

AHLU'S SUNNAH WA'L JAMA'AH
AN INTRODUCTION

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Translated by
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The bi-weekly *Da'wat* of Delhi, a publication of Jamaát-e-Islami, India, asked me to write an introduction to the creed of the Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah, which is better known as Hanafi Barelwi among common folk. I was asked to write about the views of this group, its noteworthy scholars, its important schools and institutes. This would be published in the special issue of *Da'wat* titled *Hindustani Musalman Number* (Part 2, October 1999) and serve as a proper introduction to the adherents of Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah and their views presented in a reliable manner. I agreed and therefore I present this article. Even though this subject is worthy of a whole book and it is nigh possible that this article may serve as an introduction to such a book. I have refrained from including great many details and have attempted to present a brief introduction. I am sure it will add to the reader's knowledge and may be a cause for them to further research the subject matter.

From the very beginning, the Muslims of India have been affiliated with the Hanafi school of Sunni thought. In Malabar and Konkan there is a small number of Sunni Shafi'i Muslims and in some areas of the country there are small communities of Shi'ites. Sectarianism within the Muslims of India began in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In particular, the following (taqleed) of the four Imams of fiqh was made an issue of contention and to a lesser extent, tasawwuf was also made a target for division. Taqleed and Tasawwuf were portrayed as innovations of misguidance and on these grounds many new sects came into existence that moved away from the Ahlu's Sunnah wa'l Jama'ah. To look at these facts in light of historic evidence, two excerpts are presented. The first is by Hakeem Abdul Hayy Rae Barelwi and the second by Sulaiman Nadwi, a student of Mawlānā Shibli Nu'mani.

(1) According to some people, the taqleed of an Imam in issues of fiqh is impermissible and Haram. They believe that those rulings that are evident in the Qur'an and Sunnah should be followed and in fiqhi issues, Qiyas (analogy) and Ijma' (consensus) hold no weight. To this school of thought belong Mawlānā Fakhir Ilahabadi bin Yahya and Miyan Ji Shaykh Nazeer Husain Husaini Dihlawi bin Jawwad Ali and Nawab Siddiq Hasan Bhopali and their followers.

One group has extreme opinions with regards to taqleed and they are adamant that it is forbidden. They consider muqallideen (followers of an Imam) to be slaves of the nafs (ego) and amongst the Ahlu'l Bid'ah. They are so forceful with their opinion that they denigrate the four Imams and in particular Imam Abu Hanifah. This is the school to which Shaykh Abdul Haq Banarasi bin Fazlullah and Shaykh Abdullah Siddiqi Ilahabadi and others belong. These people have written books propagating their ideas. For example, Shaykh Moinuddin Sindhi wrote *Dirasatul Labeeb* and Shaykh Fakhir Ilahabadi wrote *Qurratul 'Ain*. Shah Isma'il Dihlawi wrote *Tanweerul 'Ainayn* and Miyan Sayyid Nazeer Husain wrote *Mi'yarul Haq*. Other books include Shaykh Abdullah Ilahabadi's *I'tisamu's Sunnah* and Nawab Siddiq Hasan Bhopali's *Al-Jannah fi'l Uswati'l Hasanah Bi's Sunnah*.

The Hanafi Ulema are also of two categories. The first advocates taqleed based on research and evaluation. For example, Mulla Bahrul Uloom Abdul Ali bin Mulla

Nizamuddin, the author of *Arkan-e-Arba'a* and Mawlānā Abdul Hayy Farangi Mahalli bin Abdul Haleem, the author of *Al-Ta'leeq al-Mumajjad*.

The other group of Hanafis are those that stick staunchly to taqleed and do not tolerate anything against it. For example, Mawlānā Shaykh Fazl-e-Rasool Amawi Badayuni and his followers.¹

(2) Mawlānā Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi and Mawlānā Qasim Nanotwi (founder of Darul Uloom Deoband) are amongst the top students of Shah Abdul Ghani Mujaddidi. In Purab, Mawlānā Shah Isma'il's student are Mawlānā Sakhawat Ali Jaunpuri and others. This group is characterised by its claim of refuting Bid'ah and 'pure' Tawhīd alongside its adherence to the Hanafī madhab.

Another student of Mawlānā Shah Ishaq is Mawlānā Nazeer Husain Bihari Dihlawi. His group is characterised not only by its claim of 'Pure Tawhīd' and refutation of Bid'ah; but also its distancing from Hanafī fiqh. Instead, they call for derivation of rulings directly from books of hadith whatever one can and then act upon it. This group came to be known as "Ahl e Hadith".

The third group was that which stuck staunchly upon its old traditions and continued to call itself the "Ahlu's Sunnah". The leaders of this group were mostly the Ulama of Bareilly and Badayun.²

According to Hakeem Abdul Hay Rae Barelwi and Sulaiman Nadwi, the group that stuck staunchly to taqleed, remained upon its old traditions and called itself "Ahlu's Sunnah" constituted of Ulema who were from Bareilly and Badayun. Even today, they will not accept anything apart from taqleed and remaining upon old ways.

Abdur Rahman Parwaz Islahi and Prof. Muhammad Ayyub Qadri portray this sectarian split in their own words.

(1) The students of Hazrat Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dihlawi were made up one group that remained upon his creed and did not tolerate anything against the issues of Shari'ah. However, the other group pressed for the abandonment of taqleed and called for Ijtihad. Hence, slowly but surely, disagreement appeared on certain issues between the two groups.³

(2) Awadh produced some brilliant thinkers. In the latter days, Mawlānā Fazle Haq Khairabadi was the most exceptional of them all. Apart from his father, Mawlānā Fazle Imam, he also benefited from the Waliyullah family. However, he sternly disagreed with many of the beliefs of Shah Isma'il and Shah Is'haq and remained steadfast upon his traditions. Mawlānā Mahboob Ali Dihlawi (student of Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith

¹ Islami Uloom-o-Funoon Hindustan Mein, page 154. Darul Musannifeen, Azamgarh – Hakeem Abdul Hay Rae Barelwi

² Hayat-e-Shibli, page 46. Darul Musannifeen, Azamgarh – Sulaiman Nadwi

³ Mufti Sadruddin Azurdah, page 138. Maktaba Jamah Ltd – Abdur Rahman Parwaz Islahi

Dihlawi) belonged to the same creed. Mawlānā Fazle Haq and Mawlānā Mahboob Ali refuted the ideas of Shah Isma'il strongly. The Ulema of Bareilly and Badayun helped them in this cause.⁴

The opinions of Muhammad Ja'far Thanasari and Mawlānā Thanallah Amratsari are much closer to the truth and are helpful in arriving at correct conclusions:

(1) During my time in India (1280 AH, 1864 CE) I believe, there were not even ten individuals in the whole of Punjab that followed the Wahabi creed. And now (1302 AH, 1884 CE) I see that there is no town or city in which at least one in four people are Wahabi who follow the creed of Muhammad Isma'il.⁵

(2) In Amritsar, the Muslim and non-Muslim populations are equal. Eighty years ago, nearly all Muslims followed that creed which is today called "Hanafi Barelwi".⁶

Mawlānā Thanallah Amratsari, editor of the periodical *Majallah Ahle Hadith*, said this in 1973. According to him, 165 years ago, the Muslim population of Amritsar, Punjab, followed the same creed as those that are known today as "Hanafi Barelwi" and according to Muhammad Ja'far Thanasari, 200 years ago, there was no sign of any Wahabi or follower of Shah Isma'il Dihlawi in the whole of [undivided] Punjab!

