In Good Company: Reformist Piety and Women's Daʿwat in the Tablīghī Jamāʿat

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Abstract

Women's participation in the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, an Islamic reform movement launched in the 1920s that emphasizes personal piety, remains underexamined, impeded by the organization's strict *pardāh* requirements but also by the popular perception that it is a body of male preachers. While there is no indication that its founder wanted women to play an active role in his movement, women were a part of the Jamāt a few decades later. This paper points to important twentieth-century shifts in the socio-economic configuration in north India that paved the way for women's inclusion in the Jamāt. The mode of piety that evolved in this period was better suited to handle the stresses of the emerging salaried class, and it upheld the pious wife as an ideal companion for the pious man, underplaying the role of teachers and spiritual masters. This paper argues that the possibility of social and geographic mobility that changed the structure of the household and the texture of local communities also formulated a mode of piety that enabled women to perform *daʿwāt*.

In 2013, I approached the Crime Branch in Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, to access the intelligence briefings filed by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for the years 1900 to 1935. The colonial regime closely monitored the movement of prominent figures and the intelligence

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reports from this period, currently held by the local Crime Branch, form an important archive. Since the reports are not de-classified, I had to review them in the presence of a junior officer. Further, on my last day in the archive, I had to submit my handwritten notes to the department head for review. As I sat across the table from him, he flipped through my notebook and asked, “What were you looking for?” I said I was a scholar of gender and religion and had hoped to find references to the Tablīghī Jamāʿat in the reports. He was baffled. “If you are interested in women, why are you after the Tablīghīs? They are a bunch of men,” he said. It was my turn to be shocked. I had just realized that a senior intelligence officer, the head of a department dedicated to collecting information about organizations, did not know that women had been a part of the Jamāt for decades, visiting its headquarters in Delhi, gathering for sermons in the neighborhood community centers, and travelling to Europe and Africa on proselytizing tours (*khuruj*).

Women’s participation in the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, a reform movement that emphasizes personal piety, remains underexamined, impeded by the organization’s strict *pardāh* requirements, but also by the popular perception that it is a body of male preachers.[1] Its founder Maulana Ilyas Kandhlewi (d. 1944) launched the movement in the 1920s to reform what he called the ‘nominal Muslims’ of Mewat in northwest India amid conversion campaigns launched by rival Hindu groups.[2] Under his leadership, the Jamāʿat achieved impressive success in Mewat and made tentative forays into north India. It attracted a significant number of men who travelled to nearby villages and towns to teach and learn correct religious practice. There is no indication that Maulana Ilyas wanted women to play an active role in his movement. However, several ulema I met in Deoband, many of whom were affiliated with the Dār ul-ʿUlūm, insisted that Maulana Ilyas had approached noted jurist Mufti Kifayatullah Dehlavi (d. 1952) to issue a fatwa in support of women’s recruitment, but he was refused.[3] A fatwa against women travelling on *khuruj* can indeed be found in the second volume of Mufti Kifayatullah’s collection of fatwas.[4] However, since the text does not disclose the name of the person soliciting the fatwa, it is impossible to conclude that the question was posed by Maulana Ilyas. Taking a different position, Barbara Metcalf writes that Mufti Kifayatullah was among the handful of traditionalists who endorsed women’s presence in the Jamāʿat.[5] But the text she cites—*Daʿwat e Tablīghī kī Sharʿī Haisiyyat*—acknowledges and reproduces the fatwa of Mufti Kifayatullah.[6]

Women's presence in the Jamāʿat is a polarizing issue, inviting rebuke even from clerics who are sympathetic to its mission.[7] In response, the Jamāʿat has devised complex communication rules and dress codes for women to avoid any breach of *pardāh*. As far as I can tell, the first and only written reference to women by a leader of the Jamāʿat came from Maulana Yusuf (d. 1965), the son of Maulana Ilyas and the second emir, in a letter he drafted for a group travelling to Mecca.[8] The letter is undated but we know that starting in the late 1940s, Maulana Yusuf sent several missions to Mecca. The letter, likely to have been composed in this period, prohibits women from door-to-door proselytizing—a hallmark of Tablīghī *daʿwat*[9]—but encourages them to organize meetings at home. When men and women travel on *khuruj*, the men must stay in the mosque and the women should be hosted by a family, whose male members have also moved to the mosque, the letter insists. The visiting men and the locals can then organize *daʿwat* tours, while the women can teach and learn from each other in the *pardāh* environment of the home.

It is impossible to ascertain the number of female—or, for that matter, male—members affiliated with the Jamāʿat since the movement does not undertake official enrollment, but within the two-kilometer radius in south Bombay where I conducted fieldwork from 2012 to 2014, there were at least 25 homes that hosted afternoon sermons. Some of these meetings drew less than 10 women, while others were held in a community center large enough for 300 people. I have written about my ethnographic fieldwork among the women elsewhere, but in this paper, I will point to the important shifts in the socio-economic configuration in north India in the twentieth century that opened the door for women's inclusion in the Jamāʿat. I argue that the possibility of social and geographic mobility that changed the structure of the household and the texture of local communities also enabled women to perform *daʿwat*. To make this point, I read religious edicts alongside didactic fiction and journalistic pieces as a methodological strategy. The social world that the archives reveal is one in which novels and fatwas, magazines and sermons, and government notices and petitions circulated simultaneously in intersecting networks. Putting these disparate texts in conversation has enabled me to combine archives hitherto segregated along the lines of religious and secular literature.

The Rise of the Government Servant

The colonial state built a massive bureaucratic apparatus and peopled it with educated natives, but it also altered the terms of employment and

transformed the work place. It has been pointed out that men like Syed Ahmad Khan (d. 1898), Maulvi Zakā'ullah Khan (d. 1910), Altaf Hussain Hali (d. 1914), and Nazir Ahmad (d. 1912) hailed from families that had traditionally served the governments of the day.[10] In taking up employment with the colonial state, they were following the lead of their fathers and forefathers. And yet the experience of a government employee under British rule could not have been more different from the Mughal court. For one, the new offices were removed from the space of the household. They were no longer the sites of leisurely socialization. The Weberian impersonality and rationality of the new workspace, defined by fixed hours, centralized authority, and rigid rules, were not lost on the employees. The protagonist of Nazir Ahmad's later novel *Ibn ul Waqt* (The Son of the Moment, 1888) articulates this shift:

