solutions to the challenges Muslims were facing at that time. He took up arms only when an armed confrontation was imposed on him.

### Scope of Jihad

It should be made clear here that Jihad in Islam includes all peaceful efforts which are made for the cause of Islam. Islam allows the use of armed resistance (*Qital*) with clearly defined restrictions, only when all peaceful means fail. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi defines Jihad in these words:

*Jihad* is not limited to *Qital*, i.e., use of force (although use of force against intolerance and injustice is the highest form of it, if that remains the only option). In fact, all efforts made to convey the message of Allah to people and to help in the ascendance of religion are Jihad. It is related in a Hadith that 'the most noble form of Jihad is to proclaim what is true and just in front of a mighty and intolerant ruler.'<sup>257</sup>

### Aim of Jihad

Using arms, therefore, was not the first option for Sayyid Ahmad. In fact, his chief aim behind his Jihad was to raise Muslims to follow the teachings of Islam sincerely. Mehr comments on this issue in the following words:

It is wrongly believed that the preachers from the Mujahideen used to call the Muslim mass day and night toward waging a war with sword against the

<sup>256</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 234-35. Mehr takes this definition from an Arabic source. He also provides the Arabic text. Unfortunately, he does not cite the source.

<sup>257</sup> Nadwi, *Dastoore Hayat* (Lucknow: Majlise Tahqiqat wan Nashriyate Islam, 1983), p. 159.

infidels, and that their main aim was to recruit Muslims for participating in Jihad and transport them to the Frontier from where it was very difficult for them to return....In fact, the real aim of the preachers was to call Muslims to follow the true teachings of Islam sincerely, provide them with correct information about Islam, and help them discard un-Islamic practices. It goes without saying that the preachers must have been informing them that Jihad with sword is one of the important commandments of Islam, if the need arises.<sup>258</sup>

What Sayyid Ahmad understood by Jihad becomes clear from the event of Maulana Mahboob Ali's visit to the Frontier to join the Jihad Movement. When he saw that the Mujahideen were not fighting a war with any group of non-Muslims in the Frontier those days, he was disappointed and declared that there was actually no Jihad being conducted in the Frontier and so the stay of the Mujahideen there was Islamically questionable. His words created confusion among the Mujahideen. Thus, one day, with the permission of Sayyid Ahmad, Muhammad Hasan, a very reliable associate of Sayyid Ahmad, challenged Mahboob Ali in a large gathering when Sayyid Ahmad was also present there and explained the true concept of Jihad in the following words:

*Jihad* does not merely mean 'fighting in a battle'. Fighting in a battle is called *Qital* and a situation of *Qital* is faced by Muslims once in a great while. Jihad, on the other hand, means 'to strive for the proclamation of Allah's word,' which is a long-lasting job and is done in so many different forms. It is your misunderstanding that you call *Qital* as *Jihad*, and discard as useless the efforts of people here that they are making for the proclamation of Allah's message.<sup>259</sup>

<sup>258</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p 431.

<sup>259</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol 2, pp. 55-56.

It goes without saying that the above words of Muhammad Hasan should be taken to represent Sayyid Ahmad's views as he was present in the gathering and as Muhammad Hasan spoke to Mahboob Ali with his permission.

In fact, Islamically Jihad cannot be waged for taking wilful revenge, obtaining wealth, or conquering countries to become the ruler thereof. It is waged, if a genuine need justifies it, to suppress the powers of tyranny and oppression and to establish justice instead, and has to be conducted in full accordance with the stringent regulations imposed by the Islamic Shariah. Sayyid Ahmad was fully mindful of the fact that for every move in the path of Jihad he is answerable to Allah and that he would be able to please his Lord only if his efforts were just, constructive and noble. That is why he mentions his aim behind his Jihad efforts in these words: "We have raised the banner of Jihad for Allah alone. We have no desire at all to achieve wealth and booty, glory and grandeur, power and estate, governance and political supremacy. None except Allah is our goal."<sup>260</sup>

### Target in Jihad

During his Jihad Movement, Sayyid Ahmad confronted the Sikhs first because the Punjab was then the worst site of atrocities inflicted on the Muslims and needed immediate attention. He then wanted to move to India to deal with the British: "In fact, my main aim is to launch Jihad upon India [which had then fallen under the British control], not to settle down in the land of Khurasan."<sup>261</sup> As mentioned earlier, he considered the British as the main opponent,

<sup>260</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 387. When Sayyid Jafar Ali was returning from the Frontier to Delhi after the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad, he met Mulla Shakoor, a Minister of Shah Shuja, at Ludhiana. Mulla Shakoor told Sayyid Jafar that the Durranis had usurped power from Shah Shuja and that the Mujahideen could have helped Shah Shuja in regaining the power in the land. The reply of Sayyid Jafar reflects the aim of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement very clearly. He replied, "We went there to fight for the cause of Allah, not for any king or for anybody else who had a claim to the throne." Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 206.

<sup>261</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 17.

as they had usurped political power in India from Muslims and would do everything possible to destroy them as totally as possible. Mehr acknowledges this fact in these words:

For Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad], the first target in Jihad was the British who had captured a large area in India. Jihad with the Sikhs was also essential, but the Sikhs did not come before the British. Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad] fought with them first because he chose the Frontier as his center and thus faced the Sikhs first.<sup>262</sup>

But if we let Sayyid Ahmad speak for himself, the following excerpt from his personal letter to Raja Hindu Rao of Gwalior clarifies his position on this issue beyond doubt:

The Foreigners who came here from far-off lands have become the rulers. The Traders who came here for business have established their state. The power of local leaders and the states of native rulers have met with total destruction; their honor and public image are completely shattered. Those who were the rulers of states and leaders in politics have desperately sunk into a life of inaction. So, this small group of poor and resourceless persons has taken courage to rise [against this situation].<sup>263</sup>

It is obvious, as Mehr mentions in his comment to the above quotation, that by "the Foreigners" and "the Traders" Sayyid Ahmad was referring to the British.

### Characteristics of Sayyid Ahmad's Jihad Movement

Sayyid Ahmad and his associates conducted Jihad in India for the first time in full accordance with Islamic principles and traditions of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him. As Maulana Abul 'Ala Maududi writes, "although Muslim incursions into India had started as early as the first century and continued up to the

<sup>262</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 132.

<sup>263</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 15.

thirteenth century of the Hijri calendar, Jihad was only once fought in this land in the true sense of the term, which was conducted under the leadership of Hazrat Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi and under the command of Hazrat Shah Ismail Shaheed." He further writes that during their struggle "they never made the slightest deviation from the principles of the *Shariah*, and that when they got an opportunity, they established a rule which followed the model of the Rightly-guided Caliphs."<sup>264</sup> The following details will further elucidate this point.

The first and the foremost characteristic of Sayyid Ahmad's Jihad Movement was his utmost sincerity to seek Allah's pleasure through it. He writes in one of his letters: "All this is only for Allah. In this work there is no part of ego or insinuation of the Devil."<sup>265</sup>

Second, as Sayyid Ahmad wished to launch Jihad strictly in accordance with the Islamic guidelines, he made *Hijrah* (Migration) before Jihad, a Sunnah, and moved from India to the Frontier where the Muslims were in majority and were able to practice their faith freely.

Third, Sayyid Ahmad and his associates were the first to revive in India the Sunnah of conducting Jihad under an Imam, which is a very important Islamic principle. For Sayyid Ahmad Jihad was a means to fight against tyranny and implement justice to all, which was possible only when all participants in Jihad were made answerable to a chosen leader - the Imam.

Fourth, Sayyid Ahmad truly preferred peace to war. He always tried to resolve a dispute through negotiation and peace talk and became ready to fight only when the peace talk failed. All his encounters with the local rebels reveal this fact. He followed this policy with Khadi Khan before attacking the Hund fort, Ahmad

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<sup>264</sup> Abul Ala Maududi, "Introduction," *Shah Ismail Shaheed*, ed. Abdullah Butt, pp. 19-20. This book was published before the freedom of India and was one of the earliest efforts to write the history of the Mujahideen. It is a collection of articles by different writers.

<sup>265</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 387.



Khan before he brought Sultan Muhammad Khan against him, Yar Muhammad Khan before the Battle of Zaida, Painda Khan before the Battle of Amb, and Sultan Muhammad Khan before the Battle of Mayar and fought with them only when a battle was imposed on him. A night before the Battle of Zaida when the Mujahideen sought his permission to launch a night attack on the army of Yar Muhammad Khan, he replied, "The message of peace is between us. How can I permit a night attack? This is not the way to please Allah."<sup>266</sup>

Fifth, He also treated the prisoners of war humanely in accordance with the injunctions of Islam. He fed them well, provided them with medical help if they were wounded and gave them gifts and escorts at the time of their release.<sup>267</sup> He gladly granted amnesty to the warring tribes whenever they asked for it and fully abided by its terms and conditions.

Sixth, to Sayyid Ahmad and his associates Jihad was a means to establish justice in the society and was resorted to only for the benefit of mankind. As it challenged all forms of oppression and tyranny, all citizens of the state, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, were guaranteed full share of security and justice achieved through it. Sayyid Ahmad underscores this very point when he says that Jihad is "as important for the world to function justly as is rain for the survival of life."<sup>268</sup>

### No Religious Bias behind Jihad

Sayyid Ahmad's principle of Jihad did not necessitate that he should hate the followers of other religions. This point deserves special mention here that Sayyid Ahmad was not hostile to other religions, such as Hinduism, Christianity, or the Sikh faith. In fact, his Jihad was against the repressive policy of the communities that made an attempt to persecute Muslims and destroy Islamic values in the

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<sup>266</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 143.

<sup>267</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 200-01.

<sup>268</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 395-403.

areas they ruled. He, of course, loved Islam first and last, but he did not ever wish to impose Islam on anyone. Mohammad Hedayatullah writes:

Sayyid Ahmad's lack of interest in Hindus as a religio-political community is an indication of the fact that his Movement has no communal or political inclination. Dr Smith points out that none of the (Indian) Movements were anti-Hindu. It is said that during his reforming struggle, Sayyid Ahmad converted many Hindus to Islam, but no case of conversion is reported to have been forceful.<sup>269</sup>

## Enthusiasm for Jihad

Once Sayyid Ahmad felt that the protection of Muslims and restoration of Islamic values required the revival of the institution of Jihad, he came forward with all his might to establish it. In order to encourage the contemporary Muslims, he wore arms, practiced martial skills, instructed his associates to learn and practice war skills, and became very happy when strong young men, who could contribute to his Jihad mission, came to meet him. It was in this very spirit that in his pilgrimage journey he encouraged his associates to take Bai'ah for Jihad at his hands at Oqba.<sup>270</sup> He also took Bai'ah for Jihad from his associates at Hudaibiya.<sup>271</sup>

He made extensive tours in different areas and with him traveled the reputation that he had committed himself to reviving the institution of Jihad. His precept created in the Muslims a great enthusiasm for Jihad. When he was staying at Allahabad during his Hajj journey, his host Sheikh Ghulam Ali visited him more than once every day, and every time he came to see him he presented an

<sup>269</sup> Muhammad Hedayatullah, *Sayyed Ahmad: A Study of the Religious Reform Movement of Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970), p. 128.

<sup>270</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 358.

<sup>271</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 352.

expensive weapon to him. When Sayyid Ahmad told him that he would collect arms from him after returning from the pilgrimage journey, Sheikh Ghulam Ali submitted, "I don't know from where you will start Jihad, from this country or elsewhere. I also don't know how long I am going to live. If I die [before you return and collect arms from me], my aspiration [to help you in your Jihad mission] will remain unfulfilled."<sup>272</sup> During the same journey the Muslim soldiers deputed in the fort of Allahabad invited Sayyid Ahmad for dinner and presented to him several pieces of arms. In Azeemabad, Patna, Nawwab Qutbuddin Khan invited Sayyid Ahmad and his associates for dinner and presented to him a very expensive sword, a shield, a pistol, a gun, two bows and two quivers.<sup>273</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad's call for Jihad had a tremendous appeal for the Muslims of his time. The desire to join the Jihad Movement became so popular that parents urged their young sons to join the Mujahideen. Nawwab Farzand Ali of Ghazipur served the caravan of Sayyid Ahmad very enthusiastically at Ghazipur and one day presented his young son Amjad to him with the request that Sayyid Ahmad take him to the Frontier and let him be a martyr in the path of Allah. It had become a common practice of mothers to sing the lullaby to the children at bed time emphasizing the blessings of martyrdom, "Lord! Bless me with martyrdom, too (*Ilahi, mujhe bhi shahdat naseeb*)."

Young Muslims used to openly discuss their program for joining the Jihad Movement and tried to compete with their family members to go to the Frontier first. The Mujahideen envied their martyred associates and prayed that they were also blessed with the honor of martyrdom. The whole Muslim society of India resounded with Sayyid Ahmad's call for Jihad with such a powerful appeal that, as Hunter acknowledges, "no Wahhabi father, who has a boy of more than usual parts or piety, can tell the

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<sup>272</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 274.

<sup>273</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 304.

moment at which his son may not suddenly disappear from the hamlet."<sup>274</sup>

It should be noted that the eagerness to participate in Jihad was not an emotional response of only the youth which evaporates in the heat of the trial. It was also seen in such persons who were most mature and responsible in the Muslim society. In face of the lack of space, we will refer to only a few representative examples here.

Maulana Yahya Ali, a member of the illustrious family of Azeemabad, was arrested by the British, tried in the court and sentenced to death. After hearing the decision of the court he used to recite the Arabic couplets of Khubaib, the famous Companion of the Prophet of Allah: "When I am killed in the path of Allah, I don't mind on which side of the body I fall."<sup>275</sup>

When Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla, the ruler of the State of Tonk, learned that Sayyid Ahmad had been elected as Imam in the Frontier, he immediately sent a letter affirming his Bai'ah for Jihad to him and wrote that if Sayyid Ahmad ordered, he would immediately join him by giving up his position as ruler and all other associations in life. Sayyid Ahmad asked him to wait.<sup>276</sup>

Nawwab Ahmad Ali Khan, the ruler of Rampur and an ardent follower of Sayyid Ahmad, wrote a moving letter to him at hearing the news of his election as Imam in which he said:

I have offered the oath of allegiance (Bai'ah) in your absence at the hands of Maulvi Haider Ali who is your deputy. This way I have entered the group of the Mujahideen who are striving for the cause of Islam. I will gladly come to you at the appropriate time. At the beckoning of the Friend [Sayyid Ahmad] we will run towards him with

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<sup>274</sup> Hunter, p. 112.

<sup>275</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 52.

<sup>276</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 188.

the highest readiness and eagerness. You also pray that the Almighty fulfills our intention.<sup>277</sup>

Momin Khan Momin, the famous Urdu poet, was a follower of Sayyid Ahmad and wrote several poems in Persian and Urdu expressing his love for Sayyid Ahmad. Mehr has included these poems in his book *Jama'ate Mujahideen* on pages 100-02. His verses are charged with a strong desire to join Sayyid Ahmad in the battlefield. In one of his Urdu couplets he writes: "Eagerness to join the company of Sayyid Ahmad and longing for martyrdom makes my heart restless/ Reach quickly, O Momin, to the *Mehdi* (the promised Redeemer) of this age."<sup>278</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad's name will go down in history as his sincere efforts created in Muslims the same spirit to sacrifice everything for the sake of Allah that marks the character of early Muslims. It is hard to believe that the shocked, demoralized and depressed Muslims of the time were thus turned into such people for whom living had become more difficult than attaining martyrdom.

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<sup>277</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 260-61.

<sup>278</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 101. Momin did not consider Sayyid Ahmad as the *Mehdi* whose birth as a redeemer has been promised in Islamic literature. In an Urdu couplet he writes: "If you find the time of the Promised Mehdi, O Momin/ Convey first of all the greeting of Hazrat [Sayyid Ahmad] to him." (*Jama'at*, p.101). Momin had also written a poem on the value and importance of Jihad which is again recorded in Mehr's *Jama'at* on pp. 102-04. Momin was a close associate of Sayyid Ahmad. His name appears in some personal letters of Sayyid Ahmad in which he asked the addressee to convey his greetings to him.



## Chapter Three

### Moral Reform Cultivation of Moral Values

The caravan of Sayyid Badshah [Sayyid Ahmad] is moving on, disseminating the effulgence of their ideology and moral excellence. This is a unique caravan. The Historian is overwhelmed to see such travelers treading the path of truth. After the illustrious Companions of the Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) he had never seen people of such a high level [of moral excellence] in such a large number.

- Abad Shahpuri, *Sayyid Badshah ka Qafla*

### Introduction

The preceding chapter shows how the efforts of Sayyid Ahmad and his associates revived the fundamental tenets of Islam, such as Iman, Salat, Hajj, Du'a, Da'wah, and Jihad. Once these fundamentals were fully established in the lives of the Muslims of the time, a great transformation in their moral character took place. They were naturally able to develop the moral qualities that were pleasing to Allah and discarded the habits and practices that were forbidden in Islam. The most remarkable feature of this moral revolution was its true adherence to the noble precept of the Prophet who had emphasized the importance of moral reform in these words: "It is but for perfecting of morals that I have been sent to you." Below we shall discuss the chief moral qualities that the Mujahideen developed in them on the individual level.

## 1. Sincerity ( )

Sayyid Ahmad and his associates were the most sincere people of their time. They lived for the pleasure of Allah and were ready to sacrifice everything they had to achieve this goal - a lifestyle that made it possible for them to repulse all selfish insinuations and immoral inclinations. Sayyid Ahmad writes in a letter: "We seek nothing but Allah's pleasure. We have closed our eyes and ears to all else other than Allah and have withdrawn our hands from the world and all it contains.... We have no goal except [seeking the pleasure of] Allah."<sup>279</sup> He gave the Muslims the noble call for returning to the true and unadulterated teachings of Islam and following the moral precept of the Prophet. This call touched the hearts of millions of people and set alight in their eyes a dream of leading a noble, clean, and sincere life based on the moral teachings of Islam. This was a contribution of Sayyid Ahmad that he found at his time a shocked, shaken and shattered Muslim mass leading an aimless life and helped it emerge as a model that was soon acknowledged as most pious in character, noble in aims and confident in spirit. Below are given only a few examples showing how their sincerity remained unwavering even when they were about to breathe their last.

Abdul Majeed Khan Afridee of Jahanabad, Rae Bareli, had migrated to the Frontier with Sayyid Ahmad to participate in Jihad. When the Mujahideen planned to launch a night attack on the Sikh army of Sardar Budh Singh at Akawra, he was quite sick and, was, therefore, excluded from the group of the Mujahideen chosen for the expedition. When he learned about it, he restlessly submitted to Sayyid Ahmad: "This is the first encounter with which will begin the work of Jihad for the sake of Allah. Please include my name among the Mujahideen selected for this expedition so that I am not deprived of the blessings of being among the first ones."<sup>280</sup>

<sup>279</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 387.

<sup>280</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 231-32.



Sayyid Musa, a young man from the family of Sayyid Ahmad, fought vigorously in the thick of the battle and after receiving numerous serious injuries on hands and head fell off the horse. When a Muslim soldier approached him, he was uttering the word *Allah*. When the soldier tried to carry him to the Muslim camp, he asked him, "Who are you? Who gained victory in this battle?" On being informed that Sayyid Ahmad was victorious, he immediately uttered *Alhamdulillah* (All praise is for Allah) and became a bit cheerful.<sup>281</sup>

A Mujahid named Kale Khan was seriously injured in the Battle of Mayar and fell unconscious. He regained consciousness for a while and asked, "What is the result of the battle?" When informed that Sayyid Ahmad was blessed with victory, he uttered *Alhamdulillah* (All praise is for Allah) and breathed his last.<sup>282</sup>

The quality of sincerity, which is the fountainhead of all moral excellence, was not limited only to a few select associates of Sayyid Ahmad. As Nawwab Wazirud Dawla writes, "by the grace of Allah the sincerity of the soldiers of this army, which lived by the principle of piety, had reached such a high level that the narration of the qualities of even one of them will spread to an unending account."<sup>283</sup> No wonder, then, that Hunter, who was highly antagonistic towards this Movement, thus acknowledges the moral excellence of the Mujahideen: "I find it impossible to speak of them without respect.... Certain it is that the Wahhabi Missionary furnishes, so far as my experience goes, the most spiritual and least selfish type of the sect."<sup>284</sup>

<sup>281</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 261-62.

<sup>282</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 260-61.

<sup>283</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 71.

<sup>284</sup> Hunter, pp. 56. Hunter and other European writers used the term *Wahhabis* to refer to Sayyid Ahmad and his associates to misrepresent them as followers of Sheikh Abdul Wahhab, a religious reformer of Saudi Arabia, who was unjustifiably very much despised those days by Muslims in India for reasons that are beyond the scope of this study.

## 2. Readiness to Sacrifice

Sayyid Ahmad and his associates held their mission very dear to their hearts and were ready to make any sacrifice for it, whatsoever. When we read their stories, we are reminded of the glorious past of Islam when the illustrious Companions of the Prophet readily sacrificed anything and everything they had to uphold the honor of their faith.

Sayyid Ahmad was an ideal for his associates and other Muslims for practicing this principle. In India he enjoyed a very privileged position. Hundreds of thousands of his followers, including Nawwabs, Rajas, and dignitaries, wished to serve him with all they had. The Ulema and the spiritual leaders (*Mashaekh*) took oath of allegiance at his hands and ran bare-foot behind his palanquin. But when he realized that he should migrate to the Frontier to start his Jihad activities from there, he did it without the slightest scruple. He left his home, his relatives, his family and the society in which he could have comfortably practiced and preached Islam, and advanced to adopt a life of struggle in which every moment was spent facing hardships and challenges. He continued in this spirit until he laid his life at Balakot and shed the last drops of his blood to please his Lord.

Sayyid Ahmad's relatives lived the same life of sacrifice and selflessness. His wives and daughter also left their home to migrate and join him in the Frontier, but due to unfavorable circumstances they were not able to travel beyond Sindh and could never meet him. They never returned home, not even after his martyrdom. His relatives Sayyid Ahmad Ali, Sayyid Musa, Sayyid Abu Muhammad, and Sayyid Abul Hasan migrated to the Frontier with him and laid their lives in the Frontier. Several others proceeded to join him in the Frontier, but due to unfavorable circumstances they could not advance farther than Tonk. All others who stayed at Rai Bareili spent their lives to promote the cause of Islam.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 73.

Maulana Abdul Hai and Maulana Shah Ismail were the most respectable scholars of their time. Their lives tell the same story of sacrifice for their mission - long, continuous, and enduring. Mohammad Jafar writes in *Sawaneh Ahmadi* that they were Islamic scholars of such repute that "even the King of Delhi used to pay respect" to them, but when they migrated to the Frontier with Sayyid Ahmad, "they cleaned the lavatory, ground flour, cut grass, carried heavy loads, and took care of horses, and did not show any hesitation in doing even the humblest job." They were raised in comfort and were accustomed to a proper lifestyle, but in the Frontier they used to eat leftover food, and sometimes the only part of it that remained stuck to the cooking pot. There were occasions when they starved with other Mujahideen. Their usual bed was rough mats or bare floor. But they gladly accepted it all for their noble mission.<sup>286</sup> Maulana Shah Ismail himself writes in a letter: "We had better financial status and considered ourselves kings. But...we discarded all useless engagements for Allah's pleasure as we noticed that at that time Allah's pleasure lay in establishing Jihad."<sup>287</sup>

When Munshi Ameenuddeen met Shah Ismail in Calcutta during the Hajj journey, he could not believe that the person in such humble attire was the same famous scholar that he had always wished to meet.<sup>288</sup> Meer Faiz Ali Gorakhpuri, son of Meer Zulfiqar Ali Khan who was a dignitary of Gorakhpur, had so radically changed in dress, appearance, and lifestyle after adopting the company of Sayyid Ahmad that when Sayyid Jafar Ali Naqwi met him at Amb, he could not recognize him, although the two were close friends.<sup>289</sup> Maulana Wilayat Ali, who came from a very rich family of Bihar, was so radically changed in dress and lifestyle after offering oath of allegiance to Sayyid Ahmad that his old family

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<sup>286</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 36.