After Siraj-ul-Hind Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dihlawi (d. 1239 AH, 1823 CE), various people strayed from the Sunni Hanafi creed and adopted non-Madhabism which divided the Muslims of India. Shah Isma'il Dihlawi's *Taqwiyatul Iman* epitomised their views and was supposed to strengthen belief in Tawhīd. About this book, Mawlānā Ashraf Ali Thanwi writes what Shah Isma'il Dihlawi himself thought of his book:

"I have written this book and I know that there are harsh words in some places and extremist views in certain other places. For example, some actions which are hidden polytheism [Shirk-e-Khafi], I have labelled it as manifest polytheism [Shirk-e-Jali.] I fear that there will be an outrage for these reasons. If I were here, I would have published its contents over an eight or ten year period. However, at this moment, my plan is to go to Hajj and thereafter, go on Jihad. Therefore, it is not possible to spread publication over eight or ten years. I also see that no one else will do this job so I published the book all at once eventhough there will be outrage due to it, though I feel that it will subside over time."⁷

Harsh language could be a writer's habit but how did the author of *Taqwiyatul Iman* gain the authority to label Shirk-e-Khafi as Shirk-e-Jali? His expectation of causing an outrage was certainly fulfilled but the division of Muslims has not healed unto this day.

⁴ Urdu Roznama – Urdu mein madhabi adab, page 55 – December 1975

⁵ Tawarikh-e-'Ajeeba, page 81. Sang Mail Publications, Lahore – Muhammad Ja'far Thanasari

⁶ Sham'a Tawhid, page 4. Maktaba Thana'ia, Sargodha, Punjab – Thanallah Amratsari

⁷ Hikayat-e-Awliya (Arwah-e-Thalatha), page 98. Kutub khana Na'imia, Deoband – Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanwi

Mawlānā Sayyid Ahmad Raza Bijnori Qasmi writes:

“It is a shame that due to this book (*Taqwiyatul Iman*) the Muslims of India who number 200 million, of which 90% are Hanafis, have been split into two groups.”⁸

Mawlānā Abul Kalam Azad writes:

“Mawlānā Muhammad Isma’il Shaheed was a classmate of Mawlānā Munawwaruddin. After the passing of Shah Abdul Aziz, when he wrote *Taqwiyatul Iman* and *Jilaul ‘Ainayn* and his creed spread throughout the land, all the scholars rose up against it. The person who refuted these books the most was Mawlānā Munawwaruddin who wrote several books and in 1240 AH, the famous dialogue happened at the Jamia Mosque of Delhi. All the scholars of India were asked to effect a ruling [fatwa] and thereafter a fatwa was also beseeched from the Haramayn.

From his writings it is evident that initially Mawlānā Munawwaruddin tried to convince Mawlānā Isma’il and his son-in-law Mawlānā Abdul Hay and their friends and tried all means to persuade them. However, when all his attempts came to nothing, he was forced to debate and refute. The famous debate at the Jamia Mosque of Delhi was organised where on one side were Mawlānā Isma’il and Mawlānā Abdul Hay and on the other side were Mawlānā Munawwaruddin and all the scholars of Delhi.⁹

Mawlānā Makhsos Ullah bin Shah Rafiuddin Dihlawi, Mawlānā Muhammad Musa bin Shah Rafiuddin Dihlawi, Mawlānā Fazle Haq Khairabadi (student of Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dihlawi), Mufti Sadruddin Aazurdah (student of Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dihlawi), Muhammad Fazle Rasool Uthmani Badayuni, Mawlānā Ahmad Saeed Naqshbandi Dihlawi, Mawlānā Rasheeduddin Dihlawi, Mawlānā Khairuddin Dihlawi, Hakeem Sadiq Ali Khan Dihlawi (grandfather of Masih-ul-Mulk Hakeem Ajmal Khan), Mawlānā Sayyid Ashraf Ali Gulshan Abadi, Mawlānā Mukhlis-ur-Rahman Chatgami, Mawlānā Qalandar Ali Zubairi Panipati and numerous other Ulema of the Ahlu’s Sunnah refuted these new beliefs and doctrines via speeches and writings. They took part in this noble Jihad to protect the creed of the Ahlu’s Sunnah wal Jama’ah through their knowledge and actions.

Hazrat Shah Makhsos Ullah bin Shah Rafiuddin bin Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dihlawi was asked seven questions by ‘Allama Fazle Rasool Uthmani Badayuni regarding *Taqwiyatul Iman*. These questions and answers have been published by the name of *Tahqeeq al-Haqeeqah* from Bombay in 1267 AH. Three of these answers are presented here. Hazrat Shah Makhsos Ullah Dihlawi writes:

“The answer to the first question concerning *Taqwiyatul Iman* – and I call it *Tafwiyatul Iman* (with the letter faa) – is that which I have written in a monograph refuting it named *Mu’eedul Imanf*. Isma’il’s book is not only against the traditions of our family but it is against the Tawhīd of all the Prophets and Messengers themselves! Because Prophets and

⁸ Anwar-ul-Bari, page 107. Nashir-ul-Uloom, Bajnuri – Mawlana Sayyid Ahmad Raza Bajnuri

⁹ Azad ki kahani, page 48. Maktaba Khalil, Urdu bazaar, Lahore. Mawlana Abdur Razzaq Maleeh Abadi

Messengers are sent to teach the people and make them walk the path of Tawhīd. In this book however, there is no sign of that Tawhīd nor the Sunnah of the Messengers. Things that are claimed as Shirk and Bid'ah in this book and taught to the people have not been labeled as such by any of the Prophets or their followers. If there is any proof otherwise, ask his followers to show it to us.

The answer to the fourth question is that the Wahabi's book [ibn Abdu'l Wahab Najdi] was the text and this is as if it's commentary. The answer to the fifth point is that Shah Abdul Aziz was impaired by his poor-sight. When he heard about the book, he said that if he were not ill, he would have written a refutation similar to *Tuhfa Ithna Ashariya*.

It is the grace of Allah that I (Mawlānā Makhsoos Ullah) wrote a rebuttal of the commentary (*Tafwiyatul Iman*) by course of which the text (Kitab al-Tawhīd) was also refuted. My father, Shah Rafiuddin, had not seen the book but when Shah Abdul Aziz saw it and expressed his disapproval, I set out writing the refutation.”¹⁰

Let us have a look at another example of Shah Isma'il Dihlawi's reformist nature and his free thinking. Mawlānā Ashraf Ali Thanwi writes:

“Shah Is'haq narrates that when Molvi Isma'il started performing Rafa' Yadain (raising hands in salah) Molvi Muhammad Ali and Molvi Ahmad Ali, who were both students of Shah Abdul Aziz, approached Shah Abdul Aziz and asked him to warn Molvi Isma'il against this as it would cause unnecessary confusion. Shah Abdul Aziz replied that he had become too old and weak to participate in debates.

When Shah Abdul Qadir visited Shah Abdul Aziz, he was asked to tell Isma'il to abandon Rafa' Yadain as it would cause confusion among the public. Abdul Qadir replied that he would advise Isma'il but feared that the latter will not listen and will counter by presenting hadith.

Hence, Shah Abdul Qadir asked Molvi Muhammad Ya'qub to ask Molvi Isma'il to abandon Rafa' Yadain because it will cause unnecessary trouble among the masses. When Molvi Muhammad Ya'qub spoke to Molvi Isma'il, the latter replied ‘if one worries about troubling the masses, then what do you say about the hadith: “a person who revives a Sunnah in times of tribulation gets the reward of a hundred martyrs?”’ When an abandoned Sunnah is revived then there is bound to be opposition from the masses. Molvi Muhammad Ya'qub informed Shah Abdul Qadir of Molvi Isma'il's reply to which Shah Abdul Qadir said:

“Oh, dear! We thought that Isma'il had become a scholar. But he has not understood the meaning of [even a simple] hadith. The hadith he quotes is for that action which contradicts the sunnah. In the matter of Rafa' Yadain, we do not go against the Sunnah;

¹⁰ Anwar-e-Aftab-e-Sadaqat, page 617-620. Kareem Press, Lahore – Muhammad Qadi Fazle Ahmad Ludhyanwi

because just as raising the hands [Rafa' Yadain] is Sunnah, leaving them unraised is also [from another] Sunnah.”¹¹

The contradiction and mistakes of Shah Isma'il Dihlawi in matters of belief (aqayid) and juridical mistakes caused many disputes among the Ulema. Most notably, the issue Imkan-e-Kadhib and Imkan-e-Nazeer-e-Muhammadi caused an uproar. The scholars of Ahlu's Sunnah have explained these two issues brilliantly, precisely and in detail. The contentious passage written by Shah Isma'il Dihlawi that caused this friction goes thus:

The glory of that King is such that He can create a billion prophets, awliya, jinns, angels, Muhammad and Jibril in a single moment with just a 'kun' [the command 'Be.'] (Taqwiyatu'l Iman, pg.37)

'Allama Fazle Haq Khairabadi, student of Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dihlawi, refuted this idea proving it was against the Shari'ah. He wrote that according to the absolute proofs of the Qur'an and hadith, Prophet Muhammad sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam is the last and final Prophet, there can be no other Prophet or Messenger after him. Conceiving another like the Prophet Muhammad is now an impossibility and from those aspects which is an impossibility according to the Shari'ah. To believe that there can be another Muhammad would necessitate that Allah did something apart from what He has stated in the Qur'an, that is, that Allah ta'ala has lied. Lying is a flaw and it is impossible for Allah to have a flaw. For a detailed discussion on the matter, refer to 'Allama Fazle Haq Khairabadi's *Tahqeeq al-Fatwa fi Ibtal al-Taghwa*.¹² The book has many proofs concerning the matter of 'possibility of lying by Allah ta'ala' and 'Impossibility of another Muhammad to exist' [Imkan-e-Kizb and Imkan-e-Nazeer-e-Muhammadi.]

Shah Isma'il Dihlawi wrote a monograph on this subject named *Yak Roza* and his student Mawlānā Haidar Ali Tonki provided support to his teacher's motif. As an answer to this, 'Allama Fazle Haq Khairabadi wrote a book in Farsi (Persian) called *Imtina'un Nazeer* which was published by 'Allama Sayyid Sulaiman Ashraf (President of Islamic Studies, Aligarh University) in 1908 from Jaunpur. Mawlānā Ahmad Hasan Kanpuri (student of Mufti Muhammad Lutfullah Aligarhi and Khalifa of Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki) wrote a book on the topic of Imkan-e-Kizb called *Tanzeeh al-Rahman 'an Shee'at al-Kadhibi wa al-Nuqsan*. On the same subject matter, Mawlānā Hakeem Sayyid Barkat Ahmad Tonki wrote *al-Samsam al-Qadib lira'asi al-Muftari 'alallahi al-Kadhib* and Mufti Muhammad Abdullah Tonki wrote *Ijalat al-Rakib fi Imtina'yi Kadhib al-Wajib*. With these works, they comprehensively refuted the idea of Imkan-e-Kizb with utmost brilliance.

We shall now leave the disagreements of that era and move on. The famous Naqshbandi Mujaddidi scholar Mawlānā Abul Hasan Zaid Faruqi Dihlawi's summing up of that era is quite informative:

¹¹ Arwah-e-Thalatha, Hikayat 73. Imdad-ul-Ghuraba, Saharanpur, 1370 H – Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanwi

¹² Maktaba Qadriya, Lahore – Urdu translation by Mawlana Muhammad Abdul Hakeem Sharf Qadri

“From the time of Hazrat Mujaddid-e-Alfi Thani Shaykh Ahmad Faruqi Sirhindi to 1240 AH (1825 CE), the Muslims of India were divided in only two groups: the Ahlu’s Sunnah wal Jama’ah and the Shi’a.

Then Mawlānā Isma’il Dihlawi came into the picture. He was the paternal grandson of Shah Waliullah and the paternal nephew of Shah Abdul Aziz, Shah Rafiuddin and Shah Abdul Qadir. He came across the ideas of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab Najdi and read Najdi’s book *Radd al-Ishrak*. He wrote *Taqwiyatul Iman* in Urdu and this book initiated the era of unfettered freedom in religious matters. Some became Ghair Muqallids, some Wahabis, some others called themselves Ahle Hadith and some became Salafis.

The respect that people had for the Mujtahid Imams diminished greatly and people of ordinary learning and common intelligence became Imams. The great tragedy is that in the name of Tawhīd, people began to disrespect the Prophet. All these corrupted ideas started after the month of Rabi’ al-Akhir in 1240 AH.”¹³

In 1871, a debate took place in Shaikhopur, Badayun, between Muhibbur Rasool Taajul Fuhood ‘Allama Abdul Qadir Qadri Barkati Badayuni (d. 1319 AH / 1901 CE) and Mawlānā Ameer Ahmad bin Molvi Ameer Hasan Sahsawani (d. 1306 AH / 1889 CE) on the matters of Imkan-e-Kizb and Imkan-e-Nazeer. Mawlānā Nazeer Ahmad Sahsawani (d. 1299 AH / 1881 CE) has documented this debate.¹⁴ Mawlānā Ameer Ahmad and Mawlānā Nazeer Ahmad both spent time with Mawlānā Muhammad Ahsan Nanotwi. Using the *Athar* of Ibn-e-Abbas as evidence, they not only believed that having Prophet’s like Adam, Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa ‘alayhimu’s salam and Muhammad sallallahu `alaihi wasallam was possible, they even believed that this was actually the case.

Prof. Muhammad Ayyub Qadri (Karachi) writes:

“It is important to point out that the Ulema of Bareilly and Badayun strongly opposed and disagreed with Mawlānā Muhammad Ahsan’s (Nanotwi) viewpoint. In Bareilly, the foremost in opposition was Mawlānā Naqi Ali Khan and in Badayun it was Mawlānā Abdul Qadir, the son of Mawlānā Fazle Rasool Badayuni.”¹⁵

Mawlānā Abdul Haq Khairabadi, Mawlānā Sayyid Husain Muhaddith Rampuri, Mawlānā Abdul Ali Rampuri, Mufti Noorun Nabi Rampuri and other Ulema of the Ahlu’s Sunnah opposed the *Athar* of Ibn Abbas, proving it to be against the Qur’an and a false belief. Hazrat Mufti Irshad Husain Rampuri wrote that believing in it is against the creed of Ahlu’s Sunnah. Because *Khatam al-Nabiyyin* means The final Prophet – that is Muhammad sallallahu `alaihi wasallam.¹⁶

¹³ Mawlana Isma’il Dihlawi aur Taqwiyatul Iman, page 9. Shah Abul Khair Academy, Dehli – Mawlana Abul Hasan Zaid Dihlawi

¹⁴ Munazara-e-Ahmadiya. Published in 1289 AH / 1872 CE

¹⁵ Mawlana Muhammad Ahsan Nanotwi, page 94. Maktaba Uthmania, Karachi – Prof. Muhammad Ayyub Qadri

¹⁶ Tanbeeh al-Jihal, page 26. Mufti Hafiz Bakhsh Anolwi.

Argumentation regarding Nazeer-e-Muhammadi, Khatme Nubuwwat and the Athar of Ibn Abbas continued and answering a question about these issues, Mawlānā Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi wrote a book named *Tahzeerun Naas* in which he wrote:

“The common folk, the general populace thinks that the meaning of the saying ‘Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam is the Seal’ means that his time is after the time of the earlier prophets and that he is the last of all the prophets. However, people of discerning know that there is no speciality in being earlier or later.

Suppose if there is a prophet born ever after the time of Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam, there shall be no difference in his being the Seal. So it wouldn’t make any difference if there is a prophet in his own time on a different planet, or even on this very planet.”

In a letter to Mawlānā Muhammad Fazil, Mawlānā Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi wrote:

“The meaning of Khatam al-Nabiyyin according to those who look at literal meanings is that the time of the Prophethood of Muhammad is after the time of the Prophethood of all other Prophets and that no other Prophet can come afterwards. However, you know that this is something in which there is neither praise nor any harm.”¹⁷

Mawlānā Ashraf Ali Thanwi writes:

“When Mawlānā Nanotwi wrote *Tahzeerun Naas*, nobody in the whole of India supported him, except Mawlānā Abdul Hay.”¹⁸

Mawlānā Muhammad Shah Punjabi, Mawlānā Fazle Majeed Badayuni, Mawlānā Hidayat Ali Barelwi, Mawlānā Faseehuddin Badayuni and Shaykh Muhammad Thanwi all wrote books against *Tahzeerun Naas* and strongly refuted its contents.

Hazrat Mawlānā Abdus Samee’ Bedil Rampuri, Khalifa of Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki, wrote the famous book *Anwar-e-Sati’ah*. In reply to this book, Mawlānā Khalil Ahmad Anbethawi Saharanpuri wrote *Baraheen-e-Qati’ah* which was endorsed by Mawlānā Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi. This book contains a paragraph which compares the blessed knowledge of Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam with that of the accursed Iblis in such heart wrenching words. He writes:

“The end result: One should ponder that by looking at the state of Shaytan and the Angel of death, and proving [similar] knowledge that encompasses the earth to the Pride of the world Sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam without any documentary evidence and merely by wrong analogy – if this is not polytheism, then which part of belief is this?

Because such extensive [knowledge] for the Angel of death and Shaytan is proved from absolute evidence [nuSuS e qaTyi’ah]. Where is any such absolute evidence to prove the

¹⁷ Qasim al-Uloom, page 55. First letter

¹⁸ Al-Ifadat al-Yawmiya, page 580. Deoband – Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanwi

extensiveness of the knowledge of the Pride of the world, sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam which refutes all absolute documents in order to prove one polytheistic belief?”

Baraheen-e-Qati’ah was written in 1303 AH and there was great displeasure to it. The Ulema of the Ahlu’s Sunnah opposed it and in 1306 H, a debate took place in Bhawalpur (Punjab) which was organised by Nawab Muhammad Sadiq Abbasi (Nawab of Bhawalpur). This was the place where Mawlānā Khalil Ahmad Anbethawi worked. Mawlānā Mahmood Hasan Deobandi (Shaykh al-Hind) and Mawlānā Khalil Ahmad Anbethawi argued in favour of *Baraheen-e-Qati’ah* and for the Ahlu’s Sunnah, Mawlānā Ghulam Dastagir Qasuri was the debater. Shaykh al-Mashaikh Hazrat Shah Ghulam Farid was the judge for the debate. The whole debate has been published as *Taqdees al-Wakeel ‘an Tauheen al-Rasheed wa al-Khalil*. The debate was a written one and the argument of Mawlānā Dastagir was this:

“My objection is that you have denied the vast knowledge of the most knowledgeable of creation sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam and have shown his knowledge to be less than that of Shaytan. This is disrespect of the worst kind.”¹⁹

Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki and Mawlānā Rahmatullah Kairanwi supported the Ulema of the Ahlu’s Sunnah and favouring the stance of Mawlānā Dastagir, they both signed the *Taqdees al-Wakeel*. After seeing the signatures of Mawlānā Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi in favour of Mawlānā Khalil Ahmad Anbethawi, Mawlānā Rahmatullah Kairanwi wrote in refutation:

“I used to think of Mawlānā Rasheed Ahmad as “Rasheed” but he turned out to be other than this. He has tried hard to prove the knowledge of Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam to be less than that of Shaytan and has called it Shirk to believe otherwise.”²⁰

In 1319 AH, Mawlānā Ashraf Ali Thanwi answered a question regarding ‘Ilm-e-Ghayb and published it as *Hifzul Iman*. In this book, he has compared the knowledge of Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam or to show its size or smallness to madmen and animals and has said there is nothing unique to Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam regarding this knowledge. The actual paragraph is this:

“And then, if it is correct to attribute the knowledge of the unseen (ilm ghayb) to be possessed by Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam, as Zayd says, then it remains to be asked, which one he refers to. Is it only a ‘part’ of it (baáĎ) or ‘complete’; if he refers to ‘part’, then what is extraordinary about Rasulullah in possessing it? Such knowledge of unseen is also possessed by all and sundry (Zayd, Amr); even infants, lunatics and all the animals and quadrupeds.”

The paternal grandson of Hazrat Sayyid Muhammad Jilani Qadri Hyderabadī, Sayyid Nazeeruddin son of Sayyid Moinuddin, expresses his disgust at this statement:

¹⁹ Taqdees al-Wakeel, page 93

²⁰ Taqdees al-Wakeel, page 419

“Some people brought the book, *Hifzul Iman* by Ashraf Ali Thanwi to my grandfather (Sayyid Muhammad Jilani Qadri) and asked about it. He read the book and said, “Molvi Ashraf Ali has written an utmost disrespectful thing about ‘Ilm-e-Ghayb”.

A few days after this, Molvi Ashraf Ali was sitting in Makkah Masjid in Hyderabad. My grandfather stood and expressed his disgust at the book and said, “This paragraph stinks of Kufr.”

A few days later, there was gathering of Ulema at the house of Mawlānā Hafiz Muhammad Ahmad (son of Mawlānā Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi). Since he had great affection for my grandfather he invited him too. At the gathering, the Ulema expressed their views on the paragraph in *Hifzul Iman*. My grandfather mentioned the disgust he felt and presented a fatwa against the book.

Then, some days after this, my grandfather saw Sayyidina Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam in a dream. The dear Prophet sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam expressed his happiness that my grandfather had refuted the book and had labelled it “Aqbah” (the most repugnant). Rasulullah sallallahu ‘alaihi wasallam said, “I am happy with you. What do you wish for?” My grandfather replied that he wished that his remaining life would be spent in Madina and that he be buried in Madina. His wish was granted and he migrated to Madina thereafter. He spent ten years there and passed away there in 1364 AH.²¹

Hazrat Mawlānā Abul Khair Naqshbandi Mujaddidi Dihlawi was once resident in Kothi Ilahi Bakhsh, Meerut. During his stay, Hafiz Muhammad Ahmad, son of Mawlānā Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi, and Mawlānā Ashraf Ali Thanwi came to one of his gatherings. A supporter of Mawlānā Ghulam Dastagir Qasuri read out the passage of *Hifzul Iman*. Hazrat Shah Abul Khair Dihlawi found it utterly displeasing and said:

“Is this service to the religion? Your elders were upon our path. Why did you oppose this?” Molvi Ashraf Ali Thanwi replied, “I have clarified this passage in another book of mine”. Shah Abul Khair answered, “So many people have diverged from the truth due to your book, what need remains of your clarification?”²²

The beginning and the end of sectarianism is there for all to see. Muhammad Husain (Raees Nahtor, Zila Bajnur) writes that when Shah Muhammad Isma’il Dihlawi reached Lucknow from Delhi with his supporters and began to preach his ideas:

“At the time, Mawlānā Abdur Rahman Wilayati was resident in Lucknow. He was famous for his miracles. Molvi Isma’il abstained from debate during this time. When he was about to leave, he said that the Ulema of Lucknow were very astray. He expressed his plan to return from Calcutta and do Jihad against these “astray” people. Molvi Abdur Rahman said, “My son! Whoever has intentions such as this does not return.”²³

²¹ Maqamat-e-Khair, page 616. Shah Abul Khair Academy, Dehli

²² Bazm-e-Khair az-Zayd, page 11. Shah Abul Khair Academy, Dehli

²³ Faryad al-Muslimin, 1308 AH / 1890 CE – Muhammad Husain Bajnuri

The ideology of Sayyid Ahmad Rae Bareilwi and the writings of Shah Isma'il Dihlawi strayed away from the beliefs of the predecessors and the creed of Waliyullahi family. Pointing towards the consequences of this, Mawlānā Ubaidullah Sindhi clearly expresses his views:

“As time passed by, due to dissent from the original creed, instead of becoming a national movement for the Muslims, the Waliyullahi movement became a platform for religious sectarianism. When connected with Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, naturally, this sectarianism occurred and the other section of this movement, the Deoband movement, also caused the same result. Even today, the vast majority of Muslims is Bareilwi which does not consider the two abovementioned movements as being anything less than *Kufr*.”²⁴

The religious sectarianism that occurred in India after 1240 AH / 1825 CE, the reasons for it and the people behind it have been mentioned briefly. A brief list of influential Sunni personalities is also presented.

13th Century Hijri

- ‘Allama Abdul Ali Farangi Mahalli Lakhnawi (1144-1235 AH)
- Shah Muhammad Ajmal Ilahabadi (1160-1236 AH)
- Shah Anwarul Haq Farangi Mahalli (1159-1239 AH)
- Shah Ghulam Ali Naqshbandi Dihlawi (1158-1240 AH)
- Shah Abu Sa’eed Mujaddidi Rampuri (1196-1226 AH)
- Shah Sayyid Aale Ahmad Qadri Barkati Marahrawi (1160-1262 AH)
- Shah Abul Hasan Fard Phulwarwi (1191-1265 AH)
- Shah Ahmad Sa’eed Mujaddidi Rampuri (1217-1277 AH)
- ‘Allama Fazl-e-Haq Khayrabadi (1212-1278 AH)
- ‘Allama Abdul Haleem Farangi Mahalli Lakhnawi (1209-1285 AH)
- ‘Allama Fazle Rasool Uthmani Qadri Badayuni (1213-1289 AH)
- Shah Aale Rasool Ahmadi Qadri Barkati Marahrawi (1209-1296 AH)
- Mawlānā Naqi Ali Bareilwi (1246-1297 AH)

and many others, may Allah be pleased with them all.

14th Century Hijri

- Mawlānā Abdul Hay Farangi Mahalli Lakhnawi (1264-1304 AH)
- Mufti Irshad Husain Mujaddidi Rampuri (1248-1311 AH)
- Mawlānā Fazle Rahman Ganj Muradabadi (1208-1313 AH)
- Mawlānā Ghulam Dastagir Qusuri Lahori (d. 1315 AH)
- Mawlānā Abdul Qadir Uthmani Qadri Barkati Badayuni (1253-1319 AH)
- Mawlānā Hidayatullah Rampuri Jaunpuri (d. 1326 AH)
- Mawlānā Khairuddin Dihlawi (d. 1326 AH)

²⁴ Ifadat-o-Malfuzat, page 349. Sindh Sagar Academy, Lahore – Mawlana Ubaidullah Sindhi

- Mawlānā Ahmad Raza Hanafī Qadri Barkati Barelwi (1272-1340 AH)
- Shah Abul Khair Naqshbandi Dihlawi (1272-1341 AH)
- Sayyid Shah Ali Husain Ashrafi Kachochawi (1266-1355 AH)
- Shah Mihr Ali Golrawi Punjabi (1274-1356 AH)

and many others, may Allah be pleased with them all.

In the previous pages, the references and the passages of the leaders of Deoband are based upon misguidance and Kufr (copies of the original passages can be seen in *Da'wat e Fikr* by Mawlānā Muhammad Mansha Tabish Qasauri). These passages harm the Islamic doctrine about Allah and the sanctity of Prophethood. These were the root cause of the division among the Muslims of India and this land became a battleground for sectarianism, the effects of which can be seen even today in every village, town and city, destroying the very soul of Islam.

The movement to preserve the sanctity and sacredness of Prophethood and protection of the creed of the Ahlu's Sunnah was aided by many great scholars who played a vital role. Foremost among them was, Muhibbu'r Rasool Taaju'l Fuhool Mawlānā Abdul Qadir Uthmani Qadri Barkati Badayuni (son of 'Allama Fazl e Rasool Uthmani Qadri Barkati Badayuni), student of 'Allama Fazl e Haq Khairabadi who was the student of Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dihlawi and secondly Imam e Ahl e Sunnat Mawlānā Ahmad Raza Hanafī Qadri Barkati Barelwi (son of 'Allama Naqi Ali Barelwi), Khalifa of Mawlānā Sayyid Shah Aal e Rasool Qadri Barkati Marahrawi who was the student of Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dihlawi. These two personalities, in their own era, played an important role. They both had Bay'ah and also Ijazah and Khilafah from Marahra Mutahhara (Eta, U.P.) and their allegiance was always to the luminaries of Marahra Mutahhara.

The distinctive characteristic of Imam Ahmad Raza Hanafī Qadri Barkati Barelwi was his love for the dear Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam. His great-grandson, Mawlānā Mufti Akhtar Raza Qadri Azhari Barelwi writes:

“The love of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam was the prime focus in his life. All his sayings and actions were steeped in love for the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam that it can be said that, he was, from head to toe, immersed in the love of Rasulullah sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam. Love of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam was his life and that was his message.”

It is worth noting here that his love was not a kind of madness where all sense of judgment is lost; rather, his love bound him to comply with the wishes of the beloved sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam. This is the state in love, where a man's own wishes are vanquished and he becomes a follower of the wishes of his beloved. This is the state mentioned in the hadith : ‘that a man's desires are compliant with that [message] which I have come with.’ [*wa an yakunu hawāhu tab'an limaa jiytu bihi*]. This aspect is reflected in all his religious services and efforts. His book, *Maqal e 'Urafa' bi I'zaz e Shar'a wa 'Ulema* is sufficient to demonstrate this. In this book he has shown the loftiness of the Shari'ah, and has eloquently refuted those freethinking Sufis who oppose it. He has

strongly refuted rituals and actions that are anti-Shari'ah in his books and urged Muslims to abstain from them. For example, visiting fake graves, visiting of graves by women, festivals and fairs during an 'Urs, prostration of reverence and making Ta'zia [icons to commemorate the martyrdom of Ahl al-Bayt]. He has strongly advised and urged Muslims to abstain from such rituals.²⁵

Prof. Muhammad Mas'ud Ahmad Mujaddidi Mazhari, son of Mufti Muhammad Mazharullah Naqshbandi Mujaddidi (Khateeb and Imam of Masjid Fatehpuri, Delhi) writes:

(1) Imam Ahmad Raza Muhaddith Barelwi considered it to be contrary to adab [respect] to use words or phrases loosely, when referring to Allah ta'ala or the Prophets; because even though the literal meaning might seem correct, they still remain disrespectful. According to Muhaddith Barelwi, such words are present in Molvi Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi's *Tahzeerun Naas*, Molvi Ashraf Ali Thanwi's *Hifzul Iman*, Molvi Khalil Ahmad Anbethawi's *al-Baraheen al-Qati'ah*, Molvi Isma'il Dihlawi's *Sirat-e-Mustaqeem* and *Taqwiyatul Iman* and Molvi Mahmood Hasan Deobandi's *al-Jahd al-Maqal*. Whereas the authors of these books claim that these words should not be taken in the sense that is disrespectful; because even according to them, disrespect is Haram. But the standpoint of Muhaddith Barelwi is that because the passages in these books are in common speech [Urdu]. The default meaning is that which is commonly understood by the native Urdu speaker. Therefore, the ruling will be according to such a meaning [not the abstruse one, which can be extracted].

(2) Secondly, Muhaddith Barelwi believed that the praise mentioned about the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam in the Qur'an and Hadith should be taken as it is reported and disseminated likewise so that the status and rank of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam is known to Muslims and their hearts are filled with his love and respect. However, the Ulema of Deoband chose to be overly cautious in this regard because they believed that this could cause Muslims to transgress the limits.

(3) Muhaddith Barelwi was of the opinion that celebrating the birthday of the Prophet sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam was permissible and desirable, whereas the scholars of Deoband were against it.

(4) Muhaddith Barelwi considered Qiyam [to stand in respect] to be a praiseworthy act in the gatherings of Mawlid an-Nabi sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam whereas the scholars of Deoband considered this to be Bid'ah or an innovation.

(5) Muhaddith Barelwi considered 'Urs to be permissible (as long as these gatherings did not contravene the Shari'ah) whereas the scholars of Deoband considered them to be impermissible.

²⁵ Weekly Hujoom, New Delhi. December 1988

(6) Fatiha [donating the reward to deceased] was considered permissible by Muhaddith Barelwi [again as long as it did not have any element against Shari`ah] but the scholars of Deoband considered it to be impermissible.

A few paragraphs later, Prof. Muhammad Mas`ud Ahmad writes:

The Spiritual Master and Murshid of the elders of Deoband, Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki, had the same opinions as Muhaddith Barelwi did; and he wrote a monograph, *Faisla Haft Mas`ala* to unite these two groups. However, the Ulema of Deoband did not accept his views.²⁶

From the Salaf (predecessors) to the Khalaf (their successors) it is a unanimous belief that disrespect towards the Prophet sallallahu `alaihi wasallam is a gross crime and manifest Kufr. The Qur`an, Hadith and the sayings of the Sahaba and Tabi`een form the evidence for this ruling. The Shaykh-ul-Hadith of Darul Uloom Deoband, Mawlānā Husain Ahmad Tandwi, writes concerning the issue:

“Disrespecting the Prophet sallallahu `alaihi wasallam is Kufr. Never mind clear disrespect, even if a person utter words that [are ambiguous and hence] might resemble disrespect, even this will cause it to be ruled Kufr.”²⁷

Similarly, *Ihād* and *Zandaqah* are also Kufr; and after Shar`i proof is obtained, it is obligatory to rule someone an apostate [Takfeer] who denies a matter deemed among the necessities of faith. Mawlānā Ameen Ahsan Islahi from Madrasatul Islah (Azamgarh, U.P.) writes in a letter:

“Mawlānā Thanwi’s fatwa has been published that Mawlānā Shibli Nu`mani and Mawlānā Hamiduddin Farahi are Kafir and because the Madrasatul Islah is part of their mission, it is a Madrasa of Kufr and apostacy up to the stage that those Ulema who attend the missionary gatherings of the Madrasa they too are Mulhid and non-Muslims.”²⁸

When the mureed and Khalifa of Mawlānā Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Mawlānā Abdul Majid Daryabadi, wrote a letter to Mawlānā Thanwi which consisted of praise for Mawlānā Shibli Nu`mani and Mawlānā Farahi’s knowledge, their piety and their religious services, Mawlānā Thanwi replied by writing:

“These are all actions (a`maal). Belief (‘aqaid) is a separate entity to this. Good beliefs can be coupled with bad actions just as bad beliefs can be coupled with good actions.”²⁹

²⁶ Imam Ahmad Raza Muhaddith Barelwi, page 37-38. Qadri Kitab Ghar, Bareilly – Prof. Muhammad Mas`ud Ahmad

²⁷ Maktubat Shaykh-ul-Islam, vol. 2, page 165

²⁸ Hakeem-ul-Ummah, page 475 – Abdul Majid Daryabadi

²⁹ Hakeem-ul-Ummah, page 476

Further details on this topic can be found in books like *Kitab al-Shifa'* by Qadi Iyad Maliki al-Andalusi, *As-Sarim al-Maslool* of ibn Taymiya, *Ikfar al-Mulhideen* by Anwar Shah Kashmiri (Shaykh-ul-Hadith, Darul Uloom Deoband), *Ashaddul 'Adhaab* by Murtada Hasan Darbhangwi (Head of Education, Deoband) and two new books – *Naamoos-e-Rasool aur Qanoon-e-Tauheen-e-Risalat* by Justice Muhammad Isma'il Qureshi and *Gustaakh-e-Rasool ki Shar'i Haysiyat* by Mufti Muhammad Gul Rahman Qadri.

The scholars of Ahlu's Sunnah defended the sanctity of Prophethood and they performed a Jihad against attacks on established beliefs. Following in their footsteps, the Imam of Ahlu's Sunnah, Mawlānā Imam Ahmad Raza Hanafi Qadri Barkati Barelwi protected the creed of the Ahlu's Sunnah with his pen; Books like *Kanz al-Iman fi Tarjumat al-Qur'an*, *Al-'Ataya al-Nabawiya fi al-Fatawa al-Ridawiyya*, *Jadd al-Mumtar 'ala Radd al-Muhtar*, *Hadayiq-e-Bakhshish* and *Al-Daulat al-Makkiyah* are proof of his efforts to ward off the mischief. As a part of this service are his *Fatawa al-Haramain Bi Rajafi Nadwat al-Mayn* (1317 AH, 1899 CE), *Al-Mu'tamad al-Mustanad* (1320 AH, 1902 CE) and *Husaam al-Haramayn* (1324 AH) in which he passed the juridical verdict that the aforementioned writings were Kufr and presented it to the scholars of Haramayn (Makkah and Madinah) who wrote approvals [taqriz] for that fatwa. Read *Fazil-e-Barelwi 'Ulema-e-Hijaz ki Nazar Mein* written by Prof. Dr. Mas'ud Ahmad for more details.

As a Faqih (jurist) and a Mufti, he wrote thousands of fatawa and answered all kinds of questions. Other Sunni contemporaries also rendered this service, but his rank was that of a spokesman for all of them. He was always at the forefront against false belief and anti-Islamic philosophies. He refuted the Wahabi sect and its offshoots with utmost brilliance and this is the reason why he became a target for many a false accusation. He writes himself in *Tamhid e Iman*:

“To deceive the public these people have contrived a scheme. They say, “What is the reliability of these scholars of Ahlu's Sunnah? These people [Sunnis] make takfir on petty things. Their machines churn out only the decrees declaring people as infidels. They have ruled Isma'il Dihlawi, Molvi Ishaq, Molvi Abdul Hay as Kafirs” [here the imam implies that he has not said so].

And those without shame say that I have ruled Kafir – I seek Allah's refuge - Shah Abdul Aziz, Shah Waliullah, Haji Imdadullah, Mawlānā Shah Fazlurrahman [all scholars of Ahlu's Sunnah] and those beyond all boundaries of shame, say that I have ruled Kafir – I seek Allah's refuge – that I have did Takfeer of Shaykh Mujaddid Alfi Thani rahimahullah [implying I have never said so].

They mention the names of whosoever the person they are talking to holds in great esteem. In fact some of them went to Mawlānā Muhammad Husain Ilahabadi and said that I have done Takfeer of – I seek Allah's refuge - Shaykh al-Akbar Muhiyuddin ibn al-'Arabi quddisa sirruhu! May

Allah grant the Mawlānā an exalted place in paradise for he did not believe those liars. Rather he obeyed the verse: “If a fasiq comes to you with news, make sure of it” [investigate its truthfulness] and he wrote to me asking whether I had done so. I wrote to him back negating it in the form of a booklet by name, *Inja al-Bari an Waswasil Muftari*. When the Mawlānā read it he said “La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah”, warding off the deceit of these people.”³⁰

A prominent scholar of the Ahlu’s Sunnah, Mawlānā Sayyid Ahmad Sa’eed Kazmi Amrohawi (Anwar-ul-Uloom, Multan) writes:

“On the issue of Takfeer [ruling someone as an apostate], our stance has always been that, whosoever utters words of Kufr we shall not refrain from pronouncing Takfeer against them; whether they be Deobandi or Bareilwi, follower of the League or the Congress, Nechari [naturalists] or Nadwi. On this issue we shall not differentiate whether someone is a friend or a foe.

This certainly does mean that if one follower of the League utters a word of Kufr, all the followers of the League are Kafir; or if one Nadwi committed Kufr that all Nadwis are apostates. We do not declare all the residents of Deoband as Kafirs due to passages of Kufr written by some Deobandis.

We and our elders have repeatedly said that we do not decree any resident of Deoband or Lucknow as a kafir just because they live there. According to us, only that person is a kafir who commits insults against Allah, His Prophets and the chosen people of Allah and despite repeated warnings, does not repent. We also consider those people to be kafir who are aware of such Kufr and are aware of the clear meanings of these insults, and despite this they consider the insults to be the truth, the insulter to be a believer and their leader.

And that is it.

Apart from this, we do not declare anyone who claims to be a Muslim as an apostate. The number of people we have ruled as apostates are very few in number and restricted [to a specific issue]. Apart from these specific individuals, no Muslim from Deoband or Bareilly is termed an apostate. Neither are [Muslim] followers of the League or the Congress. We consider all Muslims to be exactly that – Muslims.”³¹

Mufti Muhammad Sharif al-Haq Amjadi, an exegete of *Al-Bukhari*, and head of the fatwa division [Dar al-Ifta’], al-Jamiat al-Ashrafiya, Mubarakpur (India) writes:

³⁰ Tamheed-e-Iman, page 45-46. Idara Ma’arif-e-Nu’mania, Lahore - Imam Ahmad Raza Bareilwi

³¹ Al-Haq al-Mubeen, page 24-25. Multan – ‘Allama Ahmad Sa’eed Kazmi

“Mere currency among common folk [úrf] is not sufficient to issue a ruling. Rather, rulings must take the real meanings of words into consideration. Therefore, a person who calls himself a Deobandi, is known by others as a Deobandi, believes these four Ulema-e-Deoband to be his leaders, even labels the Ahlu’s Sunnah as Bid’atis, but is not aware of the infamous statements of Kufr of these four scholars, then in reality he is not a Deobandi [who is ruled kafir]. Such a person is not ruled as a disbeliever or that performing his funeral prayer is disbelief. And Allah knows best.”³²

Note by the translator: The reason why the shaykh says ‘he is not a Deobandi in reality’ is because in the fatwas of Imam Ahmad Raza and other prominent Sunni scholars, the tag ‘Deobandi’ is used for a specific group. People should not confuse this to accuse these scholars of indulging in blanket takfir. Allāh táālā knows best.