> For generations we have been in the service of the Mughal government. A body of servants that was affiliated with the dynasty for generations fulfilled every need of the government. The servants took comfort in the knowledge that not only their livelihood but also that of their children was secure...I never heard the words 'penalty', 'suspension', or 'termination' in the Fort (the Red Fort in Delhi, the seat of Mughal power). We were always showered with praise and treated with respect. The House of Taimur (the Mughal dynasty) was generous. The salaries of the deceased royal servants continued to be disbursed among their children, grandchildren and even their great grandchildren, such that often the descendants received a few paise in remuneration every two years. The money was accepted by the families as a token of grace (*tabarruk*)…. the Mughals treated the employees like their children. That is the kind of government I have worked for. I do not think I could work for the English.[11]

Nazir Ahmad is among the most successful Urdu reformist writers of his generation. His first novel *Mir'āt ul 'Urūs* (The Mirror for Brides, 1869) received high praise. The novel is didactic and unabashed in pushing the agenda of reform. At important moments in the plot, Nazir Ahmad makes cursory references to correct Islamic practice, but his engagement with religious reform is fundamentally different from that of Maulana Ilyas or noted Deobandi *'ālim* Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi (d. 1943) for whom the Afterlife took precedence over success in this world. Nazir Ahmad, on the other hand, never lost sight of the material success that he thought Muslims could, and should, achieve. He was aware that in the nineteenth century

this required associating with the British government. In *Mir'āt ul 'Urūs,* when an unemployed Muhammad Kamil contemplates seeking a position in a princely state in Lahore where his father is already employed, his wife Asghari reminds him:

> There is nothing left in Lahore. The government of the *ra'īs* (the rich nobility) is in ruins. He employs your father out of courtesy and pays him a paltry sum of fifty rupees.[12]

Asghari further elaborates that none of the native states was doing well and the only realistic option Muhammad Kamil had was to work for the British. Nazir Ahmad himself worked in the education and revenue departments of the North-Western Provinces for nearly two decades. *Mirāt ul 'Urūs*, written during this period, is his most optimistic vision of the colonial state's potential to facilitate Muslim empowerment through employment.

In unsurprising ways, the plots of Nazir Ahmad's novels mirror his aspirations and disappointments. He moved to Hyderabad in 1877 to work in the Nizam's government, but returned to Delhi in 1884 and stayed there until his death. He wrote *Ibn ul Waqt* towards the end of a long career as a public servant. In contrast to *Mir'āt ul 'Urūs*, which is set in an *ashraf* household, *Ibn ul Waqt* narrates the blossoming and the eventual failure of the friendship between a *sharīf* Muslim and a British officer. The novel opens with Ibn ul Waqt giving shelter to an injured British official, Noble Saheb, during the 1857 rebellion. When peace is restored in Delhi, Noble Saheb returns the favor by awarding him a land grant. He also seeks his assistance in the government's probe into the rebellion. Soon a friendship develops between the two and Ibn ul Waqt, upon Noble Saheb's coaxing, fashions himself as a reformer of the Muslim community. He embraces English clothing and rents a house in the cantonment area. However, his relocation from the inner city to the British camp isolates him from the very community he wanted to reform. He finds himself further marginalized when Noble Saheb abruptly returns to Britain. Ibn ul Waqt realizes that his integration into the English world is fragile and goes back to the world he knows best: the walled city of Delhi.

The sudden rupture of Ibn ul Waqt's ties with Noble Saheb symbolizes the shattering of the faith in education and government employment that animated the early writings of the reformers who had come of age in the shadow of the events of 1857.[13] In *Ibn ul Waqt*, Nazir Ahmad articulates this disillusionment through the character of Hujjat ul Islam (Evidence of

Islam),[14] a native bureaucrat, who, unlike the novel's protagonist, held on to his value system. He reminds Ibn ul Waqt:

> The government is so frugal and efficient in its workings that if a rupee needs to be spent, it spares no more than fifty paise; and that too after much hesitation. As a result, fewer people find employment and the salaries are low. To make matters worse, the whole world is intent on finding government employment….the *bania* (merchants), *baqal* (traders), *thetre* (vegetable sellers), *kanjre* (musicians), *bhatiyare* (cooks)[15], even the grass cutters…families that did not have a single literate person in their clan are now sending their children to school. So what good can government employment do for us now?[16]

It should be noted that Hujjat ul Islam's critique of the government, which forms Nazir Ahmad's closing argument in the novel, is different from Ibn ul Waqt's comparison of employment under Mughal and British regimes cited earlier. The latter argument represents the anxiety of a service class that was wrestling with the idea of taking up British employment, struggling to learn a new language, and was dismayed at not being treated as an equal in the new workplace. In contrast, Hujjat ul Islam warns the readers that government employment did not necessarily improve the community's prospects. The novel's critique of the government here is twofold: one, it was not doing enough to improve the fortunes of the elite, and two, by educating and employing men from the lower castes, it was creating a new service class that was threatening the entrenched position of the old elite. Nazir Ahmad's own career bears testimony to this disenchantment. He came into the limelight as a celebrated author of educational literature apt for the service class, but he spent his later years loaning money to Muslim entrepreneurs in Delhi to make them "more and more interested in trade and business".[17] Mirza Farhatu'llāh Beg, a student of his, writes that Maulvi Saheb (Nazir Ahmad) could be easily persuaded to offer financial assistance to promising business ventures. Quoting Nazir Ahmad, Beg states, "He used to say, 'My dears…if you want to start a business, I will loan you money too. When you face difficulties in government service, only then you will understand my position.'"[18]

In 1888, the same year as the publication of *Ibn ul Waqt*, Nazir Ahmad's classmate from Delhi College, Maulvi Zakaullah Khan, penned an essay that reviewed the progress made by Muslims in the field of education in time for the third Muslim Educational Conference held in Lahore. In his write-up, Zakaullah Khan paints a dismal picture of low Muslim enroll-

ment in degree and professional colleges. Though the number of Muslim boys in primary and middle schools had risen, he claimed they were barely proficient in English and could do no more than "wear the tag of a peon in the post and telegraph offices and distribute mail or write 'Lahore' and 'Delhi' in English alphabets on the freight loaded on goods train."[19] In the meanwhile, he lamented, important government posts were being filled by men from other communities.

Employment data from the North-West Provinces and Oudh for 1886-87 indicates that the Muslim "share of influential posts was greater" than the Hindus even in the last quarter of the century, squarely contradicting Zakaullah Khan's claim.[20] Nonetheless, Nazir Ahmad and Zakaullah Khan's anxiety about creeping competition from castes and occupational groups that in the previous dispensation were not part of the scribal elite foreshadows the eventual decline of upper-class Muslims as the social group that sent judges, poets, and administrators to the royal courts. More significantly, it points to the emergence of government employment as an important source of economic stability and status for a more diverse section of society.

We get a sense of the whole-hearted endorsement of government employment in Maulana Thanawi's biography in which he mentions that his younger brother, Munshi Akbar Ali, was educated in a modern school because their father, a pious landholder, wanted one son to master the religious sciences (*dīn*) and the other to master the mundane world (*dunyā*). Akbar Ali found employment as a secretary in the Bareily municipality, drawing a monthly salary of five hundred rupees.[21] Similarly, the author of the Urdu classic *Umrāo Jān Adā*, Hadi Mirza Ruswa (d. 1931), who received an engineering degree from Roorkee and worked as a teacher, engineer and translator, came from a family that had served in the Awadh army.[22] Shibli Nu'mani (d. 1914), a protégé of Syed Ahmad Khan and the force behind Lucknow's madrasa Nadwat ul 'Ulamā, belonged to a landholding family from Azamgarh.[23] An Urdu couplet that continues to be in circulation in north India captures the aspirational pull of government employment:

> Yā ilāhī de lugāi jiske honh ladke hazār
> Ek ho deputy collector, bākī honh tehsīldār[24]
>
> [Oh god, grant me a wife who will bear me a thousand sons
> Of whom one will be a deputy collector, and the rest *tehsildar*][25]

An increasing acceptance, even preference, for employed men can also be seen in the matrimonial notices appearing in the newspapers and magazines during this period:

> Alliance invited for a Sunni girl, fourteen years of age, and hailing from a respectable Syed family. The boy should be able, accomplished and employed. Merchants and zamindars can also send in their details. All correspondence will be kept secret. For details, write on the address listed below:
> (B) Manager, *Tehzīb e Niswān*[26]
>
> Alliance invited for an educated girl belonging to a respected Muslim Rajput family. The family is looking for an accomplished boy who should be employed at a senior post. Merchants and zamindars can also write in with details. All correspondence should be sent to the address listed below:
> Manager, *Tehzīb e Niswān*, Lahore[27]
>
> Alliance is invited for a thirteen-year-old girl from a respected family. The boy should be employed and could hail from one of the four *zāt* (communities) of Syed, Shaikh, Mughal, or Pathan. He should not be a resident of a village. Single men and widowers are invited to send in their details. Men who already have a wife are not being sought. The girl is good-looking, can read and write Urdu and is proficient in basic needle-work. Interested parties can contact the family on the address listed below:
> Manager, *Tehzīb e Niswān*, Lahore.[28]
>
> A young Sunni Muhammadan, M.A., Sub-Deputy Collector, of a Syed and respectable family, seeks marriage alliance with the family of a *ra'īs*, a zamindar, a barrister, or a senior government official of Behar or up-country. Beauty besides other qualifications common to the sex is desirable in the bride. All communication will be treated as strictly confidential. For particulars, please communicate with A.B. c/o The Manager, "The Comrade," 109, Ripon Street, Calcutta.[29]
>
> A young Muhammadan of a Syed and highly respectable family, age 23 years, a Government servant in the Executive line, fairly good pay and future prospects, good references, intends to correspond with a respectable family with a view to matrimony. Good looks essential in the bride. Communication strictly confidential. For particulars, write to X.Y.Z., care of Manager, "The Comrade," 109, Ripon Street, Calcutta.[30]

The Itinerant Couple

While the matrimonial advertisements alert us to the emergence of the government servant as an aspirational figure, they also reveal the socio-economic location of this male icon, the most important of which, by far, was his rank in the bureaucracy. A middle-ranking employee with prospects of promotion was considered a good catch by the girls' families. The advertisements also suggest that the highly stratified bureaucratic structure that worked on the principle of fine gradation of pay scales and benefits was being mapped over the native system of ranking communities.

There is another aspect of the modern hero that merits a discussion: he is an itinerant, unfettered by local affiliation. The advertisements emphasize the good social standing of the families seeking a match. They also highlight the professional achievements of the prospective grooms and the housekeeping skills of the future brides. But they completely erase 'locality' from the profiles of the family. Barring one case, none of the advertisements mentions the town, the city, or the village of the interested parties, reaffirming the social and geographic mobility of an emerging class that traversed translocal networks with dexterity. The appearance of these advertisements in transregional newspapers and magazines, in addition to, if not to the exclusion of, the traditional channels of match-making underscores the importance of geographically-unmarked networks to the flourishing of this social class. *Tehzīb e Niswān*, a women's weekly from which three of the five advertisements have been reproduced, was published from Lahore, but found eager readers in faraway towns. The letters and essays submitted by the subscribers reveal the magazine's presence as far as Aurangabad in southern India and Bihar in the east. Since women often used their husband's or father's names for correspondence, we can also conclude that the families of government employees were among the dominant subscribers of the magazine.

Shaista Suhrawardy (d. 2000), an eminent author and diplomat from Pakistan, was born in such a family. Her father, Dr. Hasan Suhrawardy, a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons and a member of the Viceregal staff, was frequently transferred to towns and military cantonments across eastern India. Shaista was born in 1915 and belonged to the generation of women who grew up around reformist literature. In the year of her birth, *Mir'āt ul 'Urūs* had been in circulation for more than forty years, *Tehzīb e Niswān* had been in print for fifteen, and *Beheshti Zewar* had been selling as a guide for pious women for a decade. Shaista was a keen social commentator and

a prolific writer. In her book *From Purdah to Parliament* (1963), she speaks about her childhood, her foray into politics, and the Pakistan movement. She writes with remarkable clarity about her peculiar upbringing that required her to flit in and out of the "Arabian Nights world of [her] mother's family, and [her] ultra-Westernized home and the English school."[31] Her essays in *Asmāt*, a women's magazine, offer a glimpse into the upper-class *zenāna*, especially the labor of women and the household servants that sustained the practice of *pardāh*. In one essay, she writes:

> My mother's (Sheherbanu Begum) father, Nawab Sayyid Muhammad, belonged to an old, noble middle-class family of Dhaka. When the vagaries of life ate into the family's wealth, he came to Calcutta and cooperated with the British to the extent of finding employment with the government. Under duress, he put his sons through English education but he absolutely refused to change the way the women of his family lived. Not a single door or window of the *zenāna* opened onto the streets. Unknown women were not allowed into the house. Even women who hawked bangles, vegetables, etc. were questioned before they were let in. The family cooks had to wear the *chādar* (hijab) before stepping out. My mother and my aunts could visit only two houses: their uncle's and their aunt's. They did not have the permission to visit a third place. Their uncle lived next door so his house could be accessed through the window, but a palanquin had to be called to go to the aunt's house. The palanquin waited for them inside the verandah. It would be covered with a thick sheet and a servant travelled with them.[32]

The Arabian Nights world that Shaista imagined her mother to inhabit, and with which she constantly compared her between-two-worlds upbringing, was transforming during her mother Sheherbanu's very lifetime. The household was being reconfigured in ways not entirely anticipated by men like Nawab Sayyid Muhammad. Despite spending her early years behind the veil, a married Sheherbanu Begum had to adjust to a more westernized household of her husband. Nawab Sayyid Muhammad resented her daughter's occasional brush with the Hindu and English women at the *pardāh* parties hosted by her sisters-in-law. While her father was alive, Sheherbanu Begum could not join her husband in his non-traditional home in British neighborhoods and had to stay with her mother-in-law. Eventually she did move in with Dr. Suhrawardy, and quickly adapted to the itinerant lifestyle of a civil surgeon.

Shaista wrote extensively about the many houses she lived in as a child, the planning that went into setting up a *mardāna* fit to receive English officers and a *zenāna* that was out of bounds even for the male servants who had attained puberty. In accordance with his position as a senior medical officer, Shaista's father was allotted accommodation in the English quarters of the town, but this privilege came with certain problems. For one, it was difficult to retain household help because servants refused to commute so far outside the city. An equally pressing problem was the absence of beggars, shrines, and mosques. Immediately after moving into a new house, Sheherbanu Begum would look up the closest mosque and start contributing money towards its upkeep. She also sent evening meals to the mosque during Ramadan and sponsored its illumination during festivals.

As Sheherbanu Begum set up her household anew every time the family moved, she established fresh infrastructures of piety. The *zenāna* was cordoned off, the poor were sought out and fed, and faraway mosques were patronized. It was impossible, however, to recreate the Arabian Nights-like atmosphere that drew Shaista to the homes of her cousins. The family's outer city bungalow, with its sprawling gardens and water fountains, was cut off from the inner city where multiple generations of the family lived in close proximity.

The writings of other women from this period also hint towards the isolation they experienced in their far-flung marital homes. While write-ups on the battles between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law were given ample print space in *Tehzīb e Niswān*,[33] an essay in the October 20, 1923 issue, authored by W.A., draws attention to disagreements between spouses:

> These days married women spend very little time with their mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. All their time is spent in the company of their husbands, living a lonely life in a far-flung, foreign place. Unfortunately, when men move away from the watchful eyes of their guardians they cultivate habits that are resentful to their wives. Modern women, on the other hand, are not as resourceful and hardworking as their mothers and grandmothers used to be. They learn no skills in their parents' homes and when in a remote city the responsibility of running the household falls on their shoulders, they fumble and fail. It is, therefore, not surprising that in our times the husbands and wives are constantly locked in a feud.[34]

Two aspects of this excerpt deserve to be highlighted. The first is the loneliness of the women who moved to towns where they probably did not know

many people. Returning to the case of Sheherbanu Begum, after a prolonged illness, she died a lonely death in 1933, surrounded by servants and a distant relative.[35] To be sure, not all women met the same tragic end, but more and more of them were spending their married lives in places where the thick network of female sociality did not follow them. *Beheshti Zewar*, a text that positions itself as the complete household and religious guide, sought to educate women in the skills, sciences, and religious fundamentals that would be useful for running a good Muslim home. The book begins with teaching women the correct form of speech. Next, they learn to write, pray, pickle vegetables, attend funerals, master the art of gift-giving, and other domestic skills. What kind of household did Maulana Thanawī imagine his female readers to inhabit? It certainly appears to be one in which all the guidance comes from his book. Matriarchs, mothers-in-law, co-wives, sisters and sisters-in-law do not populate this world. The only other person who inhabits this household, apart from the wife, is her husband.

This brings us to the second point made by W.A.: the absence of oversight from the guardians when a couple lived alone. In a traditional set-up, chastisement of the young could come from the older relatives and neighbors, apart from the parents. In fact, as novelist Ismat Chughtai (d. 1991) writes, in a large household the responsibility of keeping the children in line often rested with the servants.[36] Teachers and Sufi masters were also key figures of authority. This was especially true in the days before the establishment of professional madrasas when boys and girls received early education in a local *maktab*, an informal school often run from the home of an *ʿālim*, a merchant, or a landlord. It was not uncommon for children from diverse class and religious backgrounds to attend the same *maktab*.[37] While they provided basic literacy to the community, the *maktab*s were only the stepping stone for the children of the elite. Following their introduction to alphabets and numbers, young boys from scholarly and scribal families began lessons in grammar, ethics, logic, mathematics, literature, rhetoric, and fiqh. It was a pedagogical approach that assumed that a core of religious education—whether it was Islamic or Hindu—was foundational to learning and character-building.[38] The entire process of education could take up to six to seven years, during which a student moved from one teacher to another and yet always remained entrenched in the familiar network of male scholars, some of whom were family members—brothers, uncles, and fathers—while others were spiritual guides.

This is not to state that a young man never left home. In fact, the rhetoric of travelling to distant lands in search of a teacher found encouragement

in the frequently-cited hadith that a Muslim should travel in the pursuit of knowledge even if the search takes him to China. Maulana Ilyas shuttled between Kandhla, Gangoh, and Deoband during his days as a student. He received early education from his father in Nizamuddin. But he did not make much progress and was asked to shift to Gangoh in 1896 by his brother Maulana Yahya, who was then in the service of the Chishti shaikh, Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1905). Maulana Ilyas became his disciple and stayed in Gangoh as long Maulana Gangohi was alive. When he finally enrolled in Deoband in 1908 he had the privilege of being the disciple of an important Sufi of his time. In all his years of education, never did Maulana Ilyas step outside the familiar and the familial network, embedded as he was in a system of learning and socialization that ensured that a family and its offshoots, over the course of a few generations, transformed itself into a social and political force and claimed for itself the role of the moral guide of the community.

Maulana Thanawi championed the division of labor that sustained this system by tying together the community's learned elite and the occupational classes in a reciprocal relationship that manifested itself in institutional and non-institutional forms. He belonged to a landed family, a privilege that he shared with many *ashraf* ulema. An important aspect of the respect that male scholars like Maulana Thanawi and Maulana Ilyas commanded in the community was their disinterest in money-making ventures, which aligned very well with their disparagement of those ulema who did take up worldly (*dunyāwī*) professions. Maulana Thanawi proposed that the poor should receive one year of religious education, following which they could enroll for occupational training because he did not see them fit to perform the role of moral leadership. That responsibility, according to him, should be shouldered by men from affluent families who were better suited to receive specialized education in religious texts without being encumbered by mundane concerns. "The poor are never free from the worries of livelihood," he argued.[39]

What is lacking in Maulana Thanawi's vision of the appropriate role and conduct of the ulema is an introspection of his own class position as a landed and religious elite in a *qasba* town that placed him in the center of a thick network of material and spiritual transactions. The unreflective elision of *ashraf*-ness with a natural disposition towards piety misrecognizes cause for effect. The tools and resources necessary to fashion a pious self had been historically available to *ashraf* men like Maulana Thanawi, and to women in their family to a lesser extent, in the form of land grants, service,

and devotion from the community, and access to knowledge through lineage. However, the establishment of Deoband's Dar ul 'Ulūm in 1866 and smaller seminaries in towns with a sizeable Muslim population considerably changed the dynamics between the upper-class ulema and the community, though the impact of these institutions on the status of endowed ulema has not been scrutinized. As boys from small landholding, military, mercantile, and occupational backgrounds turned into religious scholars, they poked holes in Maulana Thanawi's argument that the elite ulema were the sole arbiters of religious matters.

It is against this twin possibility of mobility—the mobility of young couples across regions and the upward mobility of the newly-educated middle and lower castes—that I will read Maulana Thanawi's *Fawā'id us Ṣoḥbat*, a sermon he delivered on the occasion of Maulana Ilyas' marriage ceremony on October 17, 1912. Delivered over approximately four hours, the sermon meanders but largely sticks to the theme: the benefits of good company. Maulana Thanawi begins by reciting Q 18:28, from a chapter dedicated to an incident in Muhammad's early days as a Prophet when he was facing persecution in Mecca. To test his claims of prophethood, the Quraysh of Mecca posed three questions to him. The chapter was revealed to help the Prophet answer those questions. Nestled between the answers is verse 28, which warns him:

> And keep thy soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking pomp and glitter of this life; nor obey any whose heart We have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds.

Quranic commentaries relate this verse to mischief orchestrated by the Quraysh wherein they suggested that if Muhammad could get rid of the band of poor followers that surrounded him, they would be open to his message. The verse is Allah's warning to him to not trade the company of the poor and the pious for those who may be endowed with riches but whose hearts do not obey Allah.[40]

Maulana Thanawi uses this verse as the pivot to drive home the point that amid the cry for modernization, the community had forgotten that a key component of education (*tā'līm*) is correct upbringing (*tarbiyyat*) for which it is important for men, women, and children to spend time in the company of an accomplished shaykh. It was only in the company of a capable spiritual guide that one could transform into a morally-sentient being.

Unlike education, the slower process of *tarbiyyat,* in which one spends "at least one day in a week or month and one month in a year in the company of the ulema," requires the disciple to observe and imbibe the virtues of the pious master.[41] Just as there were fixed hours for eating and resting, one needed to set aside time for good company. He observed that the British had understood this principle and had built hostels and boarding schools for that purpose.

Fawā'id us Ṣoḥbat is Maulana Thanawi's roadmap to fashion a community that chases prosperity without compromising its Islamic tenets. It is a community of differential piety structured around its members' unequal access to material resources. As men who have dedicated their lives to the study of religion, the ulema take their position as the moral guides of the community. Conversely, as the top tier of a community ranked according to their display of piety, the ulema stand out as men capable of exceptional piety. But if *Fawā'id us Ṣoḥbat* provides a glimpse of the changing conception of moral leadership in the twentieth century, it also elucidates how the community itself was changing. In fact, it appears that much of Maulana Thanawi's concern about Muslim men not spending time with the ulema stems from the panic that transferable government jobs, English education, modern boarding schools, clubs and associations, and cricket and football were pulling men away from older networks of grooming and socialization. Compared to the tight-knit networks of the familiar and the familial discussed above, the community in the twentieth century was far more dispersed; and the mode of piety that Maulana Thanawi chalks out in *Beheshti Zewar* and *Fawā'id us Ṣoḥbat* is mindful of the contours of the dispersed community.

More than a century later, *Fawā'id us Ṣoḥbat* continues to circulate. Though it is not cited as frequently as the *Beheshti Zewar*, one way to gauge the impact of a text or an idea is to trace the changes it triggers and the movements it inspires. At the time of the sermon, Maulana Ilyas, the groom, was twenty-seven years old and had the reputation of being constantly preoccupied by the erosion of faith from Muslim lives.[42] It would be another fifteen years before his proselytizing work in Mewat would gain momentum, but in 1912 Maulana Ilyas, and before him his father and his brother, had spent considerable time and energy towards reforming the Mewat Muslims. After years of pursuing the idea that piety could be taught in a madrasa, he tweaked his approach by borrowing a leaf from Maulana Thanawi's sermon. He approached the ulema to travel with him to Mewat and camp there for a few days.[43] Their initial response was lukewarm, but

Maulana Ilyas was relentless and by the second quarter of the century he was organizing small touring groups of ulema to Mewat. Similar traffic of men began in the opposite direction, with Mewati men leaving their community for a couple of days to stay with the ulema in mosques and madrasas. Within a few years, the movement that is today known as Tablīghī Jamā'at was formed. The success in Mewat encouraged Maulana Ilyas to expand the mission to other towns in north India, based on the principle of 'good company' elucidated by Maulana Thanawi. The formula of spending "at least one day in a week or month and one month in a year" in good company continues to be the catchphrase of the Tablīghī Jamā'at.[44]

However, the passage of time introduced one key difference that eventually allowed Maulana Thanawi's idiom of good company to crossover into the domestic domain. The core feature of the idea of 'good company' was the centrality of the learned male as the counsellor. To the extent that knowledge flowed from the ālim to the layman, the power to transform still rested with the male scholar. This feature was maintained by Maulana Ilyas and his appeals to the ulema, asking them to travel to Mewat, reflects his fidelity to the idea that lapsed Muslims could undergo a moral and spiritual transformation in the company of learned men. However, as many more lay Muslims joined the Jamā'at, there was a subtle but distinct shift in the understanding of what good company entailed. The beginnings of this can be seen soon after the death of Maulana Ilyas in 1944. The next two *umarā* (leaders)—his son Maulana Yusuf Kandhlewi and his nephew Maulana Inam ul Hasan Kandhlewi (d. 1995)—are credited with expanding the reach of the Jamā'at to foreign shores. An important aspect of this growth was the courting of merchants and professional groups through exclusive *ijtimā* (meetings). Cities such as Bombay, Karachi, Kanpur, and Surat that had sizeable merchant populations were targeted during the 1950s and 1960s.[45] As the demographics of the men who made the body of the Jamā'at changed, good company was no longer predicated on the scholarly achievements of one's companion. Even though the principle of "one day in a week or month and one month in a year" stayed in place, a good companion could very well be a lay person who was anxious enough about the degeneration of Islam to pack his bags and travel. Being possessed by '*dīn ki fikr*' (a concern for faith) replaced scholarly achievements as the desirable quality in a Muslim, making the ālim peripheral to the movement.[46] A common trope deployed in the Jamāt meetings compares the accomplishments of an *'ālim*, an *'ābid* (a spiritual master) and a *dā'ī*. The *'ālim* and *'ābid* do not fare well because the former does not look up from his books and the latter

is engrossed in prayers. In other words, their gaze does not extend beyond themselves. The *dāʿī*, on the other hand, is so concerned about the *ummat* that he foregoes the comforts of his home to travel. He surpasses the *ʿālim* and the *ʿābid* in his compassion and piety. For this reason, the *dāʿī* will rise with Prophet Muhammad and his companions on the day of Judgement.[47]

The emergence of the *dāʿī* as the ideal Muslim was based on a conception of piety that was disassociated from formal relationships of scholarly and spiritual lineages. The piety of the *dāʿī* arose from within and did not depend on training under a learned master. It created leadership roles for members of the community who had previously only been the receivers of spiritual guidance. Merchants, businessmen, and women who had historically played the role of patrons to religious specialists could now claim to be a *dāʿī*.

Scholars and feminists arguing for gender equality in Islam have mined the early history of the Islamic community to demonstrate instances when women played an active role as spiritual and political leaders. Prophet Muhammad's wives Ayesha and Khadija, his daughter Fatema, and the eighth-century Sufi Rabiʿa Basri are the common protagonists of such studies.[48] Another school of revisionist history blames the androcentrism of tenth- and eleventh-century male scholars, the period when the hadith and fiqh canons were formalized, for the latter-day misogyny in Islamic laws.[49] But while it is true that Ayesha, Fatema, Khadija and Rabiʿa Basri were exceptionally powerful and pious women and also that the middle ages of Islam institutionalized practices and texts that curtailed the role of women in the public sphere, the fact remains that it was not before the twentieth century that women in large numbers could participate in political and spiritual movements. Apart from the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, Maududi's Jamāʿat e Islāmī and Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League were actively courting women in this period. The same can be said about the colonial-era mass movements launched by the Hindus and Sikhs, though few movements have enjoyed the reach and longevity that the Jamāʿat has.[50]

Scholars have ascribed the Jamāʿat's success to the early inroads it made in the top-ranking madrasas in South Asia or its creative organizational structure that allows members to affiliate with the movement in various capacities. These analyses, while making valid points, have left the space of the household unexamined. Given the Jamāʿat's very early preoccupation with the domestic sphere and its desire to monitor women's activities, this lack in scholarship is baffling. In fact, it can be argued that the twentieth-century reform movements, by virtue of their ambition to refashion the

household space, demanded a partnership between men and women. The Tablīghī Jamā'at, the most tenacious reform movement to have emerged in that milieu, was also the most successful in forging this partnership by replacing scriptural authority with piety. The only company that mattered for the Jamā'at was the company of a pious Muslim who was willing to spend time teaching and learning from other Muslims. The biggest beneficiaries of this shift were the women who could become religious *dā'ī*s without enrolling in a madrasa. The Tablīghī Jamā'at's vision of piety trimmed the encumbering rituals and impinging clergies from the everyday lives of Muslims and replaced them with an inward-looking mode of piety. It is no coincidence that it came into existence in a period when the fulfillment of one's religious obligations was becoming a task that could be accomplished in isolation from one's immediate local community, even as it paradoxically had the potential to connect Muslims across large distances.

Conclusion

When Maulana Ilyas died in 1944 his family received hundreds of telegrams and telephone calls from people who wanted to visit the Jamā'at's headquarters in Nizamuddin to pay their condolences. In response, his nephew Maulana Zakariya (d. 1982) sent out letters, asking the well-wishers to refrain from travelling to Nizamuddin. Condolence visits, he said, were customary practices that served no purpose. Maulana Ilyas' disciples did not have to be in Nizamuddin to pray for his departed soul. He followed this letter with a longer message that was posted on the madrasa's notice board and mailed to a wider group of followers. The letter advised people that their money and time would be better spent in strengthening the movement of Maulana Ilyas.[51] In taking this step, Maulana Zakariya was rejecting a rich tradition of funeral ceremonies such as the reading of the Quran at the grave site and the feeding of neighbors and the poor on the third, ninth, and the fortieth day following the death of a family member.[52] When reformist movements like the Tablīghī Jamā'at gathered steam in the twentieth century, it was these and similar ceremonies that came under attack for being un-Islamic. Male reformers held a plurality of opinions and were often in conflict with each other on issues such the rights and responsibilities of women, English education for Muslim boys, cooperation with the British government, etc., but they were unanimous in their critique of rituals.[53] The model of personal piety presented in the sermons of Maulana Thanawi and the novels of Nazir Ahmad decoupled authentic religion from rituals, labelling the latter as extraneous innovations.

The bare and austere mode of reformist religiosity dovetailed with notions of personal piety espoused by the emerging middle class. More importantly, it was compatible with the itinerant lifestyle of the modern Muslim, detached as it was from any relations, material or spiritual, embedded in the local community. An announcement in the December 15, 1923 issue of *Tehzīb e Niswān* demonstrates how well-positioned the nascent Muslim middle class was to embrace reformist piety. It lists the names of fifty-nine women from Punjab, the United Provinces, Maharashtra, and Bihar, who had volunteered to read an assigned section of the Quran in the isolation of their homes whenever a request came from a reader who had a death in her family.[54] The announcement, which precedes Maulana Zakariya's letter by two decades, lays down several guidelines to make sure that the volunteers received the notice for the geographically-dispersed Quran *khwānī* (the reading of the Quran) well in advance. The volunteers are also warned that their failure to read their section would lead to their removal from the list. Most women who signed up for the group were wives or daughters of government servants. It is likely that the women who requested a Quran *khwānī* in memory of their deceased family members also organized a reading in the local mosque, as is usually done. But in cases where this would not be possible—like the distant home of Sheherbanu Begum in the English quarters—the community of magazine readers who referred to each other as sisters could potentially step in as a substitute. It is of some significance here that the people eligible for requesting the reading were subscribers who had lost a parent, a sibling, a child, or a spouse. There was no room for requests for deceased aunts, uncles, cousins, wetnurses, neighbors, or family servants in this initiative, reinforcing an imagination of a family as a much smaller unit comprising intimate blood relatives.

I opened this paper with an anecdote about my conversation with a senior intelligence officer to highlight the widespread ignorance about women's participation in the Jamā'at in scholarly and lay discourses. Even as scholars write about the Jamā'at's central mosque in Delhi abuzz with bearded men dressed in billowing trousers, their scholarship overlooks the multi-level hall behind the mosque that is packed with hundreds of women who are preparing to leave on forty-day or four-month proselytizing tours. To an extent, this lack can be attributed to the strict gender segregation practiced by the members, making it difficult for male scholars to approach the women. However, some blame must also rest on the overwhelming tendency among scholars to analyze the Jamā'at from the perspective of counter-terrorism policy-making, which has ensured that the movement

is mainly studied as an international actor in the field of geo-politics and global security apparatus. Consequently, the participation of hundreds of thousands of women in Jamāʿat meetings that focus on self-fashioning and household improvement gets sidelined. On more than one occasion, my presentation on women's work in the Jamāʿat has been received with polite disbelief from male scholars who have been studying the movement for more than two decades.

In ignoring the Jamāʿat's deep inroads into the domestic sphere, we have also failed to examine the new infrastructures of piety which the movement created at a moment in South Asian history that coincided with the rise of the Muslim middle class and the gradual restructuring of the household. These developments rendered older forms of piety unsustainable. It is in this milieu of the early 1900s that the Jamāʿat emerged as a movement fueled by the personal piety of its followers as opposed to the scholarly devotion of a handful of elites. While the period between the 1930s and the 1950s saw participation of lay Muslim men in proselytizing work, it was not long before pious women were also invited to toil in the path of Allah. As the women I interviewed in Bombay, Delhi, Deoband, and Lucknow repeatedly asserted, the *zimmedār* (council of senior men in Delhi) know that women are the best recruiters for the movement. If a woman joins the Jamāʿat, chances are that her husband and sons will follow suit. The Jamāʿat's success as a twentieth- century movement lies not in its links with the ulemā but its sprawling network of non-specialists—merchants, government servants, and their wives and daughters—who inhabit an increasingly mobile middle-class world. Furthermore, it rests on its ability to harness the force of the restructured household at the heart of which lies the partnership between the man and his pious wife. Maulana Thanawi could sense this shift in 1912 and the readers of *Tehzīb e Niswān* were already reformulating new ways of being pious in 1923. Over a period of twenty years, Maulana Ilyas' Tablīghī Jamāʿat fine-tuned its message and organizational structure to accommodate these changes, achieving spectacular success in the 1940s.

Endnotes

1. Apart from Barbara Metcalf's essays, other notable exceptions are Bulbul Siddiqi's work in Bangladesh and Marloes Janson's fieldwork in Gambia. See Bulbul Siddiqi, "Reconfiguring the Gender Relation: The Case of the Tablighi Jamaat in Bangladesh," *Culture and Religion* 13, no. 2 (2012): 177-192; Marloes Janson, "Renegotiating Gender: Changing Moral Practice in the Tablighi Jam'at in The Gambia," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 28, no. 1 (2008): 9-36.
2. For an account of Maulana Ilyas' work in Mewat, see Syed Abul Hasan Nadwi, *Hazrat Maulana Ilyās Aur Unki Deeni Da'wat* (New Delhi: Farid Book Depot, 2002). For an overview of the conversion campaigns in colonial India, see Christophe Jaffrelot, "Militant Hindus and the Conversion Issue (1885-1990): From Shuddhi to Dharm Parivartan: The Politicization and Diffusion of an 'Invention of Tradition,'" in *The Resources of History: Tradition, Narration, and Nation in South Asia* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, Institut français de Pondichéry, 1999), 127-52, and Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
3. Notes from fieldwork, Deoband (May 23-25, 2013).
4. Muhammad Kifayatullah Dehlavi, *Kifāyat e Mufti* (Karachi: Dar ul Sharia, 2001), 2:35.
5. Barbara Metcalf, "Islam and Women: The Case of the Tablīghī Jama'at," in *Appropriating Gender: Women's Agency, the State and Politicized Religion in South Asia*, ed. Patricia Jeffery and Amrita Basu (London: Routledge, 1998), 107-122.
6. Sayyid Abdul Shakur Tirmizī, *Da'wat e Tablīgh kī Shar'ī Haisiyyat* (The Legal Status of Tablīghī Da'wat) (Lahore: Idārah e Islamiyat, 1985), 100-101.
7. For a review of the fatwas issued in favor and against women's participation in the Jamā'at, see Mufti Muhammad Abu Bakr Jabir Qasmi and Mufti Rafi'uddin Hanif Qasmi, *Mastūrāt Kī Jamātein Fiqh aur Fatwe kī Roshni Mein* (Hyderabad: Madrasa Khair ul Madaris Trust, 2011).
8. Maulana Syed Mohammad Thani Husna, *Sawāneh Hazrat Maulana Yūsuf Kandhlewī* (Lucknow: Kakori Offset Press, 2008), 781-782.
9. The term *da'wat* is a gerund form derived from the Arabic root *da-'a-wa.* It means calling or inviting somebody. In this context, it refers to inviting a person to Islam. A person who performs *da'wat* is called a *dā'ī*.
10. Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 10-33.
11. Deputy Nazir Ahmad, *Ibn ul Waqt* (The Son of the Moment) (Delhi: Kitabi Duniya, 2000), 90-91.

12. Deputy Nazir Ahmad, *Mir'āt ul Urūs* (Mirror for Brides) (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1958), 104.
13. Syed Ahmad Khan's *Asbāb e Bagāwat e Hind* (The Causes of Indian Rebellion, 1859) and William Wilson Hunter's 1871 tract *The Indian Musalmans* are perhaps the most prominent nineteenth-century texts that advised the government to facilitate the education and employment of upper-class Muslim boys as a strategy to cultivate loyal subjects.
14. Didactic novels present straightforward narratives about the battle between good and evil, leaving no room for ambiguity. Each character represents a clear position on religion, reform, and politics and his or her actions through the course of the novel reflect those positions. Nazir Ahmad made the ideological affiliations of his characters even clearer by giving them allegorical names such as Hujjat ul Islam, Ibn ul Waqt, and Dur Andesh Khan (Mr. Foresighted).
15. Robert Vane Russell, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India,* 4 vols. (London: Macmillan and Company Ltd, 1916).
16. Deputy Nazir Ahmad, *Ibn ul Waqt* (The Son of the Moment) (Delhi: Kitabi Duniya, 2000), 117-118.
17. Mirza Farhatu'llah Beg, *Nazir Ahmad: In his Own Words and Mine,* translated by Mohammed Zakir (Hyderabad: Orient Blackswan, 2009), 20-21.
18. Ibid, 21.
19. Muhammad Zakatullah Dehlavi, *Musalmanon ki Maujudah Ḥālat e Ta'līm par Navishtāh i Maulvī Muhammad Zakātullāh Dehlavī* (Agra: Matba e Mufid e Am, 1889), 113.
20. In his comparison of the number of government posts held by Muslims and Hindus in the North-West Provinces and Oudh in the second half of the nineteenth century, Francis Robinson demonstrates that unlike the Muslim elites in Bengal, who were hit by the Permanent Settlement and the abolition of Persian as the court language in 1837, the Muslim elites in the north held on their position of prominence into the second decade of the twentieth century. See Chapter 2 of Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims*. For an overview of Muslim politics in Bengal, see Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968).
21. Aziz ul Hasan Majzub, *Ashraf us Sawāneh* (Deoband: Maktaba Thanawi, 2009), 1:48-55.
22. For a succinct biography of Ruswa, read Khuswant Singh and MA Husaini's preface to their English translation of Mirza Hadi Ruswa, *Umrao Jān Ada* (Mumbai: Orient Longman Limited, 1998), vii-xii.
23. Syed Sulaiman Nadvi, *Hayāt-e-Shiblī* (Azamgarh: Dar ul Musannifin, 1970).

24. Another version of the couplet pegs the number of deputy collectors at four (*chār honh deputy collector*). I am indebted to 'Motka Nana' for this couplet. His exhaustive knowledge of colloquial Urdu was a valuable resource.
25. Deputy Collector and *tehsildār* are middle-level administrative ranks institutionalized by the colonial regime, building on existing taxation structures. Selection of Indian nationals to senior positions in the administration became possible only after simultaneous Indian Civil Service exams were held in London and India at the turn of the nineteenth century. Prior to that, natives were either nominated to local self-government bodies or recruited to provincial administrative posts. See Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Manchester University Press, 1995) and Bernard S. Cohn, "Recruitment and Training of British Civil Servants in India, 1600-1860," in *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition*, ed. Ralph Braibanti (Durham: Duke University Press, 1966), 87-140.
26. *Tehzīb e Niswān* 26, no. 20 (May 25, 1923).
27. Ibid., 26 (August 4, 1923).
28. Ibid., 26 (October 13, 1923).
29. *The Comrade*, 1-7-11.
30. Ibid, July 1, 18.
31. Shaista Ikramullah Suhrawardy, *From Purdah to Parliament* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 26.
32. Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, *Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah ki Muntakhib Tehreerein* (The Selected Writings of Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah), ed. and intro. by Ahmad Saleem (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7-8.
33. Other topics regularly featured in the magazine include the hardships faced by widows, the need for women to learn better accounting habits and nuanced debates about the role of *pardāh* in Muslim society.
34. *Ek Mufeed Tajweez* (A Useful Suggestion), *Tehzīb e Niswān* 26, no. 42 (October 20, 1923).
35. Ikramullah, *Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah ki Muntakhib Tehreerein*, 13-14.
36. Ismat Chughtaī, *Kāgazi Hai Pairahān* (The Mask / Attire is Fragile) (New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1994), 20-21.
37. With the establishment of formal learning institutions—both religious and secular—the informal *maktab*s rooted in local patronage relations became extinct. See Nita Kumar, "The 'Truth' about Muslims in Banaras: An Exploration in School Curricula and Popular Lore," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, no. 28 (1990): 82-96.
38. Hali's *Majālis'un Nisān* critiques the traditional systems of learning and posits a model of pedagogy in which the child would obtain secular education in a government school and religious instruction outside school hours. The

splitting of education into secular and religious domains assumed that while education was a public good and, therefore, the responsibility of the state, matters of religion belonged to the private domain. See Altaf Hussain Halī, *Majālis'un Nisān* (Panipat: Hali Press, 1924).

39. Maulana Ashraf Alī Thanawi, *Fawā'id uṣ Ṣohbat: Allāh Walon ki Ṣoḥbat ke Fawā'id aur Samrat* (Karachi: Jamia Ashrafūl Madaris), 65.
40. Abul 'Ala Maududi, *Tafhīm ul Qur'ān*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Markazī Maktabā Islamic Publisher, 2011).
41. Thanawi, *Fawā'id uṣ Ṣoḥbat*, 46.
42. See the section *Dard o Beqarārī* (Angst and Restlessness) in Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Nadwi, *Hazrat Maulana Ilyās Aur Unki Deeni Da'wat* (New Delhi: Farid Book Depot, 2002), 169-179.
43. Ibid., 100-101.
44. Maulana Thanawi's views on the Jamā'at are difficult to ascertain. He was initially skeptical about Maulana Ilyas' radical methods that sought to break down the institutionalized hierarchy between the ulema and the uneducated Muslims. His opposition softened considerably towards the end of his life, though he never travelled with the Jamā'at (based on interviews with Maulana Nur ul Rashid Kandhlewi in June 2013).
45. See the section on Maulana Yusuf's early work in India and Pakistan in Maulana Syed Mohammad Thani Husna, *Sawāneh Hazrat Maulana Yūsuf Kandhlewī* (Lucknow: Kakori Offset Press, 2008), 314-399.
46. This is not to say that the ulema do not hold a position of privilege in the organization and planning of the Jamā'at. But a huge presence of merchants and professionals, particularly the former, in the Jamā'at has made them a prominent faction in the decision-making circles and has irked the ulemā in Deoband and Delhi (based on anonymous interviews conducted in Delhi in January 2014).
47. Notes from fieldwork, Bombay (October 3, 2012 and November 8, 2012), Nizamuddin, Delhi (March 4, 2013).
48. See, for example, Margaret Smith's *Rabi'a the Mystic and Her Fellow-saints in Islam: Being the Life and Teachings of Rabi'a Al-Adawiyya Al-Qaysiyya of Basra Together with Some Account of the Place of the Women Saints in Islam* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) and Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Inquiry* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1991).
49. Leila Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
50. See Tanika Sarkar, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001); Judith E. Walsh, *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004); Prem

Chowdhry, "Conjugality, Law and State: Inheritance Rights as Pivot of Control in Northern India," *National Law School Journal,* Special Issue on Feminism and Law 1 (1993): 95-115.

51. Maulana Zakariya Kandhlewi, *Aap Beeti* (Deoband: Darūl Kitāb, 2002), 2:241.
52. Jaffur Shurreef, *Qanoon-e-Islam or The Customs of the Mussalmans of India* (al-Irshad, 1973).
53. A rare defense of customs came from Shaista Suhrawardy, who argued that traditional practices wove the community together by providing patronage and support to poorer relatives, widows, and less fortunate neighbors. She blamed the reformers for throwing the bathwater out with the baby by calling for a sweeping disavowal of customs and instead recommended a scaling down of ceremonies. See Ikramullah, *Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah ki Muntakhib Tehreerein*.
54. *Tehzīb e Niswān* (December 15, 1923) (AMU archives).