<sup>287</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 37.

<sup>288</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 206.

<sup>289</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 20.

servant failed to recognize him when he met him at Daera, Sayyid Ahmad's village.

And not only Maulana Wilayat Ali, but his whole family sacrificed virtually everything for one and the only goal of their life: to please Allah. Sheikh Baqar Ali, a member of this illustrious family, was the first martyr in the first encounter against the Sikhs at Akawra. Maulana Wilayat Ali died in the Frontier, Inayat Ali Ghazi breathed his last at Sittana, and his younger brother laid his life in the Frontier. Maulana Ahmadullah and Maulana Yahya Ali died in the Andaman Islands. Maulana Abdur Rahim was arrested by the British, imprisoned and deported to the Andaman Islands, and was released only when he was weak and old. But when the then Amir of the Patna center died, he once again stepped forward and accepted the responsibility of leadership, which was at that time as dangerous as picking up a burning piece of charcoal in hand.

The story of the sacrifice of this family is very heart touching. Not only did the revengeful British government deport the distinguished male members to the Andaman Islands, but also expelled the remaining members from their family house right on the day of Eid. Men, women, and children were turned out and were not allowed to carry even a straw with them. The British government dug up even the graveyard of the family, destroyed the graves of the dead, and constructed there a government building. There was a palm tree in the graveyard which they uprooted and thus eradicated even the last relic of that family.

Thousands of others trod the same path of sacrifice. Sheikh Wali Muhammad Phulati, the Amir of the Mujahideen in the Frontier, Naseeruddin Manglori the Commander of the Mujahideen in the Frontier, Naseeruddin Dehlawi who moved from India to the Frontier to boost up the sagging spirit of the Mujahideen, hundreds of those whose names and contributions are known to us, and thousands of others who still remain unknown shed their blood to uphold the banner of Islam. The small and large groups of the Mujahideen who used to travel to the centers of the Mujahideen at

Sittana, Asmath, and Chamarkand in the Frontier knew that they might never return home, but they did not consider any sacrifice too big to attain Allah's pleasure.

In fact, most companions of Sayyid Ahmad who had come from India with him had enjoyed comforts of life back home, but once they stepped out in the path of Allah, they adopted a lifestyle as simple as possible. As Mehr relates on the authority of *Manzoora* and *Waqae Ahmadi*, the Mujahideen used to gather around Sayyid Ahmad at bed time to listen to his teachings and benefit from his words. Then they lay down on the floor and slept around the bed of Sayyid Ahmad. There was no fixed place for anybody and they did not use separate beds. They lay down in such an informal way that the feet of one were toward the other's head.<sup>290</sup>

Ghulam Rasool Mehr acknowledges the Mujahideen's unique readiness to sacrifice for their cause in the following words: "This point deserves special mention with regard to Sayyid Ahmad's Movement that at that time in the vast territory of India the spirit of sacrificing life for the revival of Islam was found only in this group....They kept on offering sacrifices for the revival of the true Islamic teachings in the most difficult circumstances and did not care whether any Islamic group ever uttered a word of appreciation for them."<sup>291</sup>

### 3. Steadfastness

A prominent quality that Sayyid Ahmad's spiritual initiation created in his associates was that of steadfastness: they were very careful and concerned about it and made a special mention of it in their prayers. Sayyid Ahmad himself was the best example of it. He writes about his resolute determination to pursue his mission all his life, no matter what the odds were: "So long as we are alive, we will remain fully committed to this mission by all means possible. We are resolute in our submission to Allah, thanks to Him, and we seek

<sup>290</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 78.

<sup>291</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 163.

nothing but His pleasure."<sup>292</sup> In fact, he always tried to make sure that his commitment to his mission never weakened. That is why when a Mujahid requested him to pray for his steadfastness, he answered, "You are right....It is difficult to trust one's ego. The help of Allah is necessary. You also pray for me that Allah keeps me steadfast in this path."<sup>293</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad was very particular that his associates never wavered in observing steadfastness. When he heard that his mother-in-law, who was staying with his wife Sayyida Zahra in Sindh, was thinking of returning home, he immediately wrote to her: "Seek Allah's forgiveness and dispel this thought from your heart. Be a source of support and strength to others and make sure that you remain steadfast in this path."<sup>294</sup>

Since the day Maulana Shah Ismail, the most important person among the followers of Sayyid Ahmad, took Sayyid Ahmad as his spiritual mentor, his steadfastness in the path of Allah remained a matter of envy for all of his companions. In one of his letters he writes: "Even if Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad] expels me with scorn, disgrace and dishonor from this auspicious army, which comprises men having angel-like qualities, I will never leave it and will adopt hundreds of means to join again the retinue of his servants"<sup>295</sup>

Sayyid Musa, son of Sayyid Ahmad Ali and grandson of Sayyid Ahmad, received serious wounds on both hands in the Battle of Mayar due to which his hands were very badly damaged. Sayyid Ahmad visited him and was touched to see his condition. Sayyid Ahmad consoled him to which Sayyid Musa replied in these words, "I am happy at the will of Allah and am thankful to Him. Praise be to Him that my life was used up in the most virtuous deed in the service of Allah. May He accept it!"<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 393.

<sup>293</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 716.

<sup>294</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 75.

<sup>295</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 38.

<sup>296</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 134-35.

The life of Maulana Inayat Ali is exemplary in observing steadfastness. When the British arrested the leaders of Azeemabad in India, who were responsible for providing financial support to the Mujahideen in the Frontier, Inayat Ali faced severe financial crisis in the Frontier. He sold all his personal belongings to pay off the debts he had taken for the salaries of the soldiers and for the maintenance of his associates. Soon his associates exhausted every grain of food they had and started living on the soft twigs of the plants and leaves of the trees. Continuously for a few months they did not get any regular food to eat. Inayat Ali fell sick, and then fell sick his only son Hafiz Abdul Majeed and Abdul Majeed's daughter. In addition, the local tribes turned rebellious against him at the instigation of the British. But in spite of such heart-breaking afflictions Inayat Ali remained steadfast like a rock. Deserted and sick, he breathed his last thousands of miles away from home in the Frontier, but he never even thought about discontinuing his mission and returning home.<sup>297</sup>

At the time of the Great Betrayal against the Mujahideen, Hafiz Abdul Ali was staying at Shewa with a number of the Mujahideen, including a Mujahid named Sayyid Amir Ali who was carrying some money belonging to the Baitul Maal. Abdul Ali escorted Amir Ali to the outskirts of the village to help him escape to Panjtar, but he himself returned to Shewa to join the Mujahideen staying there and told Amir Ali that at such a critical moment he could not leave his associates in danger and seek safety for himself. Also, when the rebellious tribes surrounded the Mujahideen at Shewa, Muhammad Ramadan, a Mujahid, was asked by an influential person of Shewa to take shelter at his place, but he also refused on the same ground and ultimately lost his life in the attack against the Mujahideen. Similarly, when the Mujahideen were attacked at a place called Munai, a local youth of Bonair who belonged to the tribe of the rebels was also with them. The rebels called him again and again to leave the Mujahideen and come out to safety, but each time he

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<sup>297</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 280-87.

replied, "I would rather die with the Mujahideen than live with you."<sup>298</sup>

Maulana Jafar Thanesari, a leader of the Movement, was arrested by the British and was severely persecuted so as to divulge the secrets about the organization of the Mujahideen. He was beaten continuously for hours so mercilessly that he thought he might die. Losing hope in life, he tried to recall if he had missed any obligatory religious duty (*Fard*) in life so as to try to make it up. He remembered that he had missed a few days of fasting in Ramadan. He, therefore, started fasting in prison. Even in such a desolate condition his commitment to his religion remained unshaken.<sup>299</sup>

At one point when the British army moved forward to destroy Malka, the then stronghold of the Mujahideen, the Muslims of the area assembled to fight against them. But unfortunately they soon dispersed and the Mujahideen were left alone in the field. That was a time when the Mujahideen had either to escape like the local Muslims or remain steadfast. Maulana Abdullah Azeemabadi was the Amir then. He selected 200 Mujahideen, divided them into two groups, gave them under the command of Nasir Muhammad and Kaleemuddeen, and instructed them to fight with the British so that the deserting Muslim tribes as well as those who chose to remain aloof realized their obligation to uphold the cause of Jihad. These Mujahideen asked forgiveness from one another, advanced fearlessly and fought with the British till all of them fell martyr, and thus established a unique history of steadfastness.<sup>300</sup>

The Mujahideen showed the same steadfastness when the British army and some local tribes loyal to them attacked Sittana, another stronghold of the Mujahideen. The Mujahideen were in small number as the local tribes, with the only exception of the Jedon tribe, had deserted them. Also, the leader of Sittana Sayyid Omar Shah, who was an ally of the Mujahideen, was killed in a battle only four days ago. The Mujahideen were no match to the

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<sup>298</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 82.

<sup>299</sup> Thanesari, p. 54.

<sup>300</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 347



combined army of the British and the local tribes. They had an option to escape in the mountains and save their lives, or fight at the risk of their lives and uphold their cause. They opted for the latter. The Mujahideen, who were, according to the reports of Sayyid Abdul Jabbar Shah Sittanawi and Dr. Bellew, only 60 in number, faced the British army and exhibited extraordinary valor, fearlessness and patience. All of them wore good dress as if sacrificing life for the sake of Allah was a happy deed for them. Bravely they advanced and fought and did not show any wavering in their determination at any point. And thus quietly they laid their lives for the noble cause of defending the prestige of Islam.<sup>301</sup>

In fact, steadfastness remained a distinguishing quality of the whole group of the Mujahideen. When they stepped out in the path of Allah, no hardship could dampen their resoluteness. They faced most serious financial crisis in the frontier. Before the Battle of Shaidu and later at Changlai each Mujahid received only a handful of barley daily for his sustenance. When even that provision was not available, they used soft twigs of plants or sweet leaves of trees to satiate their hunger. But they never regretted their decision of migrating to the Frontier to serve the cause of Islam or wished to return to the comforts of their homes.<sup>302</sup>

Similarly, when Sayyid Ahmad decided to leave Panjtār after the Great Betrayal (in which a large number of his associates were killed by the local tribes) and move toward Kashmir, he duly thanked his associates for their support and gladly permitted them to return to their homes if they so wished. All of them knew very well that continuing with Sayyid Ahmad meant following a long and arduous course of life full of uncertainties and hardships, but none of them left Sayyid Ahmad to return home. They did not even consider it.

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<sup>301</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 295-96. As Mehr says, fleeing from the battlefield was, according to the Mujahideen, an act which fell short of Islamic norm of valor. Instances from the lives of the Companions, such as the martyrdom of Ikrama®, support their position.

<sup>302</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 26.

After the death of Sayyid Ahmad, the Mujahideen naturally felt quite weak, but even Sayyid Ahmad's martyrdom, which was perhaps the heaviest blow for their human endurance to bear, did not affect their steadfastness. Short of means, exposed to danger, and seeing local friends turning foes, the Mujahideen should have found barely staying in the area a great Jihad, but nothing - not all these challenges combined - could force them to give up their cause and return home. Immediately after the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad when Sayyid Jafar Ali Naqwi asked Sheikh Hasan Ali if he wanted to return to India, the latter replied: "I have made a covenant with Allah that I will spend my whole life in Jihad. As Jihad could not be conducted without an Imam, I will travel to Kabul, Qandhar, Sindh and Arab in search of an Imam. When I find one, I will settle there at a proper place and start Jihad from there."<sup>303</sup>

The followers of Sayyid Ahmad who stayed in India demonstrated the same level of steadfastness. They organized themselves in India under the leadership of Maulana Wilayat Ali, continued their mission in India and extended full support to the cause of Jihad in the Frontier with men and money. Soon they were put behind the bars and were hunted and entangled in court cases, but their steadfastness, adherence, and single-minded pursuit of the cause knew no loss. As Hunter writes, "neither fear of detection nor hope of reward induced a single one of them to appear against their leader in the hour of his fall"<sup>304</sup> Although the mighty British Empire used all its force to crush the Movement, destroyed the centers of the Mujahideen, and put their leaders behind bars or deported them to Andaman Islands, it could not force them to leave the Frontier to return home.

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<sup>303</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 818. Of course, some Mujahideen returned to India, but all of them, without an exception, kept on working most sincerely for the Movement all their lives.

<sup>304</sup> Hunter, p. 76.

#### 4. Bravery and Courage

The associates of Sayyid Ahmad manifested a very high level of valor after Sayyid Ahmad initiated them to the service of Islam. Once they realized the nobleness of their cause, no threat was too formidable to frighten them. Sayyid Ahmad's fearlessness against odds was, in fact, exemplary. On the occasion of the Battle of Balakot he truly said: "It is my wish that I sacrifice the best I have to gain the pleasure of my Lord and I consider sacrificing my life in His path as humble as breaking a straw and throwing it away."<sup>305</sup> The Mujahideen did not ever fear for their lives in a battle: in fact, they wished to be honored with martyrdom. After the burial of the martyrs who lost their lives in the Battle of Mayar, they paid homage to the departing souls in these words: "They attained their goal of sacrificing their lives for Allah's pleasure. May Allah also grant us the honor of martyrdom!"<sup>306</sup> They faced their enemies, which were larger in number and stronger in arms, but nothing ever created fear in their hearts. In all encounters they displayed the highest level of courage and on most occasions defeated enemies that were superior to them in all respects.<sup>307</sup>

Sheikh Muhammad Ishaque Gorakhpuri, a devout associate of Sayyid Ahmad, fought in the Battle of Mayar and received serious wounds on shoulders and hands. He also lost fingers of his right hand. Unable to fight any more he gave his rifle to one Mujahid and sword to the other and told them: "These are Allah's property. I entrust them to you considering you trustworthy. I hope you will do the best to justify this trust." After this, he left the battlefield. In the way he found Mianjee Mohiuddeen, a Mujahid, who was severely hurt in the legs and was unable to walk. Although Muhammad Ishaque's hands were badly injured, he lifted Mianjee and tried to help him walk toward Mayar. But after covering only a short distance both of them lost consciousness and fell to the

<sup>305</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 420.

<sup>306</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 79.

<sup>307</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 76-77.

ground together. When the battle was over, Sayyid Jafar Ali Naqwi reached at the place. Regaining consciousness, Sheikh Muhammad Ishaque inquired him about the result of the battle. Hearing the news of the victory of the Mujahideen, he raised his injured arms and told Jafar Ali happily, "Come, let me embrace you."<sup>308</sup>

Meer Ahmad Ali Bihari was a young man and had acquired exceptional skills in swordsmanship. In the Battle of Phulra he was surrounded by the soldiers of the Sikh cavalry armed with swords and guns and knew that he could be shot dead. Unimpressed, he challenged his enemies, "Wait for a while. I'll not run away. Don't shoot me. [Fight with me with sword and] see the excellence of my skill in fencing." Then he started fighting with the mounted soldiers. Whomever he struck with sword, he lost his head or arm or leg. Finding him invincible, a Sikh soldier shot him dead.<sup>309</sup>

In the Battle of Balakot Sayyid Jafar Naqwi met Amanullah Khan Lakhnawi and Sheikh Wali Muhammad after the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad and decided to retreat to the village to form a new defense line there against the Sikh army. With this plan they left the battlefield and moved toward the village of Balakot. Although it was a strategic retreat, Jafar Ali felt wistful and prayed in remorse: "Lord! We are not retreating due to the fear of the enemy, but to change positions for defense."<sup>310</sup> Their sense of valor was so strong that even retreating for strategic reasons pinched their heart.

In the Alai encounter led by Maulvi Naseerudddeen Manglori a bullet hit a well-known Mujahid called Mullah Lal Muhammad in his wrist. Another Mujahid called out that Lal Muhammad was injured. Lal Muhammad slapped the person to silence him and said, "Don't say any such thing which may dishearten others."<sup>311</sup> In the Battle of Mardan Mazhar Ali Azeemabadi received a bullet in his left leg and fell to the ground. But he immediately rose and managed to sit down. He, however, did not let anybody feel that he

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<sup>308</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 168.

<sup>309</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 273.

<sup>310</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 788.

<sup>311</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzashi*, p. 77.

was injured. When the Mujahideen passing by saw him sitting on the ground and inquired him of his welfare, he told them, "Proceed. I'm coming behind you." When Shah Ismail reached him, Mazhar Ali told him of his condition and requested him, "Don't worry about me. First take care of the expedition. After victory you can see in what condition I am."<sup>312</sup> Likewise, in a night attack launched by the Sikhs at Kot, where 120 Mujahideen were stationed, a Mujahid received a bullet on the chest and fell down on the ground. His last words were: "Brothers! I am finished. There is no use in staying by my side. Move on and attack the enemies."<sup>313</sup>

Bravery was exhibited by the later generations of the Mujahideen in the same way. When Muhammad Jafar Thanasari, a later leader of the Movement, was arrested and tried in the court of a very prejudiced British judge, the judge addressed him in these words:

You are intelligent and educated. You are a lawyer, Chief and *Numberdar* of your town. You used all your intelligence and expertise of law in the opposition of the [British] government. You were responsible for supporting the rebels against the government with men and money. You adopted the position in the present case of refusing the charge, but did not say a word showing your goodwill to the government and in spite of warnings did nothing to show your loyalty to the government. Therefore, you are condemned to death by hanging. In addition, your property will be confiscated, and your dead body will not be handed over to your relatives. You will be buried in the general graveyard of this jail in disgrace. And I will be very happy to see you hang.

To this long tirade full of malice and hatred which put a final seal on his death decree, Muhammad Jafar replied: "To grant life or

<sup>312</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 164-65.

<sup>313</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzash*, p. 92.

terminate it is not in your power. It is in the hands of Allah and He is powerful enough to kill you, if He so wishes, before I am hanged."<sup>314</sup> Incidentally, the verdict on Thanesari's life was later changed by the court to deportation to the Andaman Islands, whereas that judge was later found guilty in a case and was hanged by the order of the court for which the same gallows were used which were prepared for Thanesari. This quality - to speak the truth fearlessly in front of a person powerful enough to pass death sentence - was created in the Mujahideen by virtue of their moral strength.

The valor of all those who joined Sayyid Ahmad's mission became such an established fact that even the severe opponents of the Movement had to acknowledge it. Hunter quotes James O'Kineanly about the bravery of the Bengali Mujahideen who were least known as a fighting people: "The timid Bengali will, under certain conditions, fight as fiercely as an Afghan."<sup>315</sup> Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla also pays tribute to the valor of the Mujahideen in a quartet:

They were very brave; they cut through the iron-dress of  
the soldiers and broke the shields of the opponents;

All of them were skilled in archery, and were fierce fighters  
and killers of enemies;

In attacking they were swift like wind, in defending  
steadfast like a mountain;

Their slogans sounded like thunder, their swords flashed  
like lightening.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> Thanesari, pp. 67 and 77. Also see, Nadwi, *Reformer*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>315</sup> Hunter, p.150.

<sup>316</sup> Wasaya, quoted by Mehr in *Jama'at*, p. 33.

## 5. Equality

Sayyid Ahmad taught the value of the equality of all Muslims to his associates with great care. The importance that he attached to this value is made clear in the incident of a fresh Bai'ah that he invited the Mujahideen to take at his hands at Raj Dowari. The covenant included the following clauses: 1) The person offering the Bai'ah will not ask another Muslim to do a thing which he finds unpleasant for himself; he will like for his Muslim brothers what he likes for himself, and 2) he will prefer the needs of another Muslim over his own needs.<sup>317</sup>

The principle of equality was observed among the Mujahideen very strictly. Muhammad Yusuf Phulati was responsible for distributing the daily ration to the Mujahideen. He was very particular about giving equal amount of grain to all and showed exception to none, not even to Sayyid Ahmad. Similarly, when Sheikh Abdul Wahhab became in-charge, he used to serve the Mujahideen according to their turn and did not show any preference to anybody in this matter, no matter how important a position he held among the Mujahideen.<sup>318</sup> Also, all Mujahideen received equal share of provision from the Baitul Maal and no discrimination was observed in this matter between the leaders and the commoners. Even Sayyid Ahmad was not an exception. When it was the turn for his group to fetch firewood from the forest for the kitchen, he also went with the members of his group to the forest and fetched firewood. No special preparation was ever done to provide him better food.<sup>319</sup>

Although the Mujahideen loved Sayyid Ahmad more than their lives and fully trusted his godliness and leadership, they felt free to disagree with him whenever a situation arose. Once Sayyid Ahmad exempted the people of the Hasanzai tribe from paying Ushr at

<sup>317</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 716.

<sup>318</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 27.

<sup>319</sup> Good food was sometimes cooked for guests and occasionally Sayyid Ahmad ate with them by way of hospitality. Sometimes he did not eat with them and took a little food with a group of the Mujahideen. Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 25.

their request, thinking that they would themselves start paying it later when they realized the importance of following the Shariah. Shah Ismail, however, disagreed with him. He mentioned to him that Ushr was a right of the Islamic state and that even an Imam was not entitled to waive it off. Sayyid Ahmad accepted Shah Ismail's verdict and changed his decision accordingly.<sup>320</sup>

When Sayyid Ahmad was moving toward Peshawar in pursuit of Sultan Mohammad Khan, he made a stopover at a place called Machni. No arrangement of rations for the army could be done there, but some food was prepared for Sayyid Ahmad and brought to him. He declined to eat when the Mujahideen had to live without food. His close associates tried to convince him that as the small amount of food brought to him could in no way suffice for the army, he should eat it. But he did not touch it until grain was bought and distributed among the Mujahideen.<sup>321</sup>

Arbab Bahram Khan was a devout follower of Sayyid Ahmad who remained faithful to him all his life. In the migration journey to Kashmir, Arbab's wife and daughter were asked to travel on ponies while the wife of Sayyid Ahmad was given a palanquin. Arbab's family members felt uncomfortable with this difference in treatment and Arbab did not hesitate to mention it to Sayyid Ahmad. Sayyid Ahmad explained the reason in these words: "My wife is expecting a baby. Otherwise she also would have been given a pony to ride. If any lady in Arbab's family is in the same condition, a palanquin will surely be arranged for her."<sup>322</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad was very much concerned about the fact that he should never hurt a person unjustly. If ever he realized that he had knowingly or unknowingly mistreated a person, he did not hesitate to seek his pardon. Once when he was staying at Rae Bareli, some of his men chased a cow, which had grazed in his field, so long that it was utterly exhausted. The owner of the cow, Peerdad Khan of Lohanipur, was exceedingly enraged at it. Sayyid Ahmad went to

<sup>320</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 86.

<sup>321</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 644.

<sup>322</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 175.



his door to ask for forgiveness. Peerdad refused to come out of his house to meet him. Seeing that Peerdad Khan felt hurt so much, Sayyid Ahmad came down his horse, sat at his door, and announced that he would not leave until he was forgiven for the offensive act of his men.<sup>323</sup>

On one occasion he used a harsh word *mardood* (the condemned) to scold one of his attendants at a fault. Later his associates drew his attention to it. On realizing his mistake, he immediately walked to his attendant and publicly sought forgiveness from him.<sup>324</sup>

When Sayyid Ahmad was in Makkah for performing Hajj, he was blessed with a daughter. Abdullah, a new Muslim, was with him in that journey. He and his wife were under the financial care of Sayyid Ahmad and lived with him like family members. They had a newborn baby. Sayyid Ahmad asked Abdullah's wife to also feed his newborn daughter. She apologized saying that her milk was not sufficient even for her son. Sayyid Ahmad did not realize the complication and asked her to start feeding his daughter too, promising that he would arrange for better food and medicine for her. But after a couple of days he realized that he had thus put the attendant lady under great pressure. Realizing his mistake, he immediately took some women from his family with him, went to Abdullah's wife and openly asked her for forgiveness. He did not leave the place until she said the words of forgiveness. He then went to Abdullah and in the presence of several persons asked for his forgiveness.<sup>325</sup>

At one point Sayyid Ahmad recruited 200 soldiers to support the Muslim army, as the arrival of the Mujahideen from India had stopped those days. Deen Muhammad, who was responsible for transferring money from India to the Frontier, suggested to him that the financial means of the Mujahideen were not stable yet to hire paid soldiers. Sayyid Ahmad consulted his advisors on the issue and then disbanded the regiment of the paid soldiers. As

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<sup>323</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 139-40.

<sup>324</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 837.

<sup>325</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 224-25.

Mehr comments, in Sayyid Ahmad's army, every body had a right to give proper suggestions to him, even if he was an ordinary person.<sup>326</sup>

Among the Mujahideen there was no class distinction. Nobody considered himself superior to others or felt ashamed in doing any menial work. They used to wash their clothes, cook their food, fetch firewood from the forest, grind flour, and even clean the vomit and dirt of the sick and the disabled. Those who came later learned it from the former.<sup>327</sup> At Mardan an elephant used to be tied near the mosque due to which that place had become dirty. One day Sayyid Ahmad and Shah Ismail themselves cleaned the place.<sup>328</sup>

## 6. Forgiveness

The Mujahideen had risen above the limitations of egotism; any offence done to them by their associates or any other person did not disturb them too much. They did favors to others and gladly forgave the offenses done to them, no matter how great they were.

Sayyid Ahmad forgave even those who made an attempt on his life. Once when he was staying at Rae Bareilly, an armed man came to him and tried to attack him. Sayyid Ahmad's men arrested him, but he forgave him, fed him well for several days, and set him free. He also gave him some money at the time of his departure.<sup>329</sup> On another occasion, when Sayyid Ahmad was staying at Digha, a place close to Patna, at the house of Sheikh Ali Jan, an armed man was found loitering in the neighborhood and looking for an opportunity to enter the house in order to assassinate him. That person was also exposed. But instead of punishing him, Sayyid Ahmad accepted his apology, prayed for him, instructed him well, gave him some money, and allowed him to leave free and unhurt.<sup>330</sup> Similarly, Sayyid Ahmad forgave Nazr Muhammad and Wali

<sup>326</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 456-57, footnote 1, p. 457.

<sup>327</sup> *Manzoor*, quoted by Mehr in *Jama'at*, p. 86.

<sup>328</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 829.

<sup>329</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 476.

<sup>330</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 475-76.

Muhammad Kashmiri, the two servants of Yar Muhammad Khan who had poisoned him, when they were later arrested by his supporters and helped them escape to a safe place.<sup>331</sup>

Once Sheikh Amanullah Khan, a high-ranking official in the army of Sayyid Ahmad, became infuriated at Lahori, a humble horse attendant, and unjustly hit him in the face. Lahori appealed for justice. Sayyid Ahmad referred the case to the Qazi of the area. The Qazi gave the option to Lahori to either forgive Amanullah, or slap him in the same way he was hit. Lahori insisted on taking the revenge. When Amanullah was brought in front of him and Lahori was asked to slap him, he moved forward, embraced Amanullah and forgave him for his offense. He later explained that although the Shariah gave him the right to avenge himself, he preferred to forgive Amanullah for the pleasure of Allah.<sup>332</sup>

Abdul Wahhab Lakhnawi, in-charge of distributing daily ration to the Mujahideen, served them on first-come-first-served basis. The Mujahideen knew it and followed the rule. But one day Imam Ali Azeemabadi, a newcomer, insisted on taking his share before his turn. Abdul Wahhab refused. Imam Ali could not control his wrath and pushed Abdul Wahhab harshly to the ground. The Mujahideen present on the scene became infuriated at it and wanted to punish Imam Ali on the spot. They surrounded Imam Ali, but the person who came to his rescue was his victim Abdul Wahhab. He immediately rose from the ground, stopped the Mujahideen from attacking Imam Ali, and told them, "Imam Ali is my brother. He pushed me; he did not push you. Why did you get angry?" The matter was reported to Sayyid Ahmad. When Sayyid Ahmad asked Abdul Wahhab about the incident, he told him, "Imam Ali is a good-natured person. He came to take his ration. It was not his turn then. He wanted to take his ration hurriedly. So I got pushed."<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 398.

<sup>332</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 157-61.

<sup>333</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 82-83.

Abdur Rahim, a young convert, used to look after the gun of Munshi Muhammadi Ansari, a well-known Mujahid. Once he brought the gun to Muhammadi Ansari and reported to him that the gun had developed some problem. The gun was loaded, but Abdur Rahim forgot to tell Muhammadi Ansari about it. Ansari test fired the gun and Abdur Rahim was unintentionally hit directly in the shoulder from a short distance. Muhammadi Ansari was shocked to death and was extremely sad at his mistake. Abdur Rahim was immediately provided medical aid but he died the next day. But even in the grip of the deadly pain and up to the last moment of his life, he consoled Muhammadi Ansari, "Don't be sad. You didn't kill me. How could have you known that the gun was loaded?"<sup>334</sup>

Maulana Basheer, Amir of the Mujahideen much later at Chamarkand, was attacked several times by his enemies (who had infiltrated in the group of the Mujahideen) with an intention to assassinate him. Each time he had a narrow escape. Realizing that any such attack in the future could be fatal, he wrote his last will (*wasiyah*) instructing his followers that in case of his assassination they should forgive his murderer and punish him merely by expelling him from the group of the Mujahideen.<sup>335</sup>

## 7. Piety and Self-restraint

Sayyid Ahmad and his companions were the best models of piety, self-restraint, and moral discipline. They lived in this world, but a desire to achieve material gain and mundane glory never touched their hearts. They remembered their Lord at all times and in all circumstances to the degree which is hard to find in any other group of Muslims at such a large scale.

Sayyid Ahmad himself displayed a very high level of piety and self-restraint in his personal life. Thousands of women offered Bai'ah to him, but he never looked at any one. His associates used

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<sup>334</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 278-79.

<sup>335</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 552.

to go to places for different needs, but they always guarded their gaze and had a reputation in the Frontier for never looking at women around. For this reason the women in the Frontier used to say that the Mujahideen were either devoid of sexual desire or were extremely pious.<sup>336</sup> In fact, none of the Mujahideen showed any weakness for any worldly charm: food, women, money, or status.

After peace with Painsa Khan, Qazi Habban sought Sayyid Ahmad's permission to tour the area and establish a proper system for the collection of Ushr. Sayyid Ahmad agreed. He gave 600 soldiers in his command and instructed him to be extremely careful about the rights of others and guard himself against the instigation of ego. Qazi Habban got ready, but fearful of Allah as he was, he requested Sayyid Ahmad, "Let Shah Ismail accompany me so that if ever I am about to commit anything against the commandments of Allah and His prophet, he may stop me."<sup>337</sup>

When the Mujahideen captured Peshawar, they entered the city in the evening. Since all shops were closed, no arrangement for food could be done for the army at night. The other day also no arrangement for food could be made. The Mujahideen ate a regular meal the third day of their entry into the city.<sup>338</sup> Although it was a victorious army and the whole city was at their mercy, no shop was looted, no private house broken into, and no garden ransacked. Sayyid Ahmad himself stayed in an inn, although Sultan Khan's palace was at his disposal.

Sayyid Jafar Ali Naqwi was traveling from Sachchon to Balakot with Shah Ismail. It was a very cold winter and the heavy snowfall and bitter cold struck them in the mountain so hard that they lost hope of survival. At one point they were even unable to move. At that time Sayyid Jafar gave his arms and some other articles to a fellow Mujahid and requested him to deposit them to the Baitul Maal. After that he asked a local person from the Gojar tribe to take his turban and in return carry him to the nearby village. Mehr

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<sup>336</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 832.

<sup>337</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 150.

<sup>338</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, pp. 286-87.

writes that Sayyid Jafar offered his turban to the local villager for saving his life only because, out of all the articles that he had at that time, only the turban was his personal property. All other clothes that he had on him were from the Baitul Maal and his piety did not allow him to give them away even to save his life.<sup>339</sup>

When Sayyid Ahmad was martyred at Balakot, Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla invited all the Mujahideen who were in India to Tonk and tried his best to help them settle there. He offered them suitable jobs, but several of them declined to take a good job he offered and accepted a small stipend that could help them meet their basic needs. Sayyid Muhammad Ali, nephew of Sayyid Ahmad and author of *Makhzane Ahmadi*, was offered a high official position, but he declined it and accepted a stipend of only fifty rupees monthly for his sustenance. He spent a very simple life at Tonk.<sup>340</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Yaqoob, another nephew of Sayyid Ahmad, was also offered a well-paying job in the service of the Nawwab, but he, too, accepted a stipend of only fifty rupees monthly and spent his life on that income.<sup>341</sup> Sheikh Hasan Ali, a devout follower of Sayyid Ahmad, came to Tonk a few years after the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad. The Nawwab welcomed him and wanted to fix a reasonable amount of money as stipend for him. He also refused and requested the Nawwab to fix for him a very meager amount as monthly stipend. He constructed a very small house for himself which was modeled on the humble house of the Prophet in Madinah and lived with the bare minimum all his life.<sup>342</sup>

Once a Mujahid called Najmuddeen went on his own to the Sikh army to persuade the Muslim soldiers of Hari Singh Nalwa to leave the Sikh army and join the Mujahideen. Hari Singh learned about it, arrested him, and sent him in chains to Lahore. Ranjeet Singh called him to the court, ordered his chains to be taken off and asked Najmuddeen to demonstrate his shooting skills as he had

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<sup>339</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 204.

<sup>340</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 131.

<sup>341</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 139.

<sup>342</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 244.

heard much about the skillfulness of Sayyid Ahmad's Mujahideen. Najmuddeen complied. The Maharaja became very happy and offered Najmuddeen a job in his army. Najmuddeen replied that he had joined Sayyid Ahmad in order to participate in Jihad for the pleasure of Allah and could not, therefore, accept any job offer from the Maharaja. Ranjeet Singh gave him a horse, two sheets of cloth and fifty rupees and asked his men to help him return in safety. Najmuddeen returned to Panjtar, went to Sheikh Wali Muhammad, gave him the horse, sheets of cloth and money and said, "These things are the property of Allah. Deposit them to the Baitul Maal."<sup>343</sup>

Sayyid Omar Shah, the ruler of Sittana, was fatally injured in a battle. He belonged to the Sayyid family of Sittana that had joined the mission of Sayyid Ahmad and remained faithful to the Movement till the end. He had received a bullet in the chest. It was the month of Ramadan, the 14<sup>th</sup> or the 15<sup>th</sup> of the holy month, and Shah Omar was fasting. He was brought to the mosque in a critical condition. When he was offered medicine, he refused to take it and said, "I like to appear before Allah fasting."<sup>344</sup>

The example of the companions of Maulana Abdullah, the Amir of the Mujahideen at a later time, is a case in point. Sayyid Abdul Jabbar Shah Sittanwi writes that the Mujahideen who joined Maulana Abdullah were most pious. They were patient and grateful to their Lord and were always engrossed in His remembrance. When the guards on duty wanted to alert one another, one called *Subhan Allah* in such an appealing way that the hearts of the listeners were torn asunder. The other guard used to respond by saying *Alhamdulillah*, the third called out *Tarhamokallah* and the fourth replied by saying *Yahdikumullah*.<sup>345</sup>

The story of the tireless efforts of the messengers who were responsible for collecting money from India and carrying it to the Frontier tell us about the same qualities of piety and selflessness. In

<sup>343</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 50.

<sup>344</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 294.

<sup>345</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 348.

order to transfer money to the Frontier, they faced danger of captivity and threat to life virtually at every step, but they did the job, nevertheless. Moreover, they did not charge any remuneration for their work. Mehr writes that this arrangement continued up to his time - for one hundred and fifty years - without even a minor complaint of misappropriation.<sup>346</sup>

Shah Ishaque and Shah Yaqoob, great scholars from the prominent family of Shah Waliyullah, were the strongest supporters of Sayyid Ahmad in India. They were in- charge of the Delhi center for supporting the Movement financially from India. They moved to Makkah al-Mukarramah after the death of Sayyid Ahmad in July 1845 (Rajab 1261H), thinking that it was incumbent upon them to migrate (*Hijrat*) for the protection of faith. They were very generous and so they remained financially hard pressed most of the time. One day both of them were seen very happy. When somebody asked them about the cause of their unusual happiness, they replied that the British government had confiscated a village called Hasanpur in India that was under their *Zamindari* and was a source of income for them. They were happy that a worldly source of income was gone and, therefore, they were provided with a chance to put their full trust in Allah alone.<sup>347</sup>

## 8. Serving Others

By virtue of Sayyid Ahmad's teachings and training the Mujahideen developed in them a habit of serving others for the pleasure of Allah. They served all who came in contact with them, friends or foes, and helped them even by sacrificing their own needs. Such instances abound in the lives of his companions, some of which are mentioned below.

At Changlai most of the Mujahideen fell ill; only six or seven of them were healthy and could help the sick. These six or seven Mujahideen spent all their energy and time to serve the sick

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<sup>346</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 66.

<sup>347</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 304-07.



Mujahideen. Each one of them was responsible for nursing a large number of sick Mujahideen. Sayyid Rustam Ali Chalganwi, for example, who had received injury in the Battle of Akawra and had not fully recovered yet, alone took care of forty sick Mujahideen.<sup>348</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad had given a horse to Shah Ismail, which he never rode. Whenever he traveled, he gave his horse to some other person to ride. He himself walked on foot, thinking that this sacrifice would fetch reward for him in the hereafter.<sup>349</sup> Similarly, when Sayyid Jafar Ali migrated to the Frontier with nineteen companions to join Sayyid Ahmad, he had a horse with him. Sayyid Jafar writes: "I had made an intention that whoever in the group would get tired, I would let him ride the horse, and I would walk on foot."<sup>350</sup> It reminds us of the journey that Sayyid Ahmad had taken from his hometown to Lucknow early in his career in which he had also given his turns to ride the horse to his companions and had covered the whole journey on foot.

Sheikh Hasan Ali, a Mujahid, lived with a meager amount of money all his life, but his desire to help the needy was not affected by his shortage of means. He had instructed his family members to add some extra water in the lintel or vegetable cooked at his home so that he could give a portion of it to the needy and the neighbors. When he was in the Islamic army in the Frontier, he was known to help the needy with whatever amount of money he could spare.<sup>351</sup>

Sayyid Abu Muhammad was a relative of Sayyid Ahmad and had migrated with him to the Frontier. In the beginning he was a very fashionable person and loved cleanliness. But Sayyid Ahmad's teachings changed him and engendered in him a strong desire to serve others. After adopting the company of Sayyid Ahmad he had no hesitation in serving anybody, even if he was a stranger. He never showed any aversion to a job considered menial or unclean nor did he ever manifest slackness in doing a job entrusted to him.

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<sup>348</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 85.

<sup>349</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 122.

<sup>350</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 201.

<sup>351</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 245.

He used to feed a sick person with his own hands and clean even his stool and urine.<sup>352</sup>

When the Mujahideen were in the Frontier, they used to wash their clothes every Thursday. This was a common practice that when they went to wash their clothes, they also collected clothes of some other Mujahideen and washed them for the pleasure of Allah. Sayyid Ahmad himself had done it for years when he was in the army of Amir Khan.<sup>353</sup> It was in this very spirit that Sayyid Ahmad used to fetch water and firewood from the nearby forest on his head for his needy neighbors in his home village when he was still a young boy.

The same desire to serve others was reflected on an occasion in the exemplary conduct of Maulana Yusuf Phulati. One night when Sayyid Ahmad was in bed, he felt thirsty and asked for water. Maulana Yusuf fetched water for him but by the time he came to Sayyid Ahmad, he had fallen asleep. Maulana Yusuf did not like to disturb him in his sleep and stood there with water waiting for him to wake up. When Sayyid Ahmad woke up in the last part of the night, Maulana Yusuf gave him water. Sayyid Ahmad was, of course, touched by his conduct and prayed for him.<sup>354</sup>

Once Sheikh Muhammad Ishaque Gorakhpuri, a Mujahid, was given the responsibility to bring to the Muslim camp some heavy arms called *Zamboorak* that were left behind by Painda Khan at a nearby place. When the messenger went to him to deliver the commander's orders, he was fast asleep as he was extremely tired with the day's hard work. Realizing that Muhammad Ishaque was very exhausted, Sayyid Jafar Ali, another Mujahid, let him rest and decided to do the job himself. He left for the mission immediately and after all night's toil brought the arms to the camp. This task, however, proved so strenuous for him that he fell ill, but he did it

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<sup>352</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 146.

<sup>353</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 28.

<sup>354</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 143.

nevertheless thinking that it would give a fellow Muslim a needed rest.<sup>355</sup>

Maulvi Abdul Wahhab was a very pious Mujahid but he was physically weak and sickly. Sayyid Ahmad decided to appoint him as in-charge for distributing daily ration to the Mujahideen in the army. He apologized on the ground of his weak health. He also submitted to Sayyid Ahmad that he wished to memorize the Qur'an and wanted to devote his time to it. Sayyid Ahmad asked him to take up the job, promising that he would pray for him and encouraged him by saying that for serving Muslims Allah might bless him with good health and also help him memorize the Qur'an. Maulvi Abdul Wahhab accepted the responsibility. Soon his health improved and he was also able to memorize the Qur'an. The following Ramadan he recited the Qur'an in Taraweeh to Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>356</sup>

Sheikh Ali Jan, a successful businessman, met Sayyid Ahmad at Danapur, Bihar, and became his follower. After his transformation, he very eagerly served the needy and the travelers and spent large amounts of money to help them. He reserved a personal garden entirely for the use of travelers so that they could stay and rest there and also made arrangements to provide meals to them.<sup>357</sup> Sadruddeen Qassab, another businessman of Danapur, was also very enthusiastic in serving the travelers and the needy after becoming attached to Sayyid Ahmad. Every day fifty to a hundred guests used to eat at his house. He had a large garden full of fruit trees that he reserved for the use of the travelers. He instructed his adopted son Abdur Rahim to personally entertain the travelers and also eat with them by way of courtesy.<sup>358</sup> Similarly, Sheikh Muhammad Taqi, a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad working in the British army as meat contractor, set aside a large property worth not less than 1,25,000 (one hundred twenty-five thousand) rupees

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<sup>355</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>356</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 93.

<sup>357</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 281.

<sup>358</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 281-82.

at that time for supporting religious and welfare works and thus helping his coreligionists.<sup>359</sup>

## 9. Moderation ( )

Sayyid Ahmad and his associates observed perfect moderation in all situations. They remained patient when faced with an unfavorable situation and thanked Allah when blessed with a favor. Sayyid Ahmad writes in one of his letters, "My way is the same as that of my Grandfather [Prophet Muhammad], the leader of the Prophets, blessings and peace be upon him. One day I eat dry bread to satisfy my hunger and extend thanks to Allah for it, and the other day I remain hungry and observe patience."<sup>360</sup>

In situations in which people easily get emotional and lose moderation, Sayyid Ahmad and his associates maintained perfect balance. About the conduct of his associates Sayyid Ahmad once mentioned, "I am thankful to Allah that in the hearts of my selfless associates neither the feeling of pride arises at the time of victory, nor does that of frustration in the face of a defeat."<sup>361</sup> Shah Ismail also acknowledged the quality of moderation and balance in the lives of Sayyid Ahmad's disciples. He once remarked: "Moderation in conduct is found among those who benefited from the company of Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad]. I try very hard that those under my care also develop a balanced character, but they either commit excesses or fall short in some way."<sup>362</sup>

A good example of moderation between manifestation of authority and observance of humility was reflected in Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi's conduct when he visited the Frontier after Sayyid Ahmad's death at the invitation of his brother Inayat Ali. Inayat Ali had conquered a large area in the Frontier and established a regular Islamic state there, and so Wilayat Ali was awarded a

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<sup>359</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 289.

<sup>360</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 69.

<sup>361</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 77.

<sup>362</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 128-29.

formal welcome like a ruler at his arrival there. He was greeted at several places with formal salute by the Muslim army and with gun and canon fire. At Atar Sheesha, thousands of regular soldiers and the Mujahideen stood in a field in two rows on both sides to receive him while a large number of people were also present there to attend the occasion. The whole area resounded with the deafening sound of the salutary gunfire. As soon as the two brothers met, they fell in prostration to the ground to thank Allah for the victorious comeback, and with them fell in prostration the whole Muslim army to offer thanks to their Lord for helping them proclaim His supremacy in that part of the land.<sup>363</sup>

Although Sayyid Ahmad was a Hanafi, he always maintained a very balanced attitude towards other schools of Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*). During the Hajj journey many pilgrims fell sick in the ship and felt difficulty in offering prayers on time. Sayyid Ahmad ordered that for the convenience of the sick the prayers of two times would be joined according to the verdicts of the other Imams.<sup>364</sup> It is to be noted that although he was a Hanafi, his followers were completely free to follow any school of jurisprudence or teachings of Ahle Hadith Ulema that they considered authentic. They followed whatever looked most authentic to them, but all observed full respect for one another's views. That is why divisive questions in the name of following different schools of jurisprudence never arose among his disciples. All of them observed perfect moderation in this matter and stood united to serve the religion of Islam.

When Sayyid Jafar Ali Naqwi was returning from the Frontier to Delhi after the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad, he met Zamaan Shah, ex-ruler of Afghanistan, at a place close to Jalandhar. The Shah treated him very respectfully and one day sent a special meal for him. When the food was brought to Sayyid Jafar Ali, the messenger of the Shah asked him to rise from his seat and pay respect to the food sent by the Shah. Sayyid Jafar Ali remained

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<sup>363</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 240-41.

<sup>364</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 345.

seated and explained his moderate stand in these words: "I respect you and this is sufficient. Respect for food is actually not more than this that it should not be wasted."<sup>365</sup>

When Sayyid Ahmad was staying at Khahar, the Mujahideen started regular practice in shooting and other martial arts with his permission. It continued for about three months due to which the Mujahideen's mastery in military skills improved very much. One day Sayyid Ahmad went to the practice ground and observed the Mujahideen in action. He admired the skills of the Mujahideen, but at the same time he instructed them: "Do not depend on your practice. Victory and defeat are in Allah's hands; they are not based merely on such military practices. If you depend on Allah's support, He will make you victorious over a skilled army." He asked them to discontinue the military exercise from the next day but allowed them to practice individually if they so wished.<sup>366</sup>

When Arbab Bahram Khan and his family joined the caravan of Sayyid Ahmad to migrate to Kashmir, his daughter and wife appeared in front of the Mujahideen. Although they were clad in proper dress, the Mujahideen turned their faces to avoid looking at them. Arbab, however, told them that one of them was his wife and the other was his daughter and that as they were covering themselves fully, there was no need for anybody to feel embarrassed. Arbab's wife and daughter, thus, observed a perfect balance in wearing proper dress and discharging necessary duties. Similarly, in the Hajj journey Maulana Abdul Hai asked his wife to come down the boat and offer obligatory prayers although male pilgrims were around. She came down dressed Islamically and said her prayers. Maulana Abdul Hai did so to counteract an un-Islamic practice prevalent among the Muslim women of the time: they did not offer even obligatory Salah in journey if there were men around as they considered it an act of immodesty. When his wife was engaged in praying, he called out aloud, "Look, Abdul Hai's wife is

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<sup>365</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 207.

<sup>366</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 64-65.

offering prayer."<sup>367</sup> He thus set a precedent for others to see that there had to be a proper balance between following the commandment of the Shariah and observing the natural feminine bashfulness.

## 10. Religious Toleration and Magnanimity

Sayyid Ahmad was a staunch follower of Islam, but his love for Islam did not reflect any bias toward other religions in the slightest form. He prayed for the guidance of those who were outside the fold of Islam and invited them properly to the faith whenever possible, but he related very comfortably to non-Muslims and treated them with full respect. His whole life shows that his attitude towards the Hindus, the Sikhs, and the Christians was very open, respectful, and magnanimous. In the same way, although he differed with the Shias on some vital points relating to faith, he was always respectful to them.

He invited all Muslims, Shias or Sunnis, to follow the Qur'an and Sunnah and give up un-Islamic practices and showed no discrimination against any community. He accepted the invitation of the Sunni Muslims in Lucknow, but he also gladly accepted the invitation of the Shia Muslims. He went twice to the palace of Nawwab Mo'tamedud Dawla, the Prime Minister of Lucknow, who was a Shia by faith, where he ate with him and exchanged gifts.<sup>368</sup> Also, in Azeemabad he gladly went to the house of Nawwab Qutbuddeen Khan, a Shia dignitary of the city, ate with him, and accepted him and his family members along with his attendants in Bai'ah without any hesitation.<sup>369</sup>

Similarly, Sayyid Ahmad treated the followers of other religions with respect and magnanimity. When Dhokal Singh, a Hindu officer, invited him to his house and said that he would not sit down until his invitation was accepted, Sayyid Ahmad accepted his

<sup>367</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 283.

<sup>368</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 171-72.

<sup>369</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 303-04.

invitation to dine with him and very kindly asked him to take a seat.<sup>370</sup> Likewise, when his boats made a stopover at an uninhabited place during his Hajj journey and a Christian merchant of indigo brought food for the caravan, Sayyid Ahmad accepted the food he brought without hesitation.<sup>371</sup> In fact, he accepted the invitation of a non-Muslim and turned down the invitation of a Muslim, if it suited the teachings of Islam this way. When Begum Hayatun Nisa invited him for a feast, he declined because she was living with a Christian as his mistress which was an un-Islamic act. But when her Christian husband wished to host him at a feast, he accepted his invitation as the Christian fellow was not bound to follow the teachings of Islam regarding his relationship with Begum Hayatun Nisa.<sup>372</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad had a very close relationship with Wazeer Singh, a high-ranking Sikh officer in the army of Raja Ranjeet Singh. Wazeer Singh was once sent with Faqeer Azizuddeen to Sayyid Ahmad on a peace mission and had also attended the talk between the emissaries of Sayyid Ahmad and Veturra and Allord of the Sikh army. He stayed in personal touch with Sayyid Ahmad, sent important messages and suggestions to him and helped his associates whenever possible.<sup>373</sup>

Ram Singh (or Sukh Ram) was in-charge of the fort of Qadirabad, which was under the rule of the Sikhs. He was originally from Rae Bareli, the hometown of Sayyid Ahmad, and knew the noble forefathers of Sayyid Ahmad full well. He used to write letters to Sayyid Ahmad, one of which is still extant. He also used to encourage and send Muslims living in his area to Sayyid Ahmad to offer Bai'ah to him.<sup>374</sup>

Another Hindu official in the court of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh, Munshi Mahtab Rai, who was also a resident of Sayyid Ahmad's area, had a very good relationship with Sayyid Ahmad. Once when

<sup>370</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 169.

<sup>371</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 266-67.

<sup>372</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol 1, pp. 269-70.

<sup>373</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 589-90.

<sup>374</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 564-65.



Sayyid Ahmad's name was mentioned improperly in the presence of the Maharaja, he openly objected to this improper practice and mentioned to the Maharaja that if this practice was allowed in his court, he would leave him and join Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>375</sup>

While on his way to the Frontier, Sayyid Ahmad stopped at Gwalior, the state of the Marhatta ruler Maharaja Dawlat Rao, and was accorded a state welcome there. As discussed earlier, he visited Dawlat Rao in his palace and had a very intimate talk with him and his Prime Minister Maharaja Hindu Rao, which was also attended by the Maharani. The Maharaja was sick. Sayyid Ahmad gave him *Tawajjoh* (a form of spiritual concentration) to bless him at his request. The Maharani invited Sayyid Ahmad to stay in Gwalior for a year with all his associates as state guests.<sup>376</sup> Sayyid Ahmad also wrote a letter to Raja Hindu Rao from the Frontier and shared with him his concern about the dangers of the growing power of the British and the need for a course of action to save the country from subjugation to them.<sup>377</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad concentrated on the teachings of Islam in his preaching and never ever entered into arguments with other religions. In his efforts to show the simple and pure features of Islam, he, of course, criticized and disowned the borrowings from other religions, but he did not hold other religions responsible for this situation. Hedayatullah writes, "The attack on Hindu borrowings should not give us the impression that Sayyid Ahmad himself or his companions were averse to Hinduism as a religion or Hindus as a religious community." He further writes about this feature in Sayyid Ahmad's preaching in these words:

Throughout *Sirate Mustaqeem* and other books relevant to his movement, there is no evidence to show that he ever spoke of any other religion or religious groups, particularly Hindus and Hinduism, in the sense of what may be called repudiation or

<sup>375</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 585.

<sup>376</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 273-75.

<sup>377</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 15.

even criticism. His only concern was his own religion which became corrupt mostly with Hindu practices. But for that matter he did not blame the Hindus; rather he held the Muslims - the heretic Sufis - through whose agency the Hindu practices found their way to Muslim life, responsible.<sup>378</sup>

Mohiuddin Ahmad observes the same pattern in Sayyid Ahmad's missionary work:

The voluminous mass of letters written by the Saiyid [Sayyid Ahmad] and Shah Mohammad Ismail's writings do not contain even a hostile reference towards the Hindus whose sympathy and, sometimes active support, was enjoyed by the Jihad movement. The Saiyid's message, in effect, called for freedom for the expression of Muslims' religious personality and removal of every social corruption that impeded its way and distorted its image.<sup>379</sup>

We also see his good relationship as a ruler with his non-Muslim subjects when he conquered Peshawar. In Peshawar there were many Hindu merchants who were running business there. When Sayyid Ahmad decided to reinstate Sultan Mohammad Khan as ruler of Peshawar, Seth Budh Ram came to him as representative of the Hindu businessmen and requested him not to give the city back to Sultan Khan. He offered all financial help to support the Islamic rule of Sayyid Ahmad as in their judgment it guaranteed to them an honorable living with full freedom and justice in all respects.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Hedayatullah, pp. 127-28.

<sup>379</sup> Mohiuddin Ahmad, p. 387.

<sup>380</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, pp. 648-52.

## Chapter Four

### Social Reform

#### Eradication of Un-Islamic Social Practices

There were persons who detested prayer and fasting, reveled in drinking spree and indulged in adultery, illegal gratification, usury and other misdeeds.... It was through the teachings of Sayyid Ahmad that such persons repented from their sinful ways...and became virtuous and pious.

- Hyder Ali Rampuri, *Siyanatan Nas 'an Waswasatal Khannas*

### Introduction

The un-Islamic social practices which were widespread and were unscrupulously practiced by the Indian Muslims of the time form the subject of the present chapter. A close look at them will show how strenuously Sayyid Ahmad had to struggle to eradicate them and establish Islamic practices in their place.

## 1. COMMON UN-ISLAMIC PRACTICES

Since Muslims of the time at large had ceased to derive inspiration and take guidance from Islam, un-Islamic values and practices, some of which were as serious as Shirk and Bid'ah, spread in the society at a large scale. Alarmingly, such practices received social approval and were practiced in society by people without any scruple.

### Celebration of Taziya

Due to the influence of the Shia community, a large number of the Sunni Muslims used to raise Taziya in the memory of Imam Husain

and performed the rites of Muharram with full religious devotion. They participated in the celebration with the reverence that would suite only the fundamental duties of Islam. Money was spent on decorating the Taziya in a competitive mood, sometimes leading to exuberant expenses. Taziya, *Alam* (banner) and *Panja* (symbolic finger prints) were decorated with expensive clothes and ornamented with silver. The Imam Bara and Chabootra were commonly built in private homes, mosques and community centers by the Sunnis as symbols of their religiosity.

Sayyid Ahmad challenged all such un-Islamic practices in an unprovoking but uncompromising way. Wherever he saw any un-Islamic practice being followed, he exerted all his influence to eradicate it. During his reformist tours and Pilgrimage journey, he and his associates, especially Maulana Abdul Hai Budhanwi, delivered sermons against such practices. People whose number defies counting benefited from the sermons and discarded all such practices then and there. At a place called Isrowli, for example, the villagers demolished the Chabootras, broke Alam and Panja, burned the bamboo sticks used for upholding the structure and presented the clothes and silver used to decorate them to Sayyid Ahmad. The residents of the neighboring villages decided to do the same.<sup>381</sup> At a village called Chapri, the residents did not know anything about Islam other than raising the Taziya, worshipping the tombs of the dead saints and practicing different acts of polytheism. They also renounced all polytheistic practices and adopted Islamic teachings instead. In Banaras (Varanasi), people destroyed several hundred Taziyas. In Danapur, one Ali Jan demolished the Chabootra and Imam Bara that he had built adjacent to his house and constructed there a mosque and a residential building for the travelers, after he came in touch with Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 271.

<sup>382</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 29.

## Saint Worship

Muslims had also developed a great devotion for the dead saints and ignorantly eulogized them as personages having divine attributes and powers. The devotees prostrated at their graves, begged of them their needs, lavished their graves with flowers, colorful clothes, sweets and fragrance to please them, and associated success or failure with their pleasure or displeasure. They used to make a covenant called *Nazar* or *Mannat* in the name of the dead saints for the fulfillment of their needs and fulfilled their covenant ceremoniously if their wish was granted. Sayyid Ahmad rejected all un-Islamic activities performed at the graves of saints and called upon the Muslims to adopt the pure and pristine teachings of Islam. He was so opposed to such practices that he prayed to Allah for not letting the people ever know the location of his grave so that they did not perform any un-Islamic activity at it.

Sayyid Ahmad and his deputies spoke in personal discourses and public sermons against all such un-Islamic practices and called Muslims toward Tawheed and Sunnah. In Banaras, for example, he instructed the Muslims in strong words not to indulge in any form of saint-worship.<sup>383</sup> In Calcutta, a group of Muslims from Decca came to meet him and attended a sermon of Maulana Abdul Hai who talked about these practices in detail in the light of the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. After hearing the sermon, they expressed their impression in the following words:

We were under the impression that constructing the Taziya, raising the banners, making offerings to the *Peers* (saints) and *Shaheeds* (martyrs), asking them for the fulfillment of needs, and doing such other wrong things on the occasions of marriage and other celebrations are deeds befitting religious people. Now we learned from the sermon that all these are

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<sup>383</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 286.

un-Islamic acts and men involved in them are, in fact, polytheists (*Mushrik*) and irreligious.<sup>384</sup>

In those days Muslims used to give to their children names after the dead saints they revered, hoping that it would bring spiritual blessings to their children and protect them against evils. This was clearly a form of polytheism and Sayyid Ahmad took a serious notice of it in his reformist scheme. Thus, wherever he met a person bearing such a name, he persuaded him to change it for an Islamic one. In Deoband, for example, a person called *Imam Baksh* offered Bai'ah to him. Sayyid Ahmad changed his name to *Imamuddeen*. *Ahmadullah Azeemabadi* carried the name *Ahmad Baksh* (gift of Ahmad) before he met Sayyid Ahmad. Sayyid Ahmad changed his name to *Ahmadullah*. One *Fatah Ali* (Victory of Ali) offered Bai'ah to Sayyid Ahmad who changed his name to *Abdul Quddus*.<sup>385</sup> Such examples are abundant in the accounts of his missionary activities. Sayyid Ahmad's teachings changed the situation so totally that polytheistic practices prevalent among Muslims became almost extinct from the society.

### Un-Islamic Rites and Festivals

Lacking in exposure to true Islamic teachings, the Muslims had become an easy prey to different kinds of superstition and deviation in faith. Their world was dominated with gods lesser in power than God but still powerful enough to benefit or hurt human beings independently, which was the influence of Hinduism. Pox, for example, was considered to be brought to a person by a goddess who had to be appeased by performing certain prescribed rites. The patient suffering from pox was not visited by people and was left alone as much as possible. Also, Muslims eagerly participated in Hindu festivals and on occasions indulged in activities forbidden in Islam, such as worshipping Hindu deities. The Nawchandi Mela of Banaras, for example, which was very enthusiastically celebrated by

<sup>384</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 322.

<sup>385</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, pp. 82 and 110, respectively.

Muslims, had in many ways become more popular among Muslims than the two Eids, which are the only festivals ordained in Islam.<sup>386</sup>

Muslims had also developed un-Islamic festivals of their own on the pattern of Hindu festivals, such as *Mela* (Fair) and *Urs* (celebration of the birthday of a dead saint). In Deoband, for example, the Muslims used to attend the Fair of Peerane Kalyar with great regularity and enthusiasm. After offering Bai'ah at Sayyid Ahmad's hands they decided to discontinue visiting the Fair and participating in the un-Islamic celebrations there.<sup>387</sup> Again, these festivals had surpassed the authentic Islamic festivals, such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, in glory and enthusiasm and were, thus, causing deviations from the Islamic norms. The situation is very clearly reflected in the instance of the Muslims from Chatgam, Bengal, who reported the practices prevalent in their areas in these words:

Those who celebrate both Eids consider themselves very religious. Some Muslims celebrate Eids and Muharram, but they also celebrate Holi, Diwali, and Dasehra [Hindu festivals]. They also worship Bhawani [a Hindu goddess] and make offerings to the saints (*Peers*) and the martyrs (*Shaheeds*).<sup>388</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad launched an all-out attack on such un-Islamic practices and gave a clear call to the Muslims to return to the authentic and unadulterated teachings of Islam. As Hedayatullah writes: "Against these social evils, such as widespread saint worship, Muslim participation in Hindu festivals, worship of Hindu deities by the Muslims, Muslim visit to shrines and tombs, Sayyid Ahmad launched his jihad (struggle)."<sup>389</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 295.

<sup>387</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 162.

<sup>388</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 323.

<sup>389</sup> Hedayetullah, p. 39.

## Decoration Pieces Bearing Images

It was also quite common for the Muslims of the time to keep in their houses toys and decoration pieces which had human and animal images carved on them. Sayyid Ahmad discouraged this practice among the Muslims. In Banaras, for example, in the house of one Deen Muhammad, who invited Sayyid Ahmad for a feast, Sayyid Ahmad saw such toys and asked him to destroy them, as keeping objects bearing human or animal images is forbidden in Islam.<sup>390</sup> Needless to say that keeping such images at home has a deeper impact on one's life than meets the eye. Such objects may gradually occupy the place of an article bearing luck to the family and then they start commanding reverence which paves the way for idol worship.

At such places women were more committed to un-Islamic practices out of ignorance and Sayyid Ahmad paid due attention to address to this situation. He instructed them in matters of religion and urged them to foster Islamic atmosphere in their homes. For example, at a place called Bisesar, near Banaras, where a large number of Muslim women offered Bai'ah to Sayyid Ahmad, he visited their houses and instructed them to give up the practices of erecting Taziya and keeping decoration pieces bearing human and animal images at home. He also reminded them that their offering Bai'ah to him required that they give up all practices forbidden in Islam and adopt Islamic teachings in all spheres of life. Otherwise this relationship was not going to benefit them in any way.<sup>391</sup>

## Drinking

Drinking had become a common and popular practice among the Muslims of the time which they did not even consider a bad thing, but at the call of Sayyid Ahmad the situation completely changed. For instance, when he made a stopover at Calcutta in his Hajj journey, a great moral transformation took place in Muslims as a

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<sup>390</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 294.

<sup>391</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 293-294.



result of which they gave up the habit of drinking. This transformation was so total that the licensed dealers of wine filed a petition to the department concerned pleading that they be exempted from annual taxes that year as all of their Muslim customers had at once stopped consuming wine due to the teachings of Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>392</sup>

### Prostitution

Prostitution was also prevalent in the Muslim society. Wherever Sayyid Ahmad's message reached, women in the profession responded to the call of their conscience and reverted to a clean and pious lifestyle. For example, at Danapur, Patna, a large number of prostitutes gave up their profession, discarded all that they had earned through that profession, and adopted a respectable and clean life.<sup>393</sup> It is narrated that one day when Sayyid Ahmad was passing by an area with his associates, a prostitute saw him and was so impressed by him that she immediately ran out of her house and begged him to help her relinquish her sinful profession. She repented at his hands along with nine men who were with her in her house at that time. Sayyid Ahmad helped her get married to one of her admirers. All of them joined him in his migration to the Frontier where all the nine men were blessed with martyrdom. That woman used to do chores for the Mujahideen with another woman called Moti who had repented from prostitution at the hands of Shah Ismail.<sup>394</sup> A prostitute repented from her sinful profession by listening to a sermon delivered by Maulana Abdul Hai. Sayyid Ahmad included her in his Hajj caravan.<sup>395</sup> Several such instances are reported in the accounts of the activities of Sayyid Ahmad and his associates.

### Un-Islamic Eating Customs

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<sup>392</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol 1, p. 318.

<sup>393</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol 1, p.298.

<sup>394</sup> Amir Shah Khan, *Amirur Riwayat*, pp. 149-54.

<sup>395</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 282.

Islam is a complete system covering all practical situations of life. It, for example, encourages consumption of food in a proper way and discourages its wastage in any form. The Muslims of the time had adopted rites and customs of eating from the Hindu culture and had stopped practicing Islamic ways. Following the Hindu rites, for example, men were not allowed in the kitchen with their shoes in Muslim houses. They sat in a corner to partake their meal and threw away the leftover. They were not supposed to touch cooking pots, and cleaned their plates when they finished eating. Especially in festivals the wastage was too much; they ate on palm leaves and discarded the food that they could not eat. Also, they ate the meat of she-goats and considered the meat of he-goats as forbidden (*Haram*).<sup>396</sup> As such things had no basis in the teachings of Islam, Sayyid Ahmad spoke in his discourses and sermons against them and encouraged Muslims to adopt Islamic practices in eating. This changed the situation and Muslims returned to the simplicity of Islamic customs.

### Un-Islamic Way of Greeting

The society of the time had moved away from day-to-day simple teachings of Islam to the extent that even Islamic greeting was discarded in favor of social norms of showing respect: instead of saying *assalamo alaikum* (peace be on you) at the time of meeting, Muslims used to say " regards to you" (*taslimat/ aadaab arz hay*). That was not all. If a Muslim greeted the other in the Islamic way, especially a person older in age or higher in status, the one addressed to felt greatly insulted. Maulvi Shamsuddeen of Deoband became a follower of Sayyid Ahmad and at once gave up all un-Islamic practices. He adopted the practice of greeting people with Islamic words and urged others to do the same. When one day Sheikh Hafeezullah, one of his students, greeted Shamsuddeen's father with the prophetic words *assalamo alaikum*, the old man

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<sup>396</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 323.

became extremely angry and burst out, "I know who has taught you this. I'll deal duly with him."<sup>397</sup>

The Islamic way of greeting was forsaken even in religious families; it was not observed even in the family of Shah Abdul Aziz. When Sayyid Ahmad visited him for the first time, he greeted him by saying *assalamo alaikum*. Shah Abdul Aziz was very pleased and asked his family members to observe the Islamic way of greeting from that day on.<sup>398</sup> When Sayyid Ahmad became the center of attraction and people started coming to him in multitude to offer Bai'ah, the practice of greeting Islamically became popular again and fully replaced all other forms of greeting. He practiced it himself and preached it to others. When he was about to sail in a boat to board the ship for his Hajj journey, a very large number of Muslims were around to bid him farewell. He lifted his hands and greeted all of them loudly by saying *assalamo alaikum*. At a place called Barh in Bihar a Muslim came to meet Sayyid Ahmad and greeted him by saying "regards or submission (*aadaab* or *bandagi*)." Sayyid Ahmad instructed him and all others present on the scene to greet one another with the prophetic salutation *assalamo alaikum*.<sup>399</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad's preaching changed the situation at all levels. The commoners as well as the members of the elite class adopted the practice of greeting each other in the Islamic way. Nawwab Mubarizud Dawla, brother of the ruler of Hyderabad, read Sayyid Ahmad's *Sirate Mustaqeem* and Shah Ismail's *Taqwiyatul Iman* and at once discarded all un-Islamic customs. He ordered that in his court people should greet one another by saying *assalamo alaikum*, not by saying ceremonial words of regard espoused by the royal courts of the time. In his home, court and the area of his influence the orders and commandments of the Shariah were fully implemented.<sup>400</sup> It is to the credit of Sayyid Ahmad that he and his associates introduced once again the practice of Islamic greeting in the society.

<sup>397</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 161-62.

<sup>398</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 114.

<sup>399</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 203.

<sup>400</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 170-71.

## 2. HERETIC SUFI ORDERS

A powerful source of religio-social corruption at that time was the unorthodox Sufi orders which promoted several un-Islamic ideologies and rites in the name of Islam. Sufism, which had the largest share in spreading Islam in India, was then met with "an undercurrent...flowing in the opposite direction,"<sup>401</sup> accommodating in its fold such un-Islamic practices which simply aimed at exploiting the ignorant mass. There emerged then some Sufi orders which were not at all faithful to the objectives of original Sufism. They rather promoted practices of Shirk and Bid'ah.

### Prevalent Heretic Practices

The heretics turned the Sufi teachings into a set of mythical traditions. Instead of serving as a source of spiritual guidance to help a Muslim improve his moral character and make it possible for him to mould his life in accordance with the Shariah, the heretic Sufis preached the exalted power of their spiritual lines and proclaimed that entering a Sufi order was all that a Muslim had to do; the rest for their salvation was the responsibility of their spiritual mentor.

The irregularities were not limited to celebrating the Urs and Chehallum of a Peer of an earlier time, or decorating the tomb and beseeching the dead saint for the grant of a wish. In some parts of India, the charlatans even relieved the Muslims of the duty of offering daily obligatory prayers or fasting in Ramadan on one excuse or another. During Sayyid Ahmad's visit to Banaras, an ignorant and illiterate Peer who had a considerably large following from the uneducated mass came to meet Sayyid Ahmad and explained to him his "reformist" activities. His source of income, according to him, was the money that he used to receive from his followers (*Mureeds*) every sixth month for guiding them in matters

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<sup>401</sup> Hedayatullah, p. 28.

of religion. Since they were menial workers and found it difficult to pray five times daily, the Peer excused them from the obligation of offering regular prayers in return of some extra money that they had to pay to him as compensation. He, as he told Sayyid Ahmad, instructed his followers very strictly to fast in Ramadan and allowed them to miss fasting only when they found fasting really difficult due to a habit, such as smoking. But in that case the Mureed, again, had to pay some extra money to him, or arrange feast for him a couple of times. This was, in the words of Sayyid Ahmad, "the practice of the false Peers of the time and this was the source of their livelihood."<sup>402</sup> Such a class of ignorant Peers had comfortably found a place in the society of the time and gained social acceptance. As the followers of that *Peer* said later, "Until now we considered his teachings the religion of Islam and the path of God."<sup>403</sup>

Such practices were localized, differing in appearance and degree at different places but remaining the same everywhere in essence in being grossly heretic and un-Islamic. For example, at a place the devotees used to assemble on a particular day annually and in a ceremonious fashion carried water pots on head to a water well for filling them with water to symbolically immortalize an act of a *Peer* of that line. They considered it a virtuous act promising spiritual advancement.<sup>404</sup> Similarly, in the Frontier, the rite of *Isqat* (forgiveness of sins) was considered a deed having religious sanctity and was observed with utmost reverence. On the death of a person, his relatives organized a gathering of Ulema for the forgiveness of the <sup>4</sup>sins of the deceased. A copy of the Qur'an was brought and handed over to a religious scholar who passed it on to another scholar, and thus the Qur'an was circulated till it came back to the first scholar in the gathering. Once this course was completed it was believed that the sins ever committed by the

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<sup>402</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 186.

<sup>403</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 187.

<sup>404</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, pp. 182-183.

deceased were absolved.<sup>405</sup> This and such other rites were practiced in the society with great enthusiasm and had gained social approval. The authentic teachings of Islam were rarely practiced in the society; un-Islamic code of practices had taken their place.

### Sayyid Ahmad Puts Sufi Orders under Shariah

Sayyid Ahmad categorically rejected all such un-Islamic practices. Wherever a personal discourse was possible, he resorted to it in order to show the inauthenticity of such practices. But, in general, he and his deputies spoke in public sermons against them. Also, he strongly condemned misguided Sufi practitioners, called them "Sufi-like heretics" (*Sufi-numa mulhid*) in his book *Sirate Mustaqeem*, and spoke unequivocally against their falsehood. It was believed by the common Muslims of the time that pledging an oath of Bai'ah to a *Peer* was enough for salvation and that he would get their sins absolved on the Day of Judgment and take them to paradise. Sayyid Ahmad rejected it outright: "This is a gross misunderstanding. The *Peer* is himself unaware of his destiny and does not know what will happen to him on the Day of Judgment." He clearly said to his followers that neither a *Peer* nor a prophet could save a person against the consequences of sins that he had committed.<sup>406</sup> Although Sayyid Ahmad's godliness was well known and well acknowledged, he told his disciples in clear words that it was not in his power to spiritually benefit a disciple or deprive the other by ignoring him. He said in Calcutta to a large group of visitors: "If anybody says that there is a great power in the *Tawajjoh* (spiritual concentration to increase the faith of a Muslim) of Sayyid Ahmad, he is a liar. This matter is not in my hand. I tried to benefit some persons, but in vain. And to some others I did not pay much attention, but they attained a very high level of piety. In fact, it is absolutely in the hands of Allah."<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>405</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 277.

<sup>406</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 295-96.

<sup>407</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol 1, p. 340.

Sayyid Ahmad, however, did not miss to appreciate the sincere efforts of the true Sufi teachers who had helped a very large number of Muslims in attaining moral discipline and godliness. He had himself undergone spiritual initiation of this kind under the care of the famous Islamic scholar Shah Abdul Aziz and knew it well that all spiritual leaders worked to guide Muslims to the true teachings of Islam and had, in fact, helped them learn and adopt correct faith and authentic practices. He, therefore, did not reject the traditions of the Sufi orders; he, however, took great care to cleanse the structure from all impurities that had crept into it creating deviations from the teachings of the Shariah. Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi rightly remarked: "All spiritual mentors (*Mashaekh*) are like doctors to the Muslims....In the teachings of all of them the emphasis is on adherence to Sunnah. People who came later introduced innovations in their teachings. Hazrat Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad] became the *Mujaddid* (Renovator) of the Sufi orders."<sup>408</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad asserted the eminence of *Tawheed* and *Sunnah* and fought an all-out war against *Shirk* and *Bid'ah* of all kinds. Tawheed and Sunnah were the core of Sayyid Ahmad's teaching. He accepted Bai'ah from people only on the condition that they would adopt Tawheed and Sunnah and discard Shirk and Bid'ah.

He accepted people in Bai'ah in the four established Sufi schools: *Chishtiya*, *Qadriya*, *Nuqshbandiya* and *Mujaddidiya*, emphasizing to his disciples that the fundamental aim of the teachings of all these schools was to internally prepare the Muslims to mould their lives in consonance with the Islamic Shariah. But he also founded a new school of spiritual discipline called *Tariqae Muhammadiya* and explained that in his school Muslims were additionally required to follow the Islamic Shariah in all external behaviors (as well as in matters relating to heart emphasized in the former schools).<sup>409</sup> Thus, Muslims following the teachings of *Tariqae Muhammadiya* had to guard their hearts against evils, such

<sup>408</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 554.

<sup>409</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 511-512. Also see Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 217.

as greed, hatred, ill-will, and deception, but they also had to follow the etiquettes of *Sunnah* in external matters, such as eating, drinking, physical appearance, and the like, and perform all internal and external deeds solely for Allah's pleasure.

Sayyid Ahmad redefined the relationship of Bai'ah between the *Peer* and the *Mureed* in the light of the Islamic Shariah. He taught that a *Peer* should instruct his followers in matters of religion in full accordance with the teachings of the Shariah and that the *Mureed* should make sincere efforts to follow such instructions of his religious mentor: "Anything more than that is the deceit of the ego and craft of the devil." He clearly instructed his followers that those who had pledged Bai'ah to him should give up all such things that are forbidden in the Islamic Shariah: "Only then," he stressed, "the relationship of Bai'ah will benefit them. Otherwise, all this is useless. Neither am I their *Peer*, nor are they my *Mureed*."<sup>410</sup>

This message was very clearly understood by his followers who took it in its true spirit. In Banaras, for example, there lived a cobbler named Tiloka. His friends Maulvi Abdullah and Bhola who had entered into Bai'ah with Sayyid Ahmad, encouraged him also to offer Bai'ah to him. Tiloka was illiterate and did not know anything about Bai'ah. He questioned his friends what it meant. They explained to him the meaning of Bai'ah in these words: "Bai'ah means to repent for the transgressions done in the past and firmly decide to refrain from them in the future." This simple definition of Bai'ah given by a commoner explains more authentically than anything else what the followers of Sayyid Ahmad understood by it. That is why as soon as Tiloka offered Bai'ah, Sayyid Ahmad made Maulvi Abdullah and Bhola responsible to teach Tiloka obligatory duties in particular and other necessary things related to Islam in general. He also changed his name from Tiloka to Ilahi Baksh.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 296.

<sup>411</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 288-89.



## Deputies Preached Supremacy of Shariah

Emphasis on the Shariah remained the central point in the reformist program of Sayyid Ahmad and was continued in the same spirit by his spiritual successors. The following examples attest how faithfully the deputies of Sayyid Ahmad carried on the work of maintaining the supremacy of the Shariah.

To one of the disciples whom Sayyid Ahmad appointed as his spiritual deputy (*Khalifa*) and permitted to accept Bai'ah from people in his spiritual line, he instructed about the eminence of the Shariah in a letter in these words: "Anyone who believes that there is any other way to obtain Allah's pleasure except the Shariah brought by Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, is a liar and a misguided person whose claims are untrue. And Shariah is based on two things: giving up Shirk and discarding Bid'ah."<sup>412</sup>

And a spiritual deputy (*Khalifa*) of Sayyid Ahmad, Haji Abdur Rahim, carried the same campaign against Shirk and Bid'ah in his turn. He wrote to Mianji Noor Mohammad Jhanjhanwi, his Khalifa, instructing him to accept people in Bai'ah in the order of Sayyid Ahmad with the same focus on the supremacy of the Shariah: "The main objective [of Bai'ah] is that a person holds fast to the Shariah in his internal as well as external affairs all the time and renounces all kinds of Shirk and Bid'ah."<sup>413</sup>

And Haji Imdadullah Mahajir Makki, a Khalifa of Maulana Mianji Noor Mohammad Jhanjhanwi, instructed in his turn to his Khalifa to accept people in Bai'ah and discipline them spiritually in these words: "A Peer should teach to his disciples that it is in no way possible to achieve the goal [of pleasing Allah] without following the Shariah." He further urged his deputies to "instruct their disciples to stay away from things forbidden in Islam and from all major sins, and impress upon them that the teachings of

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<sup>412</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 532.

<sup>413</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 536.

the Shariah are always preferable to practices [instructed in the Sufi orders for spiritual advancement]."<sup>414</sup>

The disciples of Haji Imdadullah Mahajir Makki – Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi, Maulana Qasim Nanotwi (founder of Darul Uloom, Deoband), and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, to name only a few here – also carried out the same campaign tirelessly and courageously to this day. All of them upheld Tawheed and Sunnah and discarded Shirk and Bid'ah in practice and preaching. Citing more examples would simply add to the bulk of this section.

In fact, all those who joined Sayyid Ahmad's spiritual line remained committed to his teachings. Maulana Ghulam Rasool alias Maulana Abdullah of Qila Mehan Singh, a very prominent Islamic scholar and pious person of his time, visited Mullah Sayyid Amir Saheb Kotha in search of a spiritual mentor for himself. Mullah Sayyid Amir was a disciple and Khalifa of Sayyid Ahmad. Maulana Ghulam Rasool writes in his autobiography *Sawaneh Hayat* that Mullah Sayyid Amir Saheb was such a distinguished spiritual person that anybody who visited him did not go back empty-handed. Whoever sat in his spiritual circle became "a true follower of the Sunnah of the Prophet.... The recitations that he recommended to his followers were all according to the teachings of the Sunnah."<sup>415</sup>

### 3. SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION

The society of the time was sharply divided in the classes of the rich and the poor, the high and the low. Human beings were not considered equal; people were valued in terms of money and social status. Poor people were discriminated on the basis of the norms created by the rich, and such norms had unfortunately gained social acceptance. Sayyid Ahmad's reform Movement raised a call against this attitude and encouraged Muslims of the time to create a social

<sup>414</sup> Haji Imdadullah, "Ziaul Quloob" in *Kulliyate Imdadiya* (Karachi: Darul Isha'at, 1976), p. 11.

<sup>415</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 449-50.

structure that was based on the values of human equality espoused by Islam. He preached that piety of character alone, not wealth or social rank, should be taken as a mark of distinction. Wherever he saw any discriminatory practice, he denounced it as a deviation.

### Prevalent Forms of Social Discrimination

In the days of Sayyid Ahmad, in some areas poor people were not allowed to give to their children names used by the rich. Doing so was considered an insult to the rich. The poor also could not cook the food items generally considered as the delicacies of the rich. In addition, the rich never accepted an invitation from the poor to dine with them and considered it below their standard to visit them at their houses even on occasions of happiness, misfortune, or religious celebration such as Eid. The poor people were, in fact, treated as social outcasts.

### Sayyid Ahmad Opposes Social Discrimination

In personal discourses and public sermons Sayyid Ahmad and his associates exposed the inauthenticity of discriminatory practices, but, wherever possible, he also rejected such un-Islamic practices by setting a personal example. On one occasion when a nine-year old non-Muslim boy accepted Islam, he was given *Abdul Kareem* as his new name. At it people present in the gathering cautioned Sayyid Ahmad that if that name was given to him, people of that area would mind as there were several respectable persons in that town who carried that name. Sayyid Ahmad became very unhappy to hear it and said, "If it is so, give him my name and call him Ahmad."<sup>416</sup> At his instruction, Maulana Abdul Hai gave a heart-rending sermon against this practice. When people heard that Islam was against such discrimination, they cried in repentance and decided to abolish this practice from their society.

Sayyid Ahmad's opposition to all forms of social discrimination was clearly reflected in his personal relationship with the poor and

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<sup>416</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 168.

became a guideline for the Muslims of the time to follow. At a place called Mirza, he accepted the invitation for a feast by poor and socially disadvantaged brickmen, went to their houses, and ate with them. He also visited a cobbler named Tiloka at his humble house, ate with him, and accepted his present.<sup>417</sup> Also, as mentioned earlier, when the Nawwab of Bareilly requested him to pray for the deceased members of his family buried in his private family graveyard, he first went to the public graveyard, prayed for the common Muslims buried there, and then went to the Nawwab's family graveyard to pray for his deceased relatives.<sup>418</sup> Similarly, he also tried to establish that no food was inferior and thus worthy only of the poor. At Sardhana some soldiers invited him for dinner. He accepted the invitation on the condition that they served him and his associates barley bread and lintel, food items considered suitable only for the poor.<sup>419</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad also tried to persuade the rich to come close to the poor and thus bridge the gap between them. At a place, for example, he called a landlord to be helpful to the poor peasants. Also, in Lucknow he asked the Prime Minister to be considerate to the poor people and not demolish their houses to acquire the land for his use or for the use of the state. In Allahabad, he instructed Sheikh Ghulam Ali, the *Raees Aazam* (Chief Dignitary) of the city, to help the peasants and petty *zamindars* by reducing their financial load.<sup>420</sup> Similarly, at Lucknow he promised Mendo Khan to pray for him on the condition that when blessed with affluence, he would feed the travelers who stayed in his area. Soon Mendo Khan was promoted in rank by the ruler of Lucknow Badshah Ghaziuddin Haider and became very rich. He then ordered his men to blow a trumpet morning and evening to call travelers staying in the area to come to his place and eat with him. All the travelers were treated

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<sup>417</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 289.

<sup>418</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 177.

<sup>419</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 157.

<sup>420</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 275-76.

as his guests. He served them the food that he ate, and also ate with them.<sup>421</sup>

But the best opportunity to implement the value of human equality came to him in Panjtar. When he established an Islamic state there, a classless society automatically emerged where a rich Muslim was not considered superior to his poor companions, nor did the poor despise the rich due to their wealth or status. Equality and fairness to all, as defined by the Islamic Shariah, became the code of life there. That is why, as stated earlier, when Amanullah Khan, who was a close associate of Sayyid Ahmad, once unjustly slapped a poor caretaker of horses named Lahori, Sayyid Ahmad referred the case to the Qazi and asked him to treat both of them equally and pass a verdict in accordance with the Islamic Shariah. It is also related that an old lady used to visit Sayyid Ahmad in Panjtar whom he called *Mother* by way of respect. The Mujahideen, rich and poor, chiefs and commoners, also addressed this poor lady by the title *Mother*. Sayyid Ahmad always addressed the Mujahideen by adding the word *Brother* before their names, irrespective of their status.

In Panjtar, in matters of responsibility, Sayyid Ahmad was no exception. He gladly worked with the Mujahideen in doing chores and performing assigned duties. Once when it started raining, the Mujahideen rushed to take the grain from outside in order to save it from getting wet. Sayyid Ahmad immediately joined them and helped them in it. On another occasion he saw a Mujahid grinding the flour. He sat down with him and gave him a hand. Also when the mosque at Panjtar was being extended, he worked with his associates to bring stones for the construction.<sup>422</sup>

#### 4. IRREGULAR MARRIAGE PRACTICES

Marriage, a tradition of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, had lost its simplicity, naturalness, and meaning ordained in

<sup>421</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 209-10.

<sup>422</sup> Mehr, *Shaheed*, p. 830.

Islam and become an occasion of pomp and show celebrated in the mood of competitiveness. Also, practices forbidden in Islam, such as dancing and singing, were openly observed and were considered essential parts of marriage ceremony.

### Prevalent Irregularities

Some of the irregularities observed on the occasion of marriage were very serious and could be classified as major sins and gross deviations from the Islamic Law. In Bengal and Assam, for example, Muslims kept more than four wives. Sometimes a Muslim took one wife and then kept as many other women as mistresses as he could afford. The society did not object to this practice and the children born of such extra-marital relationship were accepted in the society.<sup>423</sup> In some areas, under the influence of Hinduism, Muslims did not marry a relative, such as a cousin, and considered it a shameful act. Sometimes a person took two sisters from the same parents into marriage.<sup>424</sup> There was a genuine fear that if unchecked, the teachings of Islam would be lost beyond recognition.

Sayyid Ahmad took serious notice of the situation. Wherever he saw such irregularities, he condemned them and asked people who pledged allegiance to him to stay away from them. His simple teaching was: "In marriage, or on any other occasion of happiness or sorrow, do not do anything which could be categorized as Shirk or Bid'ah. In all matters follow the ways of the Prophet of Allah, peace be upon him."<sup>425</sup> Sayyid Ahmad's efforts brought tremendous changes in the societies he visited. Islamic practices gained respect again at all levels and Muslims started celebrating marriage in the simple way that Islam taught. A follower of Sayyid Ahmad reported such changes in his society in Lucknow in these words:

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<sup>423</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 323.

<sup>424</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 163.

<sup>425</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 212.

We have adopted a practice that in marriage the bride and the groom wear used clothes; we do not prepare even new clothes for them, although doing so is allowed [in Islam]. We do not arrange a feast on any occasion other than *Waleema* and *Aqeeqa* [which are Sunnah], nor do we attend any [feast which is not authenticated by the Shariah]. We do not perform any acts which are Bid'ah and are usually performed on the occasion of marriage, such as wearing decorative head cover (*Sehra*), or embedded bangles (*Kangna Bandhua*), all-night celebrations, singing marriage songs, or arranging programs of dancing girls. We do not attend the marriage celebrations in which such things are done.<sup>426</sup>

The upper class of society also responded to the call of Sayyid Ahmad in a positive way. Maulvi Farhat Husain, in-charge of the Azeemabad center in the absence of Maulana Wilayat Ali, performed the marriage of his children with great simplicity against the tradition of his family.<sup>427</sup> Similarly, Maulana Inayat Ali was married to Sayyida Amena, daughter of Sayyid Muhammad Musafir, in a very simple way. As Mehr writes, "In Bihar this was the first marriage which was performed according to the [injunctions of the] the Shariah in a very simple way."<sup>428</sup>

### Un-Islamic Polygamous Practices

Sayyid Ahmad also paid attention to other irregularities in marriage. Those who kept a woman as wife without marrying her were asked to immediately marry her and those who had more than four wives were asked to divorce the extra ones immediately. In Calcutta, where Sayyid Ahmad stayed for several months while on the way to Makkah for pilgrimage and where un-Islamic polygamous practices had gained a widespread acceptance, he

<sup>426</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. I, p. 213.

<sup>427</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 110.

<sup>428</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 288.

worked very hard to eradicate them. The response of the people was very encouraging. Sayyid Ahmad himself was moved to see such a positive social change occurring in Bengal. He became very hopeful about the future of Bengal and expressed his hopes in these words: "Those who remain alive will soon see how Allah changes the environment of Bengal and blesses the people here with His guidance."<sup>429</sup> In Hyderabad, Nawwab Mubarizud Dawla, brother of the ruler of the state, asked all women from his harem to marry the men of their choice and kept only four of them as his legal wives.<sup>430</sup>

### Dowry System

A very cruel practice leading to the exploitation of women of marriageable age was prevalent in the Frontier: the father of the girl demanded so heavy a dowry from the groom that many boys found it impossible to arrange. Thus while the grooms strove to earn the required money for the dowry, the brides stayed with the parents growing overage. When Sayyid Ahmad became the Amir and established an Islamic state in Panjtar, he immediately took notice of this un-Islamic practice, deputed reliable people to investigate such cases and arranged for the brides whose *Nikah* (Islamic marriage) was already performed to go home with their grooms at a convenient time without fulfilling the condition of dowry.

### Marriage of Muslim Women with Non-Muslims

In those days a trend had started that Muslim women entered into marriage with non-Muslim men, an act forbidden in Islam. Begam Hayatun Nisa, for example, lived with a Christian, Augustus Brooke, as his mistress. Sayyid Ahmad identified it as illegal according to the Islamic Law. Under the influence of Sayyid Ahmad's teachings, Hayatun Nisa repented from her irreligious marriage contract, separated from her Christian husband, and started a business to support herself. Her business turned out to be

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<sup>429</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 324.

<sup>430</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzashi*, pp. 170-71.



very prosperous. During Sayyid Ahmad's Hajj travel she entertained his caravan very enthusiastically at Banaras and thus fulfilled her desire to serve Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>431</sup> Her name appears several times in the history of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement. Similarly, Ochterlony, the first British Resident of India, had taken thirteen wives; one of them, Bibi Mahrattun Nissa Begum, was very prominent and was duly referred to in his will.<sup>432</sup> Sayyid Ahmad raised his voice against this practice and identified it as a deviation from the teaching of Islam.

### Remarriage of Widows

The most important contribution of Sayyid Ahmad in this area was revival of the practice of widow remarriage. Under the influence of Hinduism, Muslims of the nineteenth century India had developed a strong aversion to the remarriage of widows: it was considered a shameful act not befitting a woman of noble descent. Anybody who dared to enter into marriage with a widow was treated as a social outcast. Widow celibacy had become a norm among the Muslims, especially the socially distinct and religiously distinguished people. The whole society had developed a highly negative attitude towards the remarriage of widows. Sayyid Ahmad was pained to see an Islamic tradition discarded by Muslims so recklessly. He said once, "Those who consider widow marriage shameful do not unfortunately realize where ultimately this charge goes, for all the holy wives of the Prophet, except Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, were widows."<sup>433</sup>

The Indian Muslims of the time had, in fact, started believing that widow celibacy was an act appreciated in Islam. Nadwi quotes a Muslim scholar of the time who argued that even if a widow agreed to enter into a second marriage, her guardian Islamically had a right to stop her from it. Shah Abdul Aziz mentions this verdict in his famous book *Fatawa Aziziya* and refutes the

<sup>431</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 286.

<sup>432</sup> Dalrymple, pp. 66-67.

<sup>433</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 237. Also see p. 230.

arguments offered in its support. Widow marriage, nevertheless, remained a discarded tradition. In order to show the seriousness of the situation, a part of the said verdict is quoted below:

If a widow is able to attain such a high level of patience and self-restraint by virtue of her religious faith that she refuses to enter into second marriage due to [her sense of] self-respect and does not consider the option of remarriage favorably, because non-Muslims ridicule Muslim widows for remarrying as they consider remarriage an act practiced by backward people, such a widow will attain a high position in the sight of Allah.... In case a widow agrees to remarry but her guardian forbids her from it, this act of the guardian does not run contrary to the Shariah. If at a place or time an act is considered shameful or disrespectful, or is detested in the society, the scholars have considered going beyond the Shariah as better.<sup>434</sup>

For Sayyid Ahmad this situation was painful and alarming as an Islamic commandment was thus discarded and an un-Islamic practice was glorified instead. He soon realized that this evil was very deep rooted and had to be challenged much more seriously. He, therefore, decided to set a precedent. He proposed to the widow of his deceased brother Muhammad Ishaque and told the aunt of the lady: "You are fully aware that I do not want this marriage for pleasure; I simply want to revive a Sunnah [of remarriage of widow] and eradicate a practice of ignorance in India."<sup>435</sup> Although this family was very distinguished in religious knowledge and practice, it took several months for Sayyid Ahmad to obtain the acceptance of the lady after which the marriage was performed.

Sayyid Ahmad used this occasion to glorify the revival of a Sunnah as much as possible. He asked his wife to distribute sweets of her second marriage among women by herself and wrote letters

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<sup>434</sup> *Fatawa Azizi* by Shah Abdul Aziz, quoted by Nadwi in *Seerat*, vol. 1, pp. 231-32.

<sup>435</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 1, p. 237.

to Shah Abdul Aziz and his associates to popularize this event. Replies to his letter from different places showed that people taking Sayyid Ahmad as their spiritual mentor followed his example and the Sunnah of a widow's second marriage was adopted in many places. Shah Ismail gave his elderly sister Ruqaiyah in marriage to Maulana Abdul Hai. Although Maulana Ismail's sister was quite elderly and had crossed the age of marriage, she and her brother Shah Ismail and Maulana Abdul Hai did it to follow and establish a Sunnah. In Bihar, Maulana wilayat Ali "performed the second marriage of several widows in his family by himself."<sup>436</sup> When Qamruddin, a relative of Wilayat Ali, was killed in the Frontier, Wilayat Ali married his widow.<sup>1</sup> After the death of his first wife, Inayat Ali Azeemabadi took the daughter of Shah Muhammad Husain in marriage, who was a widow. Examples of the second marriage of widows in such respectable families greatly influenced the attitude of the society. Widow remarriage once again was fully accepted by Muslims and became a normal practice. The result can be best ascertained now as the remarriage of widows in the present Muslim society in India is practiced whenever necessary with full social acceptance.

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<sup>436</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, P. 47.



## Chapter Five

### **Political Contribution Creation of an Islamic State**

Saiyed Ahmad Bareilly [Barelvi] aimed not to restore the Mughals or the Mughal aristocracy, but to create a facsimile of the early Muslim community on the borders of India.

- P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*

### Introduction

The Movement led by Sayyid Ahmad evolved through different stages: from self-discipline and rectification (*Tazkiyae nafs*), to Da'wah (Social reform), to Jihad, and ultimately to the creation of an Islamic state. When Sayyid Ahmad gained power in an area in the Frontier, he lost no time in implementing the Islamic Shariah there to the extent he could. We must not forget that Sayyid Ahmad did not fight a war to capture a piece of land and directly establish his rule there. He rather tried to influence the Muslim rulers in the Frontier to implement the Shariah in their states. He, of course, made military advances in some areas to take them in control, but in all such expeditions his aim was to curb the growing insurgency there. He then wished to hand over the conquered places to deserving local chiefs who could rule there Islamically.

### 1. TOWARD CREATING AN ISLAMIC STATE

Thus, a loose structure of an Islamic state emerged in the Frontier under the influence of Sayyid Ahmad where the rulers of some states willingly opted for the adoption of the Islamic Shariah. Although the life span of this Islamic state was less than a year, we are surprised to see how complete and full-fledged it was in form as well as in

spirit and how closely it resembled the state established by the early Companions of the Prophet in Madinah.

### Election of the Head of the State

For an Islamic state to function efficiently a person has to be its head. He has to be a Muslim of sound mind and heart who sincerely follows Islamic teachings in his personal life. He should also have sound Islamic knowledge, wisdom and understanding so as to be able to solve the problems emerging in the society. In addition, he should be brave and courageous so as to be able to meet challenges faced by the state and should be able to keep his companions and subjects united under his rule. Also, he should be a person of such integrity and piety who neither desires to become the leader nor tries to shun the responsibility of managing the affairs of the state, if it is entrusted to him. Since all these qualities were found in Sayyid Ahmad, he was elected as *Amirul Momineen*, the Leader of the faithful, in an open meeting of Muslims in the Frontier. All who were present offered Bai'ah at his hands and the others flocked in large numbers later to pledge allegiance to him. The scholars from India in particular and Muslims in general also welcomed his election as the Leader of the faithful.

### The Headquarters

The Islamic state needed a central place as its headquarters from where the affairs of the state could be managed. Sayyid Ahmad took Panjtar as his headquarters which was a very suitable place for this purpose. It was a safe place in the Frontier as the surrounding mountains naturally protected it. Its ruler Fatah Khan Panjtari who, was a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad and had offered a covenant in public to implement the Islamic Law in his state, had himself offered to host Sayyid Ahmad. In addition, the community there was that of Muslims. Sayyid Ahmad very well knew the residents since he had been living there for quite some time. From all these points of view Panjtar was the most suitable choice.

## 2. STATE DEPARTMENTS

The state defined its aim in clear terms in accordance with the guidelines set by the Islamic Shariah - to take Allah as Sovereign and to guarantee people their rights and make them responsible of their duties in accordance with the Islamic Law. The state thus took upon itself the responsibility to ensure peace and justice to all in its jurisdiction. For functional purpose, three main departments were established to make the state run efficiently: the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary. All these departments identified their areas of work in the light of the teachings of the Shariah and in a short time started functioning, as we will see below, in full-fledged form.

### A. THE LEGISLATURE

The legislative body was responsible for providing laws to the state to conduct its regular functions and meet emergent legal situations.

#### General Structure

The sources of directives were the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet. For this purpose the Islamic scholars were given the responsibility to draft laws for the state to function and to ensure that nothing was ever done contrary to the Shariah. Luckily, a good number of Islamic scholars, both from Sayyid Ahmad's Indian associates and local Ulema, were available in the Frontier to guide this newly-born Islamic state in this matter.

#### Civil and Criminal Laws

In general, the laws provided by the Islamic Shariah served as the backbone of the judiciary. The well-known Islamic laws were adopted as they were. But as the local society fostered some traditional customs which were un-Islamic, laws had to be made to control them. Accordingly, such un-Islamic practices were declared as illegal and, therefore, punishable. For example, to delay the marriage of girls practiced by parents for getting dowries from the

bridegrooms, to run away from one area to another after committing a crime and thus becoming safe by seeking refuge there, to forcibly capture the property of others and drive them out of their areas, to bathe naked in the river, and to mourn the death of a person in an un-Islamic way were declared illegal and were forbidden.

It is to be noted that in order to avoid any misunderstanding regarding the nature of a custom traditionally practiced by the local people, Qazi Mohahmmad Habban, who was an Islamic scholar from the Frontier, was appointed as *Qaziul Quzat* (the Chief Justice). He prepared a set of laws for the area with the help of the local as well as Indian scholars about punishments for different kinds of transgression. He also made laws for the people to pay Ushr and Zakah and developed guidelines for the officials and the public to meet other practical situations.<sup>437</sup>

In the beginning, a person found guilty of bathing naked in the river was fined, but the punishment was later changed from fine to flogging. In the beginning a person grazing his cattle in the fields of others was fined on the basis of the number of the cattle, but later such a person was asked to pay an amount of money that justifiably compensated the loss of the property. The male members deliberately missing obligatory prayers received lashes; Amaan Khan Kunjpuri was responsible for flogging them. Women received punishment inside family quarters; Sayyid Ahniad himself punished them. Records show that two women were punished this way, one for neglecting obligatory prayers and the other for falsely declaring herself a widow. A report shows that in the beginning a landlord (*Khandeh*) had to pay the fine of two rupees for deliberately missing obligatory prayers, a cultivator who owned some land (*Malik*) one rupee, and a commoner half-a-rupee.<sup>438</sup>

In a war situation the Mujahideen were instructed to follow certain rules: they were allowed to fight with those who fought

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<sup>437</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 212.

<sup>438</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 44-45.



with them and grant peace to those who asked for peace.<sup>439</sup> It was declared illegal in a battle to take as booty the property of anyone except of those Muslims who rebelled against the Imam, or of the non-Muslims who took arms against him.<sup>440</sup> Looting and plundering in a battle was declared illegal. In the Battle of Hooti, Mardan, a group of the local people defending the fort sought peace and protection. All of them were escorted to a safe area and were allowed to take their personal belongings and arms with them. In the same battle Rasool Khan, brother of the ruler of Mardan Ahmad Khan, surrendered with the rest of the fighters and asked for amnesty. All of them were given full protection of life and property. Later, a few of the residents of Mardan complained that some local Muslims from the Muslim army had taken their property after they were granted amnesty. Maulana Ismail immediately investigated the matter and returned all such articles to the owners.<sup>441</sup> To indulge in tribal feuds and unjustly side with one's own tribesmen was also declared un-Islamic and therefore illegal.<sup>442</sup>

The Islamic Law remained the main source of legal guidance and even the Head of the state was not above it. On more than one occasion, Sayyid Ahmad himself revised his decisions when it was pointed out to him that the Islamic Law required a different verdict on the issue. For example, as stated earlier, he once allowed the residents of an area at their request not to pay Ushr for the time-being so as to let them gradually accept and obey the laws of Islam. When it was pointed out to him that even an Imam was not entitled to do that, he immediately took back his decision.<sup>443</sup>

For the distribution of the booty acquired in a war, the Islamic injunction was followed. For example, the booty earned in the Battle of Zaida, which was fought against Yar Muhammad Khan, was divided into five parts: one part was deposited in the Baitul-

<sup>439</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 74.

<sup>440</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol 2, p. 239.

<sup>441</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, pp. 236-39.

<sup>442</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 147.

<sup>443</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 86.

Maal (Public Treasury) and four parts were distributed among the soldiers. An un-mounted soldier received one share while a mounted soldier was given two shares, in accordance with the well-known Islamic injunction, *lir rijale seham wa lil faris sehamaan*.<sup>444</sup>

## B. THE EXECUTIVE

In order to implement the laws of the Shariah and make the Islamic state function effectively, a strong and full-fledged executive body was developed at Panjtar. It gradually grew into separate departments to perform all practical functions of the state. We shall discuss them separately below to assess their efficiency on one hand and their adherence to the Shariah on the other.

### The Advisory Council (*Majlise Shoura*)

There was an Advisory Council (*Majlise Shoura*) to assist Sayyid Ahmad as the Amirul Momineen. It consisted of people of wisdom, experience, knowledge, and piety. Mehr mentions the names of twenty-two persons who served as members of the Shoura on different occasions.<sup>445</sup> All important matters were discussed in the Shoura and decided on the basis of the teachings of Islam. Sayyid Ahmad consulted the members of the Shoura before taking any decision relating to matters of administrative nature. As Mehr writes, "On all important occasions the persons available from the group mentioned above were called for consultation and a decision was taken after seeking their opinion."<sup>446</sup>

Other responsible persons among the companions of Sayyid Ahmad also followed the practice of consulting their advisors before taking a decision on matters of import. Shah Ismail, for example, used to consult his advisors in important matters. He once wrote in a letter that he sent from Amb to Sayyid Ahmad: "I have strong hope that my associates in general and advisors in particular

<sup>444</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, P. 149.

<sup>445</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 41-42. Sheikh Wali Muhammad was added after the death of Muhammad Yusuf Phulati.

<sup>446</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 42.

will fully agree with this proposal.”<sup>447</sup> Similarly, Risaldar Abdul Hameed Khan, the Commander of the cavalry, always consulted responsible companions in important matters of administration. He was posted at Shewa and was responsible for touring the area under the jurisdiction of the Islamic state to maintain law and order. At times he had to take a decision on the spot about an urgent issue. Sayyid Ahmad had appointed a group of eleven advisors (Shoura) to help him, whose names have been researched and recorded by Mehr.<sup>448</sup>

### **The Treasury (*Baitul Maal*)**

In order to meet the financial needs of the Islamic state, a Baitul Maal (Public Treasury) was established along the directives of the Shariah which was responsible for managing practically all incomes and expenditures of the state.

Every soldier in the army was given at least three pairs of clothes and two pairs of shoes annually; in case of a special need, a Mujahid received additional clothes (or another pair of shoes). In winter additional warm clothes were provided to them. Every Thursday they received soap to wash their clothes. The sick were provided with medicine. Small amounts of money were also sent to the families of such Mujahideen who did not have any source of income back home to support their dependents.<sup>449</sup> The Baitul Maal also helped the Muslims in India who wanted to join the Mujahideen in the Frontier but did not have money to meet travel expenses.<sup>450</sup>

The Baitul Maal was also responsible for providing rations to the Mujahideen. In the early stage, grain was bought and distributed among the Mujahideen. Later, when grain was collected in Ushr, it was sent to a place called Munai, where it was ground to flour under the supervision of Sayyid Hamid Ali Jhanjhanwi and a small group of the Mujahideen deputed under him there for this

<sup>447</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol. 2, p. 47.

<sup>448</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 40.

<sup>449</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 28.

<sup>450</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 65.

purpose. They sent the flour to Panjtar where it was distributed among the Mujahideen according to a fixed measure. In the beginning Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf Phulati was in-charge for the distribution of daily rations. After him Meer Amanat Ali was made responsible for it. Then Sheikh Abdul Wahhab Lakhnawi was entrusted with this duty. Two to three other Mujahideen helped him when the load of work increased.<sup>451</sup>

Other expenditures of the state were also met with the Baitul Maal. The main heads of expenditure were maintenance of the Office of the Records and Correspondence, buying and manufacturing ammunitions, travels of the Mujahideen for different purposes and hosting the guests. On two occasions, when about 2,000 to 2,500 scholars and chiefs assembled at Panjtar for consultation, the expenditure of the feast was paid from the Baitul Maal.<sup>452</sup> For a few months the salary of the soldiers who were hired due to special circumstances was also paid from the Baitul Maal.<sup>453</sup> Also, there was a regiment of the cavalry in the army and there were camels as well. The expenses for feeding these animals were also borne by the Baitul Maal.

Sayyid Ahmad had set up centers in India for collecting money for his mission. The largest of such centers was at Delhi which was managed by Shah Mohammad Ishaque and Shah Yaqoob. Money was generally sent to Sayyid Ahmad through *Hundi*.<sup>454</sup> Trustworthy messengers of Sayyid Ahmad also transacted money in person.<sup>455</sup> Money was also sent with the group of the Mujahideen who traveled from India to the Frontier. A great care was taken to make sure that the system of money transaction remained a secret. For this purpose Sayyid Ahmad wrote letters about it mostly in Arabic. Also he mentioned in such letters neither his name nor the name of the addressee and never mentioned the

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<sup>451</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>452</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 63-64.

<sup>453</sup> Nadwi, *Seerat*, vol 2, pp. 80-81.

<sup>454</sup> Hundi traders transferred money through their agents to an appointed place against a service charge.

<sup>455</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 53.

money or the amount in clear words. Sometimes he wrote the whole letter in code words which were incomprehensible to a stranger.<sup>456</sup>

The Baitul Maal was supported by 1) donation, 2) war booty, 3) Ushr, 4) and Zakah. The presents in cash or kind offered to Sayyid Ahmad by his followers for his personal use or for the support of his mission fall in the first category. Such donations were sent mainly from India by the persons of means among the followers of Sayyid Ahmad. Donations also included the financial help offered by the common Muslims in India. An appeal for donations was made to Muslims in general, especially in the mosques, in response to which the devotees gave money to help the Mujahideen in the Frontier. At workplaces Muslim workers gave regular donations on monthly basis. Also, clay pots were kept in the houses of the Muslims in which a handful of grain was put every day at the time of cooking. After a week or so, the grain was sold and the money earned by it was given to the person responsible for collection in that locality to send it to Sayyid Ahmad in the Frontier.<sup>457</sup>

But because this mode of income was inconsistent and uncertain and was, due to the cumbersome exchange system at that time, delayed in reaching the Mujahideen, they sometimes suffered great financial difficulties in the Frontier. At one time, only a handful of barley was the daily provision that each Mujahid received. When even that small quantity of grain was not available, they lived on the boiled leaves of the trees. Once they worked on wages in the local sugarcane fields with the permission of Sayyid Ahmad. On one such occasion of hardship, the wives of Sayyid Ahmad, who were staying in Sindh then, sent a sum of ten thousand rupees to support the Mujahideen in the Frontier.<sup>458</sup>

<sup>456</sup> Mehr cites examples of such writing in *Jama'at*, p. 54.

<sup>457</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 62.

<sup>458</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 62-64. Money was probably presented to them by the followers of Sayyid Ahmad which they gladly spent in the path of Allah. Mehr mentions on the same page in *Jama'at* that they had on an earlier occasion sold their jewelry and sent money to Sayyid Ahmad to help him meet the expenses of his jihad work.

The second source of income for the Baitul Maal was the booty. One-fifth of the booty was deposited in the Baitul Maal according to the injunctions of the Shariah and the remaining four parts were distributed among the Mujahideen. For instance, after the battle of Zaida the booty collected was estimated to be worth 25,000 rupees, out of which the booty worth 5,000 rupees was deposited in the Baitul Maal. Most of the Mujahideen also deposited their share in the Baitul Maal.<sup>459</sup>

The third source of income to the Baitul Maal was Ushr.<sup>460</sup> When the chiefs in the Frontier elected Sayyid Ahmad as Amirul Momineen, they decided to pay Ushr to him so that he could meet the expenses of the Center at Panjtar and dispose off its financial obligations smoothly. This system, however, remained quite loose in the beginning. After sometime, Qazi Sayyid Mohammad Habban made a tour of the area and regularized the collection of Ushr and Zakah. Collectors of Ushr and Zakah were then deputed at important places who sent grain, or money earned by selling it, to the Baitul Maal at Panjtar. This made the income of the Baitul Maal steady.

The collection of Ushr was managed in an efficient way. Mehr mentions the names of seven persons who were deputed in different areas to organize this work. These are the names, however, that Mehr could recover from the documents available. As he mentions, there must have been many more persons responsible for the collection of Ushr. They kept an account of the Ushr that they collected. Each of them had several Mujahideen to assist him, ranging from two to ten, depending on the need.<sup>461</sup>

Zakah was also collected by the Mujahideen and deposited in the Baitul Maal. Although details about it are not available in the source books, there are, however, references to it. For example,

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<sup>459</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 28.

<sup>460</sup> Ushr is a share of income from crops given by Muslims to the Imam or Head of the Islamic state to meet the expenses of the state. For further details a proper book on this topic may be checked.

<sup>461</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 39.

When Qazi Habban made a tour of the area to regularize the implementation of the Islamic Law, he made an arrangement for the collection of Zakah along with Ushr. As indicated, the Mujahideen responsible for the collection kept separate accounts of Zakah and Ushr.<sup>462</sup>

### The Secretariat (*Munshi Khana*)

There was a well-developed and well-organized secretariat located at Panjtar that managed and maintained official records and correspondence. It was headed by Munshi Muhammadi Ansari. According to Mehr, there were at least seven persons who officially held the *qalamdan* (regular official status); two additional helpers worked there without the *qalamdan*. On occasions, others were called for help; Mehr mentions names of four such Mujahideen.<sup>463</sup> The number of persons working in the Secretariat shows the importance of this office. This office discharged the following services:

1. It was responsible for writing letters for Sayyid Ahmad and Shah Ismail to the chiefs and rulers of the area relating to an issue or for Da'wah purpose. Letters containing important information and necessary instructions about state affairs were also written to persons responsible for work in the Frontier as well as in India. Also, Sayyid Ahmad wrote personal letters to his associates and family members. Probably, this office helped other Mujahideen to write letters to their families in India as well.
2. The Secretariat was also responsible for writing government circulars, and making as many copies of them as needed. For making additional copies of circulars, additional hands from the Mujahideen were temporarily engaged.
3. At least one secretariat official accompanied each army which was sent for Jihad. He helped the commander in

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<sup>462</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 39.

<sup>463</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 46-47.

establishing written communication with the enemies, allies, and the headquarters at Panjtar. He also sent regular reports containing necessary details of the battle to the headquarters to keep it posted.

4. All important details related to the Movement, such as information about battles, dispatch of emissaries, visitors to the headquarters, income and expenditure, and in-coming letters and their replies, were recorded in a register with dates on a monthly basis. The register was changed every month.
5. In the record room were also kept copies of the sermons delivered by Maulana Shah Ismail. These sermons were about one hundred and were delivered usually in Friday and Eid prayers. Quite obviously, a staff of the Secretariat recorded these sermons. Some religious books were also kept in the record room simply because such books were not easily available in the Frontier: a hand-written copy of Shah Waliyullah's Tashimate Ilahiya and a copy of Mishkat, the famous book of Hadith, were among them.

Correspondence was handled with extreme care and caution. Every letter was carefully checked by Munshi Muhammadi Ansari, in-charge of the Secretariat, and then stamped and dispatched. If a letter was urgent, Sayyid Ahmad wrote on it in his handwriting *Kalimatullah Kafi* (Sufficient is the name of Allah). Sayyid Ahmad's seal was kept under the custody of Shah Ismail. If Sayyid Ahmad directly dictated a letter, the word *Huzoor* was written in a corner of it to differentiate it from those letters that were dictated by Maulana Shah Ismail. Shah Ismail's letters carried the symbolic word *Maulana* in a corner. Letters containing state secrets were written in code words, examples of which may be seen in Mehr's *Jama'ate Mujahideen*, on pages 52-55. There were official seals of Sayyid Ahmad and Shah Ismail. There was also a record room;



Ghazi Khan, Shahamat Khan and some other Mujahideen were deputed to guard it.<sup>464</sup>

### **Department of Calling to Virtue and Forbidding from Evil (Amr bil ma'ruf wa nahi 'anil munkar)**

After the Islamic state was established in the Frontier under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad, this department received due share of his attention. Mulla Qutbuddeen Nangarhari was made in-charge of this department. Thirty gunmen were put under his command. He toured the area with his soldiers to make sure that nothing forbidden in Islam was being practiced anywhere in the society. As Mehr writes, "In a very short time the whole area witnessed a radical change, people started following the etiquettes of the Shariah and feuds and clashes came to an end. All disputes were settled in accordance with the injunctions of the Shariah. If ever a soldier of Mulla Qutubudeen went to a village for any work, the villagers rushed to inform him that there was nobody there who missed regular prayers."<sup>465</sup>

### **The Army**

The Mujahideen who joined Sayyid Ahmad at his call for Jihad soon formed an organized army. When he set out for the Frontier, Sayyid Ahmad formally distributed them at Gwalior into five units. This order was maintained during the journey to the Frontier and afterward as well. Details about these divisions of the army are as follows:

#### **1. Special Battalion: (*Jama'ate Khaas*)**

This battalion stayed in the middle of the army and was considered as the main part of it. Sayyid Ahmad used to stay in this division. Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Phulati was the first commander of this unit. After his death Maulvi Mohammad Hasan

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<sup>464</sup> The information furnished in this section is taken from Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 46-49.

<sup>465</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 38.

took over. When he met martyrdom, Mian Ziauddeen Phulati was appointed as its commander.

## **2. Front Battalion: (*Muqaddamatul Jaish*)**

This unit used to stay in the front while the Muslim army was on the move. Maulana Shah Ismail was its commander. On the eve of encounters Shah Ismail rarely stayed with this battalion, as on such occasions he was usually given the command of the whole army. In his absence, Sayyid Rustam Ali took the charge.

## **3. Right-wing Battalion (*Maimana*)**

In a battle this unit fought from the right side. Its first commander was Amjad Khan who later returned to India for some work. As Mehr writes, it is not known who was appointed as the commander of this unit after him.

## **4. Left-wing Battalion (*Maisara*)**

Sayyid Mohammad Yaqoob, nephew of Sayyid Ahmad, was the first commander of this unit. It fought in the battle from the left side. Sheikh Buddhan took the command of this unit when Mohammad Yaqoob was asked by Sayyid Ahmad to stay at Tonk. Sheikh Buddhan laid his life in the Battle of Akawra. After him Mian Salahuddeen became the commander. Finally, Maulana Ahmadullah Nagpuri took the charge and remained in command until the Battle of Balakot.

## **5. Rear Battalion (*Saaqatul Jaish*)**

This unit used to move with carriages which transported luggage. Its first commander was Allah Baksh Mawranwi. It used to start first and usually reached the destination last. Peer Khan, Sheikh Hasan Ali, Mohammad Khan Khairabadi, and Ibrahim Khan Khairabadi remained the commanders of this unit successively.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 23-24.

### 6. Unit of the Cavalry (Ghursawaar Dasta)

There was also a small battalion of the cavalry in the army which was given under the command of Abdul Hameed Khan. For this reason he was known as *Risaldar* in the army. After his martyrdom, Hamza Ali Khan became the commander of this unit.

In the beginning, there were about 550 Mujahideen in the army, who were divided into five units. Later on, a large number of Qandharis joined Sayyid Ahmad during his journey to the Frontier. They were divided in three new units which were given under the command of Lal Muhammad Lal, Mulla Qutubuddin Nangarhari, and Jafar Khan Qandhari. The ninth unit of the army consisted of forty soldiers. These were from the 200 paid soldiers who were relieved of their duties after two months, forty of whom decided to stay with the Islamic army without any remuneration. This unit was given under the command of Mirza Ahmad Beg Punjabi.<sup>467</sup> And then, as mentioned above, there was a battalion of the cavalry, thus bringing the number of the divisions to ten.<sup>468</sup>

The number of the Mujahideen increased as new people kept on coming from India to the Frontier to join Sayyid Ahmad. However, their number in the Frontier never became more than 2,500 at any time<sup>469</sup>. But committed, disciplined, and selfless as they were, they prevailed over their opponents who were superior to them in number and resources.

The arms commonly used in the Islamic army were guns which were used those days in the battlefield. Other weapons used by the Muslim army were Qarabeen, Zamburak, and Shaheen. Qarabeen was a short gun with relatively wide opening. Zamburak was a small cannon and was, therefore, easy to move from one place to another. Shaheen was a firearm larger than a gun and smaller than

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<sup>467</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 24.

<sup>468</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>469</sup> The local Muslims joined the Mujahideen at the time of a battle, which increased their number from time to time. In the Battle of Mayar, for example, the total number of the Muslim soldiers was 3,500.

a cannon.<sup>470</sup> The Islamic army captured large cannons in the battles of Zaida and Mayar which became an important addition to their stock of arms. After settling down at Panjtar, the Islamic army established a factory there in which ammunition was manufactured for cannons. The Mujahideen also used swords, spears, sharp-edged sickles with wooden handles called *Gandasa*, and daggers. Long wooden ladders were also prepared to climb the walls of a fort in a battle.<sup>471</sup>

There were different physical fitness centers in which the Mujahideen were given military training. They did different kinds of physical exercise and practiced military skills in those centers. Occasionally, horse races were also organized. Sayyid Ahmad himself attended the training centers and participated in the exercises. For weeks he practiced a duel with Risaldar Abdul Hameed Khan in which both were on horseback and used spears. It was magnificent and was watched with admiration by the Mujahideen. Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla writes: "Horse racing, fencing, spear handling, using cannons and guns, practicing martial games, [learning tactics of] conquering forts and subjugating enemies: with this aim, all kinds of arms were gathered."<sup>472</sup> In order to keep the spirit of God-consciousness strong in the Mujahideen, a poem by Khurram Balhowri, *Jihadiya*, was sung right in the heat of the battle.

### The Flags

There were three main flags and on all of them the verses of the Qur'an were beautifully embroidered in silk thread. These flags were named as *Sibghatullah*, *Moti'ullah*, and *Fathullah*. *Sibghatullah* was the flag of the Special Division on which were embroidered the last verses (*ruku'*) of the first book (*para*) of the Qur'an in red silk thread. Abul Hasan Nascirabadi carried it in the battle. This flag was taken out only in a battle in which Sayyid Ahmad participated.

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<sup>470</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 30.

<sup>471</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, pp. 30-31 and 34.

<sup>472</sup> *Wasaya*, quoted by Mehr in *Jama'at*, p. 32.

*Moti'ullah* was carried by Ibrahim Khan Khairabadi. On it was embroidered the last portion (*ruku'*) of *Surah Al-Baqara* in red silk thread. *Fatmullah* was carried in the battle by Mohammad Arab and later by Farjallah Shaidi. On it were embroidered verses from *Surah al-Saf*. There must have been some other flags. These three, however, were the main flags.<sup>473</sup> When the flags of the army were unfurled, the Qur'anic verses embroidered on them reminded the Mujahideen of their sublime aim, strengthened their faith and enhanced their enthusiasm.

### **The Medical Center (*Shafa Khana*)**

There was a well-developed Medical Center in the army. Professionals well experienced in medicine and surgery worked in it. These persons also fought in the battle, if the occasion allowed. That is why some of them achieved martyrdom in the battlefield. Some persons who were experts in surgery - performing different kinds of operation, taking out bullets from the body, and stitching wounds - had joined Sayyid Ahmad from India.<sup>474</sup> Mehr mentions the names of Kareem Baksh, Noor Baksh, Abdur Rahim, Haji Jani Amethwi, Jan Mohammad Jarrah Rampuri, and Abdur Rahim Jarrah Jansthi who worked in this center. He mentions that more persons must have been working in this center, but their names are not known. Some other Mujahideen provided post-surgical nursing services. They also treated the sick Mujahideen in normal situations. Mehr mentions the names of the persons who were responsible for nursing. Medicines were prepared locally, but some special medicines were imported from India.<sup>475</sup>

### **The Store (*Tosha Khana*)**

There was a store in the army to keep grain for ration, arms, clothes, and other necessary articles for the Mujahideen. It was called *Tosha Khana*. It was from here that daily rations for the Mujahideen were distributed. The Mujahideen were given clothes

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<sup>473</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 34.

<sup>474</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 29.

<sup>475</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 29.

for daily use, clothes for winter, shoes on an annual basis, and soap for washing clothes on a weekly basis. These articles were stocked in the store. This store was also used to keep arms. The followers of Sayyid Ahmad sent different kinds of arms, such as dagger, sword, pistol, and gun through the Mujahideen who came to the Frontier to join him. The local chiefs also presented arms to Sayyid Ahmad. Sayyid Ahmad also bought different kinds of arms. As Mehr writes, "Arms were kept in the *Tosha Khana* of Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad]. When needed, these arms were distributed [among the Mujahideen]." <sup>476</sup> The Mujahideen also collected different articles as booty in the battles that they won, a part of which was deposited in Baitul Maal. All such things, again, were kept in the store.

### **The Stable (*Astabal*)**

The Islamic army also had a stable to keep horses. As there was a unit of the cavalry in the Islamic army, there were a number of horses to take care of, which required a separate arrangement: accommodation and attendants. Camels were also used in the army to transport luggage, especially in the sandy areas, and there must have been a proper place to keep them. When the Mujahideen went back to Panjtar after Sayyid Ahmad's martyrdom, the camels were an important part of the Army. Maulana Wali Muhammad, the then Amir of the Mujahideen, ordered that the camels be brought to Panjtar from Nandheyar as the climate of Nandheyar was quite cold and therefore not suitable for the camels. At the time of the Battle of Zaida the number of the camels had reached up to eighty. Later several of them died and only ten to twelve survived. <sup>477</sup> At one time there was also an elephant in the army. Several Mujahideen were responsible to look after the animals.

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<sup>476</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 30.

<sup>477</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzash*, p. 46.

### Water Porters (*Saqa*)

There was a group of the Mujahideen who performed the duty of water porters (*saqa*). As it is obvious, they were responsible for supplying water to the Mujahideen in the battlefield. <sup>478</sup>

## C. THE JUDICIARY

The Judiciary held a revered position in the Islamic state at Panjar and resolved legal issues in the light of the guidelines of the Islamic Law. Important details relating to its structure and way of functioning are as follows.

### General Structure

The Islamic judges (*Quzaat*, plural of *Qazi*) were deputed by the state at different places and their jurisdictions were specified. People with legal issues approached these judges who helped them resolve their disputes in the light of Islamic injunctions. There was then a Chief Justice (*Qaziul Quzaat*) who supervised the work of the Judges and kept the judiciary organized under the Islamic judicial system. As mentioned earlier, first Sayyid Habban was appointed as Qaziul Quzat, but after his martyrdom in the Battle of Mardan this position was given to Maulvi Muhammad Ramadan.<sup>479</sup> If a party was not satisfied with the verdict of a judge, the Chief Justice (Qaziul Quzat) was to be approached. The whole system was, finally, under the supervision of Sayyid Ahmad for administrative purposes because he was the Head of the State and was responsible to make sure that each part of the state was functioning properly. It is relevant to mention here that Maulana Abdul Hai Budhanwi was the first person to be appointed as the Qazi of the Islamic army who was also given the responsibility of assigning different duties to the Mujahideen.<sup>480</sup> *Muftis* (the Islamic Jurists) were also appointed at

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<sup>478</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 34.

<sup>479</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 37.

<sup>480</sup> Nadwi, *Karwan*, p. 15.

suitable places to guide Muslims in matters relating to Islamic laws.

### Guidelines

After his election as the Amirul Momineen, Sayyid Ahmad organized the Judiciary in a more formal way. In an announcement of general nature, he gave a guideline to the people of the area how the Judiciary would function. He wrote in a circular:

1. If there is a dispute between two parties, people should not try to settle it themselves. The matter should be referred to the Qazi of the area. Also, it is not proper for anybody to interfere in legal matters.
2. Whatever a person has to say about his case, he should say it clearly in front of the Qazi. If he does not do so, there is a possibility that the Qazi makes a mistake and, thus, injustice is unknowingly done to a party. Such a situation will be very displeasing to Allah and His Prophet.<sup>481</sup>
3. If a soldier of the Islamic army gives an unjust order to anybody without the approval of the Qazi of the area, the Qazi will punish him. If the Islamic judges (*Quzat*) commit a mistake, Sayyid Ahmad as the Head of the state will do the reprimanding. Whoever wants an order to be passed and circulated as law should do so through the Qazi."<sup>482</sup>

The Judiciary was duly empowered to discharge its duties and ensure that justice was granted to one and all. It was manned by capable and God-fearing people who worked in full accordance with the injunctions of the Shariah.

The Islamic state established by Sayyid Ahmad was unfortunately destroyed by the local chiefs of the Frontier and their allies, which has been covered in Chapter One of this book, but it is very heartening to see that Sayyid Ahmad was successful in establishing an Islamic state which so closely followed in structure and spirit the model of the early Islamic state established by the

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<sup>481</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 43.

<sup>482</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 44.



rightly-guided Caliphs. It should also be appreciated that even after his martyrdom his followers worked tirelessly to implement the Islamic Law in the areas under their influence. This effort, as a matter of fact, continued for more than a century in spite of fierce opposition. The story of the tireless efforts of Sayyid Ahmad's deputies in this direction is the subject of the next chapter.



## Chapter Six

### The Movement Continues

It [Sayyid Ahmad's Movement] has three times organized great tribal confederacies, each of which cost British India a war. One Government after another has declared it to be a source of permanent danger to our Rule, yet all our efforts to extirpate it have failed. It still continues the center toward which the hopes alike of our disloyal subjects and of our enemies beyond the Frontier turn.

- William Hunter: *Our Indian Musalman*

## Introduction

In the previous chapters an attempt was made to cover the depth and extent of the influence that the Movement led by Sayyid Ahmad exercised on the contemporary Muslim society as well as on the society of the future. His call had such a power and appeal that hundreds of thousands of people joined his mission and adopted the pure and purposeful life required by Islam. His popularity rose to the extent that "oftentimes crowds consisting of as many as ten thousand persons took oath of allegiance at his hands in a single day."<sup>483</sup> It has been related on the strength of authentic sources that within the short period of five to six years almost thirty-hundred-thousand persons repented from past sins and offered Bai'ah to him while during his way to the Hajj another hundred thousand persons pledged oath of allegiance at his hands.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>483</sup> *Risalah Tis'a* by Wilayat Ali, quoted by Nadwi in *Reformer*, p. 49.

<sup>484</sup> *Risalah Tis'a*, quoted by Nadwi in *Reformer*, p. 49. Abdul Ahad also gives the same number on the authority of *Sawaneh Ahmadi*, as quoted in *Reformer*, p. 48. He also adds that about forty thousand Hindus and other Non-Muslims accepted Islam at the invitation of Sayyid Ahmad.

## Popularity of the Movement

Due to the influence of Sayyid Ahmad, innovations and un-Islamic practices were uprooted and authentic teachings of Islam were established. Wilayat Ali acknowledges the extraordinary influence that Sayyid Ahmad exerted on the people who came in contact with him: "Whosoever ...takes the bi'ah [Bai'ah] to the Saiyid [Sayyid Ahmad], he instantly feels an aversion to the world and a liking for the hereafter."<sup>485</sup> Admiration for the Shariah, observance of the obligatory duties of Islam, and love for Sunnah soon became the distinguishing marks of the companions of Sayyid Ahmad. Old mosques were once again populated by eager worshippers. New mosques were constructed in large numbers. Religious schools (*Madrasa*) and study circles came to life again. People started learning to recite the Qur'an correctly and the practice of memorizing the Qur'an was ardently revived in the society.

Similarly, new religious books were written and old ones were reprinted and became available even in remote villages. Questions about the permissible and the forbidden (*Halaal* and *Haraam*) became popular topics even among the commoners. Sayyid Ahmad's reform Movement changed the situation so radically that, in the words of Karamat Ali Jonepuri, "now men and women belonging to every caste and class perform prayers punctually....Even women in villages and towns are memorizing the Qur'an."<sup>486</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad was blessed with martyrdom on May 6, 1831, but his deputies continued to carry out his missionary work in practically all the fields that he had covered during his lifetime. In the field of preaching, their success in establishing the Shariah has been acknowledged by Nawwab Siddique Hasan Khan of Bhopal in these words: "His spiritual successors swept the country clean of all innovations and polytheistic thoughts and practices and made the

<sup>485</sup> *Risalae Tis'a*, quoted by Nadwi in *Reformer*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>486</sup> *Risalae Tis'a*, quoted by Nadwi in *Reformer*, p. 50. Also *Makashifate Rahmat*, by Karamat Ali Jonepuri, quoted in *Reformer* on pp. 50-51.

masses betake the path of the Book [the Qur'an] and the Sunnah."<sup>487</sup> Abdul Ahad writes on the authority of *Sawaneh Ahmadi* about the unbelievably wide range of Sayyid Ahmad's influence: "The number of those who took the oath at the hands of Sayyid Ahmad's disciples and their spiritual successors exceeds tens of millions."<sup>488</sup>

Hunter acknowledges the same surprising popularity of Sayyid Ahmad's deputies when he documents an official report in this regard: "The head of the Bengal Police reported that a single one of their preachers had gathered together some eighty thousand followers who asserted complete equality among themselves...."<sup>489</sup> This is further supported by Mehr's acknowledgement about Maulvi Muhammad Asif, a disciple of Maulana Wilayat Ali, that about one hundred thousand Muslims took oath of allegiance at his hands alone.<sup>490</sup> Nadwi reports that he himself heard Nawwab Bahadur Yar Jang, an Islamic scholar of great repute from Hyderabad, India, as saying in a public speech that "Karamat Ali guided twenty million (two crore) people to the path of righteousness in Bengal."<sup>491</sup>

## Mujahideen and Freedom Movement of 1857

Sayyid Ahmad had from the very beginning planned to launch his Jihad Movement against the British high-handedness in India. As mentioned earlier, he first fought with the Sikhs only because their atrocities against the Muslims in the Frontier required immediate

<sup>487</sup> *Tiqsaro Joyudil Ahrar*, quoted by Nadwi in *Reformer*, p. 47.

<sup>488</sup> *Sawaneh Ahmadi*, quoted by Nadwi in *Reformer*, p. 48.

<sup>489</sup> Hunter, p. 82. Hunter refers here to a follower of the Faraizi Movement. But this Movement was, in fact, a part of the Movement initiated by Sayyid Ahmad. As Hunter acknowledges, "The later khalifas, especially Yahya Ali, amalgamated the Faraizis of Lower Bengal with the Wahhabis of Northern India; and during the past thirteen years they have been found side by side alike among the dead on the field of battle and in the dock of our Courts of Justice." (*The Indian Musalmans*, p. 82)

<sup>490</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 169.

<sup>491</sup> Nadwi, *Reformer*, p. 50, footnote 2.

action. But he never missed the point that the main enemy of the Muslims in India were the British. That is why he wrote to Maharaja Hindu Rao of Gwalior from the Frontier during his engagements with the Sikhs that the rulers of the different states of India, Muslims as well as Hindus, should join hands to fight together against the foreign rule of the British.<sup>492</sup>

In fact, as Sayyid Ahmad did not have any misunderstanding about the British as being the main enemy of Muslims in India, the British also never missed the point that in Muslims they had a most uncompromising opponent. Hunter clearly writes about the activities of the later leaders of the Movement who had taken Sittana as their headquarters then: "Their hand fell heaviest upon the Sikh villages, but they hailed with fierce delight any chance of inflicting a blow upon the English infidel." He supports himself by citing the example of the Kabul War in which the Mujahideen fought relentlessly against the British: "They sent a great force to help our enemies in the Kabul War, and a thousand of them remained steadfast up to death. In the fall of Ghazni alone, three hundred obtained the joys of martyrdom from the points of English bayonets."<sup>493</sup>

The Mujahideen took a very active part in the anti-British nationalist movement of 1857. When the Indian soldiers who rebelled against the British in Calcutta, Meerath and other places came to Delhi, they appeared before the Mughal King Bahadur Shah Zafar and requested him to patronize them. Bahadur Shah gave them his blessings and the Indian forces declared him the King of India with absolute sovereignty, thus nullifying all political restrictions imposed upon him by the British. Soon the news about the arrival of Bakht Khan to Delhi reached the King. Bakht Khan had rebelled against the British and had gathered a large number of supporters. He entered Delhi with his supporters on July 1, 1847.

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<sup>492</sup> Mehr, *Jama'at*, p. 15.

<sup>493</sup> Hunter, p. 12. The title that Hunter gives to his book, *The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?*, testifies that he saw in Indian Muslims the most uncompromising opponent.

Since he had a strong military background and was a great supporter of the nationalist movement, Bahadur Shah Zafar ordered Ahmad Quli Khan, father of Zeenat Mahal, his queen, to welcome him. The King appointed him as Commander-in-Chief of the national army and all regiments were put under his command to fight against the British.<sup>494</sup>

Bakht Khan was associated with the Jihad Movement of Sayyid Ahmad. In those days Maulvi Sarfaraz Ali, a leader of the Mujahideen and a staunch disciple of Sayyid Ahmad, was taking the oath of allegiance for Jihad against the British in and around Gorakhpur. When he visited Sultanpur, Bakht Khan, who was the *Subedar* there, became his disciple and took an oath at his hands to launch Jihad against the British.<sup>495</sup> Thus, with the appointment of

<sup>494</sup> Iqbal Husain, "General Bakht Khan," in *1857 ke Rahnuma: Sawanhey Khake* (New Delhi: Qawmi Council Barae Faroghe Urdu Zabaan, 2009), p. 51.

<sup>495</sup> Sayyid Muhammad Mian, *Musalmanane Hind ka Shandar Mazi*, vol. 4, (Karachi: Maktaba Rashidiya, 1986), pp. 460-61.

Bakht Khan was a Rohila youth from Sultanpur, a place in the vicinity of Lucknow. His family was also related to the family of Shujaud Dawla by matrimonial relationship. In the early part of his life he took a job in the British army and was soon promoted to a high rank. He quit his job after sometime. Soon he came in contact with Maulana Sarfaraz Ali, a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad, who used to take oath of allegiance from Muslims for Jihad against the British. Bakht Khan became a follower of Maulana Sarfaraz Ali. When Nawwab Bahadur Khan rebelled against the British in Bareilly, Bakht Khan helped him very actively. But the situation at Delhi required immediate action due to which Bakht Khan came to Delhi with a large army. The King appointed him as the Commander-in-Chief of the National Army and honored him with the title of *Sahebe Aalam*. Later on he was appointed as Governor General whereas Prince Mirza Mughal was given the position of the Commander-in-Chief. But it was Bakht Khan whose command the army was ordered to obey by the royal decree of Bahadur Shah. His fight with the British is now a part of the history of India's struggle for independence. The British soon sowed the seed of suspicion in the heart of Bahadur Shah against Bakht Khan through their agent Mirza Ilahi Bakhsh, the King's relative by marriage. Ilahi Bakhsh told the King that Bakht Khan was a Rohila and that the Rohilas had always been inimical to the Mughals. He also reminded him of the struggle for power between Sher Shah, a Rohila, and Humayun and the atrocious act of Ghulam Qadir Rohila who had gauged the eyes of the then Mughal King Shah Alam. Also, Bahadur Shah was continuously preyed upon by the vicious family members of Ilahi Bakhsh, Mumtaz Mahal, his wife whose only interest was in the appointment of her son Jawan Bakht as heir to the throne, and the selfish and obstinate interference of Mirza Mughal who was appointed Deputy

Bakht Khan as the Commander-in-Chief, the leadership of the armed struggle against the British at the national level came in the hands of the Mujahideen. The remaining supporters of the Jihad movement of Sayyid Ahmad also gathered in Delhi and, according to Sayyid Muhammad Mian, stayed mainly in and around the Jam'e Masjid. They supported Bakht Khan and were a source of his strength in Delhi, as is acknowledged in the following passage:

Bakht Khan's main strength lay in his own army and artillery, but due to the efforts of Maulvi Sarfaraz Ali, he also enjoyed the support of the Jihadis who had come with him to Delhi. Generally the number of the Jihadis increased as the Ulema were constantly arousing the Muslims in the name of Jihad to drive the British out of country. In Delhi Bakht Khan became the leader of the Jihadis. Some contemporary writers have called the Jihadis by the name of *Wahhabis*. They were mainly the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi....They had come from Hansi, Hesar, Jaipur, Naseerabad, Tonk and Bhopal in large numbers. In Hansi, Hesar, Tonk and Bhopal, the Rohila Afghans lived in large numbers who were under the influence of Maulvi Sarfaraz Ali, Abdul Ghafoor Risaldar and Ghaws Muhammad Khan.<sup>496</sup>

It is important to note that Sarfaraz Ali, the religious mentor of Bakht Khan and a leader of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement, was with Bakht Khan when he entered Delhi. Sarfaraz Ali was appointed in-charge (*Meere Lashkar*) of the Mujahideen.<sup>497</sup>

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Commander-in-Chief. When the British conquered the Red Fort and the King took shelter in Maqbara Humayun, Bakht Khan advised him to move to a safer place and continue fighting, as the whole India was with him. But the King had lost confidence and decided to surrender. Bakht Khan then crossed the River Yamuna and moved to Rohail Khand with his army. For details see the above book by Sayyid Muhammad Mian, pp. 161-62.

<sup>496</sup> Iqbal Husain, 2009, p. 55.

<sup>497</sup> Muhammad Mian, *Ulamae Hind ka Shandaar Maazi*, vol. 4, p. 185. Muhammad Mian goes into details in order to ascertain the number of the Mujahideen who fought in the front line against the British in Delhi. See pp. 181-213.



In the 1857 Freedom Movement the Mujahideen took much more active part against the British than is generally known. Hunter writes: "But in 1857 they [the Mujahideen] openly formed a coalition against us" with the help of the Yusufzai and Panjtar tribes.<sup>498</sup> He also cites the specific case of Muhammad Jafar Thanesari, an outstanding leader of Sayyid Ahmad's Jihad Movement. Muhammad Jafar was earlier condemned to death by a British court, then exiled to the Andaman Islands, and was finally released after a long period of detention there. Having full knowledge of the fact that the British were keeping an eye on him, he secretly traveled to Delhi with a group of the Mujahideen and joined in the revolution of 1857: "When the mutiny of 1857 broke out, Jafar chose twelve of his most trustworthy disciples, and repaired to the Rebel Camp." Hunter mentions that Muhammad Jafar returned to Thanesar only after the defeat of the nationalist force.<sup>499</sup> Muhammad Mian also comments on the role of the followers of Sayyid Ahmad in the 1857 Freedom Struggle in these words: "This much is clear that the Ulema who took part in the Freedom Movement of 1857 were mostly related to Shah Abdul Aziz or Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed by way of learning or devotion."<sup>500</sup>

After the 1857 Movement the situation changed tremendously. Due to the victory of the British the faithfulness of many nationalist groups changed, but the Mujahideen remained steadfast. The Jihad centers of the Mujahideen at Asmast and Chamarkand adhered to their objective to fight for the freedom of India. As quoted by Mehr, Haji Meer Shamsuddeen mentions in His book *Sayahate Afghanistan* that a tea party was given by Raja Mahindra Pratap, President of the interim national government of India, to the freedom fighters in Afghanistan on 11 November 1926 at a hotel in Kabul.<sup>501</sup> On that occasion Raja Mahindra Pratap spoke

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<sup>498</sup> Hunter, p. 14.

<sup>499</sup> Hunter, p. 73.

<sup>500</sup> Muhammad Mian, p. 190.

<sup>501</sup> Raja Mahindra Pratap was the president of the first interim national government of India formed in Kabul. Maulana Brakatullah Bhopali was elected the Prime Minister. Maulana Mohammad Ali Qasuri was appointed as the Foreign

highly of the "sacrifices given by the Mujahideen for the freedom of India." Maulana Basheer, the then leader of the Mujahideen, spoke after him and reiterated the objective of the struggle of the Mujahideen against the British in these words: "Our only objective is that we firmly implant the foundation stones of the palace of India's future freedom, on the strength of which India may build the pillars and walls of its own government." Mehr summarizes by stating that "the freedom of India had a very prominent place among the objectives of the Mujahideen. This objective occupied such prominence for the Mujahideen not only at the later stage of the Movement; it was so from the time of Sayyid Ahmad."<sup>502</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad's associates and deputies who took charge of his missionary and Jihad activities after his martyrdom never lost sight of the fact that the ultimate aim of the Muslims in India would be achieved in the battle against the British. That is why as soon as the Sikh State collapsed in 1849, against which the Mujahideen were at war, they organized themselves against the British and fought with them a relentless and uncompromising fight until they left India in 1947. Qeyamuddin Ahmad also acknowledges that the political objective of the Movement was "the defeat of the English."<sup>503</sup>

In fact, if any group of Indians genuinely threatened the power of the British in India from the beginning till the end, it was the Mujahideen. Hunter writes:

Throughout the whole period the fanatics [the Mujahideen] kept the border tribes in a state of chronic hostility to the British Power. A single fact will speak volumes. Between 1850 and 1857 the

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Minister. Maulana Mohammad Basheer was the Defense Minister and was entrusted with the task of raising an army from Yaghistan to attack the British in India. Dr Khushi Muhammad was given the post of the Secretary (*Sarguzasht*, p. 660). The number of the Muslim leaders and the nature of responsibilities entrusted to them show the prominence of Muslims in the freedom movement of India. (*Sarguzasht*, pp. 492-93 & 512)

<sup>502</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 565-67.

<sup>503</sup> Qeyamuddin Ahmad, p. 336.

Frontier disorders forced us to send out sixteen expeditions, aggregating 33,000 Regular Troops; and between 1850 and 1863 the number rose to twenty separate expeditions, aggregating 60,000 Regular Troops, besides Irregular Auxiliaries and Police.<sup>504</sup>

The Mujahideen maintained their severest opposition to the British against all odds. Hunter further writes about the continued deteriorating situation of the British power in the Frontier:

The whole Frontier was now in flame. On the 4<sup>th</sup> November [1863] the Punjab Government had found its military line so dangerously stripped of troops, that it borrowed a part of the escort belonging to the Viceroy's camp, and hurried forward the 7<sup>th</sup> Fusiliers to the Frontier.... By the 14<sup>th</sup> November things had assumed a still more serious aspect, and the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in India hurried up to Lahore, and assumed the direction himself.<sup>505</sup>

## The Movement Continues After Sayyid Ahmad

The difficult situations in which the Mujahideen continued their struggle after the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad forms a long story of patience, forbearance, and commitment. After Sayyid Ahmad fell a martyr in Balakot, the Mujahideen in the Frontier should have scattered in a normal situation, but their strong commitment to the mission helped them overcome the shock. They immediately united themselves under Sheikh Wali Muhammad and continued their struggle in the Frontier against severe challenges.

<sup>504</sup> Hunter, p. 14.

<sup>505</sup> Hunter, p. 23. The British saved the situation by using their policy of sowing dissension among the tribes loyal to the Mujahideen. Hunter writes, "What our arms had failed to accomplish, dissensions and diplomacy began to effect." (Hunter, p. 26)

Sheikh Wali Muhammad decided to escort the wife of Sayyid Ahmad, popularly called *Bibi Saheba* by the Mujahideen, to Sindh. He appointed Muhammad Qasim Panipati as the Amir of the Mujahideen in the Frontier, but virtually it was Sheikh Wali Muhammad who was looked at as the Amir of the Mujahideen. Soon Naseeruddeen Manglori became in-charge of the Jihad activities in the Frontier. He once again organized the Mujahideen and fought several successful battles against the Sikhs and their local allies. He lost his life in the Battle of Topi. Meer Awlad Ali took the command of the Mujahideen after him.

At that time news reached India that due to lack of support in the Frontier the Mujahideen were not able to carry out their mission effectively. The Indian Muslims decided to support them and consequently Sayyid Naseeruddin of Delhi, grandson of Shah Rafiuddin Muhaddith Dehlawi and son-in-law of Shah Ishaque of Delhi, left for the Frontier with his supporters. He reached Sindh and raised up the banner of Jihad.<sup>506</sup> He fought several battles against the Sikhs and the British. He sent a troop to participate in the Battle of Ghazni against the British in which 300 Mujahideen laid their lives.<sup>507</sup> He reached Sittana after the martyrdom of Naseeruddin Manglori where Meer Awlad Ali was Amir of some seventy to eighty Mujahideen. The Mujahideen unanimously took him as their Amir. He stayed in Sittana and upheld the mission of Sayyid Ahmad until he breathed his last there. Haji Sayyid Abdur Rahim became the Amir after his death.<sup>508</sup> He died in 1840. Then

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<sup>506</sup> Sayyid Naseeruddin of Delhi went to see Sayyid Ahmad's wife, Sayyida Umme Ismail, who was staying then at Peerkot. She offered to support the cause of Jihad with all that she had and issued a moving written appeal to the Muslims to support Sayyid Naseeruddin. She also mentioned in her appeal that as she was a woman and as her son Muhammad Ismail was too young to participate in Jihad, she was left with the option of praying for the Mujahideen and calling on Muslims to support the cause of Jihad (Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 167). On another occasion when the Mujahideen faced severe financial problems, the family members of Mian Wali Muhammad, women from the families of other Mujahideen, and the wife of Sayyid Ahmad sold their ornaments and gave the money to the Mujahideen (Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 185).

<sup>507</sup> Hunter, p. 13. Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 194.

<sup>508</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 199.

Meer Awlad Ali became the Amir of the Mujahideen at Sittana again.<sup>509</sup>

In fact, after the death of Sayyid Naseeruddin of Delhi, the work of Jihad in the Frontier received a setback. Sittana, the headquarters of the Mujahideen at that time, was washed away by flood. A small number of the Mujahideen still stayed there and organized themselves under the leadership of Meer Awlad Ali. In view of this situation, Sayyid Zamin Shah of Kaghan invited Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi to come to the Frontier and revive the mission of Jihad. Wilayat Ali first sent his younger brother Inayat Ali to the Frontier. Inayat Ali gave to the cause of Jihad a new momentum. Soon after his arrival to the Frontier, he took Balakot from the Sikhs in a fierce battle. After this conquest he was elected as the Amir of Jihad in the Frontier.<sup>510</sup> Sayyid Zamin Shah of Kaghan joined him. Then the Mujahideen conquered the fortress of Habeebullah Khan. After that the strong fort of Fatah Garh was conquered. Then in about ten days about twenty two other forts fell to the Mujahideen. According to O' Kinealy, in a very short time the Mujahideen captured a large area which stretched along the left bank of the Sindh River from Haripur to Kaghan and from Sittana to Kashmir.<sup>511</sup>

The Islamic rule was introduced in the conquered areas and Fatah Garh, which was now called Islam Garh, became the capital of the Islamic state. The Islamic state developed a strong regular army of its own. In addition to it, 30,000 soldiers could be brought to the field any time with the help of the local chiefs who were given *jagir* (state gift) by the Islamic state on the condition of supporting the state with soldiers in a state of emergency. A full-fledged government structure was developed and, as Mehr writes, "all works of the government were performed according to the Qur'an and the Sunnah."<sup>512</sup> Soon Wilayat Ali also reached the

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<sup>509</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzashi*, p. 213.

<sup>510</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzashi*, p. 234.

<sup>511</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzashi*, p. 231.

<sup>512</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzashi*, pp. 234-42.

Frontier. Inayat Ali gave him a state welcome and entrusted to him the responsibility of leadership. Then Wilayat Ali became the Amir. When he died, his younger brother Inayat Ali was again elected as Amir of the Mujahideen.

The period of the leadership of Inayat Ali was very active from the point of view of Jihad. In addition to challenging the British and the Sikhs in the battlefield, he also tried to win the Indian soldiers of the British army to his side. The leaders of the Mujahideen secretly contacted the Fourth Regiment of the Native Infantry and tried to persuade them to give up their support to the British. This move was especially important because this regiment was going to be the first to be used against the Mujahideen at the time of a military action against them. Hunter acknowledges this fact in these words: "Their leaders made a skilful attempt to tamper with the 4<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry, stationed at Rawalpindi, conveniently near to the Fanatic Colony; and one of the first Regiments which, on their invading our Province, would have been sent to act against them."<sup>513</sup> Qeyamuddin Ahmad attests to the strategic importance of this move of the Mujahideen in these words: "The Wahhabis [Mujahideen] were earliest to realize the crucial role of Indian Units of the Army in the struggle against the English and they made conscious attempts to win them over or to 'tamper their allegiance,' as the contemporary official records put it."<sup>514</sup>

After Inayat Ali died, a board of three members was formed to discharge the duties of the leadership of the Movement. The board consisted of Maulana Nasrullah, Shah Ikramullah, and Meer Taqi. Maulana Nasrullah was the head of the board. Soon Maqsood Ali Azeemabadi reached the Frontier and was entrusted with the responsibility of leadership. When he died, Maulana Abdullah, son of Maulana Wilayat Ali Azeemabadi, was taken as the Amir. He

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<sup>513</sup> Hunter, p. 13. Since the soldiers in the 4<sup>th</sup> Native Infantry were non-Muslims as well, the move of the Mujahideen to win their support and form a common national platform to defeat the British attests to their concern for the freedom of India and their liberality in joining hands with all Indians, whatever their faith.

<sup>514</sup> Qeyamuddin Ahmad, pp. 337-38.

worked in that capacity for about forty years.<sup>515</sup> When he became the Amir of the Mujahideen, he also took a large area under his control in the Frontier and established the Islamic Shariah there. His army comprised ten battalions which consisted of 1200 to 1400 regular soldiers. It was under his able leadership that the Battle of Ambela was fought in 1863, in which the British army narrowly escaped total destruction at the hands of the Mujahideen.<sup>516</sup>

After the Battle of Ambela the Mujahideen fought five major battles during 1863 and 1915 in which the British had to use all their might to defend themselves. The Mujahideen lost on all occasions but their determination to oppose the British never died out.<sup>517</sup>

It is to be noted here that when Inayat Ali had raised the standard of Jihad in the Frontier, Sayyid Akbar Shah of Sittana was elected as the ruler of the Lower Hazara by the people there and was given the title of *Badshah* (King). He was a very trustworthy follower of Sayyid Ahmad. He enforced the Islamic Shariah in his territory. Unfortunately, the period of this Islamic rule in the Lower Hazara was quite short due to which it is remembered in the area as *Lundi Musalmani* (the Islamic rule which existed for a short period).<sup>518</sup> To the list of the sincere Muslims who tried to implement the Shariah in their jurisdictions, we can include the names of Nawwab Wazeerud Dawla, the ruler of Tonk, and Mubarezud Dawla, brother of the ruler of Hyderabad, who

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<sup>515</sup> Maulana Abdullah's powerful leadership in the Frontier rendered a terror in the British army. In spite of their military superiority, the British could not suppress his successful Jihad efforts. Consequently, they contacted Maulana Abdullah's relatives in Azeemabad, India, and offered that if they persuaded Maulana Abdullah to return from the Frontier and give up hostility against the British, the British government would return all the confiscated property of the family and also award them new property worth six hundred thousand rupees. The relatives of Maulana Abdullah, of course, did not pay any attention to it and Maulana Abdullah fought with the British till his death. He died in the Frontier thousands of miles away from his hometown and relatives and was buried there. (Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 380).

<sup>516</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, pp. 327-349.

<sup>517</sup> For details, see Shahpuri, p. 426.

<sup>518</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 222.

sincerely tried to establish the Islamic Shariah in the areas under their rule. These rulers came to the scene after the martyrdom of Sayyid Ahmad. Their efforts to establish Islam in full at all levels testify that Sayyid Ahmad's Movement did not come to an end with his martyrdom. In fact, it continued for more than a century.

And on and on went the Movement with selfless persons coming forward one after another and shouldering the responsibility of keeping the standard of Jihad up and flying. The Mujahideen thus continued their struggle for over a century. Hunter writes in the concluding paragraph of the first chapter of his book:

To trace the Wahhabi warlike ramifications throughout India, would swell this little book to a great volume.... Beside constantly keeping alive a fanatical spirit of unrest along the Frontier, it has three times organized great tribal confederacies, each of which cost British India a war. One Government after another has declared it to be a source of permanent danger to our Rule, yet all our efforts to extirpate it have failed. It still continues in the center toward which the hopes alike of our disloyal subjects and of our enemies beyond the Frontier turn.<sup>519</sup>

I do not intend to record at this place the names of all the leaders of the Movement. My purpose here is to show the continuing influence of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement by discussing how the Movement survived for over a century after the death of Sayyid Ahmad and influenced the moral, social, and political lives of the then Muslims.

The Mujahideen faced unbearable trials and tribulations in carrying on the work of Jihad in the Frontier. Although they continued to work for more than a century in the Frontier, no local chief of consequence, except the Sayyids of Sittana and only a few others, stood by them as dependable friends. But they remained steadfast, nevertheless. No matter whether they increased in

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<sup>519</sup> Hunter, p. 30.



number or decreased, ate well or starved, won a battle or lost, they kept the banner of Jihad flying high in all circumstances. They were imprisoned, exiled, and hanged; their properties were confiscated; their women and children were driven out of their homes; their family graveyards were dug and destroyed; but they did not yield to the British. The British used all their might as well as their tested policy of divide and rule against the Mujahideen, but the Mujahideen always rose from their ashes and raised again the call of Jihad against them until they left India in 1947. A quotation from Hunter's book would give us a feel of the helplessness of the British in face of the steadfastness of the Mujahideen:

The source from which the Frontier Rebel Camp derived this extraordinary vitality long remained a mystery. Thrice it was scattered by the Native Power which preceded us in the Punjab, and thrice it has been crushed beneath masses of British Troops. Yet it still lives on, and the devout Musalmans find in this almost miraculous indestructibility a visible augury of ultimate triumph.<sup>520</sup>

Wilfred Cantwell Smith acknowledges the uncompromising opposition of the Muslims to the British rule in India in these words: "Even more lasting and more widespread was the persistence of the Movement's impetus and ideal. The attempts to oust the infidel could be, and were, suppressed. The attempts to refine and renew Muslim society and to restore its glory must continue, and incidentally keep it reminded of its more proper destiny on both scores. The dream of revived Indo-Muslim power remained into the twentieth century, to haunt or incite the community."<sup>521</sup>

The single-mindedness with which the Mujahideen fought the British to liberate India laid a guideline for the later freedom fighters in many significant ways. Qiyamuddin Ahmad

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<sup>520</sup> Hunter, p. 32.

<sup>521</sup> W. C. Smith, *Islam in Modern Society* (NP: Mentor Books, 1957), p.53.

acknowledges the strong influence of Sayyid Ahmad's Movement on the Indian national freedom movement in these words:

The Wahhabi Movement left behind an inspiring tradition of a heroic and sustained struggle against the British, and also a model for the formation of a well-knit All-India political organization to conduct the struggle. Many of the tactics initiated and practiced by the Wahhabis were subsequently adopted and improved upon by the early political parties, particularly the Indian National Congress. The passive non-cooperation, the Panchayati system, the social boycott of 'loyalist' element – *the hukka pani band*, as Reily neatly puts it - all these were perfected into powerful methods of political agitation during the course of the struggle for freedom, but it should be remembered that they had their beginnings under the Wahhabis. The unobtrusive and effective method of collection of funds evolved by the Wahhabis was specifically cited as a model by Surendranath Banerjee in a public speech, and recommended for adoption. The highly secret and complex Wahhabi organization for relay of vital information and transmission of men and money from all over the country appears to be strikingly modern and effective.<sup>522</sup>

## Sayyid Ahmad's Influence in the Present Time

In fact, Sayyid Ahmad's Movement never died out for Indian Muslims. In many ways it continues to mould the aspirations and dreams of the Muslim community up to this day. Nadwi mentions that a large number of religious, social, and educational organizations emerging in India and abroad derived inspiration

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<sup>522</sup> Qeyamuddin Ahmad, pp. 337-38. As mentioned earlier, the British called the Movement initiated by Sayyid Ahmad *the Wahhabi Movement*. Qeyamuddin Ahmad uses this popular term in his book.

from Sayyid Ahmad's teachings. He names the Reformative Movement of Nisar Ali (Titu Mian) in East Bengal, the Ahle Hadith Movement having its centers all over the country, Sadiqpur's recruitment and training center for Jihad, the missionary endeavors of the Ghaznawi Family of Amritsar, the two Darul Uloom of Saharanpur and Deoband with a network of institutions for religious education, and, finally, the Nadwatul Ulema's center of higher education, and mentions that these and many other institutions can be cited here as examples of the continuing influence of Sayyid Ahmad. To this list we can add the *Reshmi Roomal Tahreek* led by Maulana Mahmoodul Hasan Deobandi, a staunch freedom fighter, who had established links with the leaders of Turkey, Afghanistan and some other countries to help India achieve freedom.<sup>523</sup> Also, the intellectual efforts with which Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanwi and Dr. Wazeeruddeen discredited the missionaries' propagation of Christianity and the open war that Maulana Rahmatullah, Dr Wazeeruddeen and their associates fought against the British in the area of Thana Bhawan, Kayrana and Shamli must have roots in their attachment to Sayyid Ahmad. Incidentally, Maulana Rahmatullah had earlier visited Delhi in 1857 to assess the situation.<sup>524</sup>

Even today the call and message of Sayyid Ahmad is dear to the hearts of Indian Muslims and his influence continues to set directions for the Muslim individuals as well as organizations. The establishment of the Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Academy in Lahore, Pakistan, that of a Madrasa called Madrasa Imam Sayyid Ahmad bin Irfan at his home village at Daera Shah Alamullah, Rae Bareli in India,<sup>4</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed Academy, Dare Arafat, Takiya Kalan, Rae Bareli, Jamia Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed at Maleehabad, the conference held on the influence of the Movement at Daera Shah Alamullah, Rae Bareli in the recent past, books and articles continuously appearing on his life and mission, tributary poetic compositions written in appreciation of his piety and godliness,

<sup>523</sup> Mehr, *Sarguzasht*, p. 536.

<sup>524</sup> Muhammad Mian, pp. 214, 307-313.

frequent mention of his exemplary character and contributions in Islamic literature and in private and public discourses, and continuation of the spiritual order of *Tariqae Muhammadiya* for moral and spiritual purification - all speak that he was and continues to remain a great source of inspiration for the Muslims even today. Maulana Ilyas Kandhalwi rightly acknowledged the influence of Sayyid Ahmad when he said, "We are still living under the influence of the renovatory work of Sayyid Saheb [Sayyid Ahmad]." <sup>525</sup>

Nawwab Siddique Hasan Khan's homage paid to Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed aptly underscores the magnificent personality and contributions of Sayyid Ahmad in the following words:

In short, there was none so godly and perfect of spirit in the whole world in those days, nor was there any mystic or religious scholar who exerted such a strong influence over even one-tenth of the people as he did. <sup>526</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Momshad Ali Qasmi, *Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi: Akabir wa Mashaheere Ummat ki Nazar Men* (Urdu), (Phulat: Shah Waliyullah Academy, 1998), pp. 63-64.

<sup>526</sup> Nadwi, *Reformer*, p. 47.

## Epilogue

A question is sometimes asked by less informed readers why the Movement of Sayyid Ahmad failed in spite of his able leadership and eminent stature. This question bothers only those who mistakenly limit the scope of his Movement to the creation of an Islamic state. In fact, Sayyid Ahmad's Movement had a much wider span - religious, moral, social, and political - and its success or failure should be judged by looking at its comprehensive contributions. As this book aims to underscore, this Movement achieved miraculous success on all fronts. There cannot be any disagreement that Sayyid Ahmad's aim of establishing Islam in the lives of the then Muslims and creating a model Islamic society based on the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah was fully achieved. He also established an Islamic state in the Frontier. Although it survived for about ten months only, it was a full-fledged institution and followed the guidelines of the Shariah in full. It does not matter how long it lived, for as long as it lived, it was the closest model of the state established by the Rightly-guided Caliphs of Islam. As a matter of fact, the question to be asked here is how Sayyid Ahmad succeeded in bringing about such a comprehensive transformation in the Muslim society in such unfavorable circumstances in a short period of time.

In fact, the most glorious success of this Movement lies in the correctness of Sayyid Ahmad's ultimate objectives and his sincerity with which he pursued his mission. The preceding chapters attest to the fact that from the point of view of sincere adherence to Islamic teachings, the Movement was most successful as it never deviated from the guidelines set by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. As an Islamic leader, Sayyid Ahmad should be judged on the basis of the correctness of his ultimate objectives and his sincerity with which he pursued his mission. The result remains in the hands of Allah. If we insist on the result, how can we appreciate the

missionary efforts of those true Prophets of Allah whose peoples did not accept their message, but few and far between?

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