The Ahlu’s Sunnah scholars have described criteria and conditions that are to be met before someone can be ruled an apostate.

- (1) Takallam – that a particular statement was certainly said;
- (2) Kalam – that such a statement is certainly blasphemous;
- (3) Mutakallim – that such a statement was certainly said by the person.

When there is not the frailest doubt [or misunderstanding] in any of the criteria above OR when there is not an acceptable explanation, only then can a ruling of apostacy be issued. This is the same for both actions and words [amounting to blasphemy]. This principle can be understood by a simple example. If Zayd claims to be a Muslim, then the ruling of apostacy [takfir] can be issued only if he denies or contravenes any necessary article of faith either through his words or his actions and such a denial or contravention has:

- (1) indeed occurred
- (2) such words or actions are indeed blasphemous
- (3) such words or actions are indeed proved to be that of Zayd.

And only when all three aspects above are conclusively proven and ascertained, the ruling of apostacy [takfir] can be pronounced for Zayd.

The unambiguous position of the scholars of Ahlu’s Sunnah concerning the leaders of Deoband and their infamous statements is that: any person who has complete knowledge of these statements and clear understanding of those statements, and yet, does not consider such people as disbelievers is a disbeliever himself. That is, being fully cognizant of the issue and complete understanding of those statements is a necessary condition for ruling the second person [the follower or admirer of Deobandi elders] an apostate.

³² Ma’arif Shaareh Bukhari, page 914, Raza Academy, Mumbai

The doctrine and the actions of Ahlu’s Sunnah are those which have been handed down from the time of the Prophet and his companions [Sahabah] to their successors [Tabiyeen] and that which have been documented in the books of tafseer, hadith, fiqh, tasawwuf, seerah and tareekh. The writings and speeches of the scholars of Farangi Mahal, Lucknow, Khayrabad, Badayun and Bareilly conform to this very set of beliefs. They are the true spokesmen of the teachings and opinions of scholars like Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dihlawi (d. 1052 AH) and Shah Abdul Aziz Muhaddith Dihlawi (d. 1239 AH) who are the true heirs of Islamic scholars. They will never accept or even contemplate novel ideas that contradict Islamic doctrine. They hold fast unto the doctrine propounded and promulgated by the elders; they consider this to be a precious gift and a path to their own salvation and that of other Muslims.

Mawlānā Nayimuddin Muradabadi, a deputy of Imam Ahmad Raza Hanafi Barkati Bareilwi, writes:

“A Sunni is one, who is a living example of *Maa ana ‘alaihi wa as’habi*. They are upon the creed of the Khulafa al-Rashideen, the Imams of religion [both fiqh and tasawwuf] and among the latter scholars Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dihlawi, Malik al-Ulema Bahr al-Uloom Mawlānā Abdul Ali Farangi Mahalli, Mawlānā Fazle Haq Khairabadi, Mawlānā Shah Fazl e Rasool Badayuni, Mufti Irshad Husain Rampuri and Mawlānā Mufti Shah Ahmad Raza Bareilwi, may Allah have mercy on them.”³³

Imam Ahmad Raza Bareilwi in his fatawa – like other scholars of Ahlu’s Sunnah – has enjoined Muslims to be steadfast in their belief and better their social standing. These are available as small booklets and following are the subjects of his fatawa :

- Shari’ah is the ultimate law and following it is obligatory for all Muslims;
- to refrain from Bid’ah is of utmost importance
- a Sufi without knowledge or a Shaykh without actions is a joke of the devil;
- it is impermissible to imitate the Kuffar, to mingle with the misguided [and heretics] and to participate in the festivals of the Hindus.
- it is polytheism [shirk] to prostrate to any other than Allah táālā with the intention of worship. And if such a prostration is out of reverence [sajdah at-taḥiyyah], it is Haram.
- it is prohibited to ridicule other muslims and consider oneself higher than others.

³³ Al-Faqeeh, page 9, Amritsar – 21st August, 1925 CE

- the iconography of the Shi`ah [ta`aziyah] and respecting such icons is forbidden
- Qawwali [sama`a] with musical instruments is forbidden
- it is not permissible for women to travel to visit graves [or maqams of awliya]
- it is not permissible to make pictures of living things.
- abbreviating the blessing `sallallahu `alaihi wasallam` to an acronym `sa`d lam ayn meem`, [in english it is abbreviated as PBUH] is impermissible
- to visit fake graves [that have no basis or record but simply the product of folklore] is impermissible
- feeding the poor and needy with the intention to donate the reward to the dead is permissible; but to hold obsequies and banquets where even the rich are invited is impermissible

For further details, see my book, *Imam Ahmad Raza aur Radd e Bid`aat-o-Munkaraat*, [Imām Aḥmed Rida and his refutation of heresies and innovations] published in India and Pakistan.

He had the same opinion like that of the *Sawad al-A`dham* (the great majority) of the Ahlu`s Sunnah wal Jama`ah; similar to that of the scholars of Badayun, Khairabad, Bareilly, the masters of Marahra and Kichaucha with regards to the following practices and beliefs are permissible:

- that intercession [*tawassul*] of the Prophets and saints is permissible
- to respect relics of the prophets and elders and to revere them
- visit shrines or graves of saints with the intention of tawassul
- to celebrate `Urs which is free from impermissible practises and sin
- to celebrate the birthday of the prophet sallallahu `alaihi wasallam [Mawlid, Qiyam] and to stand up in his honor
- to donate reward of good deeds to the dead [Fatiha and Isaal al-Thawab] etc.

These are practices permitted by our predecessors and even today, 90% of the Muslims of the world practice these actions. The newly published Arabic book, *Mafaheem Yajib an*

*Tusahhaha*³⁴ [Matters that need to be Clarified], by the late Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawi ibn Abbas al-Maliki al-Makki is a detailed exposition and research on the practices of the Ahlu's Sunnah. Many contemporary Arab and African scholars have endorsed this book, many of whom are the members of *Raabta al-'Aalam-e-Islami*, Makka. I have translated this book into Urdu by the name of *Islah-e-Fikr-o-I'ytiqad*, which has been published both in India and Pakistan.

Sayyid Muhammad Faruq al-Qadri, the Urdu translator of *Anfas al-'Arifeen*, an important book on taşawwuf among the followers of Shah Waliyullah, writes the following about the practices of Ahlu's Sunnah:

“Imagine! Were Shah Waliullah Muhaddith Dihlawi, Shah Abdur Raheem, Shaykh Abū'r Rida and Siraj al-Hind Mawlānā Shah Abdul Aziz all Barelwi? Mawlānā Shah Ahmad Raza Barelwi and Darul Uloom Deoband were not even in existence when these disagreements began.

It is ironic that the first thing that disrupted the peaceful environment of the Subcontinent was a member of this prominent family [of Shah Waliyullah] - Shah Muhammad Isma'il and his *Taqwiyatul Iman*. His thought was unacceptable, his beckoned towards a strange idea and his way of invitation was warlike.

I have seen a list of 250 books written as a rebuttal to *Taqwiyatul Iman* in various languages as soon as it was published. From this, one can surmise the reaction towards this book amongst both ordinary Muslims and scholars.

We have no proof to say that all the scholars, Sufis and ordinary Muslims were steeped in polytheism and heresy [Shirk and Bid'ah] and that Shah Muhammad Isma'il was enlightening the nation and introducing them to *real Tawhīd* for the first time.

After all, what is the time gap between Shah Waliyullah, Shah Abdul Aziz and Shah Muhammad Isma'il? Had the entire Subcontinent been engulfed in Kufr and Shirk in this very short period? And if it was already afflicted with Shirk and Kufr, then why did Hakeem al-Ummah Shah Waliyullah and Shah Abdul Aziz not use the same harsh language [as Shah Isma'il]?

The reality of the matter is that, the first voice that erred from the creed of *Sawad al-A'dham* or the Great Majority that shook the Subcontinent was that of Shah Isma'il. Certainly, this can be termed as an invitation to the movement of Muhammad bin Abdu'l Wahhab an-Najdi but it surely not a call towards the thought or practices of Shah Waliyullah.”³⁵

The movement to protect the Ahlu's Sunnah and to reestablish the respect of the Prophet in the hearts of Muslims, was led by the scholars of Khairabad, Badayun and Bareilly. This movement came into prominence as an answer to the Wahabi movement and was greatly

³⁴ First published in 1985, Cairo

³⁵ *Anfas al-'Arifeen*, page 18-19. Maktaba al-Falah, Deoband

aided by the Imam of the Ahlu's Sunnah, Mawlānā Ahmad Raza Hanafi Qadri Barkati Barelwi (d. 1340 AH, 1921 CE) whose immense knowledge and outstanding leadership saw that the creed of Ahlu's Sunnah, the creed of our predecessors, the elder scholars prevailed.

A brief list of scholars, institutions and publishing houses that belong to the Ahlu's Sunnah is in order.

Scholars among many others, may Allah have mercy on them all:

- Mawlānā Waṣī Aḥmed Muḥaddith Sūrātī
- Mawlānā Amjad Ālī Azmi
- Mawlānā Nayimuddin Muradabadi
- Sayyid Jama'at Ali Shah Muhaddith Alipuri
- Mawlānā Sayyid Deedar Ali Alwari
- Mawlānā Hamid Raza Qadri
- Mawlānā Mustafa Raza Qadri Noori
- Mawlānā Abdul Muqtadir Badayuni
- Mawlānā Abdul Qadeer Badayuni
- Mawlānā Abdul Aleem Siddiqi
- Mawlānā Sayyid Muhammad Muhaddith Ashrafi Kachochwi
- Mawlānā Zafaruddin Qadri Bihari
- Mufti Muhammad Abdul Baqi Burhanul Haq Jabalपुरi
- Mawlānā Hashmat Ali Lakhnawi
- Mawlānā Karamatullah Dihlawi
- Mawlānā Hasnayn Raza Barelwi

Contemporary scholars:

- Mufti Muhammad Akhtar Raza Qadri Azhari
- Mawlānā Shah Ahmad Noorani
- Mawlānā Tahseen Raza Barelwi
- Mufti Muhammad Shariful Haq Amjadi
- 'Allama Arshadul Qadri
- 'Allama Sayyid Mahmood Ahmad Rizvi Lahori
- Mufti Abdul Mannan Azmi
- Mufti Ghulam Muhammad Rizvi Nagpuri
- Mufti Muhammad Abdul Qayyum Qadri Hazarvi
- Prof. Muhammad Mas'ud Ahmad Mujaddidi Mazhari
- Mufti Zafar Ali Nu'mani
- Mufti Jalaluddin Ahmad Amjadi
- Mawlānā Sayyid Muhammad Madni Ashrafi Kachochwi
- Mufti Muhammad Ashfaq Husain Na'imi
- 'Allama Zia-ul-Mustafa Qadri

- Khwaja Muzaffar Husain Rizvi
- Mawlānā Mujeeb Ashraf Rizvi
- Mawlānā Abdul Hakeem Sharf Qadri
- Shah Turabul Haq Qadri
- Sayyid Hamid Ashraf Kachochwi
- Mawlānā Qamaruzzaman Azmi
- Mawlānā Muhammad Ahmad Azmi Misbahi

Institutions and Universities [or Madrasah, Jami`ah] of Ahlu's Sunnah:

- Manzar-e-Islam, Bareilly
- Mazhar-e-Islam, Bareilly
- Al-Jamiatul Ashrafiyah, Mubarakpur
- Jamia Na'yimia, Muradabad
- Darul Uloom Hizbul Ahnaaf, Lahore
- Darul Uloom Amjadia, Karachi
- Jamia Nizamia Rizvia, Lahore
- Darul Uloom Ishaqia, Jodhpur
- Markaz al-Thaqafat al-Sunniya, Calicut, Kerala
- Jamia Sa'dia, Kasargod, Kerala
- Jamia Hazrat Nizamuddin Awliya, New Delhi
- Darul Uloom Amjadia, Nagpur
- Darul Uloom Faizur Rasool, Bara'un Shareef
- Jamia Ashraf, Kichauha Shareef
- Jamia Hameedia Rizvia, Banaras
- Jamia Na'yimia, Lahore
- Darul Uloom Na'yimia, Karachi
- Al-Jamiatul Islamia, Ronahi, Faizabad
- Darul Uloom 'Aleemia, Jamdashahi, Basti
- Darul Uloom Muhammadia, Mumbai
- Faizul Uloom, Jamshedpur
- Zia-ul-Islam, Hora, Bengal
- Anwar-ul-Qur'an, Balrampur
- Darul Uloom Ghareeb Nawaz, Ilahabad
- Ahsan-ul-Madaris, Kanpur
- Darul Uloom Warsia, Lucknow

Publishers:

- Sunni Darul Isha'at, Mubarakpur
- Al-Majma' al-Islami, Mubarakpur
- Markazi Majlis-e-Raza, Lahore
- Raza Academy, Lahore
- Raza Academy, Mumbai
- Idara Tahqeeqat-e-Imam Ahmad Raza, Karachi
- Idara Ma'arif-e-Nu'mania, Lahore
- Darul Qalam, Dehli
- Al-Majma' al-Misbahi, Mubarakpur
- Idara-e-Afkar-e-Haq, Baisi Purniya
- Maktaba Jaam-e-Noor, Delhi
- Faruqia Book Depot, Delhi
- Rizvi Kitab Ghar, Delhi and Bhiwandi
- Maktaba Na'imia, Delhi
- Kutub Khana Amjadia, Basti
- Qadri Kitab Ghar, Bareilly
- Qadri Book Depot, Bareilly
- Maktaba Rahmania Rizvia, Bareilly

Periodicals:

- Monthly Kanzul Iman, Dehli
- Monthly Ashrafia, Mubarakpur
- Monthly Jahan-e-Raza, Lahore
- Monthly Sunni Dunya, Bareilly
- Monthly A'la Hazrat, Bareilly
- Monthly Taybah, Ahmadabad
- Monthly Yaseen, Kota, Rajasthan
- Monthly Sirat-e-Mustaqeem, Udaipur, Rajasthan
- Monthly Maah-e-Taybah, Jodhpur, Rajasthan
- Quarterly al-Kausar, Sahsaram
- Annual Ma'arif-e-Raza, Karachi
- Monthly Zia-e-Haram, Lahore

The focal point of all these institutions is, “Oh Allah! Guide us upon the straight path. The path of those whom Thou hast favoured; not those who have earned Your anger and the astray”.

A few of the awliya in the subcontinent, may Allāh be pleased with them:

- Hazrat Daata Ganj Bakhsh Hujwari Lahori
- Hazrat Khwaja Muyinuddin Chishti Ajmeri
- Hazrat Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariya Multani
- Hazrat Khwaja Fariduddin Ganj Shakar
- Hazrat Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtyar Kaki
- Hazrat Makhdoom ‘Alauddin Ali Ahmad Sabir Kalyari
- Hazrat Mahboob-e-Ilahi Nizamuddin Awliya
- Hazrat Sharfuddin Yahya Muneeri
- Hazrat Makhdoom Jahaniyan Jahan Gasht
- Ameer Kabeer Hazrat Sayyid Ali Hamdani
- Hazrat Makhdoom Sayyid Ashraf Jahangir Samnani
- Hazrat Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dihlawi
- Hazrat Mujaddid Alfi Thani Shaykh Ahmad Faruqi Sarhandi

If Muslims follow their footsteps even today, they can attain high ranks and immense favour of Allāh táālā. These are the pure souls that enlightened the subcontinent with the blessing of Islam and faith, and made it an epicentre of light.