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Mohammad Raisur Rahman

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The Dissertation Committee for Mohammad Raisur Rahman certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Islam, Modernity, and Educated Muslims:

A History of *Qasbahs* in Colonial India

Committee:

____

Gail Minault, Supervisor

____

Cynthia M. Talbot

____

Denise A. Spellberg

____

Michael H. Fisher

____

Syed Akbar Hyder

Islam, Modernity, and Educated Muslims:

A History of *Qasbahs* in Colonial India

by

Mohammad Raisur Rahman, B.A. Honors; M.A.; M.Phil.

Dissertation

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to

the fond memories of my parents, Najma Bano and Azizur Rahman,

and to Kulsum

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A History of *Qasbahs* in Colonial India

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Qasbahs have remained outside academic purview and been neglected, despite an acknowledgement of their importance by scholars of South Asia. Loosely translated as small towns or large villages, qasbahs in South Asia form an interesting area to study in order to understand socio-cultural aspects of South Asian Muslim life and modernity. As official British sources unanimously suggest, qasbahs were important historically for their role in revenue collection. But that is definitely not their sole claim to significance for no one can deny the role that people from the qasbahs, particularly the ones in North India, have played in social, literary, and intellectual life. Crediting qasbahs and their inhabitants for their role in history and making a case for qasbah studies, this dissertation advances the argument that qasbahs were important intellectual centers. Combining the close-knit and warm social structure of villages and the intense intellectual activity of cities, they

distinguished themselves from both village and city. Inhabited mostly by Muslims, qasbahs were not only the inheritors of an intellectual culture but were also equally instrumental in carrying that tradition forward through an unmatched level of literary production. The various genres of literature that they produced, mostly in Urdu, can greatly enhance our understanding of the fascinating history of a less known area.

This dissertation also argues that since Muslims have been living in the qasbahs since the eleventh century, their long history of cross cultural encounters make qasbahs an exemplary site to understand modernity. Their encounter with the West was just another encounter for them, and, hence, their modernity was rich in experience and highly interactive in nature. As an underlying argument, this dissertation suggests that qasbahs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century filled up the cultural vacuum created by the collapse of regional states in much the same way that regional states had become cultural centers upon the demise of the Mughal Empire in Delhi.

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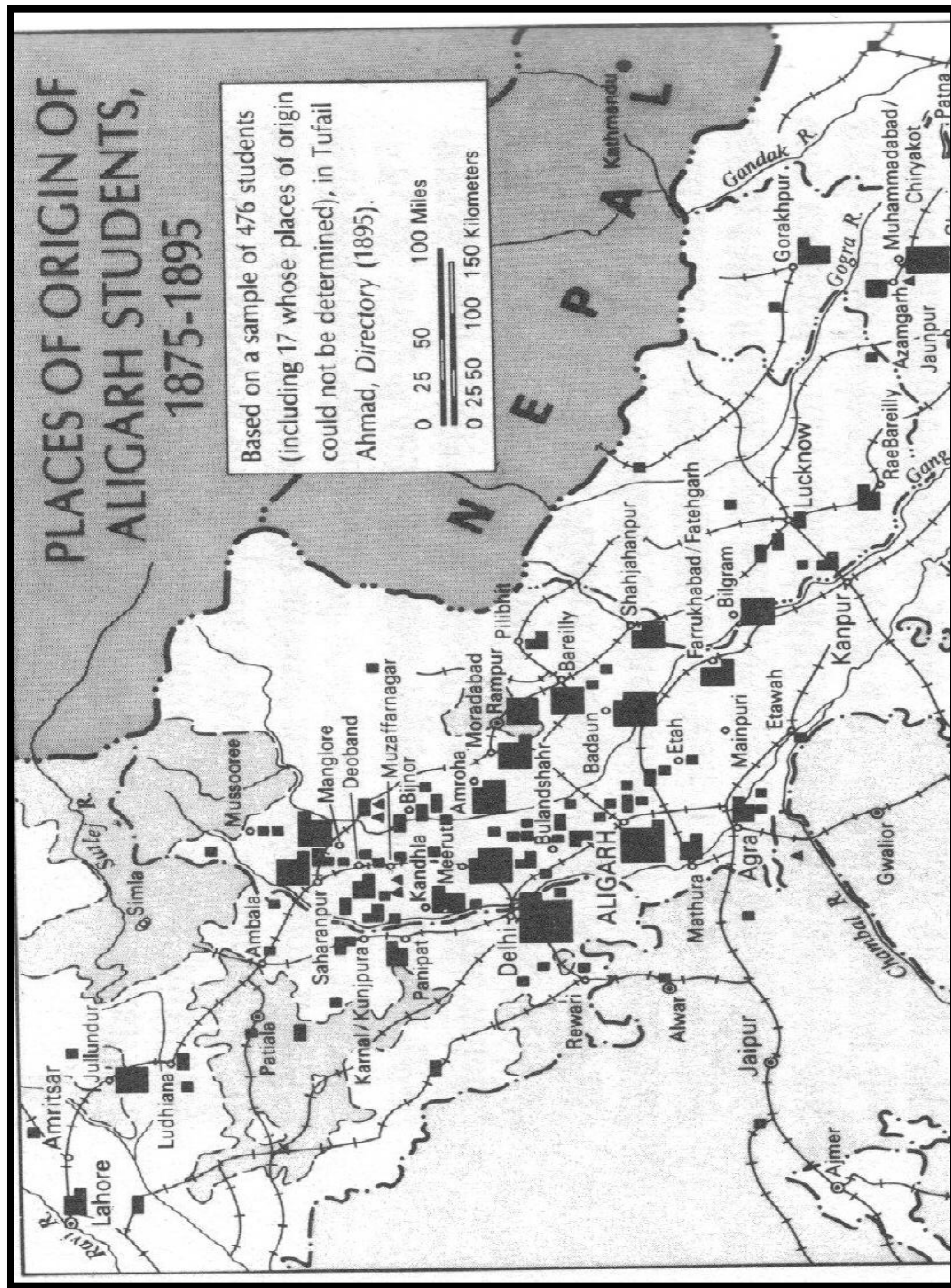
Source: Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 8-9.



Source: David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), 182.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Due to their unique qualities, the *qasbahs*[1] of South Asia continue to evoke a creed of belongingness and a sense of pride from current as well as former residents. Generations later, the descendants of those who moved from the qasbah of Bilgram to Hyderabad in South India still carry the surname 'Bilgrami.' Whether they live in North America, Europe, or Pakistan, the succeeding generations of those from qasbahs carry forth the names and traditions of their place of origin. A horde of societies, meeting halls, organizations, international forums, and the websites of Amrohvis, Rudaulvis, and Badayunis thrive throughout the world. Why do these people who are connected to qasbahs flaunt their connection as a primordial form of identity? What role have qasbahs played in the history of South Asia? It is to find answers to such questions that we must look to these pages of history.

Qasbahs and their inhabitants, the *qasbatis*, have played a powerful role in Indian history in general and the history of South Asian Islam in particular. As bastions of Islamic culture and social life, qasbahs served as a microcosm of Indo-Islamic culture. The architectural remains and ruins of mosques, *havelis* (mansions), *imambaras*, *madrasas*, and gates still tell us stories of an eventful, if not glorious past. Pallid papers, revived genealogies, faded portraits, termite-eaten furniture, Victorian souvenirs, hanging frames of trophy-style antler-horns, the narrow streets of grain bazaars, and the renovated structures of old buildings acquaint one with a not-so-remote history of the qasbahs. Qasbahs used to house the service gentry of medieval Indian states, and they harbored the administrators, judges, officials, and revenue collectors for the regimes of the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughal Empire, the kingdom of Awadh, the state of Hyderabad, the princely states of Rampur and Bhopal, as well as

[1] A qasbah in South Asian context refers to a unit of habitat in between a town and a village. The closest translation of the term would be a small town or a large village. For a detailed analysis of its unique features, please refer to the next chapter.

the British Empire. Qasbahs seized the attention of the Delhi Sultan Iltutmish in the early thirteenth century. Coming down to the time of the Mughals, the Emperor Akbar had his chief justice from a qasbah, in addition to several *qazis* (judges) and high officials who served the Empire. During British rule, qasbahs served as the domicile of those who collected taxes and governed. Qasbahs sent students to all the major educational institutions, whether they were based on Islamic or English curriculum. They produced writers and poets in Persian and Urdu who set trends in the field of literature. Qasbahs also attracted highly revered Sufis whose shrines continue to bring Hindus and Muslims, and qasbatis and non-qasbatis together.

Moreover, a close look at qasbahs reveals how well they were connected to world history and the Islamic world in particular. The term "qasbah" *per se* is not unknown to popular culture. "Rock the Casbah," a chart-topping song by the Clash from 1982 is quite well-known.[2] The 1966 Italian movie *La Battaglia di Algeri* (The Battle of Algiers), which is based on the Algerian War (1954-62) against the French, depicts Algiers and the qasbahs or fortified quarters within the capital city. But despite the familiarity of the term, the qasbahs of South Asia, the ones with which we are concerned, differ greatly in both meaning and structure from the popularly known Arab and North African varieties. South Asian qasbahs are much larger in size, have no fortifications, are away from the cities, and are more like small independent towns than a part of a city.

Qasbahs in South Asia stand out from a scholarly perspective because of their connections to the Muslim world. It was the Muslims who, from as far away as Middle East and Central Asia, came and settled in the qasbahs from the eleventh century and onwards. As territories earlier inhabited by Hindus, qasbahs gradually took on Islamic characteristics, owing in part to the state patronage conferring important offices and grants onto the Muslims of the qasbahs. While the qasbati

[2] Filmed in Austin, Texas, the video of the song depicts an Arab dressed in the typical Dishdashah and headgear and a Jew in a black suit and hat dancing together all over the town, often performing in front of an oil well. Since it is not a concern here, we deliberately omit the political and cultural implications of the song.

Muslims adapted to local conditions and culture, they also made sure to preserve a sense of identity around their communities. This sense of identity explains why their architectural endeavors, commemoration of Muharram, practice of endogamy, compilation of genealogies, and contribution to Persian and Arabic literature speak to the existence of an exclusive community. These qasbahs make a powerful case for studying Islamic communities which are deeply faithful to their own culture of origin but also adaptive to local and emergent conditions.

Qasbahs have existed in various parts of India. As a unit of inhabitation, qasbahs combined the features of a market town while also serving as an abode for the service gentry. By 1680, there were hundreds of qasbahs spread all over North India.[3] Although qasbahs are historically associated with North India, they also existed in other parts of India, in Punjab, Gujarat, Malwa, Deccan, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Kashmir. Historians from different fields have made frequent references to them, even if they do not discuss them in detail.[4] It is thus evident that, beginning with the

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[3] J. F. Richards, *The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 194.

[4] There are plenty of references that provide some description or at least, refer to the existence of qasbahs in different regions of India. The following books represent different regions in this regard. For particular references on Punjab, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 125; Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 194-95, 295; Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam since 1850* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 79; Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World* (Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 240; William J. Glover, *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 5; Harnik Deol, *Religion and Nationalism in India: The Case of the Punjab* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 16-17; and Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Punjab in the Seventeenth Century* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 175, 185. For a mention of qasbah towns in Gujarat, see Makrand Mehta, ed., *Urbanization in Western India: Historical Perspective* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat University, 1988), 73-77. On Malwa, see Norbert Peabody, *Hindu Kingship and Polity in Precolonial India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 96-98; and Upendra Nath Day, *Medieval Malwa: A Political and Cultural History, 1401-1562* (Delhi: Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1965), 33. For works on Rajasthan, see Shail Mayaram, *Against History, Against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 211-12; Nandita Prasad Sahai, *Politics of Patronage and Protest: The State, Society, and Artisans in early Modern Rajasthan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 63, 66; and Babu Lal Gupta, *Trade and Commerce in Rajasthan during the 18th Century* (Jaipur: Jaipur Publishing House, 1989), 254. On the qasbahs of Bihar, see Anand A. Yang, *Bazaar India: Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Gangetic Bihar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 85, 88; and D. H. A. Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*

medieval era, qasbahs were a significant feature of the Indian topography. However, the most prosperous and flourishing of the qasbahs remained in areas surrounding Delhi. Territories closer to Delhi provided a more attractive living option for the service gentry. Once the Mughal Empire declined, smaller kingdoms and principalities took the lead in terms of patronizing the service gentry. Rohilkhand, Rampur, and Awadh were the three most powerful states near Delhi, and their rulers took on the role of patrons for the educated elite, landed gentry, and government officials. A number of these privileged people became a part of the British administrative machinery as the Empire replaced their former benefactors. In any case, the rich, educated, religious, and the powerful of the qasbahs were a force to be reckoned with.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

This study concerns a history of the qasbahs in colonial India, focusing upon the regions of Awadh and Rohilkhand. The significance of qasbahs has been acknowledged by most studies concerning South Asian Islam. Whereas one set of scholarship has acknowledged the importance of qasbahs for their role in India's economic and agrarian history, other scholars have increasingly noted their social importance. Qasbahs no doubt were centers of economic activity, bringing profit to the British government and previous rulers by way of revenue collection. They also served as markets where agricultural produce was sold by local cultivators. Some scholars such as Thomas Metcalf, Peter Reeves, and Anand Yang who work on the land revenue system and agrarian history of colonial India have duly noted these features.[5] A few historians working on different areas within South Asian Islam have

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(Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 43, 56. On Deccan, see Burton Stein, *Thomas Munro: The Origins of the Colonial State and His Vision of Empire* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), 75. For references of qasbahs in Kashmir, see S. Maqbul Ahmad, *Historical Geography of Kashmir, based on Arabic and Persian Sources from AD 800 to 1900* (New Delhi: Ariana Publishing House, 1984), 190-92.

[5] One of the best studies conducted on the theme, Thomas Metcalf's work looks into the intricate network of agrarian structure in Awadh and the North-Western Provinces by using the analytical

implicitly established the positive contributions of the qasbahs towards Islam as well as South Asia. One can infer from the works of Gail Minault, Barbara Metcalf, David Lelyveld, and Francis Robinson that one of the contributions of the qasbati Muslims was in the field of education.[6] Although these scholars do not dwell upon qasbahs as such, they offer the much needed impetus for those interested in qasbahs.

There are two scholars in particular who have explicitly dealt with qasbahs, although not in a focused way. Ravinder Kumar and C. A. Bayly have sharpened our understanding of the qasbahs by including them in their larger studies on Indian society.[7] Their contributions, original and thought provoking, provide one with the possibility and confidence to explore the field further. There was no single work on qasbahs until recently when Mushirul Hasan wrote a family history on the backdrop of a few qasbahs.[8] Although Hasan's work is focused on nationalist Muslims in a framework of religious pluralism and composite culture, it sends a message that qasbahs are worth studying on their own.

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devices of land and landlords. He gives a detailed account of landlords – taluqdars and zamindars – by placing them in the context in which they had to operate under the British rule. A powerful study, it lacks in bringing forth some of the landlords' perspectives on agriculture, ties of local control, and the impact of their accession to legal titles. See Thomas R. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords, and the British Raj: Northern India in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979). Peter Reeves continues with some of the questions about landlords well into the twentieth century. He has dealt with the transition of landlord-government relationship in the region of the United Provinces; see Peter Reeves, *Landlords and Governments in Uttar Pradesh: A Study of their Relations until Zamindari Abolition (*Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). Anand Yang uses *bazaar* or market, a neglected facet of Indian culture, as a site of investigation to elicit information about the relationship between the colonial state and Indian society. Focused on the northeastern region of Bihar, his study looks at the role of the marketing systems through urban elites, rural magnates, merchants, traders, and peasants. See Anand Yang, *Bazaar India*.

[6] Among their particular works in this regard, see Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982); David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978); Francis Robinson, *The Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001).

[7] Ravinder Kumar, *Essays in the Social History of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); and C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[8] Mushirul Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism: Qasbas in Colonial Awadh* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004).

ARGUMENTS AND FOCUS OF STUDY

Qasbahs have been an important part of South Asian history. Scholars agree on this fact but the field has not yet been properly studied. Whereas we have a plethora of studies which analyze towns, cities, and villages from all possible trajectories, there does not exist a single work that speaks to the amplitude and diversity of qasbahs. The present study is an attempt to correct this deficit in historiography. Along with constructing a history of the qasbahs in colonial India, this dissertation makes a case for studying qasbahs and demonstrating their usefulness in terms of understanding modernity. The main argument of this dissertation is that qasbahs are so unique socially, culturally, and intellectually that they present us with immense opportunities to unravel facets of South Asian, colonial, and Muslim social life. This dissertation brings to light the exceptional quality of qasbahs as upholders of a culture of intellectual dialogue and literary production. So far in scholarly works, qasbahs have been mentioned only in reference to their topographical positioning as something between a town and a village and as administrative units. The present study reverses this short-sighted approach of looking at qasbahs and presents them as exemplary sites for understanding Muslim socio-cultural life. It also argues that the translation of the term "qasbah" as "market town," as has been done by many scholars, is a misnomer that confines the meaning of the term "qasbah" solely to its economic aspects.

With its focus on qasbahs as cultural and literary hubs, this dissertation seeks to add another dimension to South Asian historiography. Several studies on the history of South Asia have shown how the regional and successor states became important with the decline of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century. Their political assertion and ascendancy also ensured the development of their capital cities, such as Lucknow and Hyderabad, as the new cultural nuclei inviting artists, writers, and poets. The Nawabs and the Nizams assumed the role of the protégé of art and literature replacing the Mughal Emperors, while also emulating the latter as a way of securing legitimacy. In the case of Awadh, for example, we find a blossoming

cultural splendor reflected in Lucknow's Urdu poetry, monumental architecture, fine cuisine, etiquette, and mannerisms. The next stage in this history came when the regional states declined in the same way as the mighty Mughal Empire's decline. In 1856, the Nawabi rule ended in Awadh with the British annexing its territories. With the fall of Lucknow, there was no significant patronage left for the artists and the litterateurs in cities. It was at this point that the taluqdars and the zamindars emerged as a powerful force in Awadh. With their alliance with the British, they were the new reliable force with an assured source of income. Most of them lived in the qasbahs where they patronized literary activities and built huge edifices such as imambaras, mosques, madrasas, and gates. They were the new seekers of legitimacy and emulators of the former Nawabs, much in the same way that the Nawabs were to the Mughal Emperors. In part, this is the reason that qasbahs became the new cultural centers during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Most existing studies ascribe the process of modernization among the Muslims of India to certain institutions such as the College at Aligarh or to a few eminent personalities such as Sir Syed Ahmad Khan or Syed Amir Ali of Calcutta. Individuals who worked from provincial locations such as qasbahs are rarely given credit. Literary figures from qasbahs, despite their artistic merit, have seldom been included in mainstream discourses. This dissertation brings qasbahs to the forefront for understanding Muslim social life in India. Additionally, it suggests that modernity is specific to local historical conditions and needs to be understood contextually. Theories, useful for comparative purposes, are themselves products of particular textual and societal approaches, and hence their universality is as questionable as Eurocentric modernity. Different from other case studies on modernity, qasbati modernity was highly nuanced and interactive in nature. The qasbati Muslims also claimed the very bases of modernity as their own by arguing that some of the ingredients of modernity were a part of their inherited Islamic tradition.

Since this dissertation uses qasbahs as a site for understanding modernity in colonial India, it is based on certain specific perspectives on Muslim social life in the

qasbahs. First, qasbahs represent a microcosm of India, at least in regards to Muslim societies. This is well reflected in the demography of the Muslim inhabitants which consisted of different social and sectarian groups, in addition to the diversity of practices, rituals, and festivals. Second, this dissertation considers the encounter of the Muslims with the British and the West as yet another episode in a chain of encounters. Muslims had lived in the qasbahs since the eleventh century. In this long history, they interacted with people of different religious and cultural backgrounds, given the rich diversity that India represents. The Muslims' encounter with the British and Western culture was, for the most part, episodic in nature.

THEORETICAL CONCERNS

Modernity has mostly been studied as a "philosophical discourse,"[9] sometimes at the expense of obfuscating its operational aspects, i.e. our day to day dealings with it. Theoretical studies concerning the subject mainly restrict themselves to analyzing the discourses of eminent Western philosophers. The old supposition that modernity, as a product of the European Enlightenment, was imposed upon non-Western societies who had no choice but to simply replicate the Western model has already been challenged. The discourse on modernity has moved from its Eurocentric and universalistic claims to a global approach. Timothy Mitchell clearly demonstrates an understanding of this shift from a Eurocentric to a global approach of studying modernity and argues that this has resulted in the opening of space to the non-West and in an elemental change to the appearance of this space.[10] This evolution in the discourse has surely opened up new vistas for exploration. But the purpose of the evolution is served only when the displacement of the lone center is met with production of multiple centers. Partha Chatterjee's notion of "our modernity"

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[9] Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987).
[10] Timothy Mitchell, ed., *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 27.

addresses this particular issue by focusing on the nation as the base unit for studying modernity.[11]

Building and elaborating upon this shift from the Eurocentric to the global, this dissertation argues for the inclusion of the local in the schema of modernity studies. Without making any claims regarding the originality of this argument, this dissertation advances the idea that in a society as diverse as South Asia, it is more practical to study different locales and their multiple modernities in order to obtain a national picture, rather than the other way around. In the case of qasbati Muslims, modernity was an alternative set of ideologies, concepts, and opportunities. Although similar preconditions may have occurred in other societies, qasbahs stand out in that they consisted of Muslims who belonged to different sects, ideologies, classes, educational backgrounds, and career interests; Muslims who, despite their differences, remained strongly tied to the idea of being qasbati Muslims. Qasbahs consisted of communities of people for whom religious precepts remained close to their hearts, even as they embraced modernity. This was possible because of their position as a close-knit and compact society as opposed to urban Muslims. Qasbati Muslims had the competence to engage in and define modernity on their own terms, terms that they deemed non-conflicting with their interests and articles of faith. Their assertions, adoptions, and accommodations demonstrate that "selective appropriation,"[12] to use Chatterjee's phrase, was key to their encounter with modernity. This dissertation explores the modernizing process as characterized by local variations and individual preferences. This complexity has not been captured in most of the existing literature on South Asian Muslims due to the limitations created by the dichotomy of "modernity" versus "tradition."

However, there are some scholars working on South Asian Islam who have touched upon certain issues of modernity among the Muslims of South Asia. While

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[11] Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity* (Rotterdam/Dakar: SEPHIS and CODESRIA, 1997), 3-20.
[12] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

some scholars have studied Indian Muslim perceptions of the West, others have looked at the conceptual problem of modernity through various lenses. Gulfishan Khan, Muhammad Khalid Masud, and Farhan Nizami have studied how Muslims of India perceived the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth century and how they dealt with colonial rule that introduced a new culture, polity, and social structure.[13] Working from a different perspective, Ayesha Jalal has looked at some of the dominant literary and political figures to capture competing visions of nationalism and the politics of cultural difference in order to understand modernity.[14] Faisal Devji has termed modernity among Indian Muslims as "apologetic modernity" by looking at the dominant Aligarh Movement and purporting to read into the thoughts of its leader Sir Syed Ahmad Khan.[15] Most recently, Francis Robinson has argued that in order to answer the challenges posed by the West, political and social elites of India used the tradition of *tajdid* or renewal and reformed their practices and institutions.[16] Although all of these are significant contributions to the understanding of modernity among the Muslims of South Asia, they are mostly based on Aligarh and certain dominant Muslim leaders. Studies outside of Aligarh, such as Jonah Blank's work on the Bohra Muslim community and their modernity, are rare.[17] Since his is an ethnographical study, we hardly have historical studies on societies and figures beyond Aligarh. This dissertation fills this gap in historiography by bringing qasbahs

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[13] See Gulfishan Khan, *Indian Muslim Perceptions of the West during the Eighteenth Century* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998); Muhammad Khalid Masud, *Trends in the Interpretation of Islamic Law as Reflected in the Fatawa of Deoband School: A Study of the Attitudes of the Ulama of Deoband to Certain Problems and Inventions* (M. A. Thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, 1969); and Farhan Nizami, *Madrasahs, Scholars, and Saints: Muslim Response to British Presence in Delhi and the Upper Doab, 1803-1857* (Unpublished D. Phil Thesis, University of Oxford, 1983).

[14] Ayesha Jalal, "Negotiating Colonial Modernity and Cultural Difference: Indian Muslim Conceptions of Community and Nation, 1878-1914." In Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C. A. Bayly, eds., *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 230-260.

[15] Faisal Devji, "Apologetic Modernity," *Modern Intellectual History* 4, 1 (2007): 61-62.

[16] Francis Robinson, "Islamic Reform and Modernities in South Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 42, 2-3 (March 2008): 259-281.

[17] Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

in the discussion and engaging with the modernities that they lived with. It attempts to draw our attention to a fresh perspective on modernity among South Asian Muslims. It also complements existing studies on colonial modernity among Hindus of North India and Bengal since both Hindus and Muslims were faced with similar situations of colonial pressure.

Since the term modernity carries a lot of connotations in our own times, one needs to be careful when examining the past. In the historical literature related to the intellectual horizon of the qasbahs, we find different terminologies being used to suggest the existence of modernity as a phenomenon. Various terms such as *jadid* (modern), *naii* (new; referring to the "newness"), and *taraqqi* (progress) are used to refer to the changes that appeared as a result of the British rule. Modernity for qasbati Muslims was defined by three basic characteristics: participation, appropriation, and contestation. The qasbatis engaged with the "newness" by participating in it. They learned English and Western sciences, used print technology to publish and disseminate Urdu periodicals, availed themselves of the charitable dispensaries and hospitals for the poor, and welcomed the construction of railway lines and services bringing better traffic facilities.[18] The qasbati Muslims also adopted Western dress and education. But in most circumstances, their attitude was not to let the new ideas and practices affect their religious precepts or compromise their existing social values. Their participation in modernity was highly selective, but not a blind imitation of the West. Rather, it was characterized by innovation and appropriation. Additionally, they also claimed some of the ingredients of modernity as a part of their own Islamic cultural and intellectual heritage. Their writings argue that aspects of modernity which were presumed to be Western such as reason, rationalism, Greek science, and medicine were not solely European but as much a part of Islamic history. Qasbati modernity, therefore, was interactive in pattern and based on contestation in

[18] An essay published on July 16, 1876 in *Najm-ul Akhbar*, a periodical based in Meerut, expressed a sense of gratitude to the "blessings of the British rule." *Supplementary Volume of Report of Native Newspapers; Punjab, NWP, Oudh etc.,* (January-December 1876), National Archives of India (henceforth, NAI), 358-59.

terms of claiming aspects of modernity as the qasbatis' own. This dissertation expands on the idea of modernity by bringing perspectives from an area hitherto understudied.

REGION OF STUDY AND TIME PERIOD

As mentioned above, this dissertation confines itself to the qasbahs of Awadh and Rohilkhand in colonial North India. To be more precise, while we discuss several different qasbahs within the two regions, the thrust of our discussion remains on the qasbahs of Rudauli and Bilgram in Awadh and Amroha in the region of Rohilkhand.[19] All of these qasbahs formed part of the United Provinces, modern Uttar Pradesh.[20] Both Awadh and the region of Rohilkhand have been noted for their distinctive contributions to Muslim culture. The dominant Muslims of Awadh were by and large the descendants of those from the region of modern-day Iran and Iraq. Rohilkhand was dominated by the progeny of those from the region of Afghanistan. While Awadh mostly patronized Shia faith and culture, the rulers of Rohilkhand, though later converted to Shiism, promoted both the sects from time to time. Both regions are thus perfect cases to be examined. The qasbahs of Amroha, Rudauli, and Bilgram are representative of the culture, intellectual make-up, and social life of these regions.

The period of study focuses mostly on the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century – between the foundation of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh (1875) and the abolition of Khilafat

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[19] Until a few years back, Amroha, Rudauli, and Bilgram were under the districts of Moradabad, Bara Banki, and Hardoi respectively. Recently, Amroha has been turned into a district and re-named Jyotiba Phule Nagar and Rudauli has been sliced off Bara Banki and merged with the neighboring district of Faizabad. Bilgram remains the same as before.

[20] The United Provinces of Agra and Awadh, simplified as the United Provinces (UP), was created as a province of British India in 1902. Prior to that, this region used to be under the North-Western Provinces (NWP) which remained in existence from 1835 until 1902. It was bigger in size and contained more territories than the United Provinces. Administratively, both were under the charge of a Lieutenant Governor. When Awadh was annexed by the British in 1856, it was placed under a Chief Commissioner, an office that was later combined with that of the Lieutenant Governor of NWP in 1877. In 1947, when the British left India, the independent Indian government named the province as Uttar Pradesh, keeping the acronym UP.

Movement in the mid-1920s. During this period, we find a relatively large pool of Muslims educated in both Islamic and English-style institutions. There is a deliberate omission from this study of the years leading up to the partition of India since it would be unjust to accommodate a field as big as partition in a space as small as this. The focus of the period therefore remains the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a period of heightened awareness and urgency as India's Muslims encountered and had to act upon rapid political and socio-economic changes.

SOURCES

Working on an area relatively uncharted and highly understudied involves both challenges and rewards. Studying qasbahs in colonial India requires one to deal with dichotomous but complementary primary sources – archival as well as non-archival. In this case, the dichotomy is more pronounced. The archival sources represent colonial views and approaches. They contain British government files of different kinds: home department, political department, educational department, revenue department, municipal department as well as miscellaneous records. Land settlement reports and revenue policy documents, alongside district gazetteers form the main sources within the formal archives. But these documents tell only one side of the story. All of them were written by and for the British government officials and solely represent the interests of the Raj. All the departmental files are overtly colonial in nature, their sole concern being land, land revenue, and land revenue settlements with landlords. The reports deal extensively with land revenue figures, land acreage, the fertility of land, demographic aspects, and so on. Similarly, the project of district gazetteers represented governmental interests. Written for British government officials, they elaborate on different aspects of life in each district, creating a kind of 'how to survive in a district' guide. While they did serve their intended purpose, gazetteers still remain one of the most informative sources for studying a district. For each district, gazetteers deal with qasbahs as the headquarters of a *pargana*, an administrative unit. And although they are not as thorough as historians may wish,

gazetteers do discuss social issues of the time. However, primary sources from archives are not dependable as the sole source of examining qasbati history.

The majority of sources used in this dissertation have come mainly from 'informal' or non-archival sources. Qasbati Muslims were extraordinarily prolific. Because of their culture of writing, preserving history, and sustaining tradition through continued writing, qasbahs have amassed a vast number of primary sources. From the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, we find Urdu writings of different genres, while Persian was gradually being replaced as the preferred language. However, Persian does continue to be a poetic language, and some authors wrote in both Persian and Urdu, like Mirza Ghalib and Muhammad Iqbal, two leading Indo-Muslim poets. Also, since qasbati Muslims began attending English-style schools and colleges, some of them have bequeathed writings in English.

This dissertation draws heavily on Urdu primary sources containing a wide variety of writings, collected over a period of six years. These are writings pertaining to regional history, autobiographies, biographies, biographical dictionaries, correspondence, memoirs, newspaper articles, Urdu periodicals, collections of poetry and short stories, and so on. A good percentage of the sources obtained as published sources are rare Urdu books, many of which were printed only for limited private circulation. Private diaries, syllabi, and unpublished letters have also been consulted. Overall, the primary sources in Urdu complement the perspectives of the official British sources by providing more in depth look at the social and cultural issues of the time.

Urdu sources used for this study contain *tarikh* literature or works of history on different levels: histories of Awadh and Rohilkhand, qasbati history or separate monographs on qasbahs, and institutional histories such as the ones of different educational institutions. The second major source is *tazkirah* literature, separate biographical dictionaries which chronicle different kinds of people such as poets and their works. A major source used for this dissertation is a collection of Urdu *rasa'il* or periodicals from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These periodicals

have numerous essays on a variety of topics of contemporary interest. The Muslims in qasbahs had a strong tradition of compiling *shajrahs* or genealogies and studying qasbati history through genealogies is one of the most effective ways to understanding the concepts of family, individual, and community in an Islamic society. Numerous biographies, memoirs, and autobiographies of different individuals from qasbahs and their surrounding areas are also a very potent source for studying qasbati history. They provide much needed information on individuals, communities, history, social life, and contemporary challenges. In addition, since qasbati history is comparatively unmapped in academic writing, this work draws heavily on Urdu books that directly, tangentially, and indirectly deal with qasbahs.

Sources used in this work are a combination of official British and unofficial Urdu writings. While official sources were written with the purpose of governance to benefit the Empire, Urdu writings capture the social and cultural life of the qasbati Muslims. Urdu writers, whether a part of the governmental machinery or not, showed a commitment to Urdu literature and its different genres. Moreover, many scholars wrote in both English and Urdu. Similarly, while qasbati Muslims were contributors to various periodicals, they also read different periodicals published within and outside of their qasbahs. Thus, qasbahs were placed as both producers and consumers of the Urdu-speaking literary world. Taken together, British and qasbati sources, or English and Urdu sources complement each other by enabling us to look at a rather comprehensive picture of qasbahs. This understanding of reciprocal perceptions is particularly crucial in the context of cross-cultural studies such as this one.

STRATEGIES

The main focus of this work is the qasbahs and their inhabitants and examining their participation in modernity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a strategy, therefore, this dissertation attempts to understand first the meaning and significance of the qasbah and then moves on to discussing aspects of religion and modernity in the lives of qasbati Muslims. Qasbahs have

existed since medieval times, beginning in the eleventh century. For the present purpose of constructing a general history of qasbahs, this work has drawn copiously on medieval chronicles. The goal is to present to the reader a rather comprehensive history of the qasbahs in order to better understand the period under study. The strategy regarding primary sources involved, over the course of several visits, interviewing individuals and families living in qasbahs. The aim of the interviews, however, was not to construct an oral history, which could be a separate project in itself, but to elicit information about the interviewees' ancestors and solicit primary source materials.

This dissertation takes another strategic approach that differentiates it from most studies on South Asian Islam. The approach employed is to focus on the qasbahs as a unit of study while allowing space for multiple differences within them. This study is not limited by aspects such as politics or education, *'ulama* (religious leaders) or Sufis, or for that matter, any particular class or family. Members of the landlord class do figure in as prominent figures but poets, journalists, and teachers also find a space. While broadening the coverage of subjects being studied, nuances or differences are not ignored. Furthermore, this research does not confine itself to any one stream of thought or structure, either institutional or personal. Instead, it disaggregates such a framework in order to allow space for qasbatis of different educational backgrounds, whether English or Islamic. It also focuses upon families as units of analysis. Family in South Asia has always been the basis of social life and deserves special treatment as an indicator of educational and professional developments vis-à-vis changing times. Another strategy is to look at various aspects of social lives and practices beyond the paradigm of "tradition" versus "modernity." On the whole, this dissertation attempts to capture the social life of the qasbati Muslims regardless of their ideological affiliations, intellectual trends, institutional frameworks, educational background, and personal convictions.

A FEW QUESTIONS

As a part of the strategy, questions have been framed in order to let primary sources speak for themselves. In the chapter concerning a history of the qasbahs, questions are raised to trace qasbahs' emergence, growth, development, and prominent features through primary sources. Further, qasbati societies were small in size and population as well as compact in nature. This made the gap between the public and the private sphere smaller, especially when compared to cities. The practice of religion, at least in its outer form, was not just a matter of private sphere. Questions on religion and modernity, therefore, generally hover around the idea of how the educated Muslims of qasbati India negotiated and lived with aspects of modernity without letting their religious precepts be violated. This also makes qasbahs apt for studying religion and modernity.

The circumstances surrounding qasbahs changed with different regimes, from the Mughal and the Awadhi and the Rampuri Nawabs to the British. In the face of the changes brought by the British colonial government, we see corresponding changes in the Muslim society. Modern western education as well as numerous technological changes introduced new visions and vistas of opportunities. By the early twentieth century, young *sharif* or high-born Muslims of qasbah backgrounds increasingly sought to augment their traditional education by learning English and Western sciences. Qasbatis who received English education with grounding in traditional learning from private tutors form a very significant portion of this work. Since it would be both difficult and impractical to list all of the research questions here, we can only take a glimpse at them. Why should we study about qasbahs? What legacies do they carry and how did they contribute to the larger society? With the onset of the British rule, how did the new colonial ideas and practices affect Muslim social life and religious practices? By what means did Muslims incorporate western knowledge into the existing realm of Islamic knowledge of *ma'qulat* (rational sciences) and *manqulat* (revealed sciences)? To what extent did the qasbati socio-cultural fabric changed? What were the bases and degrees of adoption, appropriation and rejection

of ingredients of modernity among the qasbati Muslims? What was the level and intensity of their participation in the process of modernity? These are some of the questions that we shall examine in this work.

AN OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

This dissertation consists of a total of seven chapters including an introduction and a conclusion. The following chapter, *Chapter Two*, delineates the meaning and significance of qasbahs in a South Asian context. This chapter shows how the term, originally Arabic, traveled to the Indo-Persian lexicon, and how it acquired a distinctive meaning. The geopolitical space and significance of qasbahs are laid out in a novel way. Topographically, qasbahs were unique as something in between a town and a village. But they were important for extraordinary reasons. The main argument of the chapter is that qasbahs were important not only because they inherited a strong Muslim literary tradition but also because they sustained and carried forward the culture of literature production generation after generation. This argument is illustrated through a discussion of the rich body of literature that these qasbahs produced. *Chapter Two* discusses various genres of Urdu literature such as genealogy, regional history, biography, autobiography, biographical dictionary, letter-writing, periodicals, and so on. The chapter also makes the argument that through all these different genres of literature, qasbahs served as a space of intellectual dialogue and facilitated an intellectual environment – a feature specific to the qasbahs as a whole when compared to towns, cities, or villages.

Chapter Three lays out a general history of the qasbahs for the first time. No work within South Asian historiography provides a focused and comprehensive history of qasbahs. The chapter examines how official British records such as settlement reports, native newspaper reports, and district gazetteers look at the qasbahs from the perspective of a colonial state. It is followed by an attempt to understand a general history of Awadh and Rohilkhand. A history of each of the three qasbahs is constructed by combining different sources – English as well as Urdu,

British as well as qasbati. It is also noted that the qasbahs of Amroha, Bilgram, and Rudauli were similar yet dissimilar in certain ways. The chapter ends with an analysis of the precise points of departures in the official archival and the informal non-archival sources.

Chapter Four provides a biographical discussion of certain qasbati Muslims whose writings are analyzed in this dissertation. Inspired by the genre of tazkirah, it discusses these individuals' family backgrounds, education, professions, career interests, literary pursuits, self-definitions, and their different writings. The Rudauli personalities to be discussed include: Chaudhary Muhammad Ali, Chaudhary Irshad Husain, Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi, Asrarul Haq Majaz, Safia Akhtar, and Hamida Salim. Those from Amroha include Nawab Mushtaq Huasain Viqar-ul-Mulk, Hamid Ali Khan, Amjad Ali Khan, Kazim Ali Khan, Rahat Ali Khan, and Rafat Ali Khan, all of whom were related but not from the same family. We also discuss Seemab Amrohvi. From the qasbah of Bilgram, we discuss Syed Husain Bilgrami Imad-ul-Mulk, Syed Ali Bilgrami, Safeer Bilgrami, Hosh Bilgrami, Syed Shadan Bilgrami, Tayyiba Begum, and Wasi-ul-Hasan Bilgrami. The chapter takes into account the role that qasbati women played in different fields and discusses a few of them. The purpose of the chapter is to present a complex picture of the variety of individuals who resided in these qasbahs and the outstanding contributions they made. Only a proper and detailed understanding of various individuals and their personal moves and motivations enables us to understand the intellectual habitat of qasbahs.

Chapter Five is about religion and how the qasbati Muslims saw themselves in light of their faiths and religious precepts. This chapter also discusses Hindu-Muslim relationships in the qasbahs as well as the dynamics of social hierarchies and sectarian divisions among Muslims. The commemoration of Muharram and the observation of Barah Wafat in the qasbahs are also discussed as two key religious events. The question of self-identification of qasbati Muslims based on their own writings and religious confessions form an interesting aspect of this chapter. What did religious education mean to them? What was happening in terms of madrasa syllabi?

The notions of dress code, the practice of veiling among women, and the adoption of Western dress are analyzed in order to understand the cultural influences of religion. In particular, the *fatwa* on the wearing of neckties is discussed as a way to understand debates surrounding the dress code. This chapter ends with an analysis of the instructional or didactic religious literature for women.

Chapter Six attempts to understand the issues of modernity in the context of qasbati social life. It examines aspects of modernity, its meaning, and various theories of modernity in order to locate this work in the field of global and South Asian modernity studies. It then outlines certain approaches regarding the treatment of the qasbati Muslims within the debates on modernity. After having dealt with the context of studying modernity in the qasbahs, the chapter discusses some of the ingredients of modernity and how the larger world of qasbati Muslims dealt with specific issues. The qasbati Muslims participated proactively by linking the ingredients of modernity to Greek history and thereby reclaiming the achievements of the Islamic world. The main argument made in this chapter is that modernity in the qasbahs was highly contested and interactive in nature.

Chapter Seven concludes this dissertation.

Chapter Two

QASBAHS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE:
INTELLECTUAL ENVIRONMENT & LITERARY PRODUCTION

This chapter is an attempt to understand the meaning of the term *qasbah* in a South Asian context. As discussed in the previous chapter, qasbahs have had a long and very strong presence in South Asian society. Their manifold contributions have touched all walks of life. By attempting to define the term *qasbah* and present its significance, this chapter will seek to understand what qasbahs mean historically. The argument here is that one should understand qasbahs not just for what they have inherited from history and tradition but also for the ways they have defined themselves. Beginning with a global-lexical exploration of the term *qasbah*, this chapter will display how qasbahs acquired a specific spatial dimension in the South Asian landscape. Moreover, the significance of qasbahs stems from them in not just being centers of Muslim literary tradition but equally in how they have perpetuated an intellectual environment through the production of literature.

A close examination of the history of qasbahs reveals that unlike towns, cities, and villages, qasbahs as a whole stand out for their worthiness in terms of intellectual heritage, significance, and contribution. From medieval to modern times, qasbahs have been heirs to a highly energetic literary tradition. This chapter will show that in addition to this remarkable feature, qasbahs were markedly proactive in handing down their inherited literary legacy to subsequent generations through a perpetual production of different literary genres. English education, Western knowledge, and aspects of modernity, such as print technology, facilitated this process of literary production. People who received a Western education did not hesitate to apply their new learning to their writings in Urdu. Through a constant emphasis on the production of genealogies, historical texts, biographical compositions, local

periodicals, and poems, qasbahs and their inhabitants ensured that their literary tradition would survive. As opposed to towns and cities, this inheritance of a literary tradition and its sustenance through a steady literary production defined the qasbah culture. It is uncommon to find in most towns and cities the level of enthusiasm shown by qasbahs towards the maintenance, preservation and passing down of their intellectual traditions. Moreover, it is remarkable that qasbahs could accomplish all this despite lacking the patronage and infrastructure accessible to intellectual enterprises in towns and cities such as Lucknow, Delhi, or even Aligarh.

UNCOVERING THE MEANING OF THE TERM *QASBAH*

The qasbah in itself is a unique entity in the geopolitical history of South Asia. Much like a city or village, it has been an administrative, geographic, and cultural unit. The word qasbah originates from Arabic, meaning "to divide" or "to cut up." However, it has some other meanings, such as a city, a chief town, the interior of a country, or a citadel.[21] These meanings are more applicable to our current study than the root meaning of the term. In English, the term generally refers to the walled citadel or native Arab quarters of a North African city, especially Algeria. Spelled "kaçaba" in French, the word was transliterated into English as "casbah" or "kasbah," while retaining the same meaning as in the North African context.[22] Interestingly, one finds that the term also exists in the Spanish lexicon as "alcazaba" meaning a Muslim fortification in Spain or simply a fortified enclosure.[23] Spanish also derives this term from the Arabic etymology. No doubt, qasbah acquired a common meaning in Arabic and Western languages. But when we look at its usage in the history of the Indian subcontinent, the connotation of the term differs greatly from both Arabic and

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[21] H. Anthony Salmoné, *An Advanced Learner's Arabic-English Dictionary* (Beirut: Librarie Du Liban, 1972), 779.

[22] *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (New York: Random House, 1990), 738. William Morris, ed, *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language* (New York: American Heritage Publishing Company, 1969), 208.

[23] *Diccionario De La Lengua Española* (Bacelona: Romanya Valls S. A., 2001), 72. D. Samuel Gili Gaya, *Diccionario General Ilustrado De La Lengua Española* (Barcelona: Publicaciones Y Ediciones Spes S. A., 1953), 71.

Western languages. In this region, the term is found in Turkish and Persian usages, which is evident from a host of Mughal chronicles. For instance, Abul Fazal in his account of twelve *subas* (provinces) under the Mughal Empire refers to 2,737 *qasbahs*.[24] He employs the term to denote a type of township. This meaning of *qasbah* in South Asia as a unit of administration was further integrated into popular usage through the language of Urdu. According to John T. Platts, a lexicographer, a qasbah is a "township" or "a large village or a small town particularly inhabited by decent people or families of some rank."[25] There are other lexicons that define qasbah in a similar vein.[26] Going back to official British sources such as Wilson's glossary, we find a "kasba" defined as "a small town or large village, the chief or market town of a district," and a "kasbati" as "an inhabitant of a kasba, or town usually a Mohammadan convert."[27] The term *qasbah*, as it has come to be used in the Indo-Persian terminology, refers to an entity that stands between a town and a village. However, there is much more to a qasbah than its just being a geographical space or a "market town."

UNDERSTANDING THE *QASBAH* AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Historiography is ripe with all kinds of urban and rural histories. Lurking between the town and the village, the history of qasbahs begin in the eleventh century, but a more clearly recorded history only exists since the time of the Mughal emperors. As discussed in the previous chapter, despite all their influence on Indian

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[24] S. C. Mishra, "Urban History in India: Possibilities and Perspectives." In Indu Banga, ed., *The City in Indian History: Urban Demography, Society, and Politics* (New Delhi: Manohar Publications & Urban History Association of India, 1991), 6.
[25] John T Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974 ed.), 791.
[26] *Lughat-e-Kishori* (Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, 1964), 560. John Shakespear, *Dictionary Urdu-English & English-Urdu* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Pablikeshanz, 1980), 1282. Maulvi Ferozuddin, *Feroz-ul-Lughat* (Lahore: Feroz Sons Limited, 1978), 857. S. W. Fallon, *Urdu-English Dictionary* (Lahore: Central Urdu Board, 1976), 887.
[27] H. H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, and of Useful Words Occurring in Official Documents Relating to the Administration of the Government of British India,* ed A. C. Ganguli and N. D. Basu (Calcutta: Eastern Law House, 1940), 417.

society, the study of qasbahs is a relatively uncharted territory. Ravinder Kumar is one of the few scholars in modern academia to have pointed out the importance of qasbahs in the social history of modern India. He defines qasbahs as something "bigger than more substantial villages with a market for surplus agricultural produce and a base for lowermost echelons of bureaucracy and a religious center of greater or lesser importance."[28] Although his work focuses on the economic characteristics of qasbahs, he does point out their social significance as religious centers. More recently, a work has appeared that analyzes the social aspects of qasbahs to a previously unknown extent. However, the thrust of this work presents a nationalized and homogenized view of qasbahs rather than presenting different shades of qasbati life. Mushirul Hasan's work on the Kidwais of Bara Banki attempts to understand what qasbahs and their intellectuals meant within a nationalist framework, since the qasbah structure in his view was based on "pluralism and syncretism." Hasan, in an attempt to demonstrate the urge of the Muslims to be part of the nation's pluralistic life, overemphasizes Hindu-Muslim unity. He goes so far as to state that "the Karbala paradigm itself communicated profound existential truths not only to the Shias but also to the Sunnis and the Hindus," and that "they all commemorated Muharram with equal solemnity."[29] He also recounts, while discussing the legacies of qasbah life, the way some people revisit their ancestral home annually and states that "[it] is when the crumbling havelis bustle with life, and the local communities, Hindu and Muslims, Shia and Sunni, respond to the cry "Ya-Husain Ya-Husain."[30] Nonetheless, the fact that he chooses qasbahs as the overarching theme of his larger nationalistic argument indicates the significance of the qasbah as a potential area of study. Moreover, he acknowledges that "histories of localities, are still, for the most part, unwritten."[31] Additionally, although Hasan's book emphasizes the nationalist synthesis, his work

[28] Ravinder Kumar, *Essays in the Social History of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 35.
[29] Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism*, 24.
[30] Ibid., 37 & 47.
[31] Ibid., 5

contributes to the study of Hindu-Muslim relationships. This dissertation, on the other hand, focuses on Islamic culture and Urdu tradition in qasbahs.

C. A. Bayly's monograph *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*[32] is a pioneering work that recognizes the structure and significance of qasbahs. Focused on the makeup of the Indian economy from the late eighteenth through the late nineteenth century, Bayly's study ought to be credited with problematizing the concept of qasbahs as an important unit of the Indian trading and marketing network and, hence, the Indian political economy. In keeping with his main argument, Bayly makes a pioneering contribution to the historical study of qasbahs by detailing their basic characteristics, although his study for the most part remain based on sources in English and not in Urdu. In his scheme of studying towns, Bayly uses the term "country towns" for qasbahs and describes them "as the most obvious bottom rung of the urban hierarchy." This description differentiates qasbahs from non-urban *haats* (periodic peasant markets of the countryside) and *ganjs* (rural fixed markets), both essentially rural structures. Qasbahs, with a population of roughly 3,000, were different from cities that were marked by a population above 10,000. However, to Bayly, the population of qasbahs was less consequential than other features; he wrote that it was "their social, legal and economic status that distinguished qasbahs"[33] – a point that invites further analysis.

Around the time of Bayly's work, Gyanendra Pandey of the *Subaltern Studies* Collective wrote an essay on the Mubarakpur qasbah in the Azamgarh district of eastern Uttar Pradesh. Pandey's article was trend-setting in the sense that it incorporated a few sources which represented a "Muslim account," thus providing an alternative view to the official British records.[34] But due to his focus on incorporating

[32] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 111, 189-93, & 346-68.
[33] Ibid., 110-11
[34] Pandey's sources include, alongside official records, an eighty-nine page document written in the 1880s by one Sheikh Mohammad Ali Hasan entitled *Waqeat-o-Hadesat: Qasba Mubarakpur*. Written in Urdu, he translates it as "Encounters and Calamities." Ali Hasan, its author, belonged to the disappearing landlord class – obviously not a subaltern. Therefore, he classifies *Waqeat* as an "alternative elite perspective." Besides, he uses two other documents: first, a petition drawn up by the

alternative sources as a way to understand different "histories," Pandey neither defines what a qasbah is nor attempts to generalize its characteristics. However, both Bayly and Pandey in their works do underline the importance of qasbahs as units of study.

What made qasbahs unique and significant in Indian history? Official and authoritative British sources view them mostly as administrative-economic units. These sources indicate that there were no great towns in Awadh except for the city of Lucknow. This shows the conceptual distance that existed between cities and qasbahs. An official source states that "the qasbahs are almost universally the headquarters of parganas, and from them the pargana used to be administered under the native rule."[35] This definitely underscores the administrative significance of the qasbahs as a center for adjoining villages and parganas. Most interesting, however, is the definition of a qasbah that comes from a British judge named Mr. Cooper in connection with the Amethi case:

> A Musalman settlement in a defensible military position, generally on the site of an ancient Hindu headquarters, town or fort, where, for mutual protection, the Musalmans who had overrun and seized the proprietary of the surrounding villages resided; where the faujdar and his troops, the pargana qanungo and chaudhri, the mufti, qazi and other high dignitaries lived; and, as must be the case where the wealth and power of the Moslem sect was collected in one spot, a large settlement of Sayyad's mosques, dargahs, etc. sprang up. As a rule, there was little land attached, and that was chiefly planted with fruit groves, and held free of rent, whilst each man really had a free hold of the yard of his house and the land occupied by his servants and followers."[36]

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leaders of the weaving community; and second, a diary or occasional 'notes' of a weaver named Sheikh Abdul Majid. Thus, he comes up with two kinds of histories of one qasbah. His purpose is to capture the consciousness of those involved in history. Gyanendra Pandey, "Encounters and Calamities: The History of a North Indian Qasba in the Nineteenth Century" ed. Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies III* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), 250-51.

[35] *Gazetteer of the Province of Oudh,* Vol II (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1985; first pub 1877-78), 312.

[36] While elaborating on the agrarian structure of Awadh and the place of qasbahs within it, this description is quoted in the *Gazetteer of the Province of Oudh,* Vol II, 312.

The above statement underscores the significance of qasbahs as a space accented by visible Muslim presence. Although qasbahs typically had a significant non-Muslim population, they were generally inhabited by a conglomeration of Muslim dignitaries and high officials who carried significant weight in the local machinery. They had considerable political, economic, and cultural influence both within and outside their qasbahs. The Muslim dignitaries were people of great wealth, knowledge, religion, and power. Many of them controlled land rights, while many others made up the service gentry, who had been catering to the administrative conduct of the state since the time of the Mughal Empire. There is much evidence of royal decrees (*farmans*) being issued, by Emperors Akbar and Aurangzeb in particular, which granted and recognized revenue-free charitable lands (*madad-i-ma'ash*) to people of knowledge and piety.[37] In a number of cases, such lands located in and around qasbahs remained in the family many generations beyond the grantee, and even the British rulers chose not to disturb this arrangement.

As a part of the revenue collection administration, the local landed elite of the area continued to have landholding rights. The *zamindars* had rights of landholding over one or more villages and the responsibility of paying an agreed collection amount (*jama*) to the government. The *taluqdars* also had landholding rights over a few villages of an area (*taluqa*) but were placed above zamindars, as in Awadh. While a taluqdar had similar land rights to a zamindar, the taluqdar also acted as an intermediary for both the villages directly under his charge and those that were placed under zamindars. It has been clearly argued by some that being a zamindar was more substantial than being a taluqdar.[38] But such arguments overlook the fact that taluqdars not only had regulatory powers over zamindars, they were also the ones

[37] Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 110-117. Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy of a Transformation: Awadh, from Mughal to Colonial Rule* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1998), 49-59.
[38] Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 172.

whose power grew as British intervention increased.[39] In Awadh, a taluqdar was usually “a very big man” who was “assigned the responsibility of collecting revenue from a whole lot of other fairly big zamindars.”[40] Moreover, the fact that the British granted titular designations, including that of *raja*, to the taluqdars speaks of their local influence. Both zamindars and taluqdars dominated rural society because of their control over land, and the latter “played a critical role throughout much of northern India as intermediaries, or brokers of power, between state and village.”[41] The zamindars and taluqdars under study took advantage of the British presence, new education, and the ideas and concepts that came along. While staying true to their Indo-Islamic culture, they actively engaged with the new knowledge and aspects of modernity. Their situation was somewhat similar to Hindu taluqdars and zamindars of North India who were also guided by social factors such as “Rajput” identity, as has been shown by Richard Fox.[42]

QASBAHS AS CENTERS OF MUSLIM LITERARY TRADITION

A qasbah was dominated by people of political and administrative power, along with people of religion and knowledge. The landed elite were crucial to the *qasbati* (of qasbah) society and not just in financial matters. Examples show that because of their luxurious position and economic independence, a number of the landed gentry could indulge themselves in socially significant literary pursuits.[43] Moreover, qasbahs in colonial India were home not only to the landed elite, or those

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[39] Jafri, *Studies in the Anatomy*, 78-79.
[40] S. Nurul Hasan, *Religion, State, and Society in Medieval India: Collected Works of S. Nurul Hasan*, edited by Satish Chandra (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 270.
[41] Thomas Metcalf has one of the most exhaustive studies of these two groups and their role and influence in rural north Indian society. Focused on the *zamindars* and the *taluqdars*, this is a marvelous study of “the interplay of state and local power in rural India during the nineteenth century.” Thomas R. Metcalf, *Land,* Landlord, Preface.
[42] Richard G. Fox, *Kin, Clan, Raja, and Rule: State-Hinterland Relations in Preindustrial India* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971).
[43] A few examples here include Chaudhary Mohammad Ali and Chaudhary Syed Ali Mohammad Zaidi of Rudauli whose writings indicate the expanse of interests these qasbah intellectuals had. More details shall follow later. Also see Bibliography for the kind of works they produced.

belonging to the landowning class, but also to the service gentry, who excelled as teachers, lawyers, revenue collectors, government officials, etc. A number of officials working under the Mughals, and even the British, came from this pool of qasbati professionals. Qasbati Muslims occupied the positions of *mansabdars* (a Mughal rank of military service), *qazis* (judicial officer), *muftis* (jurisconsults), and soldiers under the Mughal Empire and its successor state of Awadh. The trend continued under the British administration wherein they held the offices of revenue surveyors, deputy collectors, magistrates as well as lower service positions. All this may have been possible despite the adverse conditions of changing regimes, for the simple reason that a dominant literary tradition helped qasbati Muslims retain lucrative official positions.[44] Even official British writings dating back to 1877 ascribe importance to qasbahs as providers of men of intellect, who aided in the everyday running of the British Empire in India. The qasbahs of Bilgram, Kakori, Malihabad, and Rudauli are credited for having "sent out a number of men distinguished in science, administration, and war, and though the light of Eastern learning had paled, and the sword rarely finds opportunities of winning fame, they still provide the English Government of North India with numbers of its ablest servants, and contribute one of the most important of its elements to the only learned profession – the bar."[45]

Apart from professionals and landed gentry, qasbahs housed prominent Sufis, their shrines, successors, and followers. Such shrines further enhanced the literary environment for the people residing in and around qasbahs. Rudauli has the historic shrine of Shaikh Ahmad Abdul Haq (d. 1434) of the Chishtiyya Sabiriyya *silsila*, or order. Shrines such as this were centers of spiritual and intellectual activity. Shaikh Abdul Quddus Gangohi (1456-1537), a learned Sufi known for his excellent poetry

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[44] Bayly demonstrates this in the case of qasbah Kara, near Allahabad. C. A. Bayly, "The Small Town and Islamic Gentry in North India: the Case of Kara," in Kenneth Ballhatchet and John Harris, eds., *The City in South Asia: Pre-Modern and Modern* (London: Curzon Press, 1980), 20-48.

[45] *Gazetteer of the Province of Oudh*, Volume I (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, Indian reprint 1985, first published 1877-78), xix-xx.

and the Sufi text *Rushdnama*, was closely associated with the Rudauli shrine.[46] The presence of spiritual leaders and philosophers added to the overall intellectual ambience of qasbahs. Sufi shrines also helped teach the younger inhabitants of qasbahs. Claudia Liebeskind shows how students made up part of the following for such shrines.[47] Service families in qasbahs used to send their sons to the local shrines for the beginning of their primary education. The power of such Sufi families can be seen in the case of the Barkatiyya Sayyids of the qasbah Mahrehra, who had an enormous impact on the Ahl-e-Sunnat movement launched by Ahmad Riza of Bareilly.[48] Also, almost every qasbah had its religio-spiritual center in the form of a *dargah* (shrine). Such dargahs not only united the residents, Hindus as well as Muslims, of the qasbah into a cohesive band of followers but also acted as a celebrated attraction for people in surrounding areas. Rudauli, with its shrine of Shaikh Abdul Haq, exemplified this phenomenon. Hameeda Salim, a prolific Urdu writer and younger sister of the renowned Urdu poet Majaz who belonged to qasbah Rudauli, recounts her childhood days in Rudauli when the annual *'urs*[49] of Shah Abdul Haq would turn her house into a shelter for relations and acquaintances from

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[46] S. A. A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India,* Vol. I (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978), 272, 343-46. Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam: India, 1200-1800* (London: Hurst & Company, 2004), 92.

[47] Claudia Liebeskind has studied three Sufi shrines located in three different qasbahs of Awadh. They are: *Takiya Sharif* in the qasbah Kakori which is close to Lucknow; *Khanqah Karimiya* in the qasbah Salon of Rae Bareilly, and *Dargah Warith Ali Shah* of the qasbah Dewa in Bara Banki. She also demonstrates that it was a custom in Kakori, among both Hindu and Muslim service families, to send their sons to the shrine of *Takiya Sharif* to learn Arabic and Persian. It was only after attaining some proficiency there that they were sent to other educational institutions. See, Claudia Liebeskind, *Piety on its Knees: Three Sufi Traditions in South Asia in Modern Times* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 62.

[48] In her pioneering study of the powerful Sunni movement of North India, Usha Sanyal shows how the discipleship of Ahmad Riza to the Barkatiyya Sayyid Sufi Shah Aale Rasul (d. 1878) influenced the Barelwi Movement to incorporate Sufi practices within its Sunna content. It is also worth mentioning that the Barkatiyya Sayyids belonged to the qasbah Bilgram before moving to Mahrehra in the seventeenth century for reasons involving a "search for spiritual truth." Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and his Movement, 1870-1920* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 97-127.

[49] Death anniversary of a Sufi saint; a festive occasion observed annually in Sufi shrines since a Sufi's death is considered his or her final union with God.

nearby places.[50] Similarly, in the qasbah of Amroha, the dargah of Sharfuddin Shah Wilayat (d. 1381?) was a center of perpetual attraction for the people of this area. It is popularly believed that the enclosure of this dargah is infested with scorpions that do not bite unless taken outside the premises. This belief sounds like a medieval Sufi *karamat* (miracle) but has generated considerable interest and speculation for years. Housing dargahs, qasbahs were centers of Sufi piety and knowledge and added to the general intellectual environment of the locality. The structure of dargahs accommodated a rich library of Islamic literature, discourses on virtue, counseling to followers by the sitting inheritor of the dargah (*sajjada nashin*), and an annual display of the writings and sayings (*malfuzat*) of the main medieval Sufi pir at the time of the 'urs – a practice that continues to this day.[51] Current practices, however, lack the intellectual rigor and commitment of yesteryear that we have found in our study.

What made qasbahs socially important, especially in the context of the present study? Defining qasbahs as a "town dominated by Muslim families," Barbara Metcalf in her pioneering work on a *madrasa* (religious seminary) at Deoband in North India illustrates how qasbahs or "rural towns" of the upper Doab were inhabited by a number of important Muslim families. She argues that "for the Mughals the qasbahs had been centers of imperial influence where leading families had settled as courtiers, religious leaders, and zamindars." [52] In the context of her own work on the Deoband madrasa, she later shows how the "three men" who played a considerable role in the reformist movement and founding of the academy at Deoband, i.e., Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833-1877), Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1829-1905), and Imdadullah (1817-1899), were all natives of the qasbahs of the upper Doab.[53] In his history of another prominent madrasa named Firangi Mahal at Lucknow, Francis Robinson shows the intricate and natural links between the worlds of this famous

[50] Hameeda Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran: Yadein* (New Delhi, Har-Anand Publication, 1995), 30.
[51] This information is based on an Interview with Shah Husain Ahmad of Rudauli & the current *sajjada nashin* of Khanqah Niyaziya, Bareilly, June, 2004.
[52] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 365.
[53] Ibid., 75-76.

institution and several of the qasbahs in the hinterland. Robinson further shows how qasbahs sent a number of students to institutions such as Firangi Mahal. He illustrates this by discussing how qasbah residents typically "with a foot perhaps in landholding or perhaps in government service" were "concerned to maintain the highest standards of Muslim culture and Islamic behavior and were able down the ages to make the names of their birthplaces, Mohan, Bilgram, Thana Bhawan, and so on, resound with Indo-Muslim acheievements."[54]

Such was the importance of the qasbahs that they provided not only religious leaders but also leaders who retained their relevance in the face of the new English education and "modern" professions. David Lelyveld's extensive study of the Aligarh movement, which advocated modern English education among Muslims, points to areas "distinctly rural, old fortresses now torn down or small market centers" as the home of 54 percent of the students registered at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College between the years 1875 and 1895.[55] Furthermore, Barbara Metcalf's study of the 'ulama of Deoband emphasizes the significance of qasbahs. She explains how, after the Revolt of 1857, the 'ulama left Delhi in favor of the qasbahs in which they had their roots. These qasbahs were less affected by the British presence and, as a result, became centers for preserving Muslim culture and religious life. Her argument leads us to realize how Deoband became one such qasbah, where the 'ulama took on the task of establishing educational institutions and teaching and guiding Muslims of all backgrounds and classes.[56] An affirmation of this argument can be seen in Bayly's work, which states that "qasbah societies played a key role in transmitting Islamic learning and providing a local Muslim leadership."[57] It is thus quite clear that qasbahs served as recruitment centers for pupils of both modern institutions and madrasas. Qasbahs, thus, seem to have been bulwarks of Islamic religious and cultural life, as well as centers of modernization among Muslims. They allowed for a space where

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[54] Francis Robinson, *The Farangi Mahall*, 5, 183.
[55] David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 181.
[56] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 85-86.
[57] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 190.

modern education could flourish side by side with traditional Islamic education in a rather interactive way, a point we shall discuss in Chapter Four.

An examination of tazkirah literature highlights the prominence of qasbahs in terms of intellectuals. This genre of literature consists of biographical sketches of individuals who mattered within both local and national Muslim society.[58] A close reading of general and region-specific tazkirahs suggests that the majority of honored individuals in these writings came from qasbah backgrounds. These tazkirahs include the surnames Bilgrami, Amrohvi, Panipati, Badayuni, Rudaulvi, Thanvi, Nanautavi, and Panipati, which are derived from their home qasbahs. Similarly, numerous scholars included in tazkirahs are poets or professionals who made it big in cities like Delhi and Lucknow as migrants from qasbahs. For instance, Ghulam Hamdani Mushafi (1750-1824), an Urdu writer of extraordinary fluency, came from Amroha and went to live in Delhi as a young man.[59] The influence of qasbati upbringing extended far beyond placing the names of one's qasbahs next to one's own name. Former qasbati residents never tired of writing "historical and famous incidents" of their qasbahs.[60] Writers who were brought up in qasbahs produced a range of nostalgic literature which affirmed a sense of superiority of qasbahs over villages,

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[58] *Tazkirahs* form a distinct genre of literature of Indo-Muslim society beginning in the late medieval times. Appearing first in Persian and then in Urdu in vast numbers, they can be seen as biographical anthologies. However, my own translation of the term is "mentionables" i.e., a piece of literature that records details of those individuals considered worthy of being mentioned by the author. In Urdu, they are one of the most potent sources of information on individuals such as those classified as Sufis, ulama, poets, writers, or a group of such combinations belonging to a particular region, sect, Sufi order etc. Depending on the tazkirah writer, the size of descriptions of an individual may vary from a few lines to several pages. What they include, in general, is the individual's place and date of birth and death, educational background, lineage and upbringing, as well as sample works or contributions. Examples of a general tazkirah would include Rahman Ali's *Tazkirah-e-ulama-e-Hind* (1961) detailing men of religious learning from across India, whereas a tazkirah could also be as specific as Maulvi Syed Manzar Ali Ashhar's *Manzar al-Kiraam: Hyderabad Deccan ke Mashahir ka Tazkirah* (1926) focusing solely on the people from Hyderabad. For an informative discussion on the genre of tazkirahs, see, Frances W. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Poetry and its Critics* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 63-76.
[59] Grahame Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature* (Lahore: Al-Biruni, 1977 reprint; first published Calcutta, 1932), 53.
[60] Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi, *Apni Yadein: Rudauli ki Batein* (Rudauli: Azmi Publishers, 1977).

towns and cities. Hameeda Salim, who spent her childhood in the qasbah of Rudauli, writes:

> Qasbati culture has its own unique color. Its shape and color acquires a special character because of the mingling of the cultures of town and village. The culture of town and village, their lifestyle, thoughts and manners seem very distinct from each other. The culture of qasbah is different from either of them…. The world of village is limited but free from suffocation and pressure. In the life of cities, you see an exhibition and glitter of wealth generated by a life controlled by machines.[61]

In her fictionalized historical novel, *Kar-e-Jahan Daraz Hai,* renowned Urdu writer Qurratulain Hyder argues that the qasbahs of the provinces of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in North India have been ignored when compared to cities, particularly with regard to their contribution to Urdu language and literature. She further adds that qasbahs have been "centers of education and literature (*ilm-o-adab*)."[62] This point reinforces the existence of a literary tradition in qasbahs. But more than that, it is indicative of the fostering of education and the production of literature that defined qasbahs as a space transcending their geographical space. First, as centers of education, qasbahs served as a nursery to many intellectuals. Traditionally, children began their education with local teachers and religious leaders, both men and women. Much of this early education involved instilling linguistic abilities by training them in Persian and Arabic. Once they attained some level of proficiency, the children would learn specialized skills preferably under renowned scholars within the qasbah, or they would seek an outside teacher if needed. Maulvi Daad Ali Abbasi (1824-1895) of Amroha learned medicine from Hakim Kifayatullah Khan Siddiqui Amrohvi and religious sciences from Maulvi Ghulam Nabi Rampuri.[63] Such young students could also opt to go to institutions of learning located in other qasbahs and cities such as Darul 'Uloom in Deoband or Nadwat-ul-'Ulama and Firangi Mahal in Lucknow.

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[61] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 17.
[62] Qurratulain Hyder, *Kar-e-Jahan Daraz Hai*, Vol. I (Delhi: Educational Publishing House, 2003), 12.
[63] Misbah Ahmad Siddiqui, *Shu'ara-e-Amroha* (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2004), 81.

With the introduction of English education among Muslims towards the end of the nineteenth century, the younger generation had yet another option: attending modern colleges, particularly the one at Aligarh. Muhammad Dawood Abbasi (1863-1900), after receiving lessons in Arabic and Persian at Amroha went to the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College (MAO) at Aligarh and earned a bachelors degree at the age of twenty four.[64] It is noteworthy that the surplus of scholars living in qasbahs allowed the qasbahs to provide not only foundational education but also the opportunity for specialized education. Qasbati Muslims were among the first to both send their children to colleges and to continue the madrasa education. This practice exemplifies how the Muslims of colonial India adopted Western education while maintaining their traditional educational institutions. Modernity, for qasbati Muslims, was a way that they chose to follow by refusing to view the modern in a contrasting relationship with the traditional. This will be explained in detail later in a section on madrasa curricula. Moreover, the fact that these qasbati residents left home to attend external institutions of learning, such as the ones in Aligarh or Lucknow, displays a societal acknowledgement of the necessity of broadening ones' horizons in terms of knowledge. It would not be an exaggeration to say that such practices stayed true to the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, who issued the edict that, when it comes to learning, one should go as far as China.

INTELLECTUAL ENVIRONMENT AND LITERATURE PRODUCTION

As discussed above, the idea that the acquisition of knowledge by qasbati Muslims transcended geographical boundaries underscores the significance of qasbahs. The centrality of education in their lives was more than inheriting literary and cultural traditions, as reflected in their openness to new learning. Education in turn, encouraged an even greater production of literature. Qasbati Muslims expressed themselves by writing in different genres of literature. This defined the identity of a

[64] Ibid., 92-93.

qasbah in two ways, as recipients and producers of an active literary tradition. The latter was as vital as the former in defining a qasbah's intellectual character. This literary duality has not been previously articulated in scholarly work, although there does exist a tacit acknowledgement of it in some Urdu writings. While discussing the qasbah of Nathor in the Bijnor district of western Uttar Pradesh, Qurratulain Hyder reflects on the state of dilapidated houses on the brink of collapsing due to rain. She explains that in the basements of these ruins heaps of malfuzat (collection of sayings), histories, tazkirahs, and *shajrahs* (genealogies) were found.[65] She was completely amazed to learn how zealously and with what expertise these people recorded names and events related to their past and inheritance. This literary culture is what defined a qasbah and constituted its specific identity as a space brimming with literature, education, and other activities of intellectual import.

Regional histories indicate an abundance of sources that historians would use while writing the history of qasbahs. Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi, who published a comprehensive history of the qasbah Amroha in 1930, was overwhelmed by the sheer profusion of documents and writings that came from households within Amroha.[66] They contained all kinds of source material pertaining to various families and their histories, including individuals' papers, letters, certificates, honors, family genealogies, government ordinances, and land deeds. The mere preservation of such documents indicates that a keen sense of history prevailed among these qasbati people. Unlike many other societies within and outside Indian history, the drive to preserve and document history was not limited to only a few individuals. Rather, it extended across classes within the qasbah, as even the less resourceful invested themselves in such genealogical pursuits. There could be a myriad of explanations for this desire to document, but the most persuasive – and most striking – reason is one that relates to the issue of identity. A history of the early settlement of Muslims in these qasbahs refers to their connections to regions outside India. In the case of

[65] Hyder, *Kar-e-Jahan*, 10.
[66] Mahmood Ahmad Hashmi Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha* (New Delhi, 1930), 10.

Rohilkhand, or parts of modern western Uttar Pradesh, the gentry's origin was among the Pathans of Afghanistan who had gradually settled across Rohilkhand as they acquired ruling powers and land rights.[67] The Awadh qasbahs, on the other hand, had a significant number of Shia gentry. They settled under the patronage of Awadh Nawabs, who had succeeded as rulers of the region after breaking off from their Mughal masters.[68] Farhan Nizami's argument that the Muslim families living in these qasbahs belonged to a similar cultural and racial stock[69] may not apply in all cases, but it is quite obvious that the preservation of identity must have become an important component of life for both Shia and Sunni Muslims. This is demonstrated through a continuous and meticulous production of genealogies and family histories going back as far as the family of the Prophet Mohammad, although the veracity of these shajrahs or genealogies, in many cases, is highly contestable.

As a society, qasbati Muslims were tied up in a close-knit structure. They had a population certainly bigger than villages but still small enough to retain intimate social interactions, unlike cities. People living in qasbahs had many different markers of identity: their family, occupation, and *muhallah* or neighborhood. What one did, where one came from, what one's ancestors were known for, and which lane one lived in – all constituted a part of an individual's identity. It may seem as if individualism could have been lost to a host of collectivities, but an individual was still judged and valued on the basis of her or his achievements. One of the most creative avenues for articulating one's individuality was through the expression of knowledge, primarily in the form of writing. One's identity, thus, combined self-

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[67] For an analysis of the growth of Rohillas as a power, see, Nawab Sadaat Yaar Khan, *Tarikh-e-Rohilkhand (Urdu Tarjuma Tarikh-e-Gul-e-Rahmat)*. Trans by Shah Abdus Salam (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2002); Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 13-14. Mustafa Husain Nizami, *Nawwabin-e-Awadh aur British East India Company: Siyasi Rishte* (Bareilly: Raza Barqi Press, 1995), 113-119; Also, Mustafa Husain Nizami, *Tarikh-e-Rohilkhand: 1707 ta 1775* (Bareilly, 1986).
[68] Michael H. Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, The British, and the Mughals* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987), 45. Juan Ricardo Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 40-50.
[69] Farhan Ahmad Nizami, *Madrasahs, Scholars, & Saints: Muslim Response to the British Presence in Delhi and the Upper Doab, 1803-1857*. Unpublished D. Phil Thesis (Oxford: Oxford University, 1983), 39.

expression representing individuality and social cohesiveness representing the collectivity of the qasbah. For instance, an individual could self-identify as a writer but also as part of his or her family or qasbah. Such situations kept conceptions of belongingness flexible and dialogic in nature, an aspect of qasbahs that make them an attractive area of study. This also points to an interesting outcome of modernity, where qasbatis could adopt the idea of individualism coming from the West while retaining their sense of collective identity. Subsequently, qasbati Muslims can be seen producing various genres of literature. Through these, they addressed both individual and communitarian concerns regarding both the private and public spheres. Of the different genres of literature pursued and produced within qasbahs, history, poetry, autobiographies, biographies, letters, diaries, biographical anthologies, literary journals, memoirs, and genealogies were the most remarkable ones. A detailed discussion and close analysis of each of these genres reveals how different forms of literature characterized, defined, and reinforced the identity of qasbati Muslims and the qasbahs themselves.

SHAJRAHS / GENEALOGIES

The compilation of shajrahs or genealogies was a regular feature of qasbati living. Qasbati Muslims preserved ancestral information in the form of a family tree. The preservation of genealogies presents a very good example of the use of history as a dialogue between the past and the present. Family tree or genealogy, in qasbahs, was a way of both tracing family pedigrees and maintaining them. Qasbati Muslims preferred to preserve the uniqueness of their origin and, as such, made a deliberate attempt to marry only within the group with which they identified. When arranging a marriage, families would compare their genealogies in order to make sure they were not disturbing their *hasb-o-nasb* or lineage. Of particular importance was the hereditary status of being *sadaat* or descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.[70] The

[70] Interview with Syed Faizan Ali Naqvi, Amroha, March 2006.

pride associated with lineage continues even today in these regions, although most of the other legacies of qasbah life such as education, literacy, and sophistication are hardly visible. Such legacies probably started disappearing with the beginning of economic hardships[71] and received a final blow with the partition of India in 1947, which resulted in a huge migration from these qasbahs to different parts of Pakistan, particularly the city of Karachi. Returning to the genealogies, they still carry an importance in the lives of Muslims of qasbati backgrounds. There are opinions that boast of the preservation of lineage through constant efforts and continuous compilations of shajrahs.[72] Such an opinion counts here in that, association is what defines qasbati living. Constant references to one's lineage is a part of one's qasbati identity, not only in claiming a particular inheritance but also in making the qasbah a space defined by the people living in it.

One of the most exhaustive genealogies ever compiled, *Faizaan-e-Sadaat* constructs a genealogical encyclopedia of the qasbah of Amroha.[73] It is hard to come across a genealogy of comparable length and breadth, at least in the Indo-Muslim world. Extremely well-indexed and well-organized, it is a compilation of family trees starting with the family of Prophet Muhammad and covering almost every possible Syed Muslim living in Amroha up to 2000 AD. Not only that, it details who was married to whom and provides the names of people from different generations that ever lived in Amroha from the eleventh century until the lifetime of the compiler.

[71] On the decline of economic powers of Muslims of qasbah Amroha, Abbasi wrote in 1930 that "a large portion of the jagirs and property of the Muslims of Amroha have gone to waste because of their negligence, misgovernance, and extravagance." He is probably referring to the fact that a good number of prosperous qasbati Muslims indulged themselves in luxury and extravagance and neglected work and education. This, in turn, ousted them as masters of landed property and wealth. How could they facilitate literary work then? This induced an eventual loss of features that made qasbahs vibrant. This view is shared by a number of individuals living in these regions today. For example, Interview with Syed Tehseen Zaidi of Rudauli in June 2004. Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 341.

[72] This is not an opinion of the author of *Faizaan-e-Sadaat*, Syed Faizan Ali Naqvi. This book has several articles by various authors one of whom opines so while underlining the contribution of this book. Syed Faizan Ali Naqvi, *Faizaan-e-Sadaat: Silsila-e-Nisab Sadaat-e-Amroha* (Amroha: Syed Faizan Ali Naqvi, 1991), 8.

[73] It took more than 15 years for the author and several trips between India and Pakistan to collect, verify, and collate genealogies received from thousands of families. Interview with the author in March 2006, a few months before his death. See, Naqvi, *Faizaan-e-Sadaat*.

Women are placed next to their husbands' names, and are viewed as the base of a particular branch of a family with their sons and daughters following them in the succeeding generation.[74] It is also worth noting that marriages were decided by one's sadaat status, and, in accordance with this norm, marriages across qasbahs were not uncommon. Moreover, in *Faizaan-e-Sadaat*, residents of Amroha are divided according to the muhallah or the neighborhood they resided in. The most startling aspect of this particular collection is that these family trees include as many photographs of individuals as the author could collect. By carrying on the tradition of his qasbati forefathers, aggregating thousands of different family trees, and consulting almost all previous genealogical compilations on Amroha, the compiler, Syed Faizan Ali Naqvi, has constructed a remarkable historical document.

The tradition of documenting genealogies is so strong that it is found across all of the qasbahs in colonial North India. *Tawarikh-e-Wastiya* by Syed Rahim Bakhsh, *Tarikh-e-Asghari* by Syed Asghar Husain, *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha* by Syed Khesaal Ahmad Naqvi, *Shajrah-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha* by Maulana Syed Basheer Husain Naqvi, *Kitab-e-Lajawaab* by Syed Asghar Nazar, *Tehqeeq-ul-Ansaab* by Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi, *Zikr-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha* by Syed Talmizuddin Naqvi, *Anwar-e-Qum* by Maulana Syed Saghir Husain, and *Nakhbat-ul-Tawarikh* (in Persian) by Syed Aale Hasan are only a few examples of the genealogies produced within Amroha about its residents. Likewise, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram* by Qazi Shariful Hasan Bilgrami and *Hayat-e-Shadan-e-Bilgrami* by Syed Asghar Ali Shadani are two examples of collections of genealogies on the Muslims of qasbah Bilgram. Although these books do a good job presenting family trees and listing different individuals, they do not come close to the comprehensive nature of *Faizaan-e-Sadaat* on Amroha. However, this entire genre of genealogies reflects the

[74] Faizan Ali's genealogies mention numerous women whose names appear along with their husbands, and as daughters of a particular person, alongside the names of that person's sons. In this regard, Faizan Ali has done a remarkable work. It should be noted that this is not a dominant trend among genealogy compilers in Indo-Muslim communities. Women rarely make it to genealogies in most cases. Naqvi, *Faizaan-e-Sadaat*.

uniqueness of the qasbati culture. It underscores what the qasbah meant to its inhabitants while at the same time emphasizing how important the inhabitants were themselves in the makeup of the qasbah. Additionally, the compilation of genealogies among qasbati Muslims as well as its perpetuation reinforces the idea that they were able to place themselves globally, not just locally, by celebrating their ancestral connections outside India. This ability has often been considered as an awareness imparted by modernity, but it was an old practice as well as a conscientious choice for the qasbati Muslims.

TARIKH / HISTORY

A keen sense of preserving history was present among qasbati Muslims not only through compiling genealogies but also, and more directly, through history-writing. The writing of regional histories was common to all qasbahs. Documenting local or regional histories was yet another way to solidify genealogical heredity. But more than that, it was a way of articulating the pride attached to these qasbahs and a way of maintaining of the socio-cultural life that distinguished qasbahs from their surrounding areas. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, we can find Persian histories of qasbahs like Bilgram and Kakori, which are described in the same format as the famous cities of Baghdad, Cairo, or Isfahan.[75] Later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, there are histories of different qasbahs written in Urdu. By this time, Persian for the most part had lost ground as a medium of writing. With the replacement of Persian by Urdu, the format of history-writing based on the ideals of Islamic cities also disappeared. Although references to the corporate Islamic world are still found in Urdu histories, they are by and large oriented more towards local society, culture, and people. For instance, while *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, written in 1930, discusses the invasions of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and the early years of Muslim rule in Amroha, it gives equal weight to discussions of Amroha under certain Hindu

[75] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 192.

rulers, the Rajputs, the Kayasthas, and the Nagas.[76] Moreover, even if this work deals with the Muslims of Amroha, it also dedicates a complete section to the Hindu inhabitants of Amroha. And, while it studies Muslims of Arab lineage, it does not leave out the Indian converts to Islam.[77] On similar lines, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, presents a one-thousand-year history of Bilgram in the same format as *Tarikh-e-Amroha*. In the first few pages it discusses the advent of Islam in Bilgram through a campaign led by Mahmud Ghazni, but this account does not go beyond a mere mention of the incident. Rather, in his references to Islam, the author's focus seems to be on the Sheikhs and Sufis who settled in Bilgram beginning in the eleventh century.[78]

It is interesting to note how qasbati historical literature in India changed over time. A lot of features which first began in Persian and Arabic historical writings from the eleventh century can be found in nineteenth- and even twentieth-century qasbati histories in India. Chronicles of history by Persian writers such as Nasr-i Khusraw (1004-1077) and writings in Arabic by traveler Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217) and historian Taqi al-Din Ahmad al-Maqrizi (1364-1442)[79] all seem to have impacted the way qasbati histories have been written. As previously mentioned, early qasbati histories were based mainly on the ideals of describing certain prominent Islamic cities. Most of the Egyptian, Iraqi, Turkish, and Iranian cities such as Istanbul, Baghdad, Isfahan, Bukhara, Damascus, Cairo, and Nishapur have been historically viewed as cities composed of several units.[80] A planned division of the city into different parts and the existence of a *Jami* mosque for Friday congregational prayers

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[76] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 5-15.
[77] Ibid., 152-169, 214-220.
[78] Qazi Shariful Hasan Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram* (Aligarh: Muslim University Gazette, 1958).
[79] Nasir-i Khusraw's *Safarnameh*, Ibn Jubayr's travelogues, and al-Maqrizi's voluminous *Khitaat*, a remarkable work of history and topography, all describe the city of Cairo through different centuries. By and large, Cairo is shown as a city having different parts and features: a walled city, a citadel, different quarters, a separate commercial zone, etc. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 33.
[80] Ira M. Lapidus, "Muslim Cities and Islamic Societies." In Ira M. Lapidus, ed., *Middle Eastern Cities* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 61-64.

has been referred to as a regular feature of most Middle Eastern cities.[81] Certain writings add that, in addition to residential quarters, a city center, a judicial institution, a community organization, and a public and a private sector characterized cities such as Baghdad, Algiers, Tunis, Aleppo, Mosul, Damascus, and Cairo during the Ottoman era (the sixteenth through the eighteenth century).[82]

Likewise, histories of qasbahs in India followed a format that viewed them as a space composed of different units, although not fortified or segmented by walls as in the examples of Arabic cities. One of the most apparent features of such compartmentalization was that different muhallahs or residential quarters existed in qasbahs, a fact that is mentioned, though not emphasized, in all qasbati histories. However, one cannot transpose all the features of a Middle Eastern city onto a South Asian qasbah for at least two obvious reasons. First, in addition to being distant geographically from the Middle East, qasbahs were not exactly cities. Second, qasbahs had their own cultural locations and local history that seem to have influenced Urdu historical writings. The reason why the local influence is seen more in Urdu and not earlier Persian histories can be ascribed to the process of localization. Early qasbati historians had less local experience and more Perso-Arabic historical precedence to draw from. By the time Urdu replaced Persian in the literary domain, Urdu writers found themselves more rooted to local society than to a culture far away. For instance, Urdu qasbati histories do not dwell upon the morphology of bazaars as a theme. The theme of the bazaar was something particular to the historical accounts of Middle Eastern cities because they ran through the central part of a city.[83] In South Asian qasbahs, this was not the case. Such findings defy sweeping generalizations

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[81] Ibid., 69-73.

[82] André Raymond, *The Great Arab Cities in the 16th-18th Centuries: An Introduction* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1984), 9-19.

[83] In an Iranian context, such bazaars called *bazaar-i-buzurg* usually began at the major *maydan* (square) of the city and often advanced through one or more of the most important cultural centres such as the mosque, *karvansarays* (house of the caravan) etc. Masoud Kheirabadi, *Iranian Cities: Formation and Development* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 49-58. In the case of Arab cities, they are referred to as *aswaq* (markets, pl. of *suq*). André Raymond, *The Great Arab*, 35-36.

about the structure of Islamic towns and cities.[84] Urdu histories preferred to deliberate upon themes of ancient history, different social groups, local administration, literature, and transcultural encounters, including the encounter with the British. By the late nineteenth century, qasbati literature was also increasingly engaged in examining the local in light of the new ideas, concepts, and perceptions that they learned through their contact with the British.

While the histories of qasbahs retained some features of the Arabic and Persian formats of history-writing, they also adapted to local circumstances. Examples of qasbati histories Islamic in spirit yet accommodative of local cultures go beyond the previously discussed histories of Amroha and Bilgram. Published in 1925, *Tarikh-e-Dariyabad*, details the qasbah of Dariyabad in Awadh and is a fascinating example of an Urdu inclusivist history. Written by Munshi Braj Bhukhan Lal Muhibb, a disciple of Nazar Lakhnawi, *Tarikh-e-Dariyabad* has two distinct sections: one dealing with Sanskritist pundits and the other discussing Islamic scholars who lived in qasbah Dariyabad.[85] That an established Urdu publisher published this historical work speaks to its wide recognition within the world of Urdu readers and writers. Moreover, despite beginning with separate sections on Hindu and Muslim scholars, *Tarikh-e-Dariyabad* does not continuously segregate these discussions; rather, references to both sets of scholars are interspersed throughout the work indicating a coming together of the two literary cultures. Although this sort of historical undertaking is not a common feature within Urdu writings, it does reinforce the idea that local histories displayed connectedness to both local societies and the larger Islamic world. *Tarikh-e-Dariyabad* is an example of Hindu authorship of the history of a region dominated by Muslims. While Muslim Urdu writers started incorporating the local in their writings, Hindu Urdu writers such as Munshi Braj Bhukhan Lal attempted to equate Sanskritistic scholarship of the qasbah to its Islamic

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[84] G. E. von Grunebaum, *Islam: Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1969 reprint), 146.
[85] Munshi Braj Bhukhan Lal Muhibb, *Tarikh-e-Dariyabad* (Lucknow: Naami Press, 1925).

counterpart. We shall further analyze aspects of qasbati Hindu-Muslim relationships in Chapter Five.

Khairabad: Ek Jhalak is a history of the qasbah Khairabad of Awadh. This work situates the qasbah in its own history by analyzing how this qasbah attained significance within Awadh[86] and the Mughal Empire, but it neglects to link the qasbah with the Islamic world beyond India. Similarly, Nizami Badayuni (1872-1948) not only attributes the history of Badayun to Muslim rule but also emphatically links it to the region's grandeur during the time of the mythic Hindu ruler Bharat. These connections were influenced by Indic traditions which reproduced legends using oral sources in contrast to the chronicle style of history-writing in Persian and Arabic. Such influence may have come from the writings of people like Raja Shiva Prasad whose three-volume history of India (*Itihas timirnasak*) appeared in 1864. Celebrating the ancient "Hindu" age and the "Vedic civilization," this first work of history in Hindi was subsequently translated into Urdu and other regional languages.[87] In addition to discussing Bharat, Badayuni also discusses various mosques, Sufi mausoleums, and Hindu temples.[88] Thus, as we move through the nineteenth century towards the early twentieth century, the shift in qasbati historical-writing from Persian to Urdu marks a shift in format and not just linguistics. This shift reflects a growing rootedness in local society and an emerging identification with a particular qasbah's own living history, as removed from the eighteenth-century format of association with major Islamic centers around the globe. This growing emphasis upon local content is a remarkable phenomenon and can be seen as a major impulse for historians' desire to write histories of qasbahs.

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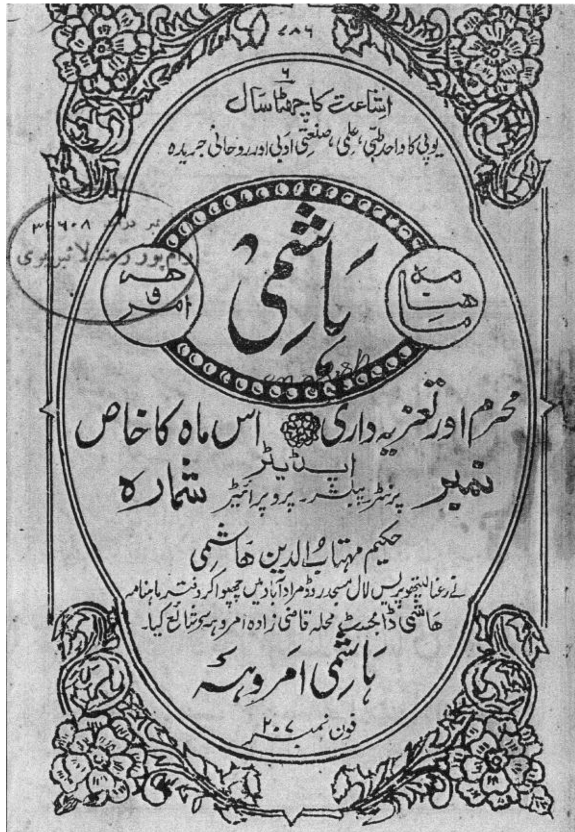
[86] Najmul Hasan Rizvi Khairabadi, *Khairabad ki ek Jhalak* (Sitapur: Municipal Board Khairabad, 1968), 8-16.
[87] Manu Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 172-82
[88] Nizami Badayuni, *Badayun: Qadim wa Jadid – Yani Badayun ki Mukhtasar Tarikh aur Uski Nayi aur Purani Imaraat wa Mazaraat ka Tazkirah* (Badayun: Nizami Press, 1920), Preface, 20-28.



اشاعت کا چھٹا سال

یوپی کا واحد طبی، علمی، صنعتی ادبی اور روحانی جریدہ

ماہنامہ

ہاشمی

امروہہ

محرم اور تعزیہ داری اس ماہ کا خاص نمبر شمارہ

ایڈیٹر

پرنٹر پبلشر۔ پروپرائٹر

حکیم مہتاب الدین ہاشمی

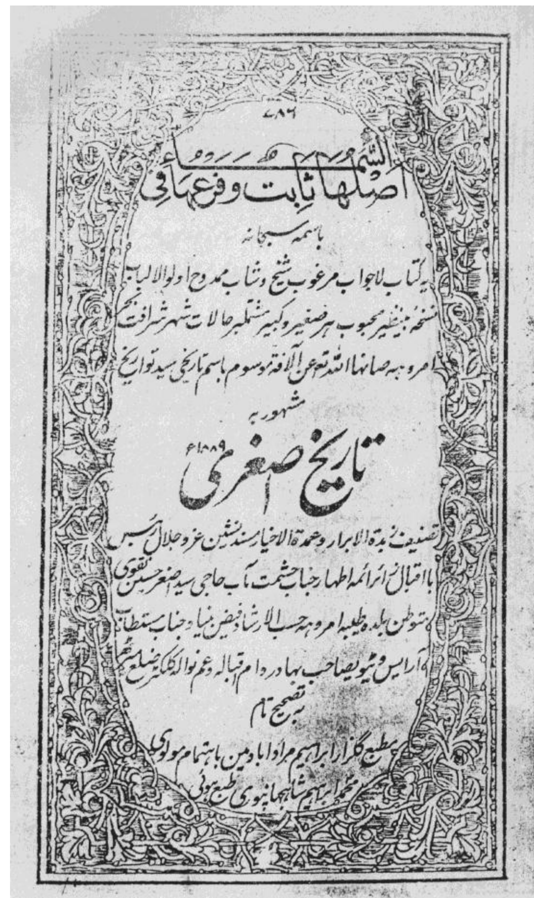
نے رعنا لیتھو پریس لال مسجد روڈ مراد آباد میں چھپوا کر دفتر ماہنامہ

ہاشمی ڈائجسٹ محلہ قاضی زادہ امروہہ سے شائع کیا۔

ہاشمی امروہہ

فون نمبر ۲۰۷

Hashmi Amroha (monthly)



اصلها ثابت و فرعها فی السماء

باسمہ سبحانہ

یہ کتاب لاجواب مرغوب شیخ و شاب ممدوح اولوالالباب

نسخہ بےنظیر محبوب ہر صغیر و کبیر مشتمل بر حالات شہر شرافت بحر

امروہہ صانہا اللہ تعالیٰ عن الآفۃ موسوم باسم تاریخی سید التواریخ

مشہور بہ

تاریخ اصغری ۱۸۸۹ء

بہ تصحیح تام

Tarikh-e-Asghari by Syed Asghar Husain Naqvi (1889)

Illustration 1: A periodical and a book from Amroha

The reason why qasbati Muslims felt an urge to leave their recorded history behind has a lot to do with their sense of association with and pride for their qasbahs, and a subsequent desire to produce a better, more satisfying history. In his history of the qasbah Kakori, Qazi Khadim Hasan Alvi has the following to say:

> Once upon a time the qasbah of Kakori was a mine of education, learning, and accomplishments where numerous poets, writers, and compilers were born. But it is an irony that no one paid attention towards writing the history of one's own qasbah. The head *qazi* (judge), Munshi Faiz Baksh, Qazi Ali Khan, and last of all, Maulvi Mumtaz Uddin have described the conditions of population and settlement of the qasbah to some extent in their *tazkirahs* and genealogies. But even these writings are either too cursory or ignorant of all other historical incidents except for a few family traditions that their elders thought as attributes of their ancestors as the conquerors and founders of the qasbah.[89]

Another statement from Muhibb, an Urdu historian of a qasbah reinforces the idea that pride was a major driving force behind history-writing:

> There is neither intellectual capability nor educational ability in this humble writer. But the excitement of *watan-parasti* [adoration of one's homeland] and the push given by the venerated guide Nazar Lakhnawi that have forced [me] to pen down a few pages and name the book *Tarikh-e-Dariyabad* in the simplest of words.[90]

The recording of history, thus, was an exercise for qasbah-dwellers to contribute to their *watan*, with the added goal of creating a history better than all those previously written. A good example of the claim to have written better history is found in the review of historical works provided by Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi, the writer of the 1930 history of Amroha. In this review, he mentions one of the oldest historical work on Amroha, *Aaina-e-Abbasi* (1878), which was written by Maulvi Muhibb Ali Khan, as a brief survey, probably no more than a *risala* (a short treatise), of the sadaat and

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[89] Qazi Khadim Hasan Alvi, *Tarikh-e-Qasbah Kakori* (Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, 1925), 2.

[90] Muhibb, *Tarikh-e-Dariyabad*, 1.

ashraf (noble) families of Amroha. Furthermore, the author continues that in 1880, a Persian work called *Nukhbat-ul-Tawarikh* was written by Syed Aale Hasan Bakshi. While this book contains ample information about the families of Amroha, not a single word is written on the historical happenings of Amroha. Similarly, although *Tarikh-e-Asghari* (1889) by Syed Asghar Husain Naqvi notes a few historical events, its sources are non-verifiable. Moreover, the book *Tarikh-e-Wastiya*, which came out right before Abbasi's *Tarikh-e-Amroha* (1930), is based mostly on English sources and is about only a few families of Amroha.[91] Flaws in earlier works, however, did not mean that they are not useful for historical purposes. In fact, new historical works are always based upon the foundations of the preceding ones. Nizami Badayuni, the author of the 1920 history of qasbah Badayun, highlights the underlying significance of earlier writings on Badayun. At the same time, he does not fail to recognize that "changes have occurred in Badayun in due process," and he points out that he "has taken the help of several histories and books, and has used local newspaper columns by prominent people of Badayun for gathering information on the last fifteen years."[92]

Works on Amroha and Bilgram definitely include claims of superiority over the works of previous writers, but simultaneously show a chronological evolution towards producing a more comprehensive piece of history. An analogous assertion can be found in Sharif-ul-Hasan Bilgrami's history of Bilgram. In the preface to his book, he elaborately details how he invested a lot of time and energy towards producing a history of Bilgram that could incorporate multiple versions of a singular incident. Before writing this work, he used an innovative method in order to ensure that it would be comprehensive. He notified the people in Bilgram that they were welcome to submit any historical records in their possession. Shariful Hasan Bilgrami did not want to miss out on any possible account of an event and get labeled as a

[91] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 6-7
[92] Badayuni, *Badayun*, Preface.

biased historian.[93] This kind of history-writing may have promoted a dialogic culture among some qasbati Muslims or at least an increased awareness among others of their ties to their watan. Moreover, the very emphasis on revising history and particularly the notion that more current works were improvements over the previous ones is particularly fascinating. This kind of approach most certainly added to the knowledge base and education of qasbati Muslims, a fact that allowed an interactive pattern in their encounter with modernity.

BIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS

As a part of their contribution to literature, qasbati Muslims were quite active in documenting their own life experiences and producing biographies of others. Penning autobiographies and memoirs, for some, was probably a way of declaring one's prominence or influence within the locality or, for others, a matter of satisfying a literary urge. An autobiography or memoir would enhance the persona of the author in two ways: first, by placing the author as a subject of study in general, and second, by making the author's life a possible avenue for emulation by qasbah-dwellers and people outside. Similarly, the writing of biographies carried two distinct and positive implications for both the subject and the biographer: first, once written, the subjects of biographies became a source of information and, second, the biographer would thus establish himself or herself as a writer. In total, this particular genre extended to qasbati Muslims an opportunity to indulge in a culture of dialogue with the outside world.

Biographies or autobiographies invoked a great deal of discussion within qasbahs by setting off debates regarding their particularities. A memoir-cum-history of the qasbah of Rudauli demonstrates this when Syed Muhammad Ali Zaidi notes: "I have tried my level best to write about incidents only after proper investigation." He continues, "I know that on the public release of this book, there will be a shower of

[93] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 15-17

objections pouring in from all directions."[94] This clearly suggests the precautions a writer had to undertake in their writings when addressing issues which involved other people. For example, in his much talked about autobiography, Hosh Bilgrami makes the point that writers need to be responsible figures: "Only s/he can be called a true writer who reveals an incident without any falsification or fabrication, an incident needs to be treated as an incident, neither it be made poetic nor it be turned into a fable, nor it be set with the title of being "story-free," just sketch a live picture of it on paper the way eyes have seen it and the way minds have noted it…."[95]

Although trying to prove the authenticity of his own work, Hosh Bilgrami does indicate the kind of discussions that went around in the qasbati circles regarding biographies or personal observations. For Muslims, the writing of biographical works was a part of their Islamic literary tradition. Compiling of biographical dictionaries in most languages concerning Islam and Muslims has for a long time been an unbroken practice within the Islamic world. Beginning with biographies of the Prophet, we find various exceptional biographies on historical figures within Islamic traditions.[96] Ibn Ishaq (d.767), one of the earliest historians of Islam, is best known for his *Sirat Rasul Allah*, a biography of the Prophet Muhammad.[97] Biographical writings within Islam, including those from qasbahs, emerged out of the *Sirat* tradition. Urdu literature is also full of biographies and biographical dictionaries.

There was also a growth in the writing of autobiographies in Urdu. Although written in Persian, *Zikr-i-Mir*, the autobiography of the renowned Urdu poet Mir Taqi

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[94] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 10

[95] Hosh Bilgrami, *Mushahedat* (Hyderabad: Osmania University Press, 1950), 7.

[96] Numerous biographical works on Islamic historical figures have helped us understand the history of early Islam. What is interesting is that early Muslim writers wrote biographies with different perspectives and selective retelling of episodes from an individual's life. This warns us to be precautious in using biographies as a source for constructing history. Aisha bint Abi Bakr, the third and favorite wife of the Prophet Muhammad, is one such figure who has been cast differently by different biographers. For a detailed analysis on her life and biographies, see D. A. Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of Aisha bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

[97] R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 78.

Mir (1723-1810), was probably a prototype of autobiographical writing in Urdu.[98] Writing autobiographies has always been considered a job of great responsibility, as reflected in the abovementioned statement by Hosh Bilgrami. One needs to view Urdu autobiographies in combination with the British practice of diary and biography-writing. By the late nineteenth century, many educated Muslims received an English education and were aware of English literary conventions. Such individuals mirrored their presentation on English literary practices, even when writing in Urdu. For instance, Syed Muhammad Ali Zaidi's Urdu account of the qasbah of Rudauli, which also combines many short biographies, reads in many ways like a government gazetteer. Like a gazetteer, it has sections such as geography, climate, topography, etc, apart from topics commonly found in Islamic historical literature. This exemplifies how the qasbati Muslims opted to use their new learning in combination with their traditional style of writing and, thus, underscores the interactive nature of qasbati modernity. This point is further reinforced by qasbati Muslims such as Kazim Ali Khan of Amroha who adopted the practice of diary-writing on an everyday basis. While he remained grounded to Islamic practices and held leadership of Muslim religious organizations, writing diaries was a practice he picked up from the British culture.

In the period under study, there seems to be a trend among biographers to write about individuals who were known or related to the principal actor. Hamid Ali Khan of Amroha wrote an excellent biography of Syed Karamat Husain (1854-1917), an Allahabad High Court judge, and an ardent advocate of Muslim women's education in colonial India.[99] Hamid Ali Khan himself was quite a dignified personality both because of his position within the qasbah gentry and because of his successful career as an educated, government professional. Syed Karamat Husain's

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[98] C. M. Naim, trans., *Zikr-i-Mir: The Autobiography of the Eighteenth Century Mughal Poet: Mir Muhammad Taqi Mir, 1723-1810* (New Delhi & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[99] Gail Minault, "Sayyid Karamat Husain and Muslim Women's Education" in Violette Graff, ed. *Lucknow: Memories of City* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 155-164; Minault, *Secluded* Scholars, 216-228.

family held a revenue assignment in the qasbah of Kantor, located close to Lucknow in the Bara Banki district.[100] Thus, we see how different individuals across qasbahs interacted with each other by way of biographical writings. Hamid Ali Khan makes public his closeness to Karamat Husain when he writes: "I used to call him [Karamat Husain] Maulana, and he would address me as Hamid very lovingly. My late father Hakim Muhammad Amjad Ali Khan was the only other person to refer to me as Hamid. Alas! None who would call me Hamid is alive anymore."[101] An assertion of such closeness between the biographer and the subject must have stemmed from the author's desire to write about an individual whom he knew personally in order to produce a work both comprehensive in nature and acceptable to the person being studied.[102] For the biographer, the trend of writing about close relations probably also meant a clear perspective on the subject by ensuring greater and more direct access to the person's life. Hamid Ali Khan on his death-bed assigned the task of collating his memoirs, letters, poetry, and other documents related to his future biography to Maulana Safi Lakhnawi, his close friend. Safi Lakhnawi dispensed part of this work to Sheikh Mumtaz Husain Jaunpuri, another acquaintance of Hamid Ali Khan.[103] Thus, some qasbati Muslims worked in tandem with each other to bring about the biography of yet another qasbati Muslim. In other words, writing of this biography makes a striking example of the way qasbati Muslims swiftly dealt with individualism as well as collectivism. These are two ideas mostly seen as opposites representing the western and the non-western social values respectively. Qasbati Muslims dealt with such ideas in a relatively compatible manner. Moreover, while the biography had one single subject, they made the project a collaborative effort.

Although a direct personal relationship between the biographer and the subject may raise questions of objectivity, including the charge of romanticizing the subject,

[100] Ibid., 17.

[101] Hamid Ali Khan, *Hayat-e-Maulana Karamat Husain* (Lucknow: Al-Nazir Press, 1918), 3.

[102] In the biography discussed here, Karamat Husain applauded the work done by the author. Addressing Hamid Ali Khan, he wrote in a latter dated March 7, 1911: "I feel deeply grateful, you have done what I was fully convinced you would do." Quoted in Khan, *Hayat-e-Maulana*, 303.

[103] Maulana Safi Lakhnawi, *Yadgar-e-Hamid* (Lucknow: Nizami Press, 1936).

the historical value of these documents outweighs this concern. A biography, however eulogistic in nature, provides a window into a particular historical time. They also allow us to learn about individuals who are not the primary subject of the biography. A biographical description in a qasbati context meant a careful discussion on the subject's ancestors, tutors, contemporaries, various colleagues, and other people instrumental in the subject's upbringing and higher and specialized education. Historian-biographer Frank Vandiver rightly says that "good biographies deal with the ways people faced living – tell how they met problems, how they coped with big and little crises, how they loved, competed, did the things we all do daily…."[104] This is precisely why biographies are useful sources in our study. They detail personal histories while at the same time suggesting "the universal in a single human life."[105] Biographies of people who matter are in fact "reflections of the complexities of a particular age."[106] Because of the multifarious nature of biographies, they allow for interactions between several individuals and incidents. Therefore, the practice of writing biographies in qasbahs added yet another dialogic content to their intellectual life.

Similar to the works of history and genealogy, biographical works also testify to the strong sense of history nurtured by the qasbati Muslims. Hosh Bilgrami articulates why biographical descriptions stand apart from other literary genres:

> Stories of the ancestors are told to the descendants so as to counsel the latter. If it were not the purpose then why would the *Kalam Majid* [the Holy Quran] care for tales from olden times, why would we be told the stories of *Mahabharata*, why would Sri Krishnaji's martial embellishments be explained in the *Gita*, how could we learn about the lesson of parental obedience than from the life-in-exile of Ramchandraji in *Ramayana*. All these are cared for to awaken those who are ignorant.[107]

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[104] Quoted in Stephen B. Oates, "Biography as History," *The Twelfth Charles Edmondson Historical Lectures*, Baylor University (Waco, Texas: Markham Press Fund, 1991), 7

[105] Ibid., 7.

[106] Zafar Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami: Hayat aur Karnamey* (Calcutta: Calcutta Photo Process, 1976), 16.

[107] Bilgrami, *Mushahedat*, 5.

Hosh also adds that biographies keep memories alive for all times to come, unlike monuments that are created to keep a particular person's memories.[108] Probably, he is referring to the fact that biographies are more lasting than monuments as a source of history. The point here is not to magnify and exaggerate the meaning of certain individuals' lives and thereby enter the old, nineteenth-century debate generated by the "great men" theory of Thomas Carlyle. It is equally difficult to agree with one of the less noticed views of A. J. P. Taylor that "the history of modern Europe can be written in terms of three titans: Napoleon, Bismarck, and Lenin."[109] That will be giving too much weight to a handful of people in order to construct a vast history. But biographies do provide a glimpse into the past and are useful in conjunction with other historical sources. Biographies of qasbati Muslims, as reflective of the conditions of colonial India, are a useful source to understand qasbahs, qasbati life, and their modernity. Biographical essays, therefore, echo the contemporary social and political environment and are not only interesting but also an invaluable source of information.[110] In addition, our present concern is not to focus on a few great souls and omit other lesser ones as a way of approximating history; it is rather to understand biographies as a genre within a common shared space – the qasbah.

KHUTOOT / CORRESPONDENCE

Letter-writing, a dying practice today, was an integral part of literary expression among the educated Muslims and other communities in colonial India. Letter-writing provided writers an avenue for expression while at the same time connecting them to their peers. It was a means to facilitate conversational threads whereby they could choose to be informal in their expression. The famous poet Mirza Ghalib (1796-1869) set the trend for writing letters in an unconventionally informal spirit, and his contribution to the epistolary genre outweighs his significant

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[108] Syed Asghar Ali Shadani, *Hayat-e-Shadan Bilgrami* (Karachi: Zamin Art Press, 1986), 9.
[109] A. J. P. Taylor, *From Napoleon to Stalin* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1950), 74.
[110] Hasanuddin Ahmad, *Mehfil: Sawanihi Mazamin ka Majmua* (Hyderabad: Wila Academy, 1982), 8.

contributions to other fields of Indo-Persian and Urdu literature. Collections of letters are a valuable source of historical information in Urdu literature generally and qasbati literature specifically both in terms of their importance and quality.[111]

In qasbahs, there existed a very rich tradition of letter-writing. Begum Hima Akhlaq Husain (1907-2002), daughter of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi, compiled and edited her father's collection of letters. She says: "My own personal ambition behind getting these letters published is to save them from being lost and to hand them over to the literary world with the hope that researchers would find something or the other worthy. I think that the style of conversation is more prominent in these letters than the writing *per se*."[112] Most of these letters are addressed to Begum Hima herself. We also have a collection of letters from Viqar-ul-Mulk (1841-1917), a pillar of the Aligarh Movement from Amroha, which were addressed mostly to government officials, friends, and colleagues.[113] Moreover, personal letters and official correspondences compiled in Urdu demonstrate different aspects of individual priorities; while personal letters are informal, official letters tend to be formal, public, and impersonal. Taken together, they provide us information on various aspects of history. Referring to the letters of Viqar-ul-Mulk, historian Khaliq Ahmad Nizami states that although his collection of letters contains private correspondence, it has also preserved historical materials of significance.[114] A study of letters from different individuals, be they addressed to their colleagues, friends, relatives, or government officials – provides us with a better grasp of history.

In the qasbah setting, letters can be seen in two different lights. First, there are those which reflect on current local and extra-local debates and discussions. Second, there are those which are more personal in nature and scope. These can be easily

[111] Abdul Lateef Azmi, *Mashahir ke Khutoot aur Unke Mukhtasar Halaat* (New Delhi: Maktaba Jamia Limited, 1975), 8.
[112] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi, *Goya Dabistan Khul Gaya* (Lahore: Punjab Academy, 1956), 11.
[113] For instance, Mushtaq Ahmad, ed., *Khutoot Viqar-ul-Mulk* (Aligarh: Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1974).
[114] Ibid., 7.

classified according to their official content or informal tenor. For instance, the exchange of letters between Viqar-ul-Mulk and Shibli Numani (1857-1914) can be read in the context of two different institutions of significance, MAO College at Aligarh and Nadwat-ul-'Ulama at Lucknow representing a modern college and a madrasa, respectively.[115] On the other hand, browsing through some of the letters written by Viqar-ul-Mulk gives us a lot of information on Amroha including its general condition, educational state, and the climate of Shia-Sunni relations within the qasbah.[116]

There are numerous examples of letters that reveal an individual's opinions as well as inform us on the history of a particular age. The interactive nature of letters inherently provides for dialogic texts concerning ongoing issues, be they personal, political, educational, social, or cultural. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi's collection of letters is a fascinating glance into the history of the qasbah of Rudauli. Although written solely to close relations, particularly his children, these letters are a classic example of the epistolary genre and a repository of historical information. Introducing this collection of Muhammad Ali's letters, Maulana Salahuddin Ahmad (1902-64), a noted Urdu critic, writes:

> Those who have studied, after the letters of Ghalib, numerous collections of letters that came every now and then over the past three quarters of a century, will most likely share with me my opinion on seeing the following collection that it is adorned with the same qualities and features that make Ghalib's letters eternal, albeit in a fresh light. [It has] the same clarity, the same frankness, the same astonishment, the same precision, and top of all, the same sense of uniqueness and intoxicating way of address that is found in the addresses of sublime Urdu and prudent Hindi…. It will suffice to say regarding the literary qualities of the letters of Muhammad Ali that Chaudhary Sahib has an absolute authority on the subtleness and finesse of the language and its expression which is reflected in almost every letter of this collection

[115] Ibid., 133-35.
[116] Ibid., 87-116.

> and, in some of the letters, its miracle touches the core of one's heart and the reader's sight merges into that very elegance.[117]

Probably, no greater an honor can be bestowed on a particular piece of writing within the Urdu literary world than the honor of comparing it with letters written by Ghalib. While Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi's letters are definitely worthy of being compared to the nuanced letters of Ghalib, Rudaulvi's letters are more a classic example of letters that came out of a qasbati intellectual. Transgressing the confines of one single qasbah, person, or a particular theme, these letters broaden our understanding of both qasbati history and the larger Muslim society of the time. Writings such as these contribute to establish letter-writing as a literary genre of historical importance. Although not completely comparable to Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi's letters, there are many other examples of letters that have come down to us from the inhabitants of qasbahs. These letters cover a range of topics including qasbati belongingness, nostalgia, colonial ideas, Islamic cultural life, religiosity, land revenue system, and personal reflections on both Urdu and English literature.

Such letters form a valuable source from which to discern information on qasbahs, qasbati life, and individuals' opinions on different topics that concerned the society at a particular time. The qasbati Muslims took advantage of the postal system introduced and run by the British government, as evidenced by a speedy exchange of letters among them. Letters from qasbahs, most strikingly, highlight both the public as well as the private spheres of qasbati living. In the same letter, someone might address the need of uniting Shias and Sunnis and complain of a physical pain he or she was suffering from.[118] In short, letters provided individuals with an opportunity to express their personal feelings and opinions and to react to such expression on the part of others, a dialogic activity that further enriched qasbati literary culture.

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[117] Rudaulvi, *Goya Dabistan Khul Gaya*, 15-16.
[118] Ibid., 98.

RASA'IL / PERIODICALS

Qasbahs were a place of literary articulation and exchanges of ideas. Regional periodicals and newspapers, a number of which came from within the qasbahs, helped to make such exchange and articulation possible. Such journals were based either in one of the surrounding cities such as Delhi, Lucknow, Aligarh, Agra, and Moradabad or in one of the qasbahs within Awadh or Rohilkhand. A few examples of the periodicals that were based in qasbahs include *Shayar* (Amroha), *Nigaristan* (Rudauli), *Armaghan*, (Shahjahanpur), *Zara'at-o-Harfat* (Badayun), *Adab* (Pilibhit), *Haram* (Thana Bhawan), and *Shafia Warsi* (Dewa). Writers from different qasbahs also had the opportunity to reach out to a larger audience by contributing to journals based in other towns and cities. Such journals, with parenthetical reference to the region under study, include: *Sala-e-Aam* (Delhi), *Ismat* (Delhi), *Asr-e-Jadid* (Meerut), *Al-Nadwa* (Lucknow), *Zamana* (Kanpur), *Tehzeeb-ul-Akhlaq* (Aligarh), *Guldasta-e-Sukhan* (Agra), *Rahnuma-e-Taleem* (Delhi), *Al-Islam* (Allahabad), *Islamia Kalej Magazine* (Etawah), *Ghuncha* (Bijnor), *Nehal Sukhan* (Bareilly), *Ahsan* (Rampur), *Akhbar Scientific* (Aligarh), *Society* (Aligarh), *Aligarh Magazine* (Aligarh), *Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental Kalej Magazine* (Aligarh), *Awadh Panch* (Lucknow), *Tohfa-e-Ishaq* (Lucknow), *Payam-e-Yaar* (Lucknow), *Jalwa-e-Yaar* (Meerut), *Tehzeeb* (Hardoi), *Dabdaba-e-Sikandari* (Rampur), and *Ibrat* (Najibabad). Although this list is by no means exhaustive, it does include journals that appeared intermittently over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and that provided a wealth of opportunities for qasbati writers.

Importantly, these journals differed in terms of ideological leaning. For instance, whereas the abovementioned periodicals from Aligarh would accommodate modernist viewpoints and approaches, one such as *Al-Nadwa* would have room for the Islamic reformist ideas of Nadwat-ul-'Ulama.[119] Moreover, journals such as *Ismat*

[119] For details on the Islamic reformist ideas of Nadwat-ul-ulama, especially with reference to its 1890s criticism of Firangi Mahal's Dars-i-Nizamiyya curriculum that emphasized on logic and philosophy, see, Francis Robinson, *The Farangi Mahall*, 124, 152.

and *Haram* were specifically dedicated to women's issues. *Awaz-i-Niswan* (Delhi), *Harim* (Lucknow), *Niswani Duniya* (Delhi), *Ustani* (Delhi), and *Purdah Nashin* (Agra) also dealt with women.[120]

Urdu periodicals or journals proved to be vehicles of expression and the sharing of ideas. To the benefit of the qasbati Muslims, the role these periodicals played was twofold. First, they provided local writers with an opportunity to publish and interact academically within as well as outside their qasbahs. Second, such publications induced an interest in readership among the local inhabitants, particularly when their own people were writers. Thus, these journals promoted a literary taste and intellectual indulgence among qasbati Muslims. These periodicals covered an assortment of topics that broadened the readership's knowledge. Topics ranged from "religion and reason"[121] to "modern education and girls of India,"[122] to "our dress."[123] As modernity posed issues such as new Western dress, notions of reason and rationalism, and women's education, these periodicals served as a forum to discuss them. This way, both the writers and the readers could connect themselves, within, across, and outside qasbahs.

Taking advantage of the new print technology brought by the British, periodicals were a useful means of promoting cultural dialogue. Rapid changes owing to British policies required these periodicals to discuss themes related - but not limited to - Islamic religious practices, modern education, women's education, dress code, mysticism and philosophy, politics, western science, and rationality. Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar (1878-1931) argues that unlike English language publications in India, Urdu periodicals were intended not only to educate people but also to

[120] For further details on journals and the role the periodical press played in the education of Muslim women in British India, see, Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, esp. 105-57. Also, Gail Minault, "Urdu Women's Magazines in the Early Twentieth Century." *Manushi* 48 (1988): 2-9.
[121] *Al-Nadwa* 7, 6 (June 1910): 3-18.
[122] *Ismat* 36, 1 (January 1926): 13-19.
[123] *Zamana* 6, 3 (March 1906): 185.

provide an avenue for representation.[124] Additionally, Urdu publications, whether from surrounding towns and cities or qasbahs, accommodated writers from anywhere. Thus, they provided a forum for the writers to interact. A journal from Aligarh or Lucknow was as accessible to a Bilgrami or Amrohvi as it was to an Alig or a Lakhnawi. *Armaghan*, an Urdu poetry journal based in Shahjahanpur, consisted mainly of contributions from outside its qasbah. The publication of a periodical or journal by a particular qasbah allowed its literary personalities to bring themselves and other qasbati writers face to face with the larger Urdu literary world. It also allowed them to utilize the space of a qasbah as a means of articulation and nourishment of Urdu writings. This kind of intellectual pursuit definitely added to the overall intellectual environment of qasbahs.

Moreover, the presence of different periodicals with differences in their contents and approaches contributed towards the formation of an intellectual mosaic. *Sala-i-Aam* of Delhi states that it was "a high class monthly magazine devoted to the cause of Urdu literature, the preservation of the old Indian especially Mohammadan culture and refinement, and the assimilation of the best features of the new civilization."[125] Another monthly magazine *Ismat* dedicated its existence to "sharif Indian wives" for whom it presented "high-minded educational and literary essays, and a treasure of useful knowledge."[126] As discussed above, ideological leanings also defined a journal's particular purpose or positioning. Writers were free to contribute to whichever journal suited their perspectives or interests, and similarly a particular journal could accommodate those writers who fit within its scope. Whatever the target group or purpose of a particular journal, it contributed towards initiating as well as sustaining a literary and educational environment within its qasbah. Moreover, the

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[124] This analysis is based on a statement made by Mohamed Ali, leader of the Khilafat Movement in India, with regard to his intention behind publishing an Urdu journal titled *Hamdard* despite having *The Comrade* in English already in the run. Mushirul Hasan, ed., *My Life: A Fragment – An Autobiographical Sketch of Maulana Mohamed Ali* (Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 97.
[125] *Sala-i-Aam* 1, 2 (January 1909).
[126] *Ismat* 1, 1 (June 1908). For a detailed analysis of the role, purposes, and contents of this magazine, see Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, 129-38.

publication itself was facilitated by the introduction of print technology, a feature of modernity that the Urdu press gladly embraced, as we shall discuss in Chapter Six.

SHA'IRI / POETRY

The study and writing of poetry was another key component of the qasbati intellectual life. In fact, a qasbah was often known by the names of its poets. The qasbah of Rudauli, for instance, was famous for producing some towering personalities in the field of Urdu poetry. Asrarul Haq 'Majaz' (1911-1955), Hakim Mirza Wasif, Muhammad Yusuf 'Asar' Rudaulvi (1852-1951), Jafar Mehdi 'Razm,' Waseem Ansari, Maulvi Syed Ali (1883-1925), and Maulvi Masoom Ali 'Bedil' (1914-) mark just a few examples. Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi writes that "the personality of Majaz made Rudauli famous in every part of the world, it was followed by Razm who earned tremendous popularity…."[127] Similarly, Maulana Taqi Shabbir, a resident of Rudauli wrote about Asar: "Rudauli is a small qasbah but it has the pride of being the land of poetry and literature. There is no dearth of talents as well. Among such talents and poets, Asar occupied a position of eminence."[128] Likewise, the qasbah of Amroha contributed hundreds of eminent poets to Persian, Arabic, and Urdu literature. Muhammad Zaman 'Zaman' Amrohvi (b. 1708), Ghulam Hamdani Mushafi (1750-1824), and Rais Amrohvi (1914-1988) are only a few examples of Amroha's collection of poets of high order.

Poets from various qasbahs not only earned fame but also contributed invaluably to the body of Urdu literature. This is as true for the period under study as for the preceding period of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. Sheikh Ghulam Hamdani Mushafi (1750-1824) of Amroha is known in Urdu literature for his ability to deal with difficult topics in a way that still interests the reader. His poetry

[127] Rudaulvi, *Goya Dabistan Khul Gaya*, 355.
[128] Ibid., 359-60.

contains extraordinary descriptions of love and beauty.[129] He wrote eight *diwans* (collections) in Urdu, in addition to his four diwans in Persian. Similarly, Majaz (1911-1955) of Rudauli has been recognized as a great progressive yet romantic Urdu poet. His poetry compilations "Aahang" and "Saaz-e-Nau" are best known as representative voices of progressive writing in Urdu literature. His advocacy of treating women with greater equality also reflected his progressive thinking.[130]

The multiplicity of such examples makes qasbahs a significant unit of study. In terms of Urdu poetry, qasbahs have made invaluable contribution. On many accounts, qasbati poets have been trendsetters. Their writings dealt with issues of contemporaneous social life and situations that arose in the face of modernity. The Progressive Urdu poets such as Majaz were attracted by aspects of modernity. Majaz's poem *Raat aur Rail* (The Night and the Train) is a testimony to this attraction to the train, a classic trope of modernity.[131] Such issues raised by poets reflect the ongoing deliberations and debates of the society.

The writings of poets definitely cultivated readerships but the oral transmission of poetry through *musha'irah* added a unique dimension by turning the reader into a more active participant. The public presentation of poetry in a musha'irah was different than public contributions to periodicals. Musha'irahs made poetry dialogic by invoking the participation of qasbati Muslims as listeners and thereby encouraging a culture of poetry among them. Although musha'irahs were also conducted in cities, they had a more intense impact in the close-knit structure of qasbahs. The qasbah of Rudauli demonstrates how observance of musha'irah was a part of everyday qasbati intellectual life. Commenting upon the culture of musha'irahs in Rudauli, Ali Muhammad Zaidi writes the following:

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[129] Shah Abdus Salam, trans, *Urdu Poetry: An Anthology upto 19th Century* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 2001), 164-65.
[130] See, Majaz's poem titled "Naujawaan Khaatun se." In Prakash Pandit, ed., *Majaz aur Uski Sha'iri* (Delhi: Star Publikeshanz, 1964), 85-86.
[131] Raza Mir and Ali Husain Mir, *Anthems of Resistance: A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2006), 86.

> Musha'irahs have been a regular feature of Rudauli. Collections of poetry were published. Leaders, landlords, and laymen – all expressed interest, and poets have emerged in all classes. Today, the young generation is pretty active, and the interest and enthusiasm of the youth has been an added advantage. Rather, it should be put this way, in present times our young generation has taken Rudauli high above of what it was in the world of poetry and literature. Musha'irahs are organized at an all-India level, and best of the poets in the nation come to participate….[132]

This description of the observation of musha'irah in Rudauli as a social event reveals a culture of poetry, the significance of poets, and an enthusiasm for the institution. Moreover, the participation of poets of national stature in musha'irahs indicates the national significance that a qasbah such as Rudauli enjoyed in terms of poetry. One factor that may have made such significance possible was that qasbahs were home to a number of nationally famous poets. This may have allowed qasbahs to bring their own sons back for the cultural event and to attract other poets of status to the musha'irah. Jaffar Malihabadi accentuates the same point while speaking of a musha'irah that was organized in 1934 in Malihabad, a qasbah close to Lucknow. Writing about the immense popularity of this musha'irah, he adds that Josh Malihabadi (1898-1982), a noted Urdu poet, had returned from Hyderabad where he was working.[133] The organization of musha'irahs attended by famous poets existed in many other qasbahs including Sandila and Mohan.[134]

The musha'irah played a significant role in the evolution of Urdu poetry, and was a popular medium of expression by poets.[135] It played an important role in the promotion of Urdu cultural tradition, was a form of literary self-expression, and provided people with an intellectually stimulating environment.[136] Regarding musha'irah or poetic symposium, Lelyveld rightly states that it was an occasion for

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[132] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 356.
[133] For a brief account on how exciting an event this was for the people of Malihabad, see, Ali Javad Zaidi, *Tarikh-e-Musha'irah* (New Delhi: Taqsimkar Shan-i-Hind Pablikeshanz, 1992), 146-47.
[134] Zaidi, *Tarikh-e-Musha'irah*, 147.
[135] Munibur Rahman, "The Mushairah," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 3 (1983): 75.
[136] Muhammad Husain Azad, *Aab-e-Hayat* (Lahore, Azad Book Depot, 1917).

men to exhibit their skill with words and was part of the verbal competition familiar to Urdu culture.[137]

No doubt, the performance of poetry on stage was also socially important. For instance, *tarannum* or musical recitation of Urdu poetry[138] was and is an integral part of musha'irahs in the Indian subcontinent. Similarly, the recitation of *ghazals* or odes, particularly on themes of love, occupied the center stage of many musha'irahs. But one should not discount the seriousness of content that the poets meant to convey, either through musical chanting or plain recitation. The way the Progressive Writers' Movement utilized musha'irahs and poetry to propagate its vision of a socialistic society allows one to fathom the wide-ranging scope musha'irahs could have in South Asian intellectual life. The progressive writers and poets are a good example of how Muslims of India absorbed the ideas of Marxism and socialism, particularly social equality and justice, which originated in the West. Moreover, progressive poets propagated these ideas through musha'irah. Members of this movement from qasbahs included Josh Malihabadi, Asrarul Haque 'Majaz' of Rudauli, and Salam Macchlishahri, to name a few. Members would mainly recite *nazm*, poetry on various topics of interest, than ghazals that focused on themes of love.[139] A selection of poetical topics ensured intellectual stimulation for the participants as well as the audience. Qasbahs, thus, had a culture of Urdu poetry and poetic symposia that contributed to their vibrant cultural-intellectual fabric.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the intellectual significance of qasbahs as they existed in colonial North India. Despite having such a rich intellectual and cultural milieu, qasbahs have never received their historical due. This chapter argued that qasbahs were unique because of their inheritance of a literary tradition and intellectual

[137] Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 226.
[138] For a detailed study on tarannum as a musical phenomenon, see, Regula Qureshi, "Tarannum: The Chanting of Urdu Poetry." *Ethnomusicology* 13, 3 (Sept 1969): 425-68.
[139] Zaidi, *Tarikh-e-Musha'irah*, 226.

environment. It also argued that qasbahs were not just passive recipients of a rich history and tradition. Rather, qasbahs and qasbati Muslims proactively kept their tradition alive and thriving. They engaged in literary practices that preserved and reinvented intellectual traditions. Qasbati Muslims were not just participating in keeping the tradition alive, but were also actively engaged in shaping a tradition that we do not find in the cities. This is clear from the prolific nature of writers and publications coming out of qasbahs, a literary culture not consistently found elsewhere. A combination of both inherited tradition and literary production enabled qasbahs to acquire a magisterial position. This is evidenced by the impact of qasbati intellectuals on Muslim public life in South Asia.

Qasbahs were localities. They created and nurtured a culture that was defined by their own customary practices, local needs, and circumstances. Qasbati Muslims actively engaged in the production of differing genres of literature that both defined their qasbati identities and made them stand out in the larger society. It is worth noting that they utilized the new English education and knowledge to enrich their experiences of modernity, while keeping their traditions and customs intact. Through their literary practices and participation, qasbati Muslims made a mark locally, nationally, and even beyond that by viewing themselves as part of the larger Islamic world.

The significance of qasbahs as recipients as well as perpetuators of a rich history and tradition singles them out as a necessary subject of study in the quest to properly understand the intellectual, social, and cultural history of South Asia. This chapter has concentrated on educated qasbati Muslims and their intellectual and literary activities. Although the presence of non-Muslims in qasbahs was important, one cannot deny that Muslims, owing to various socio-economic factors, defined the identity of qasbahs. This will be explored in the following chapter along with the following questions: what is the genealogy of qasbahs? How have qasbahs been treated in different sources? Can all qasbahs be seen from one single lens?

Chapter Three

QASBAHS: A GENERAL HISTORY

Qasbahs have long deserved a place in the historiography of South Asia. Official British sources do recognize them but largely in terms of their role in colonial India as a place for revenue collection and housing service gentry. It was for these reasons that the British chose to use qasbahs as their administrative headquarters for surrounding villages. But colonial uses of the qasbah do not tell the entire story. To learn how the qasbah had more than a mere economic existence, we need answers to a series of questions. What is the genealogy of the qasbah? How did qasbahs evolve from early settlements in pre-modern India to active, multifaceted entities in colonial India? What changes and accommodations did qasbahs undergo as a result of their contact with the British? What were some of the more specific features of the qasbahs in contrast to towns, cities, and villages?

This chapter addresses these questions by attempting to write a history of the qasbahs – an uncharted territory. We shall examine how qasbahs came into being and what differentiated them from towns and villages. Because historical sources present varying accounts of qasbahs, a combination of sources will be necessary to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of them. Additionally, we will need to attain a basic understanding of the regions under study. This chapter will proceed by examining a general and then more specific history of three qasbahs: Amroha in the Rohilkhand region, and Rudauli and Bilgram in the region of Awadh. The goal of this section will be to foster an understanding of the qasbah as a space rich in history, culture, and education, as well as literary and intellectual traditions.

QASBAHS IN OFFICIAL RECORDS

By and large, British sources have a specific economic perspective when discussing qasbahs. A close examination of official British files, records, and

publications reveals that qasbahs existed for them as mere geographic and administrative entities driven by concerns for revenue. Settlement reports of different districts, census reports, native newspaper reports, departmental reporting, government circulars, district gazetteers, and Board of Revenue records show a particular way of approaching the units of qasbahs. First, qasbahs are not treated the way we understand them in the context of our present study. Most government records deal with qasbahs as administrative units from which the British government would conduct their revenue collection operations. Second, official government files also discuss the role of the qasbahs in terms of education, with a particular interest in making use of them as a recruiting ground for various governmental offices and positions. Third, semi-official sources such as district gazetteers provide miscellaneous information about qasbahs, but they too fall under the larger empirical interests of administering the empire.

The British viewed qasbahs as part of the larger administrative set up in a province, here, the United Provinces. Provinces are divided up into districts, districts into *tahsils*, and tahsils into *parganas*. Qasbahs mark an even smaller unit of territory. A pargana could have several smaller towns within it and was usually named after the most dominant one. For instance, Rudauli is recorded both as a pargana and a qasbah under the tahsil Ramsnehighat of district Bara Banki. The pargana Rudauli is bigger than the town/qasbah of Rudauli. Whereas the census of 1881 recorded the population of the pargana Rudauli as 134,050, that of the qasbah was only 11,617.[140] That very much speaks of the differences in the size of the two. Hence the qasbah of Rudauli was a small town or a village within the pargana Rudauli.

The unit of a qasbah is most often referred to in the government files pertaining to the administration of the Department of Revenue. The majority of discussions revolve around the issue of land revenue settlement, including the quality of land, types of crops, cultivation area, names of existing proprietors, revenue-free

[140] *Gazetteer of the Province of Awadh,* Vol III (Allahabad: Northwestern Provinces and Awadh Government Press, 1878), 273-74.

villages, proposed revenue, and arrangements with taluqdars and zamindars.[141] Particular themes include the amount of revenue, specific settlement reports, revision of revenue assessments, and so on. There is also some discussion about the taluqdars, zamindars, and *mu'afidars* of respective qasbahs. Such discussions are oriented towards making these landholding groups better partners in the business of revenue collection. One example of this is found in the files that deal with the *Darbar List*. This list primarily concerned those taluqdars of the region of Awadh who were formally recognized and honored by the British government.[142] The list was occasionally revised, and people on it were invited to various official functions and ceremonies. One's ranking in the list also mattered, and taluqdars vied among themselves to obtain both inclusion on the list and a higher ranking on it. At the instance of the Commissioner of Sitapur, the name of Syed Dildar Ali, Taluqdar of Bhagiari, was entered in the Darbar List of taluqdars at number 112, directly above that of his relative, Zain-ul-Abdin.[143] The list was updated with the passage of time and in response to increasing demands and appeals.[144] By becoming a part of the official British system, these taluqdars were appropriated by the government and, in many cases, conformed to work in the government's financial interests.

Writings of British officials also reflect their preoccupation with economic gain. The writings of W. H. Moreland (1868-1938), who worked as the director of Land Records and Agriculture in the United Provinces as a member of the Indian Civil Service, provide one such example. Moreland believed in the primacy of

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[141] Examples of such files include *Revision of Settlement, Hardoi District*, File no. 814, Revenue Block A, 1896, Uttar Pradesh State Archives, Lucknow (UPSA hereafter). *Settlement of Alluvial Mahals in Oudh*, File no. 493B, Revenue Department B, 1897 & 98, UPSA. *Topographical Survey of Certain Districts in Oudh*, File no. 149, Revenue Department, 1904, UPSA. *Grant of Land or Assignment of Land Revenue to Retired Native Officers*, File no. 16, Revenue Department, 1904, UPSA. *Syed Muafis of Amroha*, File no. 116B, Revenue Department, 1904, UPSA. *Memorials of the Taluqdars of Oudh*, File no. 406B, Revenue Department B, 1896, UPSA. *Darbar List of Taluqdars in Oudh*, File no. 92, Political Department, 1884, UPSA. *Court of Wards: Harha Estate in the Bara Banki District*, File no. 1B1, Revenue Department Block B, 1892, UPSA.
[142] *Darbar List of Taluqdars in Oudh*, File no. 92, Political Department, 1894, UPSA.
[143] Ibid.
[144] *List of Taluqdars of Oudh Corrected up to 1931*, File no. 15, Miscellaneous Bound Records, December 1939, UPSA.

economics in history, and as such his writings focus on the production and distribution of wealth.[145] Among his many books, at least two concerned the United Provinces: *Agriculture of the United Provinces* (1904) and *Revenue Administration of the United Provinces* (1911). His analysis of qasbahs, towns and villages are all colored by one vision – agrarian revenue.

Qasbahs are also mentioned in the records of the education department. There are notifications, orders, correspondences, etc. regarding the implementation and smooth functioning of English education in qasbahs. After English had replaced Persian as the official language of India in 1835, there was a constant effort on the part of the government to require that Indians have some knowledge of English in order to enter government service. In the United Provinces, passing such an English language test was made a prerequisite even for vernacular offices.[146] By the late nineteenth century, Anglo-vernacular schools were a part of the educational system in most parts of India. Official records take pride in the fact that people were seeking an English education. A. H. Mackenzie, Director of Public Instruction for the United Provinces, reported: "The traditions and ideals which European schools represent are a real asset to education in the province and Indians of the middle classes are more and more taking advantage of European schools for the education of their children. The number of Indians attending European schools has increased from 285 in 1921-22 to 528 in 1926-27 i.e. by 87 per cent."[147] Not only did the government try to introduce English, but they also sought to replace Hindi and Urdu scripts in vernacular schools. John C. Nesfield, Director of Public Instruction for the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, made a plan to introduce Roman Hindustani. In one of

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[145] E. Sreedharan, *A Textbook of Historiography: 500 BC to AD 2000* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2004), 420.
[146] *Residential and Educational Qualifications required of Candidates for Government Service*, File no. 610C/143/1907, General Administration, 1907, UPSA.
[147] *The Progress of Education in the United Provinces under the Reforms*, File no. 568, Educational Department, 1928, UPSA.

his orders, he stated that "Roman Hindustani, would in my opinion, be more popular in this province and probably more useful than either Urdu or Hindi."[148]

It is not surprising that the government was working on implementing English over vernacular languages, but their plans for assimilation did not stop there. H. Sharp, Joint Secretary to the Government of India's Department of Education, wrote to the Secretary of the United Provinces government on June 9, 1911:

> The Governor General in Council considers it desirable that every school in the Indian Empire should possess some portrait or likeness of Their Majesties the King and the Queen, to be placed in the most conspicuous position in the school, it being clearly understood that portraits of Their Majesties should not be distributed to schools where there is the least likelihood of their being exposed to insult or disfigurement through sentiments of disloyalty or otherwise.[149]

This imperial project extended to qasbahs as well. In Amroha, the United Provinces' government funded *Syed-ul-Madaris*, originally an Arabic school, to add an Urdu section with the purpose of training boys for the English school.[150] The idea here is not suggest that the government had a unidirectional purpose behind its educational policies. But it is a fact that qasbahs figure in the government's educational records as a space that was used to extend its imperial mission. Qasbahs, as we shall see shortly, had rich networks of educational institutions from which the government strove to fill various official positions.

Finally, district gazetteers provide a vast reservoir of information about qasbahs' role in their various districts. Gazetteers were published "under the authority of His Majesty's Secretary of State for India in Council."[151] One of the principal purposes behind undertaking the huge project of compiling information regarding

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[148] *Introduction of the Roman Character into the Vernacular School*, File no. 623, Education Department, 1896, UPSA.
[149] *Encouragement of the Imperial Idea in Educational Institutions through the Means of Visual Instructions*, File no. 170, Educational Department, 1911, UPSA.
[150] *Free Admission of Students from the Syed-ul-Madaris to the Amroha High School*, File no. 21, Education Department, 1911, UPSA.
[151] W. W. Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908).

each district at a local level was to break "the long spell of disappointment and failure, which has hitherto hung over the efforts of the Indian Government towards the elucidation of the country it governs."[152] Gazetteers aimed to provide information to the administrators who would work in unfamiliar territories.[153] The information was tailored towards their needs. A gazetteer is generally divided into several thematic sections. More than half of it is usually demarcated for topography, land, crops, trade, languages, population, occupations, revenue, expenditure, fiscal history, police, crime, dispensaries, cattle, and so on. However, a gazetteer also provides information on the history of a district in which we can find some substantial references to qasbahs, even though they are not as direct and comprehensive as one would wish.

QASBAHS IN THEIR ENTIRETY

Qasbahs definitely were an administrative and economic entity but there were many more aspects to them. We need to understand them in a rather holistic sense. Let us briefly touch upon the various ingredients that constituted a qasbah. First, a qasbah was something in between a town and a village, as discussed in the previous chapter. In this capacity and since it was surrounded by a number of villages, a qasbah used to serve as a marketplace for the neighboring villagers. A qasbah was an "intermediate market by virtue of its intermediate position in the vertical flow of goods and services both ways."[154] Second, being closer to villages, it served as an ideal place for governments to station their officials and various staff for the purpose of revenue collection. This was true for the British as well as previous regimes. In this way, an assortment of people, ranging from landholders and merchants to qazis and

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[152] Ibid., 568.
[153] Gazetteers did serve the purpose of providing information to the British administrators but it will be reductive to view them as mere tools of the Empire. Bayly rightly puts it that the British knowledge of Indians arose "as much from natural inquisitiveness and the desire to comprehend the world as it was, as from a simple aim of domination." C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 371.
[154] Yang, *Bazaar India*, 85.

clerks, inhabited the qasbahs. Because of such inhabitants, qasbahs became administrative headquarters for surrounding villages and parganas. Thus, by the late nineteenth century a qasbah was a source of services.[155] Third, most qasbahs attracted one or more Sufi saints at the time when Muslims started settling in these regions. Bayly rightly states that the expansion of the Sufi mystic orders was crucial in the growth of these societies.[156] The Sufi shrines became a space that accommodated different religious strands and where people from within as well as outside the qasbah would flock at least once a year during the *'urs*, the occasion of a saint's death anniversary. Therefore, qasbahs also became religious centers. Fourth, because relatively well-off people lived in qasbahs, they developed their own learning centers. Most qasbahs had several madrasas, and, as the British stepped in, Anglo-vernacular primary, middle, and high schools appeared. Fifth, the learned environment of qasbahs produced intellectuals in different fields – a feature shared by almost every qasbah. Of particular note are literary luminaries from these qasbahs who made invaluable contributions to the world of Urdu, Persian, and Arabic literature. Finally, architecture also defined the identity of qasbahs. Dargahs, madrasas, mosques, gates, imambaras, and havelis all marked the skyline of a qasbah. This is comparable to predominantly Muslim cities such as Lucknow, Hyderabad, and Rampur. But in the case of qasbahs, these were the only dominant architectural feature. Although almost all qasbahs possessed the characteristics discussed above, most of them also had their own particularities.

TWO REGIONS AND THEIR HISTORY: AWADH AND ROHILKHAND

Before we discuss the history of the qasbah, it is imperative to develop some general understanding of the regions where the qasbahs under study are located. In the rest of this chapter, we shall be primarily dealing with three qasbahs: the qasbahs of Bilgram and Rudauli in the region of Awadh, and the qasbah of Amroha in

[155] C. A. Bayly, "The Small Town and Islamic Gentry," 30.
[156] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 349.

Rohilkhand. These areas lie in the current states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal. From 1835 to 1902, these regions combined were known as the North-Western Provinces (NWP). Between 1902 and 1947, they were commonly referred to as the United Provinces (UP), a simplified version of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh. A province of British India, the United Provinces had a very strategic location. It shared its border in the west with Delhi and therefore held crucial value for the rulers of Delhi in terms of exercising control and influence in neighboring areas. The region of the United Provinces was the traditional center of Muslim rule and civilization in India. There were cities such as Jaunpur, capital of the Sharqi rulers; Fatehpur Sikri, city of Akbar; Agra, city of Shahjahan; Bareilly, center of the Rohilla kingdom; and Faizabad and Lucknow, seats of the Nawabs of Awadh.[157] Muslims, who held approximately one-fifth of the land in the province, were well-placed in Awadh and dominant in Rohilkhand. Although Muslims made up only thirteen per cent of the total population, they held nearly thirty-five per cent of all government posts.[158] Despite UP forming one single administrative unit, Awadh and Rohilkhand were two different geographical regions and housed different political regimes.

Awadh used to be a suba, or province, of the Mughal Empire ruled by a Nawab based in the city of Lucknow.[159] It was founded by Sadaat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk in 1722. After being defeated by the British East India Company in the Battle of Buxar in 1765, Awadh was forced to sign a treaty by which the Company started controlling certain administrative affairs. With the gradual decline of the Mughal rule in Delhi, the Nawab of Awadh asserted his independence and established Awadh as one of the successor states of the Mughal Empire in 1819. This independence

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[157] Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860-1923* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 11.
[158] Ibid., 17, 23.
[159] For a detailed history of Awadh in Urdu, there are numerous works such as Maulvi Muhammad Najmul Ghani, *Tarikh-e-Awadh*, 5 vols. (Lucknow: Nawal Kishore Press, 1919), Muhammad Ahad Ali Abr Kakorvi, *Muraqqa-e-Awadh* (Lucknow: Markaz-e-Adab Urdu, 1987), Munshi Ram Sahay Tamanna, *Ahsan-ut-Tawarikh yani Tarikh-e-Suba-e-Awadh* (Lucknow: Markaz-e-Adab Urdu, 1988), Munshi Radhey Lal Mohani, *Tarikh Farman Rawayan-e-Awadh* (Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, n.d.), Raja Durga Parshad, *Bostan-e-Awadh* (Sandila: Queens Press, 1888), and so on.

however was curtailed by the East India Company, which stationed a Resident at Lucknow, an official who controlled the state's administration. In 1856, during the reign of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, Awadh was annexed by the East India Company under the pretense of maladministration.[160] Ruled by a Shiite dynasty, many of Awadh's high offices were held by Shia Muslims, even though the population of the province contained an insignificant proportion of Shiites.[161] The Awadh rulers chose to favor their own relatives and thereby created a hereditary Shiite aristocracy.[162] It is no wonder then that landholding in the countryside and other offices too went to many Shia taluqdars and zamindars. This is evidenced by the fact that many prominenet landlords were Shias, such as the holders of Mahmudabad, Pirpur, Qizilbash, and Bilehra; and so were several leading politicians – Syed Wazir Hasan and Syed Raza Ali for example.[163] We shall discuss more examples later in the context of specific qasbahs.

Rohilkhand is a territory northwest of Awadh and is so named after the Rohilla Afghans who came from the Roh region of Afghanistan. Having arrived as horse traders in the sixteenth century, the Rohillas initially served in the Mughal army. For their service, they received landholding rights in the area. This region was previously ruled by the Katehr Rajputs and was one of the troubled areas for the Mughals. Soon, Rohillas emerged as a local power by strengthening themselves in this region and began operating as Rohilla chieftaincies.[164] The first among the Rohilla Afghans to have arrived was Daud Ali Khan, who became a revenue farmer, a

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[160] For an analysis of how Awadh transitioned from being an imperial province to sovereign state and then to subsidiary ally of a foreign power, see Richard B. Barnett, *North India Between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British 1720-1801* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). For an understanding of the dynamics of cultural clashes among Shiite cultural norms of Awadh, imperial pretensions of the Mughals, and values brought by the British officials, see Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures*.
[161] Ibid., 45.
[162] Ibid., 183.
[163] Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, 25.
[164] For a detailed analysis of the Rohilla rulers, see Iqbal Husain, *The Ruhela Chieftaincies: The Rise and Fall of the Ruhela Power in India in the Eighteen Century* (New York: Oxford University Press and Centre of Advanced Study in History, Aligarh, 1994).

local landholder, and recruited men from Afghanistan to work for him.[165] After his death, his son Ali Muhammad Khan (d. 1748) styled himself as a *Nawab* and declared independence in 1741, changing the name of this region from Katehr to Rohilkhand.[166] He made the qasbah of Aonla his capital. Later, the Rohillas ruled from the city of Bareilly. Rohillas were in general Sunnis, but later the ruling family of Rampur converted to Shiism. Rohilkhand covered various towns, cities, and qasbahs – Rampur, Moradabad, Shahjahanpur, Badayun, Pilibhit, and Bijnor. From 1774 to 1775, the Nawab of Awadh, assisted by the East India Company, fought the Rohilla War (1774-75) against the Rohillas because they had not paid an outstanding debt to Awadh. As a consequence of the war, Rohilkhand collapsed. However, Nawab Faizullah Khan (1730-94; r. 1774-94) founded the Rohilla state of Rampur that continued as a princely state until the independence of India in 1947. The foundation of Rampur state marks a change in the image of the Rohillas from a warring tribe to one which patronized arts and letters. The Nawabs of Rampur were particularly concerned about learning and education. Nawab Faizullah Khan kept company with the learned on a regular basis.[167] He built a library with his modest collection of books that was continuously enriched by the subsequent Nawabs. Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan (1816-65; r. 1855-65) was equally interested in learning. He learned philosophy and logic from Maulvi Fazl-e-Haq Khairabadi (1797-1861).[168] He

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[165] For a contemporary account of how Rohilkhand came into being, see Nawab Sadaat Yaar Khan, *Tarikh-e-Rohilkhand: Urdu Tarjama Tarikh-e-Gul-e-Rahmat ma Farsi Matan* (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2002). It was written in Persian by the son of Muhammad Yar Khan in 1833. See also, Maulvi Hakim Muhammad Najmul Ghani Khan, *Akhbar-us-Sanadid,* Vol I (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 1997). For an analysis of how Daud Khan came as a horse trader and rose to become the ruler of a region, see Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire c 1710-1780* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995).
[166] Mustafa Husain Nizami, *Tarikh-e-Rohilkhand* (Bareilly: Raza Barqi Press, 1986), Introduction, Mustafa Husain Nizami, *Nawwabin-e-Awadh aur British East India Company* (Bareilly: Raza Barqi Press, 1995), 115. Abu Saad Islahi, *Arabi Zabaan-o-Adab mein Rohilkhand ka Hissa* (Rampur: Rampur Raza Library, 2004), 8.
[167] Khan, *Tarikh-e-Rohilkhand*, 183.
[168] Fazl-e-Haq Khairabadi was a scholar of Islamic theology, poet, and a philosopher. He is known for his participation in the revolt of 1857 during which he issued a *fatwa* in favor of *jihad* against the British. He belonged to the qasbah of Khairabad in Awadh and was one of the first to be deported to

was also a poet and a disciple of Momin Khan Dehlvi and later, Mirza Ghalib and Amir Minai.[169] Thus, not only did the Rohilla rulers themselves participate in intellectual activities; they also patronized and promoted them for the public.

The qasbahs we are going to discuss come from different political, religious, and geographical backgrounds. We have already discussed the importance of Shia Islam in the context of the kingdom of Awadh. It is interesting to note that the Nawabs of Rampur and the earlier Rohillas followed either Sunni or Shia Islam based on the sitting Nawab's preferences.[170] This means that the state promoted either of the two at one point in time, and thus both the sects could enjoy patronage one after another. As far as populations of the qasbahs are concerned, it is difficult to find a general trend. We have to bear in mind that Muslims in India were a minority population. Despite this, Muslims dominated qasbahs demographically, politically, and culturally. Their numbers were concentrated; they held key positions and offices; and, so, the culture of a qasbah was colored and represented by the Muslim culture that prevailed there. Rudauli is described as "the capital of the pargana" and "a large Muslim town" with a total population of 11,708 in 1901. Of this total, 6,451 were Muslims, or about 55 percent.[171] Similarly, the population of Bilgram in 1900 was reported to be 11,000.[172] By comparison, Amroha was probably on the higher side of the population a qasbah could have. According to a report of the Rohilkhand division, the total population of Amroha in 1911 was 40,100 of which 30,000, were Muslims,[173] constituting almost 75 percent.

Andaman Islands in 1859 after the rebellion was suppressed. Charged with sedition, he was later hanged to death.

[169] Khan, *Akhbar-us-Sanadid,* Vol II, 124-25.

[170] Khan, *Tarikh-e-Rohilkhand*, 183, 375.

[171] H. R. Neville, *Bara Banki: A Gazetteer being Volume XLVIII of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (Allahabad: Government Press, 1921), 258-59.

[172] *Conversion of Act XX Town of Bilgram (Hardoi) into a Notified Area*, File no. 934D, Municipal Department, 1900, UPSA.

[173] *Free Admission of Students from the Syed-ul-Madrasas to the Amroha High School*, File no. 21, Education Department, 1911, UPSA.

A GENERAL HISTORY OF THE QASBAH

A definition of qasbah has already been laid out in the preceding chapter. Here, our primary concern is to construct a history of the qasbah based on various sources of historical importance as well as some secondary literature that has touched upon aspects of the qasbahs' existence. The question of how qasbahs evolved and existed historically requires a more careful construction of its history. Existing historiography does discuss qasbahs, but most descriptions are fleeting and based on British sources such as gazetteers.

It is difficult to say when exactly qasbahs came into being. The formation of qasbahs as towns started to take shape during the time of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526), but sources do not describe them as qasbahs *per se*. For instance, Ibn Battuta, the fourteenth-century Moroccan traveler and explorer, has referred to Amroha as "a small and beautiful city."[174] Ibn Battuta traveled extensively from modern-day West Africa to India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, China, the Byzantine Empire, Anatolia, and Central Asia. He had definitely seen a lot of cities including the city of Delhi, the seat of the Tughluq dynasty (1321-98). If a place such as Amroha seemed small to him, it must have been less than what he meant and understood by a city on the basis of his travels across the globe. So what would later become the qasbah of Amroha was small even according to fourteenth century standards. However, the size of Amroha tells only one part of the story, i.e., geographical dimension, and does not connote the meaning as we have come to understand of a qasbah. Similar to his visit to Amroha, Ibn Battuta in his *Rehla* also notes his visit to Jalali which later became a prominent qasbah. Jalali, which is very close to the town of Aligarh, has been described by Ibn Battuta as "*balda-e-Jalali*,"[175] the town of Jalali.

Tarikh literature provides a chronological description of places such as Bilgram and Amroha as they existed under various Hindu rulers. These sources

[174] Mahdi Husain, *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta (India, Maldive Islands, and Ceylon)*, (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1953), 145. S. M. Azizuddin Husain, *Medieval Towns: A Case Study of Amroha and Jalali* (New Delhi: Hira Publications, 1995), 12. Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism*, 12.
[175] Husain, *Medieval Towns*, 34.

discuss how Muslims arrived in these towns within the larger context of the conquest of Delhi by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (971-1030) and later by Sultan Muhammad Ghori (1162-1206), followed by the subsequent foundation of the Delhi Sultanate in 1206.[176] However, the settlement of Muslims in these towns had started even before Delhi Sultans came to power. Salar Masud Ghazi, a nephew of Mahmud Ghazni, defeated the Bhar ruler of Rudauli in 1030.[177] Prior to this, Salar Masud Ghazi had actually taken several expeditions across north India and had captured several towns including the forts of Amroha and Sambhal.[178] Likewise, Qazi Muhammad Yusuf Usmani arrived at Bilgram with a batch of Muslims following an order from Sultan Mahmud Ghazni in 1018 and defeated the local ruler named Sri Raja.[179] These accounts indicate that many qasbahs had Muslims inhabiting them as early as the eleventh century.

With the Delhi Sultans establishing power in 1206, areas in and around Delhi immediately witnessed greater efficiency and stability in administration. Muslims had settled in various small towns around Delhi, in addition to the Muslim rulers instituting greater political control from Delhi. The importance of settlements such as Amroha, Badayun, and Sambhal may be gauged from the fact that Sultan Qutubuddin Aibak (r. 1206-10), the first Sultan of Delhi, organized the three towns into one unit called *Vilayat-e-Amroha* and appointed Iltutmish, who later succeeded him as Sultan, as the *hakim/maqta* (administrator) of the region in 1203.[180] When Iltutmish became Sultan, he appointed his son Nasiruddin Mahmud as the administrator of Awadh, of which Rudauli was a part. The significance of Rudauli further increased when it served as a battleground for the governor of Awadh's attempt to oust the Bhar rulers, the traditional rulers of the area.[181] Nasiruddin (r. 1246-66) later became the Sultan of

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[176] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 3-13. Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 40-43. Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 18-22
[177] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 22.
[178] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 10.
[179] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 21.
[180] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 14-15.
[181] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 23.

Delhi. His successor Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban (r. 1266-86) appointed one of his closest aides, Malik Amir Ali Hatim Khan, the first jagirdar of Amroha. The celebrated Sufi mystic, musician, and poet Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) worked under Hatim Khan for a few years and wrote *Aspnamah*, which he dedicated to his master who happened to be the administrator of *Vilayat-e-Amroha*.[182] An old mosque still exists in the qasbah of Jalali which might have been built either under the supervision of Balban himself or one of his men. Sultan Kayqubad (1286-90), Balban's grandson, gave Awadh and the title of Khan Jahan to Hatim Khan as his *iqta*.[183] Towns and settlements that later became qasbahs had attracted attention from the rulers of Delhi. Early sultans kept a close watch over these areas by appointing more men to handle the administration. This is substantiated by the fact that by Balban's era the sultan nominated a *khwaja*, or an accountant, to operate within the province alongside the *muqta* or administrator. Barani, the fourteenth-century historian, in his *Tarikh-e-Ferozshahi* interprets this nomination as reflective of the government's concern to ascertain the amount of available revenue.[184] Whatever the motive, the government had an increasingly firm grip over small towns from the early Sultanate period onwards. The growing importance of these towns is shown by their significance in the eyes of Delhi sultans.

With increasing difficulty and force, subsequent Delhi sultans attempted to increase control over such towns. Jalauddin Khilji (1290-96) made Malik Chajju, a close relative of Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, the administrator of iqta Katra.[185] Malik Chajju then rebelled against the Sultan. Jalaluddin Khilji himself led an army by way of Kol, reached Badayun, and sent his second son, Arkali Khan, towards Amroha to oppose Malik Chajju who was finally defeated and arrested.[186] In Rudauli, the army

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[182] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 19.
[183] Peter Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 78.
[184] Quoted in Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 100.
[185] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 21.
[186] Al-Badaoni, *Muntakhab-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol I. Trans by George S. A. Ranking (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Dilli, 1973), 231-32.

of Alauddin Khilji (1296-1316) established control by defeating the Bhar rulers.[187] Alauddin Khilji more clearly realized the importance of these regions as soon he assumed power. Two of his sister's sons, Umar Khan and Mengu Khan, who held the iqtas of Badayun and Awadh respectively, were executed for seditious designs.[188] Tarikh literature in Urdu does not dwell much upon what happened locally during the period of the successive dynasties: the Tughluqs (1320-1414), the Sayyids (1414-1451), and the Lodis (1451-1526). However, we do have some information based on other contemporary sources.[189] Memoirs of the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta are one of the most powerful sources about the Tughluq dynasty, particularly during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq. As discussed in the previous section, he writes about his impressions of towns like Amroha. Other sources include the chronicles by Ziyauddin Barani, Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi, Shams-i-Siraj Afif, and Abdul Malik Isami. These sources make frequent references to iqtas as units of the Sultanate and appointments of muqtas or iqtadars to oversee their administration. Such appointments carried great importance among the Sultan's close aides.[190] This shows how the Sultanate paid attention to its constituent units and gave them importance.

The question of how these locales figured in the larger society of the Sultanate gets further clarified in certain widely studied medieval sources. Afif, in his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* which is considered a continuation of Barani's *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, presents a vivid account of how iqtas and their officials mattered in the general and revenue collection administration of the Sultanate. Afif provides interesting accounts of locations that later developed as qasbahs. During the last phase of his reign, Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq had gone to the regions of Badayun and Aonla for hunting

[187] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 24.
[188] Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 173.
[189] Such sources include medieval writings such as Ziyauddin Barani's *Tarikh-e-Firozshahi*, Abdul Malik Islami's *Futuh as-Salatin*, Yahya bin Ahmad Sirhindi's *Tarikh-e-Mubarakshahi* , Ibn Battuta's travel writings. Later, Khwaja Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* and Abdul Qadir Badayuni's *Muntakhabut Tawarikh*.
[190] R. C. Jauhri, *Medieval India in Transition – Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi: A First Hand Account* (New Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 2001), 243-46.

excursions.[191] This fact shows that the locales were surrounded by nearby jungle filled with game while also providing a base for hunting camps, as areas already inhabited.[192] This indicates some kind of continuity for these regions as they later evolve into a unit of habitation partly urban and partly rural. In addition, in the writings of Barani, we find another dimension of how certain families or individuals from a region such as Badayun were tied to the larger considerations of the Delhi Sultanate. He discusses certain Sayyid families of various towns of the Sultanate, giving special prominence to those of Badayun, during the time of Alauddin Khilji. Two such personalities from Badayun were Sayyid Tajuddin and his nephew Sayyid Ruknuddin, who rose to become the qazis of Awadh and Kara respectively.[193] Their prominence was such that Barani writes that he was privileged to have met them. Later, as we consider the reign of the Sayyid dynasty in Delhi, there is a growing weakness in terms of the sultanate's control over the muqtas. The last of the Sayyid rulers, Alauddin Alam Shah, whose dominion had shrunk so greatly that it covered only an area as small from Delhi to Palam, abandoned the capital city of Delhi for Badayun in order to safeguard himself from the attacks of Bahlul Lodi, the founder of the succeeding Lodi dynasty.[194]

Although sources from the Delhi Sultanate do not employ the term "qasbah" to define any township, we find solid evidence of references to qasbahs during the time of the Mughal Empire (1526-1707/1857). A number of chroniclers from this period refer to different qasbahs, though not as qasbahs in all cases. As mentioned before, Abul Fazl has referred to the exact number of qasbahs as they existed during the time of Emperor Akbar. Such towns, now clearly being referred to as qasbahs, can be seen playing an important social and political role within the Mughal Empire. Amethi, Bilgram, Dariyabad, Gopamau, Kakori, Malihabad, Rudauli, and Shahabad were among the important qasbahs inhabited by Muslims who were in service of the

[191] Ibid., 248.
[192] Badayun, for instance, had been founded in 905 AD. Badayuni, *Badayun*, 2.
[193] Jackson, *The Delhi Sultanate*, 191.
[194] Ibid., 323.

Mughals, in the province of Awadh and elsewhere in the empire.[195] Mulla Iladad of the qasbah Amroha worked as *sadr* in the Doab of the Punjab.[196] Sayyid Mahmud of Barha stood in high favor with Emperor Akbar because of his valor. He, along with Sayyid Muhammad of Amroha, was sent out on important imperial expeditions.[197] Abul Fazl writes that Sayyid Muhammad studied the *Hadis*, the Prophet's traditions, and law under the best teachers of the age and that the father of the historian Badayuni was his friend. He served as *Mir Adl* (chief justice), and later, when "the learned were banished from the Court (*ikhraj-e-ulama*)," he was made the governor of Bhakkar.[198] It was Sayyid Muhammad who had advised Badayuni to enter the military service of the emperor rather than solely relying on scholarly pursuits and the associated madad-i-ma'ash land grants. Emphasizing the level of influence of the Sayyids of Amroha, Abul Fazl adds that they belonged to the "old families of great repute" throughout India. Such influences were not just limited to Amroha or to political spheres. Shaikh Abdul Quddus (1456-1537), born in the qasbah Rudauli, was regarded as one of the eminent Sufis of the time. His compilation *Rushdnama* consists of his own verses and those of other Rudauli saints. Abdul Wahid Bilgrami (1510-1608) wrote *Haqaiq-i-Hindi*, which attempted to reconcile Hindu devotional and orthodox Muslim beliefs.[199]

Although qasbahs and qasbati Muslims continued to play roles in the larger society, later Mughal sources do not dwell much upon them. Muhammad Sadiq Khan's *Shahjahanama*, Inayat Khan's *Shahjahanama*, Muhammad Amin Qazwini's *Padshahnama*, Abdul Hamid Lahori's *Badshahnama*, Muhammad Kazim's *Alamgirnama*, and Khafi Khan's *Muntakhabul Lubab* – all of them deal with issues of

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[195] Muzaffar Alam, "Assimilation from a Distance: Confrontation and Sufi Accommodation in Awadh Society." In R. Champakalakshmi & S. Gopal, eds., *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 166.
[196] Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*. Trans by H. Blochmann (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873), 202.
[197] Ibid., 389-90.
[198] Ibid., 438.
[199] Alam, "Assimilation from a Distance," 174.

immediate concern, mostly focused around the sitting Emperor. As we move through the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, Mughal encounters with the Jats, Bundelas, Sikhs, Marathas, and a concern for expansion in the Deccan were realities that hardly any chronicler of the time could escape. Some sources also discuss the arrival of the British as traders during the reign of Emperor Jahangir. This preoccupation of the sources with topics other than qasbahs looms large. The empire, in the locales, was functioning with stable political, social, cultural, and administrative bases. Although this fact deterred the empire's historians and writers from paying any heed to qasbahs, local history and historians come to our aid. Some of these historical writings were composed as late as the early twentieth century, but they do discuss the more distant past. There is a vast amount of untapped information in local tarikh literature as well as in other genres such as autobiographies, biographical works and dictionaries, and genealogies.

Where did qasbahs stand in terms of their existence, performance, and role in the larger society? How did they compare with towns and cities? Most basically, why should qasbahs be studied at all? Maulvi Sayyid Maqbul Ahmad Samdani[200] articulates the identity of qasbahs of Awadh in the following words:

> The number and the level of people of knowledge and wisdom produced by the qasbahs of Awadh cannot be matched even if those of entire India is taken together. Maulana Shaikh Saaduddin Khairabadi, Mulla Qutbuddin Shahid Sahalwi, Maulvi Qutbuddin Shamsabadi, Shaikh Ghulam Naqshband Lakhnawi, Shaikh Ahmad Mulla Jivan Amethvi, Maulana Bahrul Uloom Farangi Mahali, Mulla Hamdullah, Mulla Hasan, Mulla Kamal, Qazi Mubarak, Mulla Nizamuddin Dars-e-Nizamiya, Mir Abdul Jalil Bilgrami, Mir Ghulam Ali Azad – all rose from this soil and shone in the sky as the sun and the moon.[201]

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[200] He was a former member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. Samdani himself belonged to one of the qasbahs in U.P. called Samdan and is known for his biographical work on Mir Abdul Jalil Bilgrami, a courtier of Emperor Aurangzeb.

[201] Maulvi Saiyid Maqbul Ahmad Samdani, *Hayat-e-Jalil,* Vol I (Allahabad: Ram Narain Lal Publisher & Bookseller, 1929), 40.

Although one can question the bias of the author in selecting the above individuals, many of those named have played an influential role within and outside their qasbahs. The contributions of various qasbahs in different spheres of life were remarkable. We shall discuss each of those accomplishments with regard to the qasbahs under study. It is interesting to learn how certain features can be found across different qasbahs. A closer look at the history of qasbahs shows that there were many commonalities among them: a concentration of learned individuals, one or more Sufi dargahs, a literary and cultural milieu facilitating an intellectual environment, and a consistent style of architecture. As we move from the Mughal to the British era, the presence of various professionals, writers, poets, landholders, lawyers, activists, and Sufi saints make the entity of the qasbah stand out when compared to villages, towns, or cities.

THE QASBAH OF BILGRAM

Aab-o-gil man ke faiz-e-aam ast
Az khitta-e-pak Bilgram ast
Subhan Allah che Bilgrami
Kausar maii Aftab jaami.[202]

Where prosperity speaks of general abundance
That sacred territory is Bilgram
God be praised! What are you Bilgram?
Just as Kauser (Paradise) and sun-clad

These verses are a part of the poetry that Allama Mir Abdul Jalil Bilgrami (1661-1725), a noble in the court of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, composed in honor of his qasbah, Bilgram. A highly erudite man holding eminent positions in Delhi, Abdul Jalil Bilgrami always longed for Bilgram, so much so that he willed for his body to be carried to Bilgram upon his death. We find a similar nostalgia in Safeer Bilgrami (1834-1890), one of the most prolific Perso-Urdu poets of the nineteenth century and a favorite disciple of the poet Ghalib. Safeer Bilgrami settled himself in

[202] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, Preface.

Arrah but previously had traveled all over Bihar in addition to Allahabad, Benaras, Kanpur, Kannauj, Farrukhabad, Mahrehra, and Delhi. In his incomplete autobiography, *Sair-o-Safar*, Safeer writes that Bilgram "is where my watan is, I had an opportunity to come and live here every now and then."[203] Although he spent only a few years of his childhood there, the brevity of time could not take away his fascination for Bilgram. As a poet, he articulated his love for Bilgram in the following verses:

> *Humko kyonkar naa ho pyaara Bilgram*
> *Hai watan ae dil humara Bilgram*
> *Maahiraan-e-ilm wa fann paida huey*
> *Khitta-e-Yunaan hai saara Bilgram.*[204]
>
> How could Bilgram not be dear to me?
> Oh heart, Bilgram is my *watan*
> Deans of knowledge, and of the arts, born in this abode
> All of Bilgram, a branch of Greece

The above example is but one of many from the poetry and prose of the time in which one finds the author expressing reverence for his qasbah. In prose, the autobiography of Hosh Bilgrami best displays what Bilgram as a qasbah meant to a Bilgrami:

> I was born in the same land (Bilgram, U. P.) which was also the watan of Allama Syed Murtaza, who was called "*naushah-e-lughat* (the gem of dictionary)" because of *Taj-ul-Urus* (an Arabic dictionary), and which has been made eternal owing to its literal attainment; Allama Syed Abdul Jalil of the same place shone as "the seventh planet," who saw seven monarchs, and fulfilled his duties of establishing peace on seven occasions; Mir Ghulam Ali Azad of the same place became renowned by the title *Husn-ul-Hind* (the pride of India), who wrote *Maasir-ul-Kiraam* and *Khazain-ul-Amirah*, who showed how to exhibit miracles through the pen, uttered the name of Allah on every bead of the *tasbih* (coral rosary), perfumed the universe through the fragrance of his virtues, and startled the Arabs by becoming the first one to write *masnavi* in Arabic.

[203] Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami*, 78.
[204] Ibid., 33.

> This is the land that takes pride in the persona of Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk Syed Husain Bilgrami, and this is the land where Dr. Syed Ali Bilgrami became eternal by writing those books on the civilizations of India and Arabia. All these are just a few shining personalities to warm up the discussion. In addition, this has been that very productive territory where all one can see is the learned and the knowledgeable, where poets abound, where there used to be huge gatherings of people of literature, and where the souls of the likes of Milton and Shakespeare used to run in the minds of the Sayyids.[205]

What can be a better introduction to Bilgram than this? Hosh Bilgrami adds an interesting dimension to the prologue of the ode to his qasbah. He says that Bilgram was a hub of the learned and the taluqdars but also adds that it was not solely the land of the rich and the learned:

> Wisdom was kneaded into the yeast of this land, not only in knowledge and wisdom but in music as well. Mir Ahmad Nayak used to challenge Tansen [the much acclaimed musician in the court of Akbar]. If Tansen could make fire out of *dipak* (lamp), a passionate Nayak could put those flames off by *megh raag*. Look at the artists of all hues in this land: be it a carpenter or an ironsmith, a mason or a painter, be they weavers or butlers – they had no match in their respective professions.[206]

Local historians provide an interesting explanation of how this qasbah came to be known as Bilgram. Shaikh Ghulam Hasan Samin Siddiqui Farshori, in his Persian history of Bilgram titled *Sharaif-e-Usmani*, writes that there probably was a deity named "Bail Dev" after whom the place was named Bailgram, literally meaning "the village of Bail."[207] While agreeing with this version, another account also mentions that this area was earlier called Srinagar after its Hindu king named Sri.[208] *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, an impressive thousand-year historical compilation on the qasbah, presents in detail various traditions and interpretations that exist around these

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[205] Bilgrami, *Mushahedat*, 1-2.
[206] Bilgrami, *Mushahedat*, 3.
[207] Quoted in Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 23.
[208] Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami*, 34.

two stories.[209] Muslims first arrived in Bilgram in 1018 AD, during the time of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, and have lived there ever since. There are numerous families that have been living in Bilgram for the last one thousand years. One such example is the family of Khwaja Imaduddin Chishti, a Sufi saint, who was one of the first Muslims to settle in Bilgram. The description of the first lot of Muslims arriving at Bilgram is usually followed by claims from several families that their ancestors were a part of the episode in history referred to as *fateh-e-Bilgram* (conquest of Bilgram).[210] This is seen in the families' attempts to compile genealogies that include the names of the early conquerors of the qasbah. Safeer Bilgrami, tracing his family's genealogy in his book *Nasbnama Sadaat-e-Bilgram*, thus refers to Saeed Umr bin Muhammad Sughra as *faateh-e-Bilgram* (conqueror of Bilgram).[211] Moreover, the tracing goes as far back as the Prophet Muhammad and the early caliphs. The genealogies of *Shayyukh Usmani* (Usmani Shaikhs) families claim that their ancestor Qazi Muhammad Yusuf, who arrived in Bilgram in 1018, was a descendant of caliph Usman.[212]

Based on the above descriptions, one is impressed by how much the historical works on the qasbah of Bilgram are engrossed with aspects of family, genealogy, and their interconnections. As discussed in the previous chapter, genealogy was one of the identity markers for qasbati Muslims. Accentuating one's linkage to the family of the Prophet or one of the early caliphs of the Islamic world was no doubt a primary reason for genealogy-compilation. While Arabs also delved into genealogy, those Muslims who came to South Asia practiced it more religiously because, being in a land far away, they needed it more than the Arabs to establish their connection back to their ancestral homes. It was these Muslims who settled in qasbahs such as Bilgram. For them, practicing, circulating, claiming, and establishing genealogies were all common activities. The genealogies of South Asian Islam, more than anywhere else in the Islamic world, are characterized by features global as well as

[209] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 20-39.
[210] Ibid., 41.
[211] Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami*, 39-40.
[212] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 91-95.

local. Genealogies in Bilgram, for instance, do not just refer to the Prophet's family or that of one of the caliphs. *Faateh Bilgram* or those individuals who had come to Bilgram for the first time and introduced Islam to the region are referred to equally, if not more than the Prophet's or the caliphs' families. That is why these genealogies tend to make sure that the likes of Qazi Muhammad Yusuf Makki al-Madani, Khwaja Imaduddin Chishti, and Muhammad Sughra are mentioned.

The idea behind these mentions seems to be an appropriation of the prestige associated with the noble work done by ancestors. People in a particular family were not only sadaat or shayyukh (on the basis of their noble birth) but were also part of families that had an immense contribution to Islam and the region concerned. It would make them *khandani* (of noble family) Muslims, meaning that one was noble by birth but equally so on the basis of one's family's and own deeds. Zafar Auganwi, the biographer of Safeer Bilgrami says: "As far as Safeer Bilgrami is concerned, he did not only uphold the pride and honor of a family but in his household, being khandani was taken to be a sign of eminence."[213] This was true of other families and households as well. Being a sharif Muslim was a matter associated with blood, only those with genealogical connections going back the Prophet and his companions could claim that status. But being a khandani Muslim was something achievable, in addition to one's status defined by noble birth. Once attained by someone in a family, this khandani-hood could be carried through generations. This is the reason why we find people such as Safeer Bilgrami claiming a status by claiming an ancestral connection with Muhammad Sughra. The notion among the Muslims of South Asia of khandani people is thus a mix of status, combining noble birth with noble deeds. In the history of qasbahs, both seem to have worked in tandem. It mattered for the society to know who you were and what you did, and it still does.[214] It will be worth

[213] Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami*, 39.
[214] There is a very interesting paper that discusses the marriage patterns among South Asian Muslims. In this paper, the author explains the kinship and marriage networks as they exist among the *ashraf* Muslim communities in South Asia from colonial to post-colonial times. Theodore P. Wright, "Muslim

inquiring to see how the khandani factor articulates itself in other contexts, especially among non-ashraf communities.

A detailed history of Bilgram is illustrative of how qasbahs evolved over time. In *Tarikh-e-Bilgram*, Safeer Bilgrami writes: "Under the Mughals, Bilgram fell under sarkar Khairabad adjoining Akhtarnagar in suba Awadh. And, now under the British rule, this qasbah has been attached to Hardoi, and Hardoi is about seven to eight *kos* from Bilgram."[215] Once under British rule, certain changes were made in the administrative structure. Interestingly, official British sources view Bilgram as three distinct administrative units. The larger Bilgram area is referred to as a tahsil parallel to Hardoi. These sources also treat Bilgram as a pargana and, finally, divide up pargana Bilgram into several mauzas.[216] Different mauzas of pargana Bilgram included Alapur, Bilgram khas, Faizpur Campu, Fatehpur, Ghanipur, Haibatpur, Hasnapur, Jajnamau, Khairullapur, Mohammadpur That, and Pahalwanabad. The smallest unit of Bilgram is seen as Bilgram khas, or proper Bilgram. This area combined with some areas around it constituted the qasbah – a region housing prominent Muslim institutions and families and thereby representing the hub of intellectual and cultural activities. *Tarikh-e-Bilgram* mentions that the qasbah of Bilgram consisted of 18 mahals and had a total population of 12,173 as of February 17,1881.[217] Later, in 1900, Bilgram was turned into a notified area which meant nothing more than another administrative label. T.A.H. Way, Deputy Commissioner of Hardoi wrote to the Commissioner of the Lucknow Division on February 21, 1910:

> The population of Bilgram is 11,000. The town has long been distinguished for famous servants of the state. It is more fit for local self-government than any of the three existing Notified Areas. The residents include two retired Deputy Collectors (one of whom has had a distinguished career in the Gwalior state), a Taluqdar who is also an Honorary Magistrate, and a minor Taluqdar

Politics in South Asia: Who You Are and Who You Marry," *The Aziz Ahmad Lecture*, South Asia Studies (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1991).

[215] Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami*, 142.

[216] *Revision of Settlement*, Hardoi District, File no. 814, Revenue Block (A), 1896, UPSA, 557.

[217] Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami*, 142.

> who will attain his majority in 2 years. The trade of the town is showing a tendency to revive, which will be stimulated by the recent opening of the Madhoganj-Bilgram Railway extension. The inhabitants are about to start a centrifugal sugar factory and a cooperative urban bank.[218]

Although the above statement reflects the administrative and the economic side of the qasbah, one can deduce that Bilgram was inhabited by educated people. This deduction is confirmed by a study of the people who inhabited Bilgram. A host of educated Muslims, not only deputy collectors and magistrates, inhabited this qasbah. Even during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were a number of residents of different professions, ideological orientations, and backgrounds: Sufis, qazis, British officials, lawyers, writers, poets, and so on. Qazi Abdul Wali (1882-1903) came from a landed family and served as the qazi of qasbah Bilgram and later as the Registrar of the pargana Bilgram; Maulvi Rafiuddin (1885-1958) served as an official in the state of Hyderabad; Qazi Azizuddin Ahmad Bilgrami graduated from Allahabad University in 1909 with a Bachelor's degree and was appointed as the Deputy Collector for the Saharanpur district; and Darogha Nasir Ali (d.1889) was a man of means who gradually lost his properties but is noted for leaving his mark on the way certain mosques were built within the qasbah.[219]

It is remarkable that in the local historical writings on qasbahs women are not only discussed alongside men but they are mentioned as more than mere followers and companions. One such example is that of Akbarabadi Begum, the sole daughter of Darogha Nasir Ali and wife of Maulvi Zahiruddin, a resident of qasbah Bangarmau. Contrary to the custom of a wife moving to her husband's house, in this case, Maulvi Zahiruddin left his qasbah and moved initially to his father-in-law's house and later to a house built by his wife in Bilgram.[220] This dispels the stereotype that it was only women who had to leave their ancestral homes. Historian Shariful

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[218] *Conversion of Act XX town of Bilgram*, 1900, UPSA.
[219] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 216-24.
[220] Ibid., 223-24.

Hasan Bilgrami describes Akbarabadi Begum as a very popular figure in the qasbah. In another example, Darogha Khalil Ahmad of Bilgram had three daughters: Kaneez Fatima, Bilqees Fatima, and Tayyiba Khatoon, who were married to different professionals within and outside qasbah Bilgram. Although they settled outside of Bilgram and lived happy lives with their children, these three daughters never forgot their native qasbah and made sure to come back to Bilgram every year during the time of Muharram.[221] This fact shows that women played a powerful role in carrying forward and strengthening the notion of qasbati identity and perhaps also influencing their children.

In addition, there are numerous examples of women becoming active agents in bringing prestige to their sons, fathers and husbands while marital alliances took place between families from different qasbahs.[222] Also, Gail Minault has shown how certain women of Bilgrami background aligned themselves with some European and other Hyderabadi women to found an association that came to be known as the Lady Hydari Club. Later, some of them also laid the foundation for the Anjuman-e-Khvatin-e-Islam (Muslim Ladies' Association) in 1913, which supported Muslim girls' education among other social and charitable activities.[223] We also have other examples of how girls' education among Muslims was promoted in the qasbah. A government file mentions that, in 1929, a huge plot of twenty acres was acquired for the establishment of a girls' school in Bilgram. This land belonged to local zamindars.[224] Whether or not the zamindars voluntarily participated in the

[221] Ibid., 225.
[222] Kaneez Fatima, one of the Bilgrami women mentioned above, daughter of Darogha Khalil Ahmad, married Qazi Muhammad Azam Ali in 1909. She gave birth to a son named Qazi Shamsuddin who went to the Aligarh Muslim University and was employed in a good position in the state of Bhopal. Kaneez Fatima later separated from Azam Ali and married Maulvi Neyaz Hyder of the Qazipura locality in Bilgram. They had two daughters and a son. This example shows that women such as Kaneez Fatima were instrumental in bringing prestige to different relationships and yet exercised a choice – at least of remarrying and leading another life without much ado about it – even though the reason for her separation from Azam Ali goes unmentioned.
[223] Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, 210, 285.
[224] *Acquisition of Land for the Construction of a Girls' School at Bilgram, District Hardoi*, File no. 1166, Education Department, 1929, UPSA.

construction of the school, the school's mere construction does show that a demand for girls' education existed in the qasbah. The Bilgramis' expansion of educational opportunities included their own efforts coupled with help from the British government. This demonstrates that their notion of modernity was highly interactive and allowed a space to both traditional and Western methods.

Bilgram had an extraordinary educational and intellectual environment. H. Blochmann, an Indo-Persian scholar of the Calcutta Madrasa, wrote in 1873 that "Belgram [*sic*] was a great seat of Muhammadan learning from the time of Akbar to the present century."[225] We have discussed briefly how Bilgram was inhabited by educated people of different backgrounds. Bilgram has produced some of the most talented people in Indian history. In *Ain-e-Akbari*, Abul Fazl lists Shaikh Abdul Wahid Bilgrami (1510-1608) as one of "the learned men of his time." Abul Fazl notes that Abdul Wahid was born in Bilgram and authored a commentary on the *Nuzhat-ul-Arwah* and several treatises on the technical terms of the Sufis.[226] In particular, Abdul Wahid has been discussed as someone who tried to reconcile Vaishnav symbols and the terms and ideas used in Hindu devotional songs with orthodox Muslim beliefs.[227] Qazi Shariful Hasan Bilgrami lists a number of learned men from various Shaikh families who excelled in Arabic. He further describes Qazi Mahmood bin Qazi Kamal from Bilgram, who was among the nobles of Emperor Akbar. Qazi Mahmood held several jagirs including the jagir of the pargana Bilgram.[228] He earned the title of *Ziya-ul-Mulk* and lived through the reign of Emperor Shahjahan, who made him his ambassador to the Shah of Iran. The Shah was impressed with him and wrote a letter full of praise for him to Shahjahan. Qazi Mahmood's status in the imperial service was raised and he was promoted to one of the closest aides of Emperor Shahjahan. A similar treatment was given to Nawab Ruhul Amin Khan bin Qazi Muhammad Saeed who had an excellent command of Arabic, Persian, and Hindvi. The Mughal emperor

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[225] Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, 316n.
[226] Ibid., 547.
[227] Alam, "Assimilation from a Distance," 174.
[228] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 276-77.

Shah Alam was so impressed with his knowledge that he gave him several jagirs and a mansab rank of 6,000.[229] Mufti Amir Hyder Bilgrami was a historian who wrote *Sawaneh Akbari*, a well-researched document on the reign of Akbar and the society of his time.[230] *Sawaneh Akbari* is a first-rate historical account that takes into consideration all the previous works on Akbar's reign in order to provide a complete and critical history.[231] Furthermore, Syed Murtaza Husain Bilgrami, Syed Ali Bilgrami, Syed Shadan Bilgrami, Khan Bahadur Qazi Azizuddin Ahmad Bilgrami, and numerous other individuals contributed invaluably to the intellectual life of the qasbah of Bilgram. Many of them were exposed to both English and traditional education and were able to adapt to the changes brought about by British rule and culture. Some of these intellectuals shall be discussed in a following chapter.

The existence of libraries and collections of books also added to the intellectual milieu of Bilgram. The culture of this qasbah was such that the educated considered keeping books with care and copying them as a recreational activity.[232] For this reason, most households maintained at least a small collection of books. The older generation of Bilgram had a deep interest in writing books and collecting them.[233] One of the assignments given by the ulama to the students who came from outside Bilgram was to copy books. This practice ensured the multiplication of books, especially old editions that were then added to the shelves of individual and public collections within the qasbah. Moreover, the presence of various scholars encouraged the collection of books on philosophy, *mantiq* (logic), *fan-e-balaghat* (rhetoric), *tafsir*

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[229] Ibid., 278.
[230] Ibid., 307.
[231] H. Blochmann of Calcutta Madrasah, a renowned scholar of Indo-Persian historical sources and the translator of Abul Fazl's *Ain-e-Akbari*, speaks very highly of *Sawaneh Akbari*. He writes: "This work is a modern compilation dedicated to William Kirkpatrick, and was compiled by Amir Haidar of Belgram from the Akbarnamah, the Tabaqat, Badaoni, Firishtah, the *Akbarnamah by Shaikh Ilahdad of Sirhind* (poetically called *Faizi* and *Abulfazl's letters*, of which the compiler had *four* books. The sources in *italics* have never been used by preceding historians. This work is perhaps the only critical historical work written by a native, and confirms an opinion which I have elsewhere expressed, that those portions of Indian History for which we have several sources, are full of the most astounding discrepancies as to details." Abul Fazl Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, 316n.
[232] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 299.
[233] Samdani, *Hayat-e-Jalil,* Vol I, 170.

(exegesis), medicine, Arabic and Persian literature, and so on.[234] Over time, scholars such as Qazi Yusuf Gazroni, Qazi Abul Fateh, Syed Abdul Bilgrami, Shah Tayyeb, Abdul Wahid Bilgrami, and Abdul Jalil Bilgrami contributed immensely to the building up of collections. However, with the promotion of English by the British in India, an interest in traditional literature and sciences and the patronage of such fields declined. Smaller libraries and collections merged into larger ones and gradually some collections from Bilgram made their way to cities like Lucknow and libraries such as the one at Aligarh Muslim University. This eventual migration, though, does not take away from the fact that libraries were a crucial element of the intellectual life in Bilgram. Whereas keeping the books within the qasbah promoted internal education, the dispersal of books to different places may have carried Bilgram's legacy of knowledge and wisdom to the outside world.

Another remarkable aspect of the history of Bilgram has been the way Bilgramis went to different places, contributed to other societies, and earned a name for their qasbah by working in different fields. The place most tied to Bilgrami fame is the Nizam's Hyderabad. It all began with Syed Hussain Bilgrami (1844-1926), later known as Imad-ul-Mulk, joining the Hyderabad state in 1873 to serve under Nawab Salar Jung. Imad-ul-Mulk was born in Bilgram and had worked in Lucknow before moving to Hyderabad, where he became an indispensable figure in the field of governance.[235] While we shall discuss more about him later, what is noticeable is that his able service and subsequent rise in bureaucracy designated Hyderabad as an ideal place to work for other Bilgramis, who thus followed suit. Hyderabad needed able, educated, and diligent public servants. Muhammad Hasan Bilgrami (b. 1867) was among several Bilgramis who joined the services of the Nizam's government in Hyderabad. He was born and educated in Bilgram before going to Canning College in

[234] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 300-01.
[235] Hakim Sayyid Shams Ullah Qadri, compiled, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk Memorial Volume: Imadiya Historical Miscellany* (Hyderabad, Deccan: The Tarikh Office, 1925), 10-15.

Lucknow and Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh.[236] There were also people like Nazirul Hasan Hosh Bilgrami ((1894-1955) who never went to a modern educational institution but was a fine scholar of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu literature and had trained in some renowned madrasas in different cities.[237] Like many other Bilgramis, he also served the Nizam's government in different administrative capacities, including the offices of the Inspector of Savings Bank and the Superintendant of Posts. One particular qasbah producing so many qualified individuals to govern a state is rather unique. It seems that in the history of South Asia, not even larger cities achieved such a distinction.

Bilgramis also migrated and settled in different parts of India. *Ibrat-ul-'Alam*, written by Syed Abbas Ali Khan Bilgrami in 1870, is an interesting family history of Syed Nurul Hasan of Bilgram, who had built an estate in Shahabad of Bihar as early as the late eighteenth century.[238] In due course, this must have led many other Bilgramis to settle in different parts of Bihar. A few members from the family of Syed Murtaza Bilgrami went to the qasbah of Mahrehra in the district Etah of UP, while yet others settled in the qasbah of Koath in the Arrah district of Bihar.[239]

Moreover, Bilgramis living outside Bilgram have overtly articulated their association with Bilgram and have celebrated their Bilgrami identity. We have already discussed how Safeer Bilgrami always cherished his connection to Bilgram, though he spent most of his life in Arrah, Bihar. As a number of Bilgramis were highly educated and qualified, they were much sought after in other states as well. For instance, they joined different bureaucratic and academic positions within the administration of the Nawabs of Rampur and Bhopal. Allama Syed Aulad Husain

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[236] Ibid., 161-63.

[237] Samsam Shirazi, compiled, *Bagh-e-Dilkusha or Who's Who in Hyderabad – Deccan among Nobles, Officers, Lawyers, Doctors and Poets* (Hyderabad, Deccan: Mushire Alam Directory, 1939), 424-26.

[238] Alam, *The Crisis of Empire*, 330.

[239] Shibli Numani, *Baqyat-e-Shibli* (Lahore: Majlis-e-Taraqqi-e-Adab, 1965), 187

Shadan Bilgrami Naqvi Bukhari (1869-1948), for one, served as Professor of Persian at Madrasa Alia in the state of Rampur before moving to Lahore.[240]

A history of Bilgram reflects the unique identity of each individual qasbah. While this history underscores different aspects typical of a qasbati environment, it also had certain unique features. Many of Bilgram's intellectuals received English education and combined their knowledge of Western culture with their existing traditions and religious practices. The presence of different intellectuals and an intellectual environment places it alongside other qasbahs. A sense of pride and nostalgia is also a commonality found in other qasbahs. However, what differentiates Bilgram from others is the fact that Bilgramis shone outside their qasbah to an unprecedented extent. While bringing fame to their own qasbah, they also helped run princely states such as Hyderabad, Rampur, and Bhopal. This is very well reflected in the way these states sought out and engaged more Bilgramis in the running of their administrative machinery.

THE QASBAH OF AMROHA

Among the historical qasbahs of North India, Amroha is one of the oldest. It is also known far and wide for a number of reasons: its intellectuals, Sufi dargahs, and its rich history, which extends from the time of the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Empire through colonial rule. *Tarikh-e-Amroha* by Mahmood Ahmad Hashmi Abbasi is the most comprehensive history of this qasbah and probably the only one that has used a wide array of primary sources. Before its publication in 1930, a number of historical works had appeared concerning the history of Amroha, but the majority of them approached Amroha's history by focusing solely on certain prominent families of the qasbah. Maulvi Muhibb Ali Khan Abbasi wrote *Aina-e-Abbasi* in 1878, which dealt with some sadaat and sharif families of Amroha with only a few remarks beyond that discussion. Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi criticizes *Aina-e-Abbasi* for being

[240] Shadani, *Hayat Shadan Bilgrami*. Hafiz Ahmad Ali Khan Shauq, *Tazkirah-e-Kamilan-e-Rampur* (Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1986), 68-75.

too brief and "no more than a *risala* (pamphlet)" [241] Maulana Aale Hasan Bakhshi wrote *Nujhat-ul-Tawarikh* in 1880, which was followed by Syed Asghar Husain Naqvi's *Tarikh-e-Asghari* in 1889. The latter gets somewhat beyond family history. Another major work on Amroha that has often been quoted is *Tarikh-e-Wastiya* by Munshi Syed Rahim Bakhsh Naqvi, published in 1904. Whatever the contentions, criticisms, and claims among historians, it is clear that there was a strong tradition of compiling history within the qasbah. Historian Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi even claims that history-writing in the qasbah was a tradition brought by the Muslims since finding a reliable historical work from pre-Islamic times was next to impossible.[242]

Clearly, Amroha has a long history. This is reflected in the interpretations that have come up explaining why this qasbah is called Amroha. There are three different explanations for the name.[243] First, tradition has it that this territory was once ruled by a Rajput king named Amar Jodha and, in due course, was named after its former ruler. The second version goes that Amroha is derived from the Sanskrit word "Amrovanam," a combination of the words, *aamr* (mango) and *vanam* (forest), as this area has long been famous for its mango trees. Under this interpretation, only *va* of *vanam* was continued. The third interpretation, and the one supported by the people of Amroha, argues that the reason for the qasbah's nomenclature is a mix of its Sanskrit and Persian descriptions along with one other aspect added to it: the qasbah of Amroha was also famous for a fish called "Rohu." So the name Amroha represents the material aspects of the qasbah: *aam*, *aamr*, or *ambeh* (mango) and *rohu* (a fish).

Another interesting aspect of Amroha's history is the variety of its rulers over time.[244] Its recorded history is said to have begun with the ascendancy of Raja Amar Jodha in 474 B.C., who apparently founded Amroha. In due course, Amroha was

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[241] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, Preface.
[242] Ibid., 1.
[243] Ibid., 2-3. These versions as pointed out in *Tarikh-e-Amroha* also appear in earlier works such as *Nujhat-ul-Tawarikh*. The claim also exists that it was Syed Shah Wilayat, the highly revered Sufi of the region, who named this qasbah after *Aam* and *Rohu*. Jamal Ahmad Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha,* Vol I (Hyderabad, Deccan: Azam Steam Press, 1934), 5-7.
[244] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 3-87.

ruled by Tomar Rajputs, Kayasthas, Katehr Rajputs, Gujjars, Jats, and Tagas. The latter played an important role in resisting Islamic invaders in the region. The invasion of Mahmud Ghaznavi brought temporary Muslim control to this region in 1018. Control went back to Hindu rajas with Ghaznavi's return to the regions of modern Afghanistan and the confinement of his rule to the northwestern part of the subcontinent. On the question of Muslims eventually settling in the region, there are details concerning Syed Salar Masud Ghazi, popularly referred to as Ghazi Miyan (1014-33).[245] A son of Mahmud Ghaznavi's sister, Salar Masud fought wars in the western Gangetic plains as a *ghazi*, defeated many Hindu kings, and was killed in a battle at the young age of nineteen.[246] His shrine in Bahraich, now in eastern UP, has been a place of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Muslims since the fourteenth century. There is no mention of Salar Masud in the history of the Ilbari Turks, but Amir Khusrau's *Ijaz-i-Khusravi* mentions Salar Masud as a well-known saint.[247] His tomb was a site visited by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. Popular ballads, still sung in this region of UP, depict Salar Masud, or Ghazi Miyan, as a protector of herdsmen, women, and their cows.

How is the story of Ghazi Miyan related to Amroha? Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi writes that:

> […] there is a popular tradition that in this territory it was Salar Masud Ghazi who organized a crusade for the first time and the fortresses of Amroha and Sambhal was won by none but him. Salar Masud is known by different names

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[245] Shahid Amin has conducted a fascinating study on the historical memory of Ghazi Miyan incorporating sources such as folklore, popular histories, and a seventeenth century hagiography. Shahid Amin, "On Retelling the Muslim Conquest of North India." In Partha Chatterjee and Anjan Ghosh, eds., *History and the Present* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), 24-43. See also, Tahir Mahmood, "The Dargah of Sayyid Salar Masud Ghazi in Bahraich: Legend, Tradition, and Reality," In Christian W. Troll, ed., *Muslim Shrines in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 24-43, and Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, "A Note on the Dargah of Salar in Bahraich in the Light of the Standard Historical Sources." In Troll, ed., *Muslim Shrines*, 44-47. One of the earliest mentions of Ghazi Miyan is found in Sleeman's account of Awadh, first published in 1858. See W. H. Sleeman, *Journey through the Kingdom of Oude, in 1849-50*, Vol. I (Lucknow: Helicon Publications, 1989), 48-49.

[246] H. M. Elliott and John Dowson, *The History of India, as Told by its Own Historians: The Muhammadan* Period, Vol II (London: Trubner and Co., 1869), 513-49.

[247] Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India, Vol. I*, 311.

> in different places. His mausoleum is in Bahraich…. It is said that in the region of Shahbazpur, about four miles east of Sambhal, Salar Masud Ghazi and his companions had emerged victorious against Hindus to commemorate which once every year a fair is organized there known as the fair of the lance. The same fair is organized in Sambhal the following day probably to honor the oncoming entry of the founding fathers. This fair is popularly known as the "fair of the old lance." The lance festivals of Puranpur and Amroha are said to be commemorative of the same victory. Moreover, it is also accepted that the martyrs buried in and around Amroha are those daring companions of Salar Masud Ghazi who chose to embrace death in those battles.[248]

Amroha, in fact, fell on the route of Salar Masud Ghazi's chains of conquests. Amroha, thus, becomes a part of the history of Muslim conquest. But the stories surrounding Salar Masud Ghazi[249] do not completely resolve the question of Muslim settlement in the qasbahs of Amroha and Sambhal. He may have conquered these qasbahs, but the actual Muslim control began only with the invasion of Sultan Muhammad Ghori in 1193-94.

We have already discussed how the qasbahs of Badayun, Sambhal, and Amroha were united as one administrative unit since the ascendancy of the first Delhi Sultan, Qutubuddin Aibak. This was known as *Vilayat-e-Amroha* under Iltutmish, as pointed out earlier. Since this region had many Rajput clans, there was a series of rebellions and clashes (*fitna-o-fasaad*) against the new control extended by the Muslim rulers. The historian Firishta describes how Sultan Balban attacked Suba Katehr with five thousand cavalry and suppressed resistance in the region of Badayun, Amroha, and Sambhal to such an extent that until the time of Jalaluddin Khilji, no one dared to rebel in Katehr.[250] Amir Ali Hatim Khan was made the first jagirdar of Amroha, as already discussed above. Malik Aijazuddin Ghori served as the hakim of Amroha under Sultan Balban, followed by Malik Ambar Sultani under

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[248] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 10.

[249] Besides folklore, ballads, and other sources, *Mirat-e-Masudi* provides a detailed heroic account of Salar Masud Ghazi's expeditions. It was written by Shaikh Abdur Rahman Chishti in the seventeenth century, during the reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir. As is obvious, it came out more than five hundred years after the death of Ghazi Miyan.

[250] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 18.

Sultan Kayqubad.[251] Despite lying outside Delhi, Amroha remained an important place for the Sultans of Delhi. The fact that it served as a garrison for some time indicates that the Sultans considered it important or strategically crucial. Khizr Khan, son of Alauddin Khilji, stayed in Amroha for a while.[252] That the son of the Sultan of Delhi chose to spend time in Amroha speaks volumes about the significance of this qasbah, regardless of the precise reason for his stay.

Besides political significance, Amroha has also been recognized in history both socially and culturally. The arrival of Syed Sharfuddin Shah Wilayat, popularly known as Shah Wilayat (d. 1381), a greatly revered saint among Hindus, Muslims, and others, marks a turning point in Amroha's history.[253] He came from Wasit in Iraq via Multan and settled in Amroha during the early years of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's reign. Shah Wilayat is considered the founding father of the sadaat people of Amroha as he is a descendant of Imam Ali and thereby of the Prophet. His descendants played an important role in the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire and obtained many madad-e-ma'ash grants and mu'afi lands. Ibn Battuta testified that the Shah's eldest son, Syed Amir Ali, was appointed qazi during the reign of Muhammad Tughluq.[254] It is through Shah Wilayat that people in Amroha establish their sadaat standing.[255] There are different sadaat families in Amroha, of which the most numerous – the Naqvis – are said to be direct descendants of the saint.[256] The annual gatherings, or 'urs, at the tomb of Shah Wilayat attract devotees in large numbers. What is more striking is that despite its universal appeal as a Sufi shrine, Shah Wilayat's mausoleum also symbolizes the qasbah of Amroha. Moreover, Amroha has had many Sufi saints of eminence, although none of them could reach

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[251] Ibid., 20.
[252] Ibid., 31-35.
[253] Munshi Syed Rahim Bakhsh Naqvi, *Tawarikh-e-Wastiya* (Amroha, 1904), 49-52. Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 36-37. Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha,* Vol I, 8-9.
[254] Husain, *Medieval Towns*, 12.
[255] For at least thirty three very well-laid out shajrahs (genealogies) of families in different neighborhoods of Amroha see, Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha,* Vol I, 385-421.
[256] Naqvi, *Faizaan-e-Sadaat*, 12.

the same level of eminence as Shah Wilayat. Munshi Rahim Bakhsh lists at least thirteen other saints in the history of Sufism in the qasbah. They are: Syed Azizuddin, Qazi Syed Abdul Latif, Abdul Majid, Syed Abdul Hakim, Syed Nasiruddin Ghori, Shah Abban, Shah Ilahdad, Shaikh Ghasi, Shah Abdul Hadi, Shah Rahmatullah, Pir Bakhsh, Shaikh Qutb, and Ibrahim Shahid.[257] This extensive list demonstrates the special character of the qasbah as a place where Sufism flourished historically.

One of the landmarks in the history of Amroha is the fact that Ibn Battuta, the famous fourteenth-century Moroccan traveler, spent time there. As a matter of fact, rarely do we find any other qasbah being visited and paid so much attention by a world traveler. This provides the history of the qasbah Amroha with a moment of celebrity. Ibn Battuta stayed there for two months.[258] Prior to his arrival, he had been granted 100,000 mounds of grain by Sultan Muhammad Tughluq. The Sultan's vizier gave him 10,000 mounds in Delhi and asked him to go to Amroha to collect the rest of it. No doubt, this very fact points to the qasbahs's great prosperity, whether in terms of production, collection, or hoarding of agricultural produce. In regard to his visit, Ibn Battuta writes: "Then we reached Amruha [*sic*], a small and beautiful city whose officials came out to see; so did its qazi, Syed Amir Ali, along with the head (*shaikh*) of the hospice. The qazi and the shaikh of the hospice both joined to give me a sumptuous feast."[259] Ibn Battuta also mentions Aziz Khammar as the revenue officer (*wali-ul-kharaj*) of Amroha at that time. Moreover, his comments show that his visit to and stay at Amroha left him with a very positive impression of this qasbah. This becomes clear especially when compared to his passing visits to other areas that later develop as qasbahs. His references to Badayun[260] and Kara[261] are very superficial since he describes them only as "cities;" and writes of Sandila[262] only as "a village." Ibn Battuta's visit to Amroha back in the fourteenth century indicates the

[257] Naqvi, *Tawarikh-e-Wastiya* 49-59
[258] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 37-38.
[259] Husain, *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta*, 145.
[260] Ibid., 21.
[261] Ibid., 38, 41.
[262] Ibid., 107.

exposure some people of this region had to meeting with a traveler from another culture. His positive observations of the residents of Amroha also reflect the accommodative and hospitable nature of these people.

In Mughal times, we find its founding Emperor Babar writing that he gave "the jagir of Amroha worth 30 lakhs (3,000,000) as salary to Shaikhzada Musa Maroof Farmuli in 1528.[263] Once again, the high figure as well as its mere mention speaks of the significance Babur gave to this region. As mentioned earlier, Abul Fazl writes of Sayyid Muhammad of Amroha who had served as Mir Adl, the chief justice, during the time of Akbar. In general, residents of Amroha received grants and jagirs as salaries and madad-e-ma'ash from various Mughal emperors. *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha* provides information on many such individuals who joined the Mughal nobility under different rulers. For instance, Syed Abdul Wahid, Syed Zulfiqar Ali, and Syed Muzaffar Ali, among many others, held different mansab ranks under the later Mughal rulers.[264] When the British started administering the region, they too recognized the prominence of the Syed Muslims of Amroha and worked on enlisting their support, a point that we shall elaborate on later. That the Syed Muslims' position continued to be recognized is evidenced by the following statement made in a memorandum signed by Syed Muslims of Amroha in 1903 and given to Sir James La Touche, Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces:

> […] the Shia Syeds of Amroha are a very respectable body and have been settled in that town from very early times…. They have always received honours and distinctions at the hands of the Mahomedan Emperors of Delhi who have conferred revenue free grants of several lacs on them (vide Gazetteer of India, volume vi, and Settlement Report of the Moradabad District)…. These grants have been recognized by the British Government of which the said Syeds have always been the loyal subjects. Several of the members of their community have the honour of being invited to the Durbar of His Excellency the Viceroy and of His Honour the Lieutenant General of

[263] Babur, *Tuzuk-e-Babari*, Urdu trans by, Rashid Akhtar Nadvi (Delhi, 1965), 362.
[264] Jamal Naqvi provides a family by family account of such prominent individuals. Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha,* Vol I, 355.

> the United Provinces, and the British Government have always extended to them the respect and regard due to their high rank and noble descent.[265]

The above statement shows how the sadaat Muslims of Amroha continued to enjoy the patronage of their rulers, or at least strove to do so. These Muslims were also assertive of their role in the history of the region and argued that the British should recognize their historical importance. The change of regime from the Mughal to the British did not have much effect on their social status that they continued to promote and carry along, as their inclusion in the government gazetteers indicates. In addition, they adopted the new English education and used that to advance their social position.

Education highlights both the continuity and discontinuity in the history of this qasbah. Islamic education had been a part of qasbah culture since the time Muslims settled in this region. When the British annexed the region of Awadh in 1856, they tried to fulfill their growing administrative needs by making changes in the existing educational institutions, in addition to introducing new policies and curricula. The British needed people at high, middle, and low grades of administration. They wanted to fill clerical positions with preference "to be given to all those men who have passed the middle English examination and still more."[266] They introduced English as a component of school curriculum or examination, while still hiring those knowledgeable in vernacular languages. Before the arrival of the British, institutionalized education in Amroha was confined to various madrasas. By the late nineteenth century, the British government had many primary, middle and secondary schools within Amroha. The government also patronized some of the madrasas. However, there were still some madrasas that ran independently of government patronage and control.

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[265] This petition was signed by Syed Masihul Hasan, Syed Ali Sufi Raza, Syed Sibte Rasul, Syed Ahmad Husain, Syed Abbas Ali, Syed Ali Mohsin, Syed Athar Hasan, Syed Ale Hasan, Syed Ale Yasin, Syed Nafis Hasan, Syed Mukhtar Hasan, Syed Ali Dawar, Syed Mustafa, Syed Nasir Hosain etc. *Muharram Disturbances at Amroha in the Moradabad District*, File no. 255, General Department, 1903, UPSA.

[266] *Residential and Educational Qualifications required of Candidates for Government Service*, File no. 610C/143, General Administration, 1907, UPSA.

Islamic education in Amroha started in the mosques where the ‘ulama would give lessons to groups of students surrounding them. This used to be the basic format of madrasa education in those days. Mahmood Abbasi writes: “Islamic Sultanate was responsible for their [madrasas’] expenses. It was through this system where students learned through most humble means and made their way to becoming the greatest of scholars; from whose attainments and wonders are filled the pages of tazkirahs and tarikh.”[267] One can name several madrasas that were founded in the qasbah. It started with Madrasa Muazziya, which was followed by Madrasa Maulvi Dost Muhammad, Madrasa Mir Kallu, and Madrasa Khurshid Jahi during the time of the Delhi Sultanate. During late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Taj-ul-Madaris Sani, Madrasa Islamia of Jama Masjid, Madrasa Muhammadiya, Syed-ul-Madaris, Noor-ul-Madaris, and Imam-ul-Madaris were established.[268] All of these were run by scholars of eminence and patronized by some of the most influential figures of the time. Madrasa Islamia was heavily influenced by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi (1832-1879), co-founder of the historic Darul ‘Uloom of Deoband.[269] Madrasa Islamia became so famous that it attracted students from different parts of India. Amroha’s role in madrasa education in India can also be gauged by the fact that Maulana Amir Ahmad Hasan Amrohvi, a teacher at Madrasa Islamia, held an important executive position at Deoband.[270]

Moreover, whereas madrasas in Amroha, such as Madrasa Islamia followed the Deoband curriculum focused on Hadis, Taj-ul-Madaris Sani under the patronage of Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk (1841-1917), a leader of the Aligarh Movement, taught its students English along with regular Arabic, Persian, and Islamic theological lessons.

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[267] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 138-39.
[268] Ibid., 139, 47.
[269] Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi and his *madrasa* at Deoband had such an influence on Madrasa Islamia of Amroha that it was named “Qasim-ul-Uloom” after his visit to Amroha in 1860s. This *madrasa* closed down after a few years until 1883 when it was reopened by Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Hasan Muhaddis Amrohvi, another Deobandi ‘alim from Amroha. Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 142-43.
[270] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 122n.

In a nutshell, madrasas in Amroha represented the broad spectrum of education available to the Muslims of the region. With changing times, the madrasas of Amroha exhibited their flexibility in curricula by incorporating English as a taught subject. The government's sole concern was to use the existing madrasas in addition to the government-run schools with English curricula as recruitment grounds for students. The government did this by trying to influence madrasa education. E. F. L. Winter, collector and magistrate of Moradabad, provided government funds to Syed-ul-Madaris, a madrasa founded in 1892. He gave scholarships and freeships "mainly to train boys for the English school and many have entered that school from it."[271] His purpose was to get students trained in vernacular languages to enroll in Amroha High School, which was set up and run by the government. Amroha thus had a variety of schools with a range of aims, approaches, and curricula which still maintained the traditional structure of madrasa education. This demonstrates the flexible nature of educational institutions in the qasbah that allowed government intervention but simultaneously maintained a degree of autonomous space.

The rich educational environment of Amroha is further testified to by the eminent personalities that this qasbah produced. Amroha's history is full of nobles, scholars, writers, historians, poets, Sufis, teachers, lawyers, and administrators. In fact, there is hardly any field of intellectual activity to which Amroha did not contribute. Going back to the remote past, the legendary Sufi, Shah Wilayat needs no introduction at this point. Similarly, we have already discussed Syed Muhammad of Amroha, who served as Mir Adl in the court of Emperor Akbar. Known far and wide for his knowledge, he was the Chief Justice in Akbar's court and also worked as the governor of the suba (province) of Sind. Jamal Ahmad Naqvi, in *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha*, writes about a number of families that contributed to the intellectual life of the qasbah. His approach looks at individuals and their families residing within different muhallahs. He lists hundreds of individuals across families and generations.

[271] *Free Admission of students from the Syed-ul-Madrasas to the Amroha High School*, File no. 21, A Proceedings nos. 29 to 36, September 1911, UPSA.

For instance, Syed Faqirullah and Syed Bashirullah were brothers known for their knowledge (*ilm-o-fazl*), and both had served as Honorary Magistrates of Amroha; similarly, Maulana Syed Abdul Qayyum was known for his wisdom and Maulana Shabbir Ali was regarded for his skills in *munazara* (religious debate),[272] and so on. An examination of such individuals reveals that Amroha housed intellectuals trained in both Islamic and English educational institutions. They were able to assess aspects of modernity through a process of dialogue and intellectual sharing.

Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi's discussion also follows the same pattern of highlighting the intellectual life of the qasbah. There are two significant points to be noted here. First, it is noteworthy that in a qasbati context individuals are always seen as a part of their families. A man is seen as tied to his father, grandfather, and son. Similarly, a woman's description is related to her family, specifically her father, husband, and son. Family was an important source of identity among Muslims in India, especially since, as previously mentioned, many of them claimed to have descended from the family of the Prophet.[273] In addition, the qasbati Muslims, particularly the *shurafa* (pl. of sharif), had to live up to the professional and intellectual standards set by previous generations while also claiming the prestige that their genealogies carried. Hence, we find a constant effort being exerted to identify oneself with one's family. Secondly, alongside family, an individual is identified by his or her muhallah, or specific neighborhood of residence. This in turn further reinforces family identity. A muhallah was usually a bunch of descendants that branched out from one or more persons who started living in a particular area of the qasbah. For example, muhallah Kot was mostly inhabited by the descendants of Syed Abul Qasim bin Syed Muhammad Mir Adl, a renowned mansabdar.[274] Similar explanations are found in the case of muhallah Bagla and muhallah Lakra.

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[272] Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha,* Vol I, 332, 334.
[273] Francis Robinson, "The British Empire and Muslim Identity in South Asia," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th Ser., 8 (1998): 271-289.
[274] Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha,* Vol I, 345.

One cannot discount the role ‘ulama, or religious leaders, played in the intellectual life of Amroha. Although we have already discussed certain individuals associated with madrasa education in Amroha, Maulana Ahmad Hasan Muhaddis Amrohvi (1850-1902) deserves mention here. It was he who reopened Madrasa Islamia Arabia in Amroha in 1885 and reorganized it by inviting various experts in the fields of *tibb* (medicine), mantiq (logic), philosophy, Hadis, *tafsir* (exegesis), and *fiqh* (jurisprudence).[275] He was a close associate of Maulana Qasim Nanautavi of Deoband, was trained in tibb, and was noted for his oratorical skills during munazara.[276] Amroha had other ‘ulama such as Abdus Salam Siddiqui, who founded Madrasa Muhammadiya; Maulana Syed Najmul Hasan Mujtahid, who started Imamul Madaris; and Syed Taqi Hasan, whose efforts instituted Imamul Madaris that had allowed government funds.[277] Overall, the ‘ulama played a crucial role in making Amroha a center for education. They promoted and continued the trend of madrasa education. As we discussed earlier, some of them also showed an inclination to incorporate English into their existing curricula.

Of all the educated Muslims in Amroha, poets, or *shu‘ara*, and writers are probably the ones who deserve most credit for earning Amroha’s name. Amroha is one of a select few places that can claim to have produced a multitude of the best Urdu poets ever. Many of Amroha’s poets and writers were also skilled in Persian and Arabic. Shaikh Ghulam Hamdani Mushafi Amrohvi (1750-1824) was an Urdu writer of extraordinary talent and a trendsetter in Urdu literature. He was also competent in reciting poetry in Arabic and Persian. As living proof, we have eight of his diwans (collections) in Urdu, three in Persian, and it is said that he wrote one in

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[275] Maulana Mufti Azizur Rahman, *Tazkirah Mashaikh-e-Deoband* (Bijnore: Madina Press, 1967), 179.
[276] *Munazara* means a religious debate, especially the one that takes place between the debators representing two or more different sects or religions. Ibid., 185.
[277] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 146.

Arabic that is untraceable.[278] His prose is equally rich. Mushafi wrote, among many other genres, tazkirahs on Urdu and Persian poets.[279] So profound has been his influence that the famous poet Mahshar Lakhnawi (1866-1935) later wrote:

> *Amroha dar haqiqat aiwan-e-shayari hai*
> *Mawlid hai Mushafi ka Mahshar zara sambhal ke.*[280]
>
> In truth, Amroha is the gallery of poetry
> It's the birth-place of Mashafi, O! Mahshar, behold!

Maulana Ufaq Kazmi started a series on the poets of Amroha in his periodical *Sha'ir-e-Amroha* in 1928-29. Issues of this *risala* (pl. rasa'il) discussed various poets and sampled their poetry. There are other sources as well that discuss these poets and their work emphasizing that a number of them were multifaceted personalities. For instance, Hakim Muhibb Ali Khan Muhibb Abbasi (1827-1906)[281] was not only a poet of Persian and Urdu but also a historian who, in 1878, wrote *Aina-e-Abbasi*, one of the earliest family histories of Amroha. In addition, he also served as the tahsildar of Amroha during the revolt of 1857 and was one of the most respected personalities of the qasbah. Maulvi Qutbuddin Qutb Siddiqui (1863-1912)[282] was a poet of Urdu, Persian, and Arabic. He has also been acknowledged for his expertise in Islamic theology, Quran, Hadis, fiqh, *tasawwuf* (mysticism), tibb, and chemistry. Hamid Ali Khan Hamid Amrohvi (1861-1918),[283] another fascinating personality as a poet and writer in Urdu as well as English, also served as the Deputy Collector. We shall discuss more about him in the following chapter. Hakim Israrul Haque Shauq

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[278] Siddiqui, *Shu'ara-e-Amroha*, 51. Another author writes that Mushafi has six diwans in *rekhta*, and one tazkirah each in Urdu and Persian. Munshi Karimuddin, *Tabaqat-us-Shu'ara-e- Hind*, Vol III (Patna: Idarah-e-Tehqiqat Arabi wa Farsi, 1968), 88.

[279] He wrote three *tazkirahs* on the Urdu and Persian poets of India: *Aqad-e-Suraiyya*, *Tazkirah-e-Hindi Goyan*, and *Riyazul Fusaha*. Of these, *Tazkirah-e-Hindi* is oft-quoted in Urdu literature and is treated as a classic tazkirah.

[280] Quoted in Siddiqui, *Shu'ara-e-Amroha*, 10.

[281] Shauq, *Tazkirah-e-Kamilan-e-Rampur*, 341. Siddiqui, *Shu'ara-e-Amroha*, 103-06.

[282] Siddiqui, *Shu'ara-e-Amroha*, 115-17.

[283] Lakhnawi, *Yadgar-e-Hamid*. Siddiqui, *Shu'ara-e-Amroha*, 127-28.

Siddiqui (1874-1931)[284] was a practitioner of medicine (tibb), an *'alim* (pl. 'ulama) who studied at Madrasa Islamia, a teacher, and a writer and poet in both Urdu and Persian. Examples of litterateurs from Amroha are too numerous to be discussed here. Any list of poets from Amroha would be incomplete without a mention of Seemab Amrohvi (1850-1928), a poet who could write different types of Urdu poetry – *ghazal*, *masnavi*, *qasida*, *ruba'i*, or *nazm* – all with the same dexterity.[285]

In Amroha, we can find numerous examples of women being honored in different contexts. Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi writes that women of almost every sadaat and shurafa (respectable) family received madad-e-ma'ash grants. A madad-e-ma'ash document issued by Emperor Aurangzeb shows that a 100 *bigha* (a little less than an acre) of land was bestowed on Bibi Khaliq, Bibi Makki, and Bibi Zainab, all of whom belonged to the family of Maulana Syed Mir Ali.[286] Many other women in Amroha were honored with grants in this way. One such example is Najmunnisa, daughter of Maulana Baban Abbasi, who was given a grant in 1612 through a royal farman (ordinance) issued by Emperor Jahangir. Besides these honors, many women were given *rozina* (stipends), such as the mother of Syed Fateh Murad, an ancestor of the historian Munshi Rahim Bakhsh.[287] These examples provide us with just a glimpse into the gender dimension as it existed within a qasbah.

Jamal Ahmad Naqvi has written a detailed description of the descendants of Syed Muhammad Mir Adl in terms of his *pisari-o-dukhtari* (sons and daughters).[288] He shows how *aulad-e-dukhtari* (a lineage of girls) began in the family of Syed Abul Qasim bin Syed Muhammad Mir Adl. Syed Muhammad Mir Adl was a famous mansabdar of his time. His sons Syed Abul Qasim and Syed Abul Hasan became renowned mansabdars and jagirdars. Different women within this family also independently held prominence. They inherited family grants and their marriages as

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[284] Siddiqui, *Shu'ara-e-Amroha*, 156-58.
[285] Syed Faizan Hasan, ed., *Diwan Seemab Amrohvi: Shakhsiyat aur Fann* (Delhi: Classical Printers, 1992), 11
[286] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 304.
[287] Ibid., 305.
[288] Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Sadaat-e-Amroha,* Vol I, 344-53.

daughters of a particular family carried immense respect. Bibi Jev, the wife of Syed Hamid, for instance, had many elegant buildings constructed in her muhallah which is still known as the Kot of Bibi Jev. This shows how women manifested self-identity in both private and public spheres. If one raises the question as to how we can claim that women asserted their own identities when their reputations carried their sons' and husbands' names, the answer rests in the fact that even a man in the qasbati context was known by the reputation of his family.

Women, as carriers of their family's legacy whether through marriages at a private level or through an open engagement in public activities, held greater significance than one might imagine based on the time period. A careful study of family genealogies of the qasbah reveals that women were invariably placed in genealogies alongside men – a feature not so common in the compilations of Muslim genealogies elsewhere.[289] Moreover, it is worthwhile noting how Pir Syed Ghiyasuddin Ahmad, a *rais* of Amroha, makes fun of the situation in which sharif women are confined inside houses and are not allowed to obtain any kind of education.[290] Sarcastic in approach, his point of view is indicative of qasbati view that women should be educated. People such as Ghiyasuddin Ahmad provide a critical view of the contemporary society where, he felt, women needed to obtain an education and enter the public sphere. Women enjoyed respect and honor within Amroha, a fact that the qasbati Muslims reinforced with the spread of education among women in the nineteenth century, as we shall see in our further discussions on women.

One of the manifestations of the intellect of the qasbah can be seen in the pursuit of architecture. The architecture of a qasbah cannot be understood in the same way as the design of a city like Delhi or Lucknow. The royalty, majesty, and grandeur

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[289] A condensed version of family genealogies of the sadaat of Amroha presents hundreds of family trees in more than 400 pages. Although women's photographs are not included, this book invariably mentions women and shows how they relate to the rest of their families. Naqvi, *Faizaan-e-Sadaat*.
[290] Pir Syed Ghiyasuddin Ahmad, *Kitab-e-Niswan: yani Masturaat-e-Hind ke liye Dastur-ul-'Aml* (Amroha: Rizvi Press, 1914), 14.

associated with the buildings of the empire – both Mughal and the British – is lacking in the qasbati buildings. But the building designs that we find within a qasbah construct an identity for the qasbah and its residents, while also serving as a trope for understanding the qasbati environment. Buildings such as mosques, water reservoirs, dargahs, imambaras, eidgah, and madrasa make an assortment of statements. They symbolize the pride qasbati Muslims had in their qasbah, their landscape, and their religious identity. The pride displayed in architecture equals that displayed in history-writing, genealogy-compilation, and nostalgic literature. How did this happen? First, one must examine the construction of mosques by the sadaat and shurafa of Amroha. Initially, the construction of early mosques probably represented both a triumph of Islam as well as the need to keep Muslims united in a foreign territory. This holds true for the oldest and simplest of the mosques such as the Masjid Kayqubad in muhallah Saddo, built in 1287. The ornate style and grandeur of Masjid Jama Amroha in muhallah Mullana addressed the need to accommodate a growing Muslim population and a center of learning in the form of Madrasa Imamia, while also communicating a sense of stability. Whereas the beautiful and imposing structure of the Ashraful Masajid depicted the identity of Shia sadaat, Sunni Muslims such as Mir Kallu of Ahl-e-Sunnat wa Jamaat built the Masjid Mir Kallu. Amroha had many mosques named after individuals, along the lines of Masjid Kayqubad, named after the Sultan. Different rulers and administrators constructed mosques in their own names: Masjid Abbasiyan was built by Maulana Muhammad Abbasi during the reign of Emperor Akbar, and Masjid Syed Abdal Muhammad of Muhallah Lakra was made by Abdal Muhammad in 1728.[291] Another fascinating example is Masjid Basri Begum named after the wife of Syed Faiz Ali.[292] Imposing, beautiful, and extensive, this mosque underscores the importance of women in the society of Amroha, particularly when one considers that finding a mosque named after a woman is rare even in cities.

[291] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 98, 102-03.
[292] Ibid., 106-07.

Similar to mosques, dargahs or tombs of Sufi saints also held special significance. The dead saint in his tomb was no less a source of power than his living counterpart[293] -- the sajjada nashin. The dargah, a place frequently visited by devotees, needed to be impressive, evocative, and awe-inspiring in order to encourage obeisance from pilgrims for both the buried saint and the officiating authority, the sajjada nashin. Amroha has numerous dargahs, of which some are more prominent than others. The most frequented dargah of Amroha is that of Shah Wilayat. Like most other dargahs in Amroha, Shah Wilayat's dargah is surrounded by trees, symbolizing his closeness to nature, and hence God. The premises are enclosed by walls, and his immediate family members are buried around his centrally located grand tomb. A number of other graves fall outside the boundary. The outer boundaries of the dargah declare the inside as a protected site combining Shah Wilayat's blessedness, spiritual influence, and maujeza (miracle). It is a popular belief that within the premises of his dargah, scorpions do not sting.[294] Not very far from Shah Wilayat's dargah, there is the dargah of Shah Izuddin Suhrawardi, which is located next to both a huge banyan tree and the oldest tree in all of Amroha.[295] The trees, thus, represent the oldest and the biggest of the qasbah. Both also symbolize the two saints respectively, particularly going by the fact that although Shah Izuddin arrived at Amroha about a century before Shah Wilayat did, the latter is more popular. There are many other dargahs in the qasbah besides these two. Each of them has its own unique history. The abundance of dargahs in this single locality is amazing and exceptional. They show the spiritual, architectural, and intellectual side of qasbati life in Amroha.

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[293] Liebeskind, *Piety on its Knees*, 92.

[294] Maulana Aale Hasan Nakhshabi in his Persian history of Amroha *Nujhat-ul-Tawarikh* writes: "From the miracles and supernatural powers of Hazrat Syed Abdul Aziz alias Shah Izuddin Suhrawardi, it is known that inside the precincts of your [Shah Wilayat's] dargah, scorpions do not sting anyone. One day, the writer [Maulana Ale Hasan Nakhshabi] visited His Excellency's dargah with a few friends. A few scorpions of different sizes were found sitting in between the bricks of the enclosure. We held them in our hands, we also touched their stings with our fingers but we felt nothing." Quoted in Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 112.

[295] Ibid., 98, 111.

Other architectural structures that adorn the landscape of qasbah Amroha are imambaras, *eidgahs* (place for performing *Eid* prayers), *khanqahs* (hospices), *maqbaras* (tombs), *darwazahs* (gates), madrasas, and water reservoirs.[296] Although these buildings can be found in cities too, they are very typical of a qasbah. Huge gates were made at the points of entry of either the qasbah or a muhallah, or particular neighborhood. For instance, Darwazah Gher Munaf was built in 1577 by Shaikh Abul Munaf at the entrance of Munaf Potah, a neighborhood of his family houses. Moradabadi Darwazah, in an extremely dilapidated condition today, opens the qasbah in the direction of Moradabad. Built during the reign of Emperor Shahjahan, it seems the size and grandeur of the various gates of medieval Delhi. Khanqahs are another type of building that one encounters in qasbahs, although now many of them have been reduced to ruins.[297] The khanqahs of Shah Wilayat, Shah Nasiruddin, Shah Shukrullah Qadri, Shah Ibban, and Shah Muhammadi Faiyaz Jafri were some of the khanqahs of Sufi saints from different time periods. They were places where Sufis would live together with their disciples and occasional visitors and places where various questions relating to Sufism and Islam would be discussed. Although a number of such khanqahs in Amroha either were destroyed, converted into imambaras, or expanded into neighborhoods, the dargahs played a significant role in the shaping of the qasbah as an intellectual space. Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi laments the current state of these dargahs in the following words:

> *Padi hain sab ujdi hui khanqahain*
> *Woh darvesh woh sultan ki ummeedgahain*
> *Khuli thiiN jahan ilm-e-batin ki rahain*
> *FarishtoN ki padti thi jinpar nigahain.*[298]
>
> Lying here are all those ruined khanqahs
> Abodes of hope of the ascetic and the king

[296] For a description of some of these with pictures and sketches, see Ibid., 125-33.
[297] A *khanqah* is different from a *dargah*, although both belong to Sufi traditions. The *khanqah* is a place where a living *pir* resides. When the *pir* passes away, his mausoleum is referred to as *dargah*.
[298] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 126.

> Where concealed knowledge was made known
> Upon which angels would cast their eyes.

Among other buildings and monuments, Amroha had numerous maqbaras or tombs. Maqbara Qutubuddin Khan still embellishes the skyline of the qasbah. The tomb of a hakim (administrator) of Amroha, it stands as a tall, square-shaped building with a huge bulbous dome, twelve arched doorways, and four minarets, of which only two survive today. It has fine ornamentation embossed on all sides, which depict various floral patterns. Maqbara Darvesh Ali Khan is the tomb of a mansabdar of Emperor Farrukhsiyar and Maqbara Mir Kallu is of a mansabdar of Bahraich during the reign of Alamgir III. There are also several madrasas, buildings, wells, and ponds. The remnants of Baika Kuan, a *bawli*, or step well, with several levels, arches, and stairways remind us of the earlier Hindu rulers because it was built by Raja Kripa Nath in the era before Muslims arrived there.[299]

One of the most essential features of Amroha's buildings and architecture are the imambaras. This qasbah is one of the few places in India known for a large number of imambaras, shrines where Muharram rites are performed. As Mrs. Ali, a British woman married to a Muslim, Mir Hasan Ali of Lucknow, wrote in the early nineteenth century: "The opulent people of Mussulmaun society have an Emaum-baarah [*sic*] erected in the range of buildings…. The Emaum-baarah is a sacred place, erected for the express purpose of commemorating Muharram."[300] Further, as she has observed, opulent Muslims created imambaras where majlises were held. Amroha has a history of numerous imambaras or *ashurkhana* that continue even to this day. Every locality or neighborhood has at least one imambara. One of the most impressive is the Imambara Wazir-un-Nisa of Muhallah Danishmandan that was started in the early twelfth century, second only in size to the imambaras in Lucknow. Similarly, Azakhana Nooran survives in muhallah Kali Pagdi. It is significant to note that both

[299] Ibid., 92, 104, 128.
[300] Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1974; first published 1832), 19.

of these were established by and are named after women. To sum up, the variety of architectural structures displays a variety of contributions towards the development of an intense intellectual culture in Amroha. What is important is that each form or style of building supported a facet of the intellectual life of the qasbah rather than solely adding to the skyline or exhibiting the aesthetic values of its inhabitants.

A history of Amroha shows that it had certain features typical of a qasbah. It had a very rich literary tradition and intellectual environment, as we have discussed above. Amroha's tradition of education, its illustrious history, presence of Sufi saints, shrines, and dargahs; educated gentry that existed and survived through different regimes; and its architectural splendor are features that make this qasbah stand out. The influence of Amroha and Amrohvis on literature, poetry, and education deserves praise. The role of women in the society of Amroha is also impressive. Education, both Islamic and English, played a significant role in the lives of the qasbatis of Amroha. Moreover, Amroha also invokes a sense of nostalgia in its sons and daughters which is indicated by the existence of Amroha societies in different cities, including in Pakistan and North America.

THE QASBAH OF RUDAULI

Traditionally the largest qasbah of Bara Banki district,[301] Rudauli, popularly referred to as *Rudauli Sharif*, lies about 60 miles east of Lucknow. The reason why Rudauli is suffixed with "Sharif" is typical of a town in South Asia that owes its importance to the presence and impact of Sufis. Rudauli became the first qasbah from where the Chishti order of Sufis spread to other parts of Awadh. The qasbah of Rudauli had many dargahs and maqbaras of Sufis. We have already seen how sources discuss Syed Salar Masud Ghazi, who defeated the Hindu Bhar ruler who controlled

[301] Rudauli's geographical location brought its own advantages. It fell in between Lucknow, the seat of the Mughal suba and later, the kingdom of Awadh, and Faizabad, a one-time capital of Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah of Awadh. Historically, a part of the district of Bara Banki, Rudauli has only recently been moved to the Faizabad district for certain political-administrative reasons.

Rudauli in 1030 AD.[302] There are three different accounts of how this place came to be called Rudauli.[303] First, the town is said to have been founded by the Bhar ruler Raja Rudmal Singh, and it may have taken its name after him. Second, it is said that the name Rudauli came from *Rud-e-wali* (stream of the saint), which signifies Shaikh Salahuddin Suhrawardi and his disciples. One of the first Suhrawardi saints, Shaikh Salahuddin settled in Rudauli, and the name *Rud-e-wali* probably referred to him and his stream of disciples. A third interpretation takes the name as *Rudrawali*, after a form of Lord Shiva. However, the most dominant version seems to be the first one. Rudauli existed even before Muslims settled in the region. After Salar Masud died in 1033, the area lapsed back into the hands of the Bhars. In 1226, Nasiruddin Iltutmish, son of Sultan Iltutmish, became the governor of Awadh. Bhars and Rajputs of the region continued to rebel. Bhars could be controlled only when the Sultan Ibrahim Shah (1402-40), a Sharqi ruler,[304] sent Muhammad Saleh after them in 1418. Muhammad Saleh defeated them and settled in Rudauli.[305]

There is not much information available on Rudauli during the reigns of the Sharqis, Lodis, Mughals, and the Sur dynasty. Abul Fazl writes that Muhammad Quli Khan Barlas was given Awadh as *jagir* by Emperor Akbar.[306] Muhammad Quli Khan contained the Rajputs and then organized Bara Banki into *mahals*, one of which was Rudauli. He also built a fortress in muhallah Katra of Rudauli where soldiers were stationed.[307] Rudauli remained an important town in Mughal Awadh and contributed

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[302] This interpretation is also shared by the District Gazetteer of Bara Banki which says that the first permanent settlement by Muslim invaders in this district was at Satrikh in 421 AH/1030 AD and that this settlement was connected with the invasion of Syed Salar Masud Ghazi. Neville, *Bara Banki*, 153.
[303] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 18-21.
[304] The Sharqi kingdom was an independent sultanate in North India that ruled from 1394 until 1479 with a total of six rulers. Based in Jaunpur, east of Awadh, they had captured territories from Kannauj in the west to Jaunpur in the east. It was for the development of learning and architecture during their rule that Jaunpur came to be known as the Shiraz of India. The Sharqi sultans also captured parts of Awadh for some time. The dynasty was finally overthrown by the Lodi rulers of Delhi.
[305] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 27.
[306] He had earlier held Multan as *jagir* and for a short time was also the governor of Malwa. Allami, *Ain-i-Akbari*, 341.
[307] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 30.

many officials to the Mughal imperial service.[308] When Nawab Sadaat Khan Burhan-ul-Mulk became the Nawab of Awadh in 1722, he established greater control over its affairs. Nawab Shuja-ud-Daulah suppressed the revolts of the zamindars. For purposes of better revenue collection, Rudauli and Dariyabad, which had been parganas, were reorganized and converted into a *chakla*.[309] The district of Bara Banki was divided into five chaklas under Nawabi rule,[310] each governed by a *chakladar*.

In February 1856, the British East India Company annexed Awadh, taking the entire province under its direct political domination and introducing changes to the existing land revenue policies. The following year saw disturbances in the qasbah as well, when the revolt of 1857 took place in different parts of India.[311] A band of soldiers led by Ashraf Ali attacked and killed the tahsildar of Rudauli on May 27, 1857. The rebels also assaulted the British officials in Dariyabad, who fled the scene and saved their lives. The *munsarim* (administrator) of Rudauli, Ahmad Husain too escaped, and Shaikh Imdad Ali, the *thanedar* (police officer), also did not have a choice other than saving his face at a time of general dissatisfaction. When the rebels gained control over Awadh, Raja Jiyalal was made the munsarim of Chakla Rudauli by Begum Hazrat Mahal, the leader of the rebellion in Awadh. The people of Rudauli soon had to face oppression at the hands of the British and the consequent investigations and accusations. Wazir Ali Bhatti, a British ally, killed Raja Jiyalal. By the end of 1858, the revolt had been thoroughly crushed. Following the revolt, the British confiscated the property of those they regarded as rebels and awarded it to those who had shown loyalty during the tumultuous months.[312] What changes did the British bring? How did it affect a qasbah such as Rudauli and its inhabitants? These are questions that we will deal with in chapters four and six.

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[308] Alam, *The Crisis of Empire*, 224.
[309] The term *chakla* meant a district or a large administrative division. It was a district containing several parganas, under the administrative control of a *chakladar*.
[310] Neville, *Bara Banki*, 162.
[311] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 97-104.
[312] T. R. Metcalf, *Land, Landlords*, 158.

What made Rudauli unique when compared to towns and cities? What do we find exceptional in the history of this qasbah? As mentioned before, one of the prominent features of Rudauli was the presence of Sufism. The first Sufi saint who came and settled here was Shaikh Salahuddin Suhrawardi (1355-1421). He was an itinerant dervish who finally settled down in Rudauli and became famous by the name of Shaikh Saiyah.[313] Rudauli holds tremendous significance in the history of Sufism in India.[314] It was from Rudauli that Sufism of Chishti order spread to other parts of Awadh. Shaikh Ahmad Abdul Haq (d. 1434) founded a khanqah in Rudauli during the reign of the Sharqi ruler Ibrahim Shah. A spiritual descendant of Fariduddin Ganj-i-Shakar's ascetic disciple Ali Sabir, Abdul Haq was a Sufi of the Chishti Sabiri order.[315] He is commonly referred to as Makhdoom Saheb.[316] He led the traditional ascetic existence of a mystic and constantly refused to accept land grants for either his khanqah or his family.[317] His dargah in Rudauli continues to be an important Sufi center in North India.

Among the followers of Makhdoom Saheb, Shaikh Bakhtiyar and Abdul Quddus Gangohi (1456-1537) emerged as the most prominent. A former slave of a jewel merchant, Shaikh Bakhtiyar was allowed to continue to trade even when initiated as a mystic. This shows that Abdul Haq was not opposed to the idea of a Sufi earning a living while leading an ascetic's life.[318] The worldview of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* (Unity of Being), discussed at length by Indian Sufis, is fully developed in the work of Abdul Quddus Gangohi.[319] It promoted a belief in the essential unity of all phenomena. His *Rushdnama* has already been mentioned as a collection of his verses and those of other Rudauli saints. Some of the verses, with slight variations, were regarded as common to both Hindu and Muslim mystics, including in Gorakh Nath's

[313] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 231.
[314] Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam*, 92.
[315] Annemarie Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), 41.
[316] Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi, *Bara Banki* (Rudauli: Azmi Publishers, 1984), 138.
[317] Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India,* Vol. I, 271.
[318] Ibid., 272.
[319] Schimmel, *Islam in the Indian Subcontinent*, 42.

poetry and Kabir's *dohas* or couplets.[320] A descendant of Abdul Haq, Shaikh Abdur Rahman Chishti translated into Persian a Sanskrit treatise on Hindu cosmogony under the title *Mirat-ul-Makhluqat* (Mirror of the Creatures). Through this, Abdur Rahman tried to explain certain Hindu legends. He also sought to reconcile certain Hindu ideologies with Muslim ideas and beliefs through a Persian recension of the Bhagavadgita, entitled *Mirat-ul-Haqaiq* (Mirror of the Realities).[321] Sufis' interaction with Hindus and their involvement with Hindu theology in the context of Rudauli are remarkable. It is not surprising that Sufis and their shrines in Rudauli addressed spiritual and philosophical concerns. Clearly, Rudauli's contribution to Sufi doctrines was massive. This qasbah harbored and produced many Sufis who added to the intellectual environment of their locality, while also connecting themselves with the ongoing debates concerning mysticism.

Reverence towards women saints was not unusual in Rudauli. One such example is related to Zohra Bibi. We have already discussed the legend of Syed Salar Masud Ghazi who, as a soldier of Mahmud Ghaznavi, played a crucial role in defeating a number of Hindu rulers. We also discussed how his death as a martyr was later canonized and how he continues to be revered by Hindus and Muslims alike. It is said that his shrine at Bahraich was built by Zohra Bibi, the blind teenage daughter of Syed Jamaluddin of Rudauli, after she had regained her eyesight during a pilgrimage to the burial site of the martyr. At this site, she also built herself a tomb, where she was buried when she died at the age of eighteen. Her mother and other relatives used to make a trip to her grave, annually performing a ceremony simulating the marriage of Zohra Bibi to Salar Masud.[322] Gradually, this became a site of

[320] Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India,* Vol. I, 336-43. .
[321] Alam, "Assimilation from a Distance," 175.
[322] H. R. Neville, *Bahraich: A Gazetteer being Volume XLV of the District Gazetteers of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh* (Lucknow: Government Press, 1921), 149. Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 242-45. Also, Garcin de Tassy gives a detailed account of various ceremonies that take place at Bahraich related to the ceremony called *ghazai miyan ki shaadi* (the marriage of the Ghazi). See Garcin de Tassy, *Muslim Festivals in India and Other Essays*, trans. & ed., M. Waseem (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 81-86.

pilgrimage for girls of marriageable age. This account affects how we look at the shrine of Salar Masud Ghazi merely through the story of his martyrdom. It was Zohra Bibi's devotion, spiritual journey, and the act of building the mausoleum that turned the burial site into a shrine. In addition, it was her mother's and relatives' regular conduct of rituals that converted this shrine into a place of pilgrimage. Events around Salar Masud's 'urs organized at this location in Bahraich. On the Fridays preceding the fair, two separate processions are taken out with huge fanfare in Rudauli, carrying a bed each which are taken to some marked spots in Rudauli and finally, to the shrine at Bahraich.[323] This ritual, which continues to this day, is considered the *jahez* (dowry) for the marriage of Zohra Bibi, offered on behalf of her mother and family. For all the various rituals performed at the dargah in Bahraich, the people of Rudauli get an exclusive sight of the inside chamber of the tomb before the shrine is opened up for other visitors. If the story of Salar Masud is a retelling of the Muslim conquest of India, the story of Zohra Bibi retells the story of Salar Masud's consecration.

Sufis, their disciples, and their shrines contributed to making Rudauli a qasbah *par excellence*. A tradition of learning and education outside the influence of Sufi establishments played their own role in making the qasbah an intellectual space. Before the arrival of the British, education was arranged on a private basis, where a *pir* or *ustad* would impart knowledge. This tradition of instruction was probably started by the early Sufis who settled in the region.[324] There existed some madrasas teaching *ulum-e-diniya* (Islamic sciences) that included tafsir (exegesis), hadis (traditions of the Prophet), fiqh (jurisprudence), and so on.[325] We do not have much information on madrasas from Rudauli but Rifah-ul-Muslemin was one such madrasa founded in 1911. Gradually, formal schools arose through the intervention of the local government. In 1873, a middle school was set up. By 1878, more schools had been

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[323] Zaidi, *Bara Banki*, 125-26. Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 170-71.
[324] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 16.
[325] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 113-17.

established in Rudauli and its surrounding areas.[326] According to government records, the District Board of Bara Banki made educational arrangements, adding a few schools to those maintained by the taluqdars and the Court of Wards.[327] One of the important schools was Makhdumiya Anglo-Vernacular School, named after Makhdum Saheb.[328] The purpose of Anglo-vernacular schools was to prepare students for the matriculation examination of the Allahabad University, founded in 1860.[329] In addition to the Makhdumiya Anglo-Vernacular School, we also have examples of vocational schools in this qasbah. The Mason Leather School, a collaborative effort between Chaudhary Muhammad Ali and Mason – the then Deputy Commissioner – is remembered to this day.[330] It is remarkable that a qasbati Muslim intellectual and a British official worked together to found a school for the qasbatis. Education, thus, existed in the public sphere and provided for people of different backgrounds and inclinations. Madrasas, government schools, and trade schools catered to the varying needs and demands of the qasbati Muslims of Rudauli. It was this strong network of different kinds of schools that pushed Rudauli to become an educational hub.

Since obtaining education and disseminating knowledge was a part of Rudauli's life, this qasbah has a history of producing scholars, doctors, renowned intellectuals and literary personalities. In the field of medicine, Rudauli produced a number of leading physicians – *hakims*, or practitioners of *Yunani* (Greek) medicine, the traditional Muslim medical system, as well as doctors practicing modern medicine.[331] This qasbah had medical facilities and physicians. Whereas Hakim Muhammad Askari was noted for his brilliance in medical practice, his son Hakim Muhammad Mirza (1896-1948) was a hakim as well as a good poet. Hakim Ghulam Hasnain (1864-1944) received his early education in Rudauli and then went to the

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[326] *Gazetteer of the Province of Awadh,* Vol III, 274.
[327] Neville, *Bara Banki*, 148.
[328] Interview with Iqbal Saheb, Rudauli, July 19, 2003.
[329] Neville, *Bara Banki*, 149.
[330] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 261. Interview with Chaudhary Saeed Muhammad Ali, July 20, 2003.
[331] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 299-328.

Punjab University for higher degrees in Arabic and Persian. A voracious reader, he studied medicine on his return to Rudauli and started practicing with notable success. He also trained Hakim Muhammad Mirza and Hakim Muhammad Yunus, in addition to writing books on various topics, including one on medicine that discussed human anatomy, diseases, and their possible cures. Until the early twentieth century, a majority of physicians were informally trained in Yunani medicine. It was only after a while, in the 1930s, that physicians from Rudauli began to obtain formal degrees from medical colleges. Those trained in modern English medicine included the likes of Dr. Shahenshah Husain Zaidi, who went to Medical College at Lucknow in 1936 for a degree in M.B.B.S. Later, in 1963, he published a book titled "Modern Medicine and Ancient Thought," one of the few books available on the theme at that time.

Rudauli has always been acknowledged for its literary contribution. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali (1882-1959) is widely heralded for the variety, style, and content of his writings in Urdu. His association with the Progressive Writers' Association in its early days speaks of his recognition in the wider circle of writers in South Asia. He served as the chair of its reception committee for its inaugural meeting.[332] We shall discuss him in a later chapter. Maulvi Muhammad Halim Ansari (1877-1939) was another luminary from Rudauli. Taught Arabic and Persian by his father at home, he emerged as one of the best Arabic scholars of his time. He wrote several essays which were published in *Al-hilal*, a literary periodical from Egypt.[333] Ansari's success shows that although based in Rudauli, he could connect globally with other eminent Arabic writers of his time. A number of Urdu writers emerged from Rudauli beginning in the early twentieth century. Shah Muinuddin Ahmad Nadwi (1903- 74),[334] with an early education in Rudauli, was sent by his maternal grandfather to Madrasa Nizamia of Firangi Mahal in Lucknow. Later, he joined Darul 'Uloom, Nadwat-ul-Ulama in Lucknow. Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi (1884-

[332] Sajjad Zaheer, *The Light: A History of the Movement for Progressive Literature in the Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (*A Translation of Roshnai*), (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 55.
[333] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 329.
[334] Ibid., 333-37.

1953),[335] of Darul Musannifin, Azamgarh in eastern UP, employed Shah Muinuddin Ahmad Nadwi on his graduation. Muinuddin Ahmad Nadwi's greatest contribution was his assuming the editorship of the famed Urdu monthly *Maarif*, which he worked on until his death in 1927. During this time, he refused various kinds of lucrative offers from esteemed institutions such as Jamia Millia Islamia of Delhi and Madrasa Alia of Calcutta.

In the history of Urdu poetry, Rudauli has contributed a number of fine poets. In fact, it has produced more poets than one can expect from a place of this size. Asrarul Haq, popularly known as Majaz (1911-55), was a known revolutionary poet. He came from a family that gave several literary personalities to Urdu literature, including Ansar-ul-Haq Hirwani, Safia Akhtar, and Hameeda Salim – all siblings, two brothers and two sisters.[336] Earlier, Rudauli produced poets such as Maulvi Syed Ali (1882- 1925),[337] who was taught by his father before attending the middle school in Rudauli up to grade eight. He learned English there and then went to Sultan-ul-Madaris in Lucknow. On his return, he became a school teacher in Rudauli and later, an *ataliq* (tutor) teaching several pupils including Wasim Ansari who became a famous poet. Although he wrote most forms of poetry, he focused on qasidas and ghazals. Another Rudaulvi poet was Muhammad Yusuf Asar (d. 1951)[338] who studied with the eminent poet Amir Minai (1826-1900). The list of Urdu poets from Rudauli is long and includes poets who wrote all genres of poetry. A discussion of some of the poets and their poetry will follow in Chapter Four.

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[335] Syed Sulaiman Nadwi was the founder of Darul Musannifin (Academy of Authors) based in Azamgarh. A graduate of Darul Uloom, Nadwat-ul-'Ulama in Lucknow and a favorite student of Maulana Shibli Numani (1857-1914), Sulaiman Nadwi is known for completing a monumental seven-volume work *Sirat-un-Nabi*, a biography of the Prophet in Urdu to answer Western scholarly criticism. This work was originally planned by Shibli Numani. Sulaiman Nadwi also gave a series of eight lectures in Madras on the life of Prophet Muhammad in 1925. A collection of these lectures titled *Khutbat-e-Madras* has been widely acclaimed for its scholarly nature. For an analysis of *Sirat-un-Nabi*, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "A Venture in Critical Islamic Historiography and the Significance of its Failure," *Numen* 41, 1 (January 1994): 26-50.

[336] Hameeda Salim, *Hum Saath Thay* (New Delhi: Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu, 1999). Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 79-142.

[337] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 357-59.

[338] Ibid., 359.

Similar to its inhabitants, the buildings of Rudauli also help to define the qasbah's identity. Such structures include mosques, imambaras, and dargahs. The Jama Masjid of Rudauli, located in Muhallah Sufiana, was built by Muhammad Saleh Sufi in 1418 AD during the reign of Ibrahim Shah of the Sharqi dynasty.[339] This mosque holds a special place in the history of the qasbah because Makhdoom Saheb, the revered Sufi, said his prayers here for several decades. No other mosque in the qasbah is older than this one. In fact, this is also one of the oldest mosques in the Indian subcontinent. Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi writes that every muhallah in the qasbah had five or six mosques built by different individuals over time.[340] Masjid Khalilur Rahman was built in 1894 AD by a taluqdar. Its courtyard is huge, and the ornamentation speaks of the prosperity of the person who invested his resources in it. Masjid Malikzadah, Masjid Haji Neem, Masjid Purah Khan, and Masjid Shekhana are other examples of mosques constructed during the qasbah's history. Masjid Irshad Husain is known for its stunning architecture. Construction of this mosque, known also as *Chaudhary Saheb ki Masjid*, began in 1925 and was completed within five years.[341] It has beautiful arches, huge gates, several minarets, colorful floral outlines, and inscriptions of verses from the Quran.

In the same complex as Masjid Irshad Husain, the Imambara Husainia Irshadia, built by Chaudhary Irshad Husain in 1922, adorns the landscape of the qasbah. There is a small but beautiful garden laid out in front of Imambara Husainia Irshadia. Elaborate calligraphy, crystal chandeliers, marble flooring, and ornate mirrors on walls, pillars, and ceilings give it an almost baroque appearance. Here, majlises for Muharram were held and the trend continues to date. There are several other imambaras in Rudauli, in addition to the numerous dargahs already mentioned, such as those of Makhdoom Saheb, Shaikh Salahuddin Suhrawardi, Shaikh Safi Purah Khan, Syed Muhammad Saleh, and Shah Abbas. A number of these mosques,

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[339] Ibid., 212-13.
[340] Ibid., 213-17.
[341] Zaidi, *Bara Banki*, 243. Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 216-18.

imambaras, and dargahs existed as *waqf* (endowment) properties. They were built by men of means and then endowed for general public use. According to Kozlowski, the proper intention for creating a waqf was the wish to attain spiritual merit.[342] That might be true, but, as Kozlowski also rightly adds, the deeds of endowment also indicated that many of the founders' values were shaped by the older, pre-British system of social status and responsibility.[343] Probably, honorifics such as *rais* or *malik* were appropriated, legitimized, or claimed in a local society like a qasbah. Havelis of former taluqdars and zamindars also tell the story of the qasbah's history. All these structures together define what it means to be a qasbah and how their identity distinguishes themselves from towns and cities. Every building has a history which reflects some aspect of qasbati life.

With regard to the history of Rudauli, we also find a significant amount of literature that reinforces a sense of nostalgia for the bygone era. We also find a sense of celebration of the unique qualities that this qasbah had in the eyes of many of its former inhabitants. We have already discussed an example in the preceding chapter regarding the nostalgic feeling for qasbahs, particularly among people who seem to have lost between rural and urban living. Hameeda Salim recalls her days as a child in Rudauli and underlines her feeling of nostalgia in the following words:

> Even today the clouds in the sky remind me of the *saawan* [a month] of my childhood days. This month of rains held tremendous importance for us girls in the qasbati life. Our preparation for *saawan* would start much ahead of time. Our *chunaris* [piece of cloth worn over shirt] would be dyed red and green by the local dyers. *Maniharans* [female bangle vendors] would come home with a basket of colorful shellac bangles. Swings were arranged outside houses and snacks fried. Along with boys and girls, elderly too would join as spectators and become a part of the fun.[344]

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[342] Gregory C. Kozlowski, *Muslim Endowments and Society in British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 161
[343] Ibid., 3-4.
[344] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 93.

Examples such the one above emphasize that life in the qasbah was treasured in memory. To further clarify, such recounting of feelings was not solely confined to childhood memories, since the author also writes about her life in the city and frequent visits to the qasbah. This sense of belonging to qasbah would extend beyond nostalgia. Urdu poetry is probably the best avenue to look to find an expression of such belonging and reminiscence.[345] Inspired by his love for Rudauli, Majaz wrote a poem titled *Watan Ashob*, in which he challenged one's love for watan. Many other poets have also written enthusiastically about the qasbah of Rudauli and conveyed their sense of pride for it. The following couplets from Nazmi Siddiqui Saloni's poem show how Rudauli is placed in the mental terrain of a qasbati:

> *Ghairat-e-Kashmir thii is gulsitaan ki sarzameen*
> *Malwa ki Shaam thii, Kashi ka subh-e-ahmareen*
> *Raqs farma thii bahisto ki faza-e-ambareen*
> *Dilfareb-o-dilnawaz-o-dastaanon-o-dilnashin*[346]
>
> The face of this garden was the envy of Kashmir
> The evening of Malwa, the rosy aurora of Kashi
> The amber-scented breeze of paradise danced there
> Enchanting and soothing, and full of pleasing fables

If these verses articulate the pride associated with Rudauli and the feeling of nostalgia for a moment of the past, the following couplets by Wasif Rudaulvi expresses an equal affirmation of what it means to belong to Rudauli in present times:

> *Daaman mein liye gauhar-e-maqsud hoon main*
> *Saaf aaina rahmat-e-maabud hoon main*
> *Rehta hoon Rudauli hi mein lekin 'Wasif'*
> *Sadd shukr ke haasid nahin, mas-hud hoon main.*[347]
>
> Holding tight to the jewel of desire
> I am the polished mirror of the bounties of the Lord

---

[345] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 47-52.
[346] Ibid., 48.
[347] Ibid., 50.

I reside nowhere but in Rudauli, O! ‘Wasif’
A hundred thanks, I’m not the envious but the one envied

Wasif clearly articulates the pride of a qasbati living in Rudauli. An examination of poetry reveals that whereas some championed the past of the qasbah, others drew inspiration from its present. The long history of Rudauli is unique because of the many Sufis who chose to live here and left behind an intellectual and spiritual heritage. Education, both Islamic and English, reinforced Rudauli’s intellectual reputation. Moreover, because of its being close to Lucknow, Rudauli and its inhabitants exercised more choices in regards to education. This is clearly reflected in how many of its residents attended college and madrasas in Lucknow. Writers and poets, men and women, enhanced the significance of the qasbah. Overall, the contribution of this qasbah to the society and culture of South Asia is tremendous. We shall discuss some examples of its intellectuals in the forthcoming chapter.

CONCLUSION

Beginning in about the eleventh century, Muslims started settling in the areas of Rohilkhand and Awadh as they advanced beyond Delhi. Many of the newcomers, including some Sufis, chose to stay in smaller localities. Gradually, these places attracted more and more Muslims and grew larger. Sufis, landholders, revenue-free grant holders, and qazis were the first ones to arrive. Subsequent governments, including the British, found it helpful to station their officials in regions that were closer to farming lands in surrounding villages. Qasbahs grew as a space to provide a link between towns and villages. They became homes for the revenue-collectors but also served as religious centers, intellectual harbingers, and promoters of culture. The promotion of literature, Islamic education, English education, Muslim architecture, and Sufi ideas in the qasbahs occurred simultaneously.

While most qasbahs had all of these features, each qasbah emphasized different specific features according to their particular culture and historical

conditions. For instance, there were more Islamic schools in Amroha than Rudauli, but Rudauli could send more people to the madrasas and colleges in Lucknow which was close by. Moreover, Rudauli had more physicians than Amroha. Similarly, although Bilgram was less populated than Amroha, it made its mark by sending more educated people to serve and sustain some of the major Muslim states such as Hyderabad and Rampur. In addition, in all these qasbahs we can see a strong tradition of acknowledging the role women played in their respective histories. A sense of pride and nostalgia also applies universally to these qasbahs. Furthermore, because qasbahs always had a large population of educated Muslims, they make a remarkable site for studying modernity.

Qasbahs were similar yet different. They have been cast differently by different sources. British official sources and documents tend to project the administrative-economic side of the qasbahs. Because of their economic strength and potential, qasbahs could attract the attention of rulers and the officials from both medieval and colonial times. It was the officials taking up residence in the qasbahs and the concomitant prosperity that attracted the learned to these qasbahs. In the end, a combined presence of the economic and the educated elite facilitated a flowering of institutions that promoted learning, development of Islamic culture, patronage of Sufis, and a respect for literature. All these aspects can be better understood with the help of non-British sources. Local literary figures participated in articulating their association with the local qasbati culture. A combination of English as well as Urdu sources allows us to draw a more comprehensive picture of what a qasbah was during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the following chapter, we shall discuss examples of some individuals who epitomize the all-inclusiveness of qasbati culture.

Chapter Four

A CUT ABOVE THE REST:

PERSONALITIES CHARACTERISTIC OF THE *QASBAHS*

Tazkirah is a literary genre extensively used in the context of Muslim societies of South Asia in general and qasbahs in particular. The term *tazkirah* is derived from the root "zikr" or "dhikr," which means "to remember" or "to mention." This genre of literature mentions or lists individuals related to a particular region, profession, or ideology by compiling their variously sized biographies and putting them in a book-length work. Although Persian tazkirahs preceded the ones in Urdu, South Asia's contribution to the writing of this genre in both Urdu and Persian has been remarkable.[348] Qasbati Muslims were among this genre's pioneers in India and Bilgramis and Amrohvis were some of the first contributors. Having discussed the general historical background of the qasbah as well as their intellectual and literary significance, one of the obvious conclusions we can draw is that qasbahs produced numerous literary, intellectual, and educated personalities. In Urdu literature, tazkirahs remain an impressive source of history. In this chapter, we shall attempt to understand the historical contributions of qasbahs by looking at brief biographical descriptions of some representative personalities.

Historically, qasbahs have always housed people of knowledge, religion, and power. Throughout the medieval period, such people included the ulama, the Sufis, and various state officials such as qazis. As we move towards the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, particularly after English education became accessible to

[348] For a history of this genre within Urdu literature, see Frances W. Pritchett, "A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part 2: Histories, Performances, and Masters." In Sheldon Pollock, ed., *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 864-911. For a brief analysis of the contribution of South Asia toward the Persian *tazkirah* tradition, see Muzaffar Alam, "The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan." In Pollock, ed., *Literary Cultures in History*, 174-77.

qasbati Muslims, we find more and different kinds of professionals inhabiting qasbahs. This can be attributed to the new economic structures under the British, which opened up new employment opportunities. Various revenue collecting officials such as tahsildars, administrative officials (deputy collectors and deputy magistrates), and landlords (taluqdars and zamindars) dotted the qasbati landscape. Writers, poets, journalists, lawyers, teachers, publishers, and bureaucrats also made their home in the qasbahs. Beneath this varied surface, there existed even greater heterogeneity. These different professionals and officials were educated in different systems. While some went to vernacular schools and modern English colleges or to madrasas, others were educated at home by private tutors. Among those educated in madrasas, some were Deobandis, Nadwis, Barelwis, and others Firangi Mahalis, and these titles marked ideological differences amongst them. Whereas some of the personalities were Shias, others were Sunnis and even further classified by Sufi allegiance or legal school. Women of this generation also left their own mark, first as graduates of colleges and then, a generation later, as noted writers and public figures.

In this chapter, we shall deal with certain personalities from qasbahs. We will divide the chapter into four different parts, based on individual biographies from Rudauli, Bilgram, Amroha, and a few other qasbahs. It must be noted that only a couple of the individuals discussed here have attracted the attention of historians thus far, and that too only in the context of particular paradigms. The ones who have attracted attention are Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi and Syed Husain Bilgrami, known as Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk. While Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi has been described as someone who represents the pangs of the Muslims who chose India over Pakistan after the partition,[349] Syed Husain Bilgrami has only been described in eulogistic tones, for his services to the Nizam of Hyderabad and to the British.[350] My desire here is to present more than just one side of these individuals, to construct their biographies in terms of their contributions to their

[349] Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism*, 141-55, 255-65.
[350] Qadri, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk*.

qasbahs, their respective professions, literature, and the larger society. The basic idea is to evaluate the endeavors of each individual and see him or her as multifaceted. This will enable us to conceptualize a clearer picture of qasbahs and their participation in modernity and make sense of their past as linked to aspects of modern South Asian history. In attempting to do so, we shall make use of different genres of writings about and by the individuals concerned. The structure that will be followed will be to construct biographical sketches on the lines of the tazkirah tradition and to supplement that with the writings and contributions of the individuals concerned.

RUDAULI

Rudauli, a representative qasbah of Awadh, is best known for its people, culture, and buildings. Eminent taluqdars, zamindars, writers and poets stand as an introduction to this qasbah. These people have immortalized themselves by creating some of the best writings in Urdu literature. They constructed remarkable structures of architectural importance which speak to the beauty of even such a small town as Rudauli. In addition, they left behind a legacy of culture, politics, and ideology which extended beyond the confines of this qasbah for generations to come. Many people from aristocratic backgrounds, such as Chaudhary Muhammad Ali (1882-1959) and Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi, emerged from this qasbah as writers. Taluqdars such as Chaudhary Irshad Husain (d. 1954) also played a role in developing the architectural features of this qasbah. Rudauli produced poets such as Asrarul Haq Majaz (1911-55), son of Sirajul Haq, the first college graduate from Rudauli. Its history also saw women of the qasbah carving out their own niche in an otherwise a male-dominated society. Such women included the sisters Safia Akhtar (1916-52) and Hameeda Salim (b. 1922), as well as Hima Akhlaq Husain (1907-2002), the daughter of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali. We shall discuss them one by one.

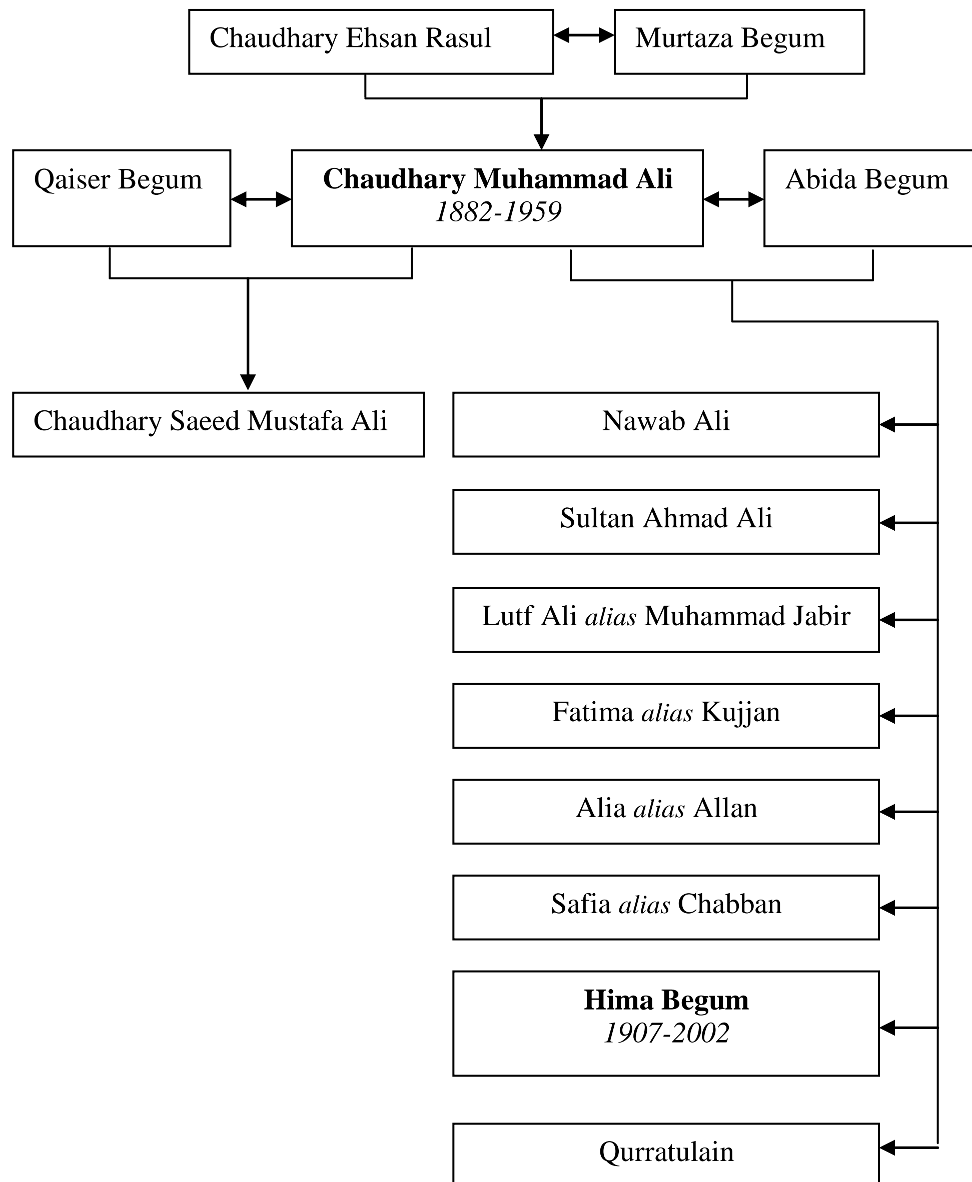

Illustration 2: Shajrah of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was born on May 15, 1882 in muhallah Salar of Rudauli. Known by his family and friends as Chamru Mian, he was the taluqdar of the Amirpur estate in the Bara Banki district. His grandfather, Inayat Rasul, belonged to a renowned Sunni family of the qasbah and was married to the daughter of Lutf Ali, the taluqdar of Amirpur and a Shia Muslim.[351] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's father Ihsan Rasul married Murtaza Begum, the daughter of Mir Muhammad Abid, the taluqdar of Purai, another famous estate in Awadh. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's maternal side of the family was Shia Muslim, and his father, born a Sunni, also adopted the Shia faith before he died. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was only three and a half years old at the time of his father's death. Because he was a minor, the estate he inherited was put under the charge of the Court of Wards. Upon adulthood, he took over his father's estate and was even able to keep his property free from encumbrances.[352] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi grew up surrounded by both Shia and Sunni Muslims.[353] In 1899, he married Abida Begum, one of his cousins, who was brought up in a Sunni environment. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's background is illustrative of some of the unique aspects of the qasbati religious milieu. An analysis of his background will also be helpful to understand the degree to which religious and sectarian affiliations served as markers of individual identities. We shall deliberate upon this question in the forthcoming chapter.

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali attended the famous Colvin Taluqdar School of Lucknow, which later became the Colvin Taluqdar College. It was here that he made friends with peers from other qasbahs and towns. He later wrote that he met his childhood friend Raja Prithvipal Singh for the first time in 1892 at the Colvin

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[351] Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab* (Patna: Idarah-e-Tehqiqat-e-Urdu, 1991, first published 1951), 10.

[352] *Application of Chaudhri Muhammad Ali, Taluqdar, Bara Banki district, to have his estate placed under the Provisions o the Oudh Settled Estates Act, 1900*, File no. 297, Revenue Department, June 1913, UPSA.

[353] He mentions one Maulvi Wajid Ali as one of his childhood teachers. He adds that when he would not completely follow Shia rituals and practices, others in the house would blame it on the Maulvi who had regularly instructed his young pupil to follow what his mother would tell him. Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 10-11.

Taluqdar School.[354] Unfortunately, in 1899, he had to discontinue his studies as he was married off at the age of seventeen. Although he could not pursue a formal education, he continued to read a wide array of literature on his own, including works in English. While many of his aristocratic contemporaries lived a life in pursuit of luxury, he pursued the intellectual life of a writer. He belonged to a generation of Indian Muslims who provided intellectual leadership during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He was one of the litterateurs and fine writers of the late nineteenth century, which also included the likes of Wilayat Ali Qidwai, Sajjad Haider Yildram, Munshi Prem Chand, Munshi Daya Narayan Nigam, Maulana Mohamed Ali, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Hasrat Mohani, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Neyaz Fatehpuri, etc. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali held his own among this litany of intellectuals, which is reflected by what Abdul Majid Dariyabadi, a prominent writer and intellectual, wrote about Chaudhary Muhammad Ali:

> Maulana [Abul Kalam] Azad Sahib of *al-Hilal* once came to Lucknow some time in 1917 and visited me for a meal. At that time, it was known that no one could face him in conversation and that he could easily outdo his opponent. For a debate, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was asked to come, and when a discussion started exchanging jokes and pleasantries over dinner, spectators could see that they were an equal match.[355]

This is just an anecdote to show that Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was a highly intelligent person, a fact that is confirmed by the body of literature he produced. He wrote solely in Urdu, although he was well-read in English literature and philosophy.[356] His intellect can be gauged by his participation in an association which consisted of the best Urdu and Hindi writers of his time. He also chaired the reception committee of the first conference of the Progressive Writers' Association in 1936,

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[354] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali, *Kashkol: Muhammad Ali Shah Faqir* (Lucknow: Siddique Book Depot, 1951), 101.

[355] Abdul Majid Dariyabadi, *Maasirin* (Calcutta: Idarah-e-Insha-e-Majidi, 1979), 119.

[356] In his writings, he frequently quotes from Spencer, Mill, Machiavelli, G. B. Shaw, and H. G. Wells, among others. Rudaulvi, *Kashkol*, 253-61; Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 16-17, 74-75; Rudaulvi, *Goya Dabistan Khul Gaya*, 161.

which was presided over by Munshi Prem Chand (1884-1936).[357] This indicates his broad appeal across classes and beyond the confines of his qasbah. Sajjad Zaheer (1904-73), noted Urdu writer, Marxist thinker, and one of the founders of the Progressive Writers' Association and the Communist Party of India, praised Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's knowledge, personality and significance for the progressive movement:

> Chaudhry Sahib was a landlord and belonged to the upper classes of Oudh. He was of a generation before us, but his personality was an amalgam of unusual qualities, which made him one of the most interesting people in the land of Oudh. His manners and decorum were like those of the elite of an earlier age, but his clean-cut face and English education bespoke of a modern man. When he wrote Urdu, the elegance, sweetness, and amused irony in his style had the flavor of old Lucknow. However, when he spoke, he could discuss anybody, from Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Marx, Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Iqbal, to Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis. When he was with members of the older generation, he would talk to them about the afterlife, property, and their children. When he found himself among young people, he could dwell on the topic of sexology, with such clarity and realism that the boldest of his listeners would stare at him in disbelief…. Chaudhry Sahib's first act on joining our reception committee as its chairman was to quietly give us a donation of one hundred rupees. He said he was embarrassed at the smallness of the sum. But what he did not know was that no individual had so far given us an amount exceeding ten rupees, and so his gift was for us a princely sum.[358]

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's participation in such a forum, moreover, was a sign of his continuously evolving thinking, which went beyond that of many of his peers, who remained satisfied with their power and authority over land and land revenue collection. It is also worth mentioning that he was not the only figure to do so. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's writings display his progressive attitude. His book

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[357] The Progressive Writers' Association was started by Sajjad Zaheer (1904-73), a renowned Urdu writer, Marxist thinker and revolutionary. He was also one of the founding members of the Communist Party of India. The Progressive Writer's Association gathered the crème de la crème of Urdu litterateurs such as Hasrat Mohani, Firaq Gorakhpuri, Rashid Jahan, and Faiz Ahmad Faiz. Interview with Professor Sharib Rudaulvi, Lucknow, July 2004.

[358] Zaheer, *The Light*, 55-56.

Ataliq Bibi (The Tutor Wife), which he wrote in 1918, on being asked by Abdul Halim Sharar (1869-1926) of *Guzishta Lucknow*[359] fame, is about the meaningless complaints and faultfinding attitudes of husbands towards their wives.[360] His progressive concern for women extended far beyond this one work, as we shall see later. *Gunah ka Khauf* (The Fear of Sin) is another of his literary works that deserves to be mentioned. It is a collection of fifteen short stories and demonstrates his ability to write fiction.[361] This was not his only collection of stories. *Kashkol Muhammad Shah Faqir* (The Beggar's Bowl of Muhammad Shah) is a collection of nineteen stories, primarily satirical in nature.[362]

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali also published *Salahkaar* (Advisor), a 124-page book. Unconventional in theme and content, it is a psychological analysis of sex for men. While Western countries had published thousands of books written on sex and sexuality, he felt that there was an acute need for such a book in Urdu. He did recognize, however, that Indian society had different values and social norms than the West. Hence, he chose to pass on only as much information as he felt did not violate the boundaries of Indian social values.[363] In *Salahkaar*, he provides a detailed account of the anatomy and sexual characteristics of both men and women. This book is amazingly descriptive and is written in very direct language with occasional stories. Besides various topics of common concern and interest, he also deals with sexual diseases such as *suzak* (gonorrhea) and *atishak* (syphilis) and the ways to prevent and cure them. While he made a clear admonition that only men should read this work,[364] a few years later, he wrote and distributed free copies of a booklet on similar theme but this time for women. The booklet was titled *Parde ki Baat* (About the Veil) and

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[359] Abdul Halim Sharar was a great essayist, novelist, and journalist. He is famous for his noted work *Guzishta Lucknow* (Lucknow of the past) that laments the bygone era of Lucknow and cherishes the best of Awadhi culture. Abdul Halim Sharar, *Guzishta Lakhnau* (New Delhi: Maktab-e-Jamia Limited, 2000).
[360] Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi, *Ataliq Bibi* (n. d.).
[361] Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi, *Gunah ka Khauf* (Lucknow: Naya Sansar, n. d.).
[362] Rudaulvi, *Kashkol*.
[363] Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi, *Salahkaar* (Lucknow: Sarfaraz Qaumi Press, 1928), 3-4.
[364] Ibid., 111.

was dedicated to "a daughter, a niece, and a daughter-in-law."[365] It answered certain very basic queries of women about fertilization and child bearing. What is really astonishing is the way Chaudhary Muhammad Ali plunged into an area which at that time was generally not traversed in the Islamic world, or at least in South Asia. While women's sexuality is still considered a taboo among many in South Asia, he wrote and openly discussed such ideas back in the 1920s.

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali deserves credit for his immense contribution to Urdu literature. He was an outstanding letter writer and his letters were later compiled and published as a collection by his daughter Hima. Titled *Goya Dabistan Khul Gaya*, this collection reflects some of the best qualities found in letter-writing. We discussed in Chapter Two how Salahuddin Ahmad, noted Urdu critic and a contemporary of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali, has compared this work to the collection of letters by Mirza Ghalib, the doyen of Urdu literature. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's letters definitely deserve accolades for their direct language, frankness of expression, and precision.

As mentioned before, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was quite progressive in his ideas and approaches to social issues. He approved of educating Muslim girls,[366] a stance encouraged by the views of Syed Karamat Husain, the founder of the Muslim Girls' School in Lucknow.[367] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was so impressed by Syed Karamat Husain that he wrote a book in his memory in 1918, a year after Karamat Husain's death.[368] In addition to women's education, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was

[365] It is a pocket sized booklet of only 41 pages and mentions no other publication details but the name of the book and the author. Rudaulvi, *Parde ki Baat*, 2.
[366] His own daughters attended schools in Allahabad and Lucknow. Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 16.
[367] Syed Karamat Husain was a champion of Muslim girls' education, first as a member of the Muhammadan Educational Conference and later, as the founder of a girls' school in Lucknow. Not only that, he had a huge impact on the educated Muslims of his generation. Many of his friends, peers, and followers spread the idea that girls' education was critical to the progress of the Muslim community. Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, 216-28; Minault, "Sayyid Karamat Husain," 155-64.
[368] Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi, *Yadgar Maulana Syed Karamat Husain Marhum* (Lucknow: Nawal Kishore Press, 1918).

also a great advocate of women's rights in the early twentieth century. The following statement is a testimony to his progressive thinking about women:

> Today, women's rights (*huquq*) and women's ability (*qabliyat*) are considered at par with those of men. Women sit in the Parliament, women run motors, women work as engineers, women serve as constables, and display excellence in all fields. Therefore, women have become equal to men.[369]

Our understanding of his concern for women's advancement is further reinforced by what Hameeda Salim writes about him. She writes that Chaudhary Muhammad Ali not only sent his own girls to the school founded by Syed Karamat Husain in Lucknow but also pressured her parents to send their girls to the same school.[370] He also promoted vocational education by opening up a training institute in 1927, the Mason Leather School, for the less fortunate young men of the qasbah.[371]

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was respected by most of his contemporaries. Among his core group of friends were certain leading intellectuals of the time. They included Abdul Majid Dariyabadi, an eminent writer from the neighboring qasbah; Neyaz Fatehpuri, the editor of monthly *Nigar* of Lucknow; Salahuddin Ahmad, Urdu writer and editor of *Adabi Duniya* from Lahore; Muhammad Tufail, the editor of the literary journal *Naqoosh*; Aale Ahmad Suroor, renowned Urdu critic and Professor of Urdu at Aligarh Muslim University; Shaikh Wilayat Ali Qidwai Bambooq, a zamindar of Bara Banki and an Aligarh graduate; and Raja Prithvipal Singh, the taluqdar of pargana Dariyabad.[372] What could be a great honor than the fact that one of his teachers Muhammad Askari, from the Colvin Taluqdar School, refers to Chaudhary Muhammad Ali as both *shagird-e-rashid* (dutiful disciple) as well as *dost-e-aziz* (dear friend).[373]

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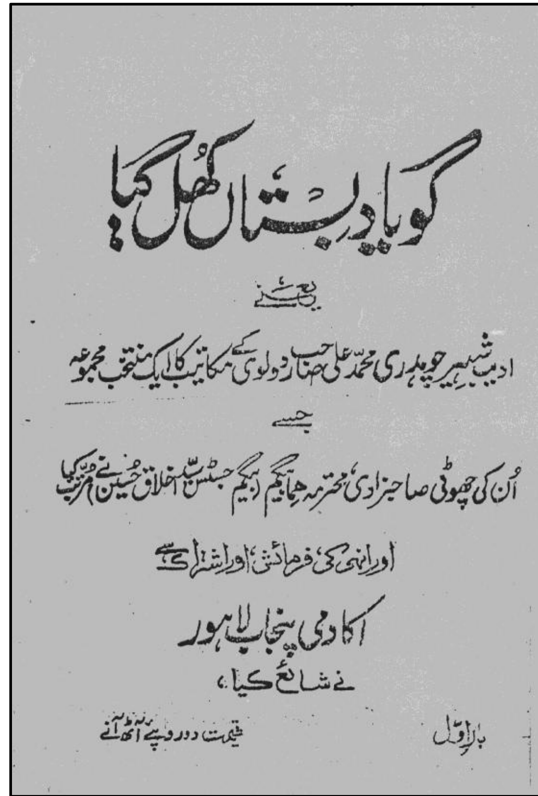
[369] Rudaulvi, *Salahkaar*, 119.
[370] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 86.
[371] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 260.
[372] Anwar Husain Khan, *Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi: Hayat aur Adabi Khidmaat* (Lucknow: Nizami Offset Press, 1992), 41-51.
[373] Mirza Muhammad Askari, *Mann Kistam* (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Akademi, 1985), 104.

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi



گویا دبستاں کھل گیا

یعنی

ادیبِ شہیر چودھری محمد علی صاحب ردولوی کے مکاتیب کا ایک منتخب مجموعہ

جسے

اُن کی چھوٹی صاحبزادی محترمہ ہما بیگم (بیگم جسٹس ایس اخلاق حسین) نے مرتب کیا

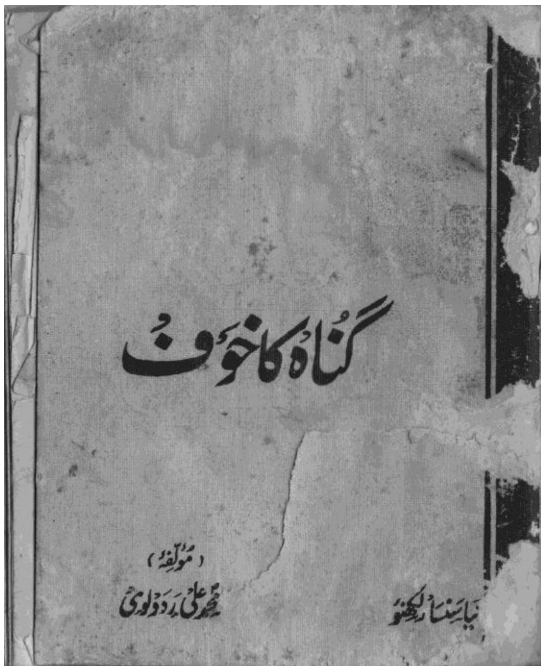
اور انہی کی فرمائش اور اشتراک سے

اکادمی پنجاب لاہور

نے شائع کیا،

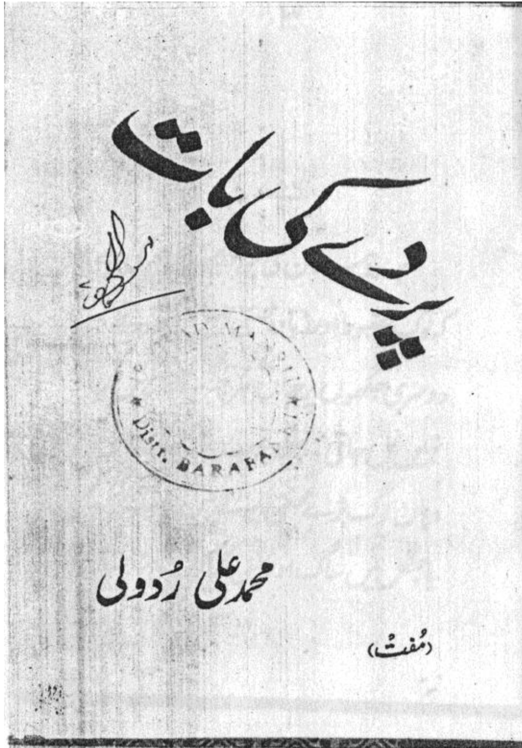
بار اوّل — قیمت دو روپے آٹھ آنے

Goya Dabistan Khul Gaya ⇧

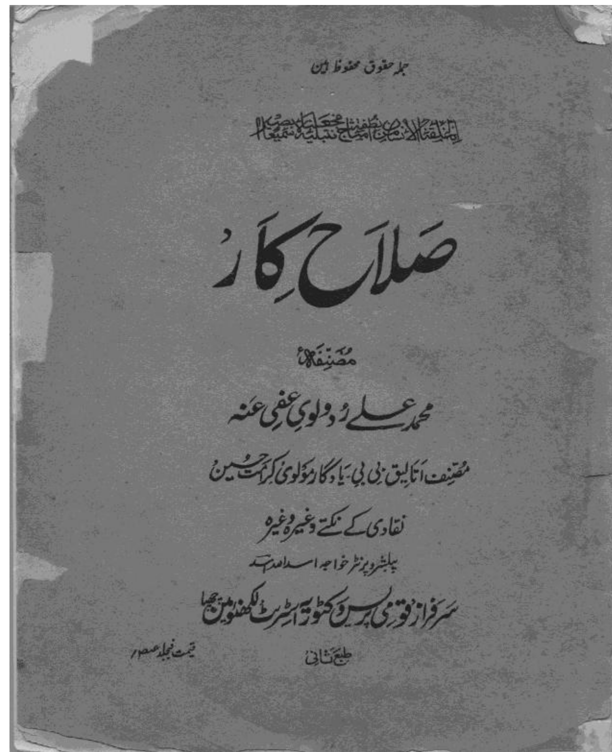


Gunah ka Khauf ⇦

Illustration 3: Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi and his books I



⇧ *Parde Ki Baat*



Salahkaar

⇨

Illustration 4: Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi and his books II

The biography of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali tells us not only about his personality as a contributor to his qasbah but also presents him as an example of the broadmindedness of a qasbati Muslim. This breadth of his vision is reflected in his contribution to the world of Urdu literature, both in terms of literary output in various genres and equally in terms of his wide-ranging, progressive content. As a progressive Muslim, he was ahead of his time about many issues including education, the position of women, and the ability to accept new ideas and remain rooted in one's culture and religion.

In our discussion above, we mentioned Hima Begum, the youngest of the five daughters of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali and Abida Begum. She was born on August 25, 1907 in the town of Almora, located on the Kumaon hills of the Himalayan range. It was for this reason that Chaudhary Muhammad Ali named her "Hima." She married Syed Akhlaq Husain and moved to Pakistan after the partition of British India. In Pakistan, she was considered a representative of Awadhi culture.[374] She deeply admired her father and always remained close to him. Her writings, including a short memoir of her father, reflect the inspiration of her father's literary activities.

One of her contributions was publishing a collection of letters written by her father. Her purpose, as she writes, was to enrich the literary world by making his letters public.[375] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali used to write to her regularly and share his opinions on topics both personal and political. Such topics included health issues, family visits, festivals, books, education, democracy, and Islam. Moreover, she herself urged her father to write letters on a regular basis. On December 22, 1932, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali wrote to her: "So you demand that I write one more letter. Here you go, it's another one."[376] Hima Akhlaq Husain's personality exemplifies the position of women in turn-of-the-century qasbahs. She received a modern education at Syed Karamat Husain's school in Lucknow, yet remained grounded in her own

[374] Khan, *Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi*, 26n.
[375] Rudaulvi, *Goya Dabistan Khul Gaya*, 12.
[376] Ibid., 17.

religion and culture. Her concern for her father and his work is indicative of her own keen interest in literature and her sense of preservation of what might become historically important.

Rudauli had many taluqdars and zamindars that have been recorded in history for their own positive mark on the development of qasbati culture. To be sure, they were a moneyed class, but whereas some of them chose to live a life of luxury, others made a difference through their work. One of the most famous taluqdars based in Rudauli was Irshad Husain, who is listed as the taluqdar of Narauli in Bara Banki district.[377] Chaudhary Irshad Husain[378] inherited the taluqa of Narauli from his maternal grandfather Chaudhary Raza Husain (1841-1885)[379] of Rudauli. Irshad Husain was the son of Sarfaraz Begum and Ahmad Husain of tahsil Motakpur in Bara Banki. Thus, the inheritance of the estate proceeded along matrilineal lines. Chaudhary Irshad Husain was born on August 6, 1883. He went to Colvin Taluqdar School in Lucknow, after which he attended Canning College, also in Lucknow. He passed the intermediate level examination and became involved in the administration of his estate. In 1905, he married Anis-un-Nisa, the daughter of Hadi Husain of Motakpur.

Chaudhary Irshad Husain is remembered today for his architectural contribution to Rudauli. Additionally, as an able administrator, he served as an Honorary Life Magistrate and Munsif[380] until 1938. In Chapter Three, we discussed how architecture is one of the key features of a qasbah. The Urdu weekly *Qaumi Awaaz* published a special feature in 1976 on Irshad Husain's contribution to the architectural landscape of Rudauli. Most interestingly, the article is subtitled *Ek*

[377] *Annual Returns of Taluqdars, Fyzabad Division*, File no. 751, Political Department, 1891, UPSA.
[378] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 277-84.
[379] Syed Raza Husain is listed as the taluqdar of Narauli before Irshad Husain succeeded him. Darogha Haji Abbas Ali, *An Illustrated Historical Album of the Rajas and Taluqdars of Oudh* (Allahabad: North-Western Provinces and Oudh Government Press, 1880), 2.
[380] The term *munsif* means judge (literally, doer of justice), In British India, following the precolonial administrative system, the person occupying the office of the *munsif* had the power to try cases in his jurisdiction, ordinarily at the level of a pargana.

Maqami Shahjahan ki Yadgar (Memorial of a Local Shahjahan).[381] This title draws a parallel between Irshad Husain's work and the architectural acumen and endeavors of the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan. The article tells us that Irshad Husain built residential quarters, an imambara, and a mosque, which filled some long standing needs since Rudauli lacked public buildings of this scale. We have earlier learned about some of the unique features of these architectural structures in Rudauli. What can be a better evidence of their significance than the fact that many people identify Rudauli with the Imambara Husainia Irshadia and Masjid Irshad Husain?

In the same family as Irshad Husain we find a writer and historian named Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi. His father Muhammad Husain and Irshad Husain's father Ahmad Husain were twin brothers. Thus, he and Irshad Husain were first cousins. Muhammad Husain served as the estate manager in the Court of the Wards.[382] He proved to be a very efficient administrator and was appointed by the British government to be the Honorary Magistrate, first class. Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi, popularly referred to as Nabban Mian, wrote at least two books on history. His book *Apni Yadein: Rudauli ki Batein*, from its title appears to be a personal account of Rudauli or his memoirs but is in fact a comprehensive history of the qasbah, the only full-length historical work on Rudauli. It traces the history of the qasbah from its earliest time and attempts to detail all aspects of qasbati living. Although written in Urdu, its format resembles that of a British gazetteer. It begins with the geography and the climate of the qasbah and covers various cultural, social, intellectual, economic, commercial, political, legal, and educational topics. He writes that he tried to produce a work of history and that it should be treated as such. He also apologizes for potentially omitting any individual or family out of sheer ignorance.[383] In similar fashion, he also wrote a history of the Bara Banki district in Urdu.[384] His meticulous

[381] Syed Muhammad Jamil Rudaulvi, "Rudauli ki ek Masjid, ek Imambara: Ek Maqami Shahjahan ki Yadgar," *Qaumi Awaaz* 3, 38 (February 8, 1976).
[382] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 278.
[383] Ibid., 10.
[384] Zaidi, *Bara Banki*.

approach and research is again reflected in this work. While Chaudhary Irshad Husain worked on making Rudauli stand out through its architectural splendor, Chaudhary Ali Muhammad Zaidi's contribution was to make sure that the qasbah's history was well recorded and handed down to subsequent generations.

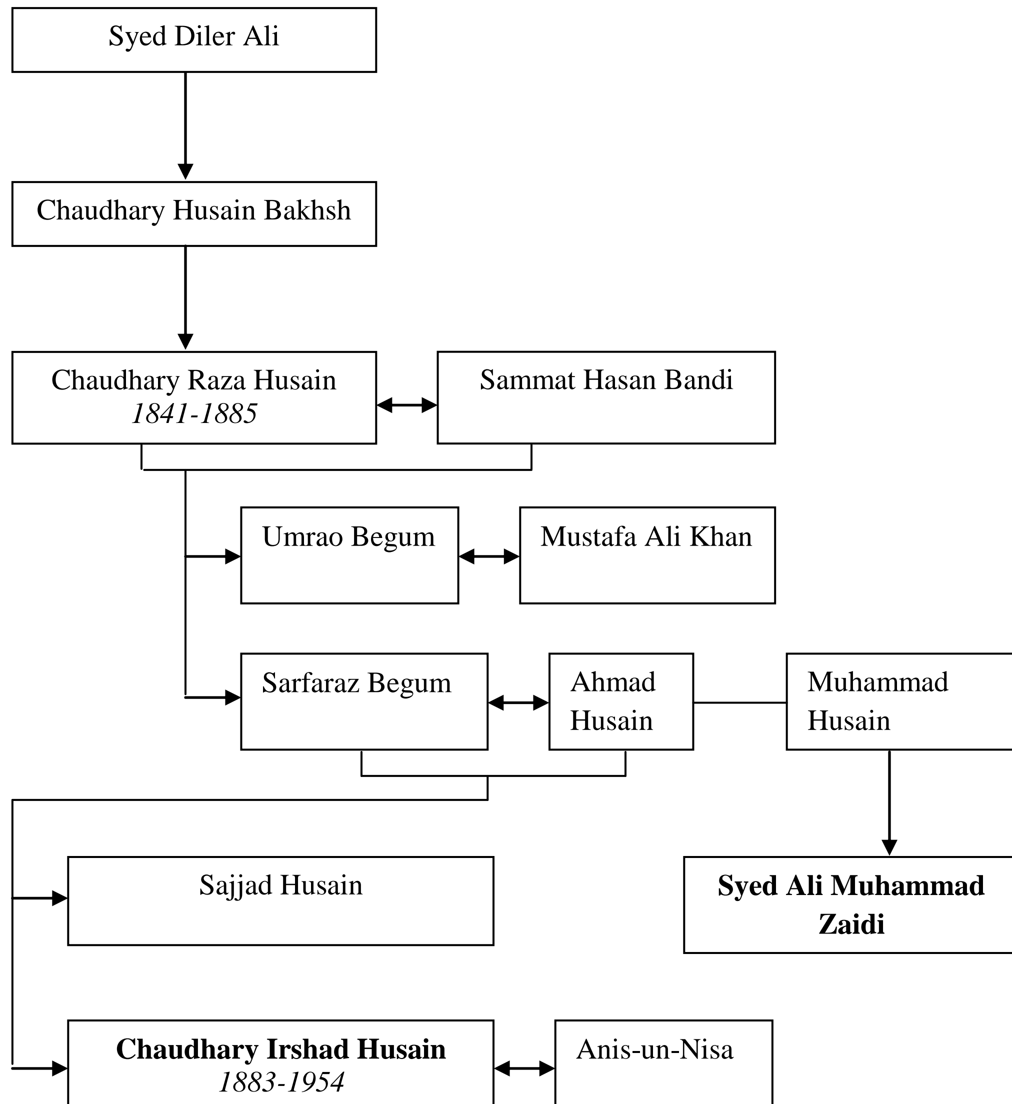


Illustration 5: Shajrah of Chaudhary Irshad Husain of Rudauli

Besides the prose writing of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali and the historical works of Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi, Rudauli is also widely known for its many poets. The foremost of them is Asrar-ul-Haq 'Majaz,' the great revolutionary poet of the early twentieth century. He has been referred to as "the first of the poets to be the standard-bearer of the progressive movement, knowing he was a part of it."[385] Majaz, a progressive yet romantic poet, was the most popular Urdu poet during the late 1940s and early 1950s. He was a romantic poet as much as he was a revolutionary poet. Popular stories tell that many young men and women of the Urdu-speaking world were in awe of him. Literary writings also frequently allude to his popularity with women. Josh Malihabadi (1898-1982), another famous poet and contemporary of Majaz, wrote about him in his memoirs. Referring to an incident, Josh writes that he scolded Majaz on one occasion, but Majaz did not immediately respond and instead later sent Josh the following couplet. To a friend who was a revolutionary poet, Majaz described himself as a romantic poet:

> *Jo Guzarta hai qalb-e-shayar par*
> *Shayar-e-inqilab kya janey*[386]
>
> What it feels to the heart of the poet
> How will the revolutionary poet know?

Born in Rudauli on October 19, 1911, Majaz came from a service gentry family. His father Chaudhary Siraj-ul-Haq was the first person in Rudauli to obtain a law degree, despite being a zamindar. Siraj-ul-Haq preferred to serve as a government official over his zamindari work.[387] He thus came from a traditional zamindari family that adopted the new education and its ensuing opportunities. He had three siblings, two sisters – Hameeda Salim and Safia Akhtar – and one brother, Ansar-ul-Haq Hirwani,

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[385] Kamal Ahmad Siddiqi, "Taraqqi Pasand Sha'iri aur Haiyat ke Tajurbe." In Qamar Rais and Syed Ashur Kazmi, eds., *Taraqqi Pasand Adab: Pachaas Sala Safar* (London: Institute of Third World Art and Literature, 1987), 476.
[386] Josh Malihabadi, *Yadon ki Barat* (Lahore: Maktab-e-Shayar-o-Adab, 1975), 561.
[387] Pandit, ed., *Majaz aur Uski Sha'iri*, 22.

who had a successful career in politics. They all pursued the best education available in and around Rudauli. Majaz's early education began at home in muhallah Khwaja Haal. He matriculated from Aminabad High School in Lucknow and passed his intermediate examination from St. John's College in Agra. He then went to the Aligarh Muslim University, from where he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1935. He then pursued a Masters program at Aligarh but dropped out in his second year to join a subeditorship at the All India Radio in Delhi, a job he was later forced to quit due to internal politics.[388]

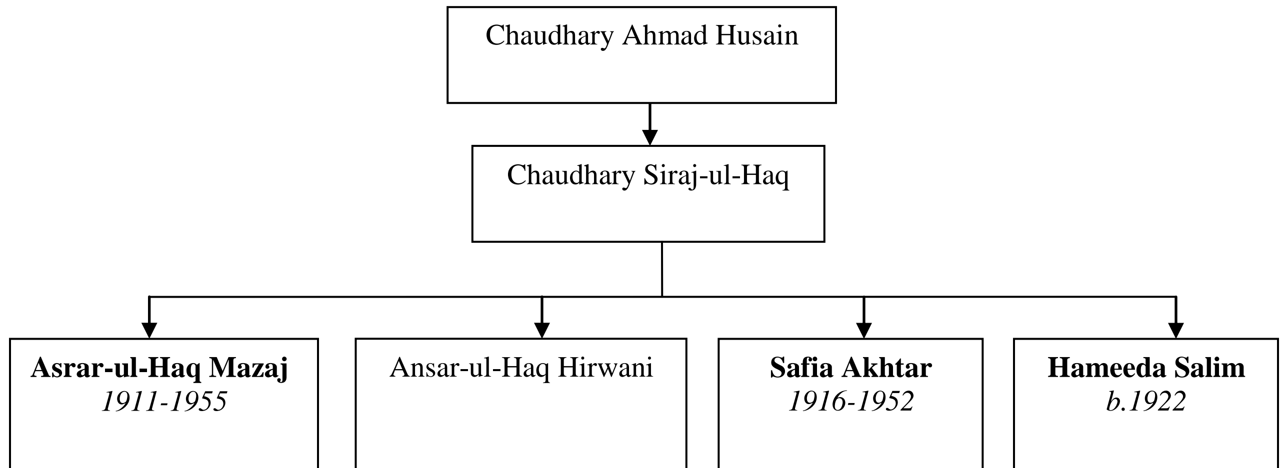

Illustration 6: Shajrah of Chaudhary Siraj-ul-Haq of Rudauli

Majaz finally settled on writing poetry, his primary interest. It is interesting to learn how many times he changed his *takhallus* (pen name), first from 'Asar' to 'Shaheed,' before becoming popular by 'Majaz.' In his early days of writing poetry, Majaz was the disciple of Fani Badayuni (1879-1941).[389] Fani Badayuni was, as the name suggests, from the qasbah of Badayun and had earned a high reputation in Urdu

[388] Salim, *Hum Saath Thay*, 69.
[389] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 363.

poetry as a child prodigy, who had started writing poetry at the age of eleven and had published his first collection when he was barely eighteen.[390] Majaz, however, mostly pursued a self-guided career in Urdu poetry. The kind of poetry he wrote inspired many then and now. Aligarh Muslim University, the bastion of Muslim education, adopted one of his poems, *Yeh Mera Chaman*, as its anthem, and it continues to be so to this day. Majaz's collected poetry includes nazms published in periodicals. Some of his works have also been published in books. His collections include *Ahang* (Concord), published in 1938, and *Shab-taab* (Sparkle in the Dark) and *Saaz-e-Nau* (The New Instrument), both published in 1945. These works have been widely read and talked about.

As an active participant in the Progressive Writers' Association, he wrote poetry that appealed to the poor and the masses. His poem *Mazdoor hain hum* (Laborers, We are) was a socialist statement calling for a revolution to end class-based society and to break the chains of exploitation.[391] Along with Ali Sardar Jafri (1916-2000), another progressive writer, he addressed gatherings in various places reciting his poems. Sajjad Zaheer testifies to Majaz's growing popularity in Calcutta among the Urdu-speaking laborers and urban workers. Sajjad Zaheer quotes the following verses to display Majaz's compassion for a socialistic cause:

> *Shahr mein chalte hain durrate huey*
> *Badalon ki tarah mandlatay huey*
> *Zindagi ki ragini gaate huey*
> *Lal jhanda hai humare haath mein*[392]
>
> We are tigers, roaring as we stride
> Hovering like the clouds
> Singing the melody of life
> The red flag is in our hands.

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[390] Mukhtar Sabzvari Badayuni, *Tazkirah-e-Fani* (Badayun: Mukhtar Sabzvari Badayuni, 1976), 9.
[391] Ahmad Ibrahim Alvi and Manzar Salim, eds., *Majaz: Kuch Yadein* (Lucknow: Zia Azimabadi, n.d.), 28-29.
[392] The above verses, including translation, are taken from Sajjad Zaheer's *Roshnai* translated by Amina Azfar. Zaheer, *The Light*, 144.

Although this shows the revolutionary side of Majaz's poetry, he also wrote romantic poetry. It is precisely for this reason that he has often been compared with John Keats (1795-1821), the famous English romantic poet. Asar Lakhnawi (1885-1967), another well-known Urdu poet, once wrote about Majaz that a Keats was born in Urdu but was lost to the waves of revolution.[393] Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1991-85), Majaz's contemporary and co-founder of the Progressive Writers' Association, wrote in his preface to *Ahang* that Majaz was a "minstrel of revolution," "who could sing revolution, not just live, shout, and beat it."[394]

Leaving aside the question of whether Majaz was more of a romantic than a revolutionary, it is certain that his poetic contribution was not only immediate but also long lasting. He primarily wrote in the ghazal and nazm genres of Urdu poetry. Of all the poetry that Majaz wrote, *Awaara*, *Inqilab*, *Raat aur Rail*, *Andheri Raat ka Musafir* became the most popular. His poem *Naujawan Khatoon se* (To a Young Woman) reflects his progressive thinking:

Hijab-e-fitna-e-parwar ab utha leti to accha thaa
Khud apne husn ko parda bana leti toh accha thaa
Teri neecchii nazar khud teri ismat ki muhafiz hai
Tu iss nashtar ki tezii aazma leti toh accha thaa.[395]

Only if you could lift the veil of mischief
Making a veil out of your own beauty
Your downcast glances are guardians of your honor
Only if you could test the sharpness of these lances

Majaz appealed to workers, lovers, and women equally, and he was one of the first Urdu poets to write about the advancement of women. He urged them to rise up and break the shackles of bondage and exploitation in society. The above verses were

[393] Pandit, ed., *Majaz aur Uski Sha'iri*, 24.
[394] Asrar-ul-Haq Majaz, *Ahang: Matbu'ah wa Ghair Matbu'ah Kalam ka Majmu'a* (Lucknow: Maktab-e-Din-o-Adab, 1995, 15.
[395] Pandit, ed., *Majaz aur Uski Sha'iri*, 85.

particularly aimed at women encouraging them to rise and face the world. This was a time when English education had fueled young minds with new ideas, and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia had given hope to the deprived. Majaz pushed women, still veiled by oppression, to champion reform. He ends the poem quoted above by suggesting that women "turn their *aanchal* (veil) into a *parcham* (flag)." This was quite revolutionary for the age. Similarly, in his poem titled *Purdah aur Ismat* (Purdah and Chastity), Majaz expressed the senselessness of keeping women in *purdah* or veiling. Coppola considers this poem to be a "forceful stance."[396] Majaz's revolutionary poetry addressed the grievances of different oppressed groups of society, women being one of them.

In his career as a progressive poet, Majaz served on the editorial team of *Naya Adab* (New Literature), the official organ of the Progressive Writers' Association. His contribution to the progressive movement as well as Urdu romantic poetry is immense. However, his example is slightly different from the other qasbati Muslims that we are discussing. Majaz was born in a Muslim household, but was apparently not ritualistic. Some of his verses are also said to be "dismissive of religious fervor."[397] Majaz's personal life, moreover, was tragic, owing to his drinking problem and loneliness.[398] He passed away in Lucknow in 1955. Nonetheless, Majaz was a poet with a vision. His career depicts how a qasbati Muslim could be involved in the larger literary world, not only of Urdu poets but also of progressive writers.

Earlier, we mentioned Safia Jan Nisar Akhtar and Hameeda Salim. These two women represent the kind of women writers that qasbahs produced. Safia Jan Nisar Akhtar was born in 1916. Although a highly educated woman who established herself as an independent personality, she is, unfortunately, mostly referred to as the sister of Majaz. As a child, Safia Siraj-ul-Haq was a very intelligent student. Her early

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[396] Carlo Coppola, *Urdu Poetry, 1935-1970: The Progressive Episode* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1975), 527.
[397] Raza Mir and Ali Husain Mir, *Anthems of Resistance: A Celebration of Progressive Urdu Poetry* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2006), 89.
[398] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 105-08.

education started at home, where she was taught by her father Siraj-ul-Haq. She learned Urdu, Persian, and English from him, and he praised her brilliance and sharp memory.[399] Later, she went to Syed Karamat Husain's Girls' School in Lucknow and then to Aligarh for high school. She also earned an undergraduate and Master's degree in Education. She married the poet Jan Nisar Akhtar, moved to Bhopal, and worked there for the Progressive Writer's Association. Ismat Chughtai (1915-91), an eminent Urdu writer known for her feminist views, writes of Safia Akhtar's active involvement in the writers' conference in Bhopal.[400]

Safia Akhtar wrote a number of letters to her husband when he moved to Bombay, while she stayed in Bhopal raising their two children. Her letters were published in two collections: *Harf-e-Aashna*[401] and *Zer-e-Lab*.[402] Written in a very simple style, these letters contain literary value as they reflect the life of an educated Muslim woman, her struggles, and experiences. A close reading of these letters reveals that she withstood the challenges of the time while undergoing personal struggles as a wife and a mother taking care of her children by herself. Her letters display the different kinds of emotions that she underwent as a lonely woman whose life partner was away. The topics she addressed included her daily chores, job, children, disease, travels, guests, and friends. Safia Akhtar's letters make a good historical source to understand the lives of educated Muslim women of her age. She can be compared to certain characters in *Majalis-un-Nissa* of Altaf Husain Hali (1837-1914). In this prose, Hali depicts the character of Zubaida Khatun, who is taught by her mother that knowledge makes women strong but that the traditional roles of women are a part of life. She adds that a woman should be prepared for hard

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[399] Ibid., 126.

[400] Ismat Chughtai, "From Bombay to Bhopal," trans. by, Tahira Naqvi and M. U. Memon, *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 15 (2000): 409-27.

[401] Safia Akhtar, *Harf-e-Aashna* (Lahore: Maktab-e-Sha'ir-o-Adab, 1958).

[402] They were published in 1955 by Maktab-e-Jamia. Recently, a Hindi translation of her letters has been published. Safia Akhtar, *Tumhare Naam* (Delhi: Rajkamal Prakashan, 2004).

times and should not entirely rely on a man's earnings without having any skill of her own.[403] The character of Zubaida Khatun aptly befits the life of Safia Akhtar.

Safia Akhtar's younger sister, Hamida Salim was also a writer, who contributed immensely to Rudauli literature. She studied at the same schools as her elder sister. Her writings, in the nature of memoirs, discuss the meaning of qasbati culture in colonial India. There are many poets who have expressed pride in their qasbahs, but she is one of the few who puts this feeling down in prose. Without her memoirs, an account of Rudauli in particular and qasbahs in general would lack a lively cultural component. She has written in detail, in two separate books, about her own feelings of attachment to Rudauli, a fact that makes her writing crucial to this study. Hamida Salim's accounts, however, require a critical reading since they carry the usual biases of memoirs: they are mostly focused on her family and Rudauli as recollected through her childhood experiences. Moreover, on many occasions, her memoirs become repetitive, non-focused, overlapping, and incoherent. Despite these weaknesses, her memoirs are an invaluable source to understanding the pride that qasbati Muslims carry.

The few examples that we have discussed above show different individuals from Rudauli as representatives of qasbati Muslims living in colonial conditions. They exemplify the kinds of individuals that this qasbah produced. Their different backgrounds, educational experiences, professions, and contributions to dissimilar fields make the history of Rudauli all the more interesting. Another important point to be noted is how family worked as a unit of social life in a qasbati context. Families that recognized the importance of education kept up with the changing times by acquiring education from new institutions for both their sons and daughters. In addition, education in qasbahs began at home providing individuals such as Chaudhary Muhammad Ali with the resilience and ability to deal with literary challenges, despite lacking in a complete formal education. Moreover, training at

[403] Gail Minault, tr. *Voices of Silence: English Translation of Altaf Husain Hali's Majalis un-Nissa and Chup ki Dad* (Delhi: Chanakya, 1986), 21, 68.

English-style institutions such as the colleges at Aligarh, Agra, or Lucknow broadened the literary horizon of Urdu and a qasbah's contribution to the larger society, as we shall see while discussing examples from other qasbahs.

AMROHA

Similar to Rudauli in Awadh, Amroha in the region of Rohilkhand produced a number of important professionals and educated Muslims in various walks of life. Amroha's contributions were quite remarkable in literary as well as non-literary professions. Several educators, administrators, writers, and most remarkably, poets emerged out of this qasbah. Their contribution to Muslim social life in South Asia is significant. We noted in the previous chapter that poets or shu'ara and writers are probably the ones who deserve the most credit for earning Amroha its name. Shaikh Ghulam Hamdani Mushafi Amrohvi (1750-1824) was an extraordinary writer with rare fluency in both Urdu and Persian. He was highly prolific and a trendsetter in Urdu literature. Born in Amroha, he pursued a career in writing and obtained recognition in places such as Lucknow and Delhi. As we move towards the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Hakim Muhibb Ali Khan Abbasi (1827-1906) was not only a poet of Persian and Urdu, but also a historian. Hamid Ali Khan Amrohvi (1860-1918) was another unique case, having the distinction of being an English as well as Urdu writer and being a lawyer and an administrator. In his family, we find many personalities who succeeded as writers and administrators. Another example is Seemab Amrohvi (1850-1928), a poet who could write different genres of Urdu poetry. Last but not the least, Amrohvis, or Amrohis, left an indelible mark in the field of both Islamic and English education. Mushtaq Husain, alias Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk (1841-1917), was a pillar of the Aligarh Movement, who championed the cause of educating the Muslims of South Asia.

The person best known as Viqar-ul-Mulk in Aligarh circles was Munshi Mushtaq Husain of Amroha. The entire Aligarh Movement was actually spearheaded by the threesome of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Nawab Muhsin-ul-Mulk alias Maulvi

Syed Mehdi Ali (1837-1907)[404] of Etawah, and Mushtaq Husain. The latter two successfully carried on the movement after Sir Syed's death in 1898. Mushtaq Husain Viqar-ul-Mulk served as the Honorary Secretary of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College at Aligarh from 1909 to 1912. As previously mentioned, he was one of the major contributors to *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq*, the journal that was the mouthpiece of the Aligarh Movement since its inception. He also worked with Muhsin-ul-Mulk as a member of the core group, or the Board of Trustees of the College. He contributed organizationally, administratively, and clerically to running the college, in addition to personally staying on campus to make parents feel safe about their children during the years of 1879 to 1882.[405] Similarly, Mushtaq Husain was at the forefront of the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference[406] and in the foundation of the All India Muslim League.

Mushtaq Husain was born in Amroha on March 24, 1841 into a family of landlords. His father Shaikh Fazal Husain, passed away when he was only six, and he was brought up in Amroha by his mother, Batul-un-Nisa.[407] She played a large role in instilling in him values such as politeness, obedience, friendliness, simplicity, punctuality, compassion, truthfulness, and manners.[408] He received his early education within the qasbah of Amroha in a traditional way. He learned Arabic and theology under Maulvi Rahat Ali and then went to a madrasa at the tahsil level. This was followed by his entrance into the Roorkee College for an engineering degree.[409] In 1861, he joined government service after graduating and worked with Sir Syed at a

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[404] For an excellent biography on him by Muhammad Amin Zuberi (1872-1958), one of his contemporaries, see Muhammad Amin Zuberi, *Hayat-e-Muhsin: yani Sawaneh Umri Nawab Muhsin-ud-Daulah Muhsin-ul-Mulk Maulvi Syed Mehdi Ali Khan* (Karachi: Academy of Educational Research, All Pakistan Educational Conference, 1994). Zuberi wrote similar biographies on Viqar-ul-Mulk, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Maulana Altaf Husain Hali, and Syed Mahmud.
[405] David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 198, 262.
[406] All India Muhammadan Educational Conference was a forum for the promotion of education among Muslims of India. Later, it was changed to All India Muslim Educational Conference, according to the usage of the time.
[407] Muhammad Ikramullah Khan, *Viqar-e-Hayat* (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1925), 2-3.
[408] Muhammad Amin Zuberi, *Tazkirah-e-Viqar: Mukhtasar Halaat Nawab Viqar-ud-Daulah Viqar-ul-Mulk Maulvi Mushtaq Husain Khan Bahadur Intesar Jung* (Aligarh: Muslim University, 1938), 2.
[409] Zuberi, *Tazkirah-e-Viqar*, 3.

time when Sir Syed himself was in government service. He spent a considerable amount of time working as an administrator in Aligarh. In 1866, at the beginning of his administrative career, he joined the Scientific Society and took the charge of publishing the periodical *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq*. Through his writings, he engaged in the debate over what Muslims needed in terms of education. He wrote thought-provoking articles on the condition of Muslims, their religious issues, and the changing times.[410] Later, he went on to serve in the state of Hyderabad for a while after being employed by Nawab Salar Jung. He worked there at the highest levels of the bureaucracy and earned the title *Viqar-ul-Mulk* (Honor of the Sovereign) in 1890.[411]

Viqar-ul-Mulk was deeply interested in spreading education among Muslims and making the MAO College a success. Even while he worked in Hyderabad, he continued his efforts to promote the College. When Sir Asman Jah, the prime minister of Hyderabad state from 1887 to 1894, stopped by Aligarh for a few hours in 1888, Viqar-ul-Mulk succeeded in getting the annual grant for the college raised by an amount of 250 rupees per annum. He also raised an enormous sum from his friends and relatives for an endowment for the college in addition to collecting large donations from the people of Hyderabad for the construction of Asman Manzil, a campus building.[412] Viqar-ul-Mulk's endeavors were crucial at a time of crisis when the operating expenditures of the college were on the rise and fund collections were shrinking.[413] It is little known that Mushtaq Husain Viqar-ul-Mulk was offered the job of prime minister of the state of Bhopal when he left Hyderabad.[414] Instead, he chose to return to Aligarh to pursue his interest in promoting education among the Muslims of colonial India.

Viqar-ul-Mulk's involvement in education was not limited to the Aligarh Movement. Maulana Shibli Numani wrote him a personal letter in 1907, after sending

[410] Mushtaq Husain, "Haiyat-e-Jadidah: Haiyat-e-Jadidah aur Maujezah-e-Qurani," *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* 1, 2 (January 2, 1871): 23-24.
[411] Zuberi, *Tazkirah-e-Viqar*, 12-58.
[412] Ibid., 99.
[413] Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 134-42.
[414] Ahmad, ed., *Khutoot-e-Viqar-ul-Mulk*, 183-84.

out a formal invitation, requesting that he attend the annual meeting of Nadwat-ul-'Ulama in Lucknow.[415] We find that, whenever possible, Viqar-ul-Mulk did attend these annual meetings of Nadwa. Moreover, he always lent his support to Nadwa both through advocacy and resources. He spoke up in its favor even when British officials disagreed with him, and he sent his own son to Nadwa for his early education.[416] Nadwa was a madrasa rather restricted in its approach to English education. This shows that Viqar-ul-Mulk was open to both Aligarh and Nadwa models of education. In addition, his support benefited the promotion and education of Yunani medicine, the traditional Muslim medicine.[417] In 1869, he helped set up a Yunani medical center in Aligarh. Later, when he occupied high office in Hyderabad, he organized the system of Yunani medicine there by establishing a department dedicated to it. Mushtaq Khan also supported the cause of Yunani medicine in Delhi championed by Hakim Ajmal Khan (1863-1928), an influential Muslim political leader and a distinguished hakim. Ajmal Khan belonged to a leading family of Yunani physicians and was the founder of Tibbiya College (Medical College) as well as the Hindustani Dawakhana (Indian Dispensary) in Delhi. For years, Ajmal Khan had advocated the foundation of tibbiya colleges throughout India under the control of one central tibbiya university.[418] Mushtaq Khan provided moral support to the Tibbiya College in

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[415] Numani, *Baqyat-e-Shibli*, 195.
[416] Zuberi, *Tazkirah-e-Viqar*, 133-34.
[417] Yunani medicine, also called *tibb*, refers to the Graeco-Arabic medicine. It originated in the doctrines of the Greek physicians Hippocrates and Galen, and was established as an independent branch of knowledge by the Persian physician Ibn Sina (980-1037), father of early modern medicine. Its treatment is based on natural substances, mainly food and herbs. This branch of medicine is very popular in South Asia, especially among Muslims, chiefly owing to its affordability. The practitioners of Yunani medicine are called *hakims*. For a general description on Yunani medicine and its comparison with the Western and other medicinal systems, see Claudia Liebeskind, "Arguing Science: Yunani tibb, Hakims and Biomedicine in India, 1900–50." In Waltraud Ernst, ed., *Plural Medicine, Tradition and Modernity, 1800–2000* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 58–75. Also, Neshat Quaiser, "Politics, Culture and Colonialism: Yunani's Debate with Doctors." In Mark Harrison and Biswamoy Pati, eds, *Health Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Colonial India* (Delhi: Sangam Books, 2001), 317–55. Recently, Seema Alavi has published a monograph on Yunani medicine. See Seema Alavi, *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Medical Tradition, 1600-1900* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2007).
[418] Barbara D. Metcalf, "Nationalist Muslims in British India: The Case of Hakim Ajmal Khan," *Modern Asian Studies* 19, 1 (1985): 20.

Delhi by participating in its various meetings. He also donated money to the Haziq-ul-Mulk Abdul Majid Khan Memorial Fund for the promotion of Yunani medicine and training. In 1903, when Ajmal Khan founded the Hindustani Dawakhana, Mushtaq Khan donated a large sum to it and accepted a position on its board of directors.[419]

Viqar-ul-Mulk was also one of the important witnesses before the Hunter Commission of 1882, a commission appointed by the British Indian government to review the state of education in India and suggest necessary measures for its progress. Viqar-ul-Mulk spoke his mind, advocating a more practical curriculum, more residential universities, and affordable education.[420] He also pointed out the ongoing demand for converting the MAO College into a university. The idea of a Muslim university had been conceptualized in 1873 by Sir Syed and his friends but was never vigorously pursued until the campaign was revived in 1910-12 by leaders including Viqar-ul-Mulk.[421] In 1911, a Muslim University Foundation Committee was organized, which replaced the Sir Syed Memorial Fund Committee. With Aga Khan as president, Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk was elected its secretary at its headquarters in Aligarh.[422] His job was to coordinate several committees spread across India which would work for the cause of a Muslim University. Hundreds of thousands of rupees were collected under his supervision. Viqar-ul-Mulk also continuously participated in the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference. In short, his participation in causes for education was both focused and extensive.

Nawab Mushtaq Husain Viqar-ul-Mulk lived a life devoted to the advancement of education among the Muslims of India. His held a somewhat unique view of education in wanting the younger generation to be well grounded in religious education, similar to his upbringing. Thus, he supported madrasas such as Nadwa. His

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[419] Zuberi, *Tazkirah-e-Viqar*, 132.
[420] Ibid., 131-32.
[421] Gail Minault and David Lelyveld, "The Campaign for a Muslim University, 1898-1920," *Modern Asian Studies* 8, 2 (1974): 146, 160-61.
[422] Zuberi, *Tazkirah-e-Viqar*, 289-90; Minault and Lelyveld, "The Campaign," 61.

belief in religious education, however, did not diminish his support for the Aligarh Movement and English-style education for Muslims, and his advocacy for these issues equaled that of Sir Syed. Additionally, his vision of education included spreading knowledge about different branches, including indigenous medicine, among Muslims. He appears to have accepted British involvement solely as a necessary means to gain financial support. To ensure less interference from the European staff in the everyday business of the college, he continued to donate his own money and sought contributions from other quarters.[423] Acquiring greater autonomy was one of his main concerns as the Honorary Secretary of the MAO College. In a letter written to J. H. Towle, a government official in Aligarh, he addressed the issue of ensuring "harmony and cooperation between the Honorary Secretary and the local Trustees on the one hand and the Principal and the Staff on the other as the first essential condition of successfully running this institution."[424] Viqar-ul-Mulk was well aware of political and more general Muslim interests. His participation in promoting educational interests through the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference has been acknowledged. When Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka proposed the foundation of an All India Muslim League at the annual meeting of the All India Muslim Educational Conference in December 1906, Viqar-ul-Mulk was named its Joint Secretary.[425] This shows not only his recognition as an influential leader among Muslim circles but also his own commitment to undertake political responsibilities.

While Mushtaq Husain chose to devote his life to education, there were many others in Amroha who served as administrators and contributed in different fields. One such person was Hamid Ali Khan Amrohvi, a lawyer by profession, who composed several works in English as well as Urdu. His biographer, Mumtaz Husain Jaunpuri, speaks hyperbolically when calling him "an invaluable and a peerless

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[423] Ahmad, ed., *Khutoot-e-Viqar-ul-Mulk*, 459.
[424] Iqbal Husain, ed., *Documents: Muslim Educational Conference*, Vol. II (Aligarh: Sir Syed Academy, 2004), 85.
[425] Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, 148-49.

pearl,"[426] but Hamid Ali Khan definitely was a person of many talents. He came from a prestigious and respected family of Amroha. Born on December 14, 1860, he spent his childhood in several towns because of the job transfers of his father, Hakim Muhammad Amjad Ali Khan (1827-1900). Hamid Ali Khan received his early education at home under his father and different tutors. He learned Persian and Arabic at home and English in school. Having obtained a Bachelor's degree from Aligarh, he went to London for higher studies and returned with the most coveted degree of the day, Barrister-at-Law. While in London, he learned Latin and French. His family background of mu'afidars[427] and his own qualifications led to a successful career. Hamid Ali Khan's accomplishments were numerous as an administrator, an English and Urdu writer, a poet, a biographer and also a politician.

Although Hamid Ali Khan had practiced law in Lucknow since 1886, his passion lay in writing. This passion dated back to his school days, when he met Safi Amrohvi, and to his days in London when he kept company with the likes of Nawab Syed Manzoor Ali of Bengal and Sir Asman Jah of Hyderabad, both of whom had a keen interest in poetry.[428] When he left London in 1885, Hamid Ali Khan wrote a poem in English titled *A Farewell to London*. Once back in India, he attended a number of musha'irahs, which encouraged him to start writing Urdu poetry. He learned poetry as a disciple of Shaikh Ali Khazeen, Ahsan Lakhnawi, and Safi Lakhnawi[429] and wrote several genres of poetry in Urdu, including *qasidas* (panegyrics), *hamd* (poem in praise of Allah), *naat* (poetry in praise of the Prophet), *ruba'iyat* (quatrains), ghazals (odes), and other forms such as *qata*,[430] and *sehra*.[431] Most of his poems were ghazals. His poems received praise across India. Dil

[426] Lakhnawi, *Yadgar-e-Hamid*, 2.
[427] *Mu'afidar* means a holder of revenue-free land.
[428] Lakhnawi, *Yadgar-e-Hamid*, 4.
[429] Ibid., 9-12.
[430] *Qata* is a kind of verse consisting of pairs of couplets in which the meaning of the first couplet is incomplete without the couplet that follows.
[431] *Sehra* is an Urdu poem recited on the occasion of someone's wedding in praise of the groom. It also prays to God for a happy and successful life of the newlyweds.

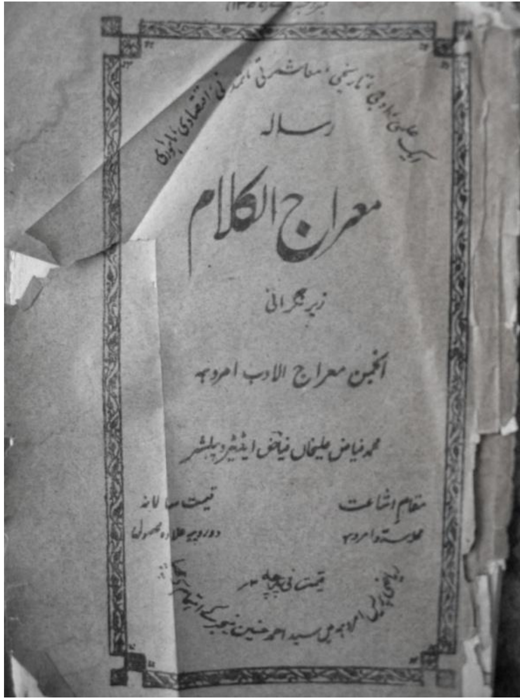
Shahjahanpuri, himself a renowned poet, wrote on June 15, 1916 to Hamid Ali Khan that his excellent ghazals and nazms qualified him to be called the Sadi of Urdu.[432] Others who wrote appreciative letters to Hamid Ali Khan included Asar Lakhnawi, Ahsan Mahrehrawi, Bekhud Mohani, Altaf Husain Hali, Shad Azimabadi, and Mujtaba of Amroha.[433] These letters indicate that Hamid Ali Khan was widely recognized as a poet of worth.

Besides poetry, Hamid Ali Khan wrote several works in prose. The most notable of these was an Urdu biography of Syed Karamat Husain of Lucknow. We mentioned earlier that Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi also wrote a biography of Syed Karamat Husain. Both Chaudhary Muhammad Ali and Hamid Ali Khan were impressed by Syed Karamat Husain, whose contribution to Muslim girls' education has been mentioned more than once. Both published their biographies on Syed Karamat Husain in 1918, the year following his death. Whereas Hamid Ali Khan's work is a full-length proper biography of 314 pages, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's work is a small but rich 41-page memoir, where he recounts his own personal encounters and relationships with Syed Karamat Husain. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali acknowledges that Hamid Ali Khan and Syed Karamat Husain had a very cordial relationship.[434] After Syed Karamat Husain's death, Hamid Ali Khan summarized his relationship with him in the following verses:

Karamat uth gaye Hamid fasana reh gaya baqi
Hamari aur unki mustaqil sacchi muhabbat ka.[435]

Karamat left, O Hamid! All that remains is but the story
Of mine and his resolute, deep affection.

[432] Lakhnawi, *Yadgar-e-Hamid*, 192.
[433] Ibid., 115-260.
[434] Rudaulvi, *Yadgar Maulana Syed Karamat Husain*, 2.
[435] Hamid Ali Khan, *Hayat-e-Maulana Karamat Husain* (Lucknow: Al-Nazir Press, 1918), 17.



رسالہ

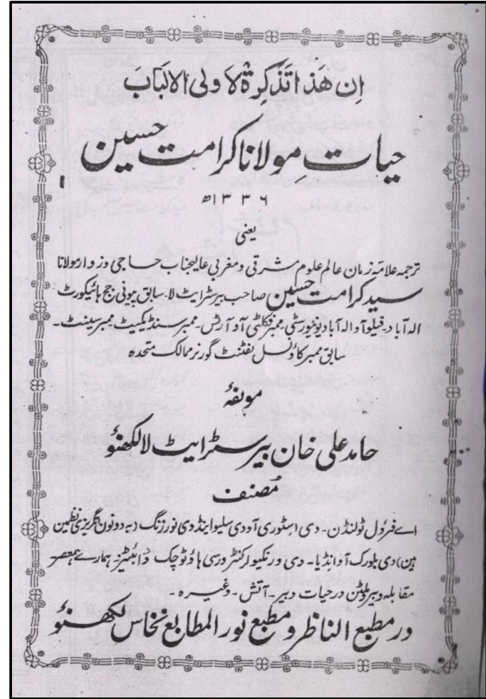
معراج الکلام

زیر نگرانی

انجمن معراج الادب امروہہ

محمد فیاض علیخاں فیاض ایڈیٹر و پبلشر

Meraj-ul-Kalam (Amroha)



اِن ھٰذہٖ تذکرۃ لاولی الالباب

حیاتِ مولانا کرامت حسین

۱۳۳۶ھ

یعنی

ترجمہ علامۂ زمان عالم علوم مشرقی و مغربی عالیجناب حاجی وزوار مولانا
سید کرامت حسین صاحب بیرسٹرایٹ لا۔ سابق پیونی جج ہائیکورٹ
الہ آباد۔ فیلو آو الہ آباد یونیورسٹی۔ ممبر فکلٹی آو آرٹس۔ ممبر سنڈیکیٹ۔ ممبر سینٹ۔
سابق ممبر کاؤنسل لفٹنٹ گورنر ممالک متحدہ

مؤلفہٗ

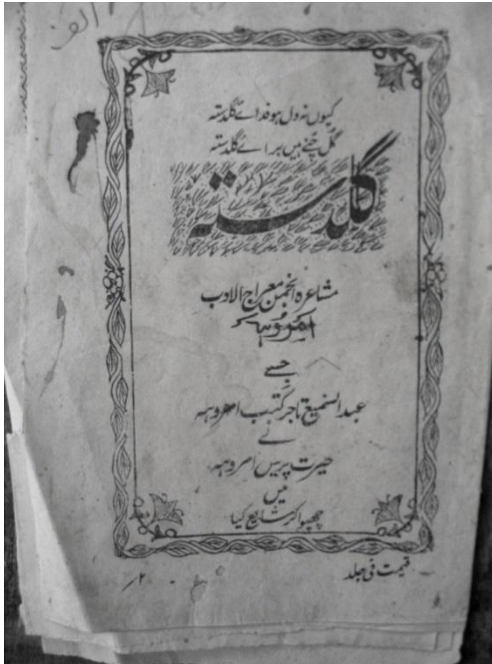
حامد علی خان بیرسٹرایٹ لا لکھنؤ

مصنفِ

اے فرؤل ٹو لنڈن۔ دی اسٹوری آو دی سلیو اینڈ دی نورزنگ (یہ دونوں انگریزی نظمیں
ہیں) دی بلورک آو انڈیا۔ دی ورنکیولر کنٹروسی ہاؤ ٹو چک ڈابیٹیز۔ ہمارے ہمعصر
مقابلہ دبیر ملٹن در حیات دبیر۔ آتش۔ وغیرہ۔

در مطبع الناظر و مطبع نور المطابع نخاس لکھنؤ

Hayat-e-Maulana Karamat Husain



کیوں نہ دل ہو فدائے گلدستہ
گل نچھے ہیں برائے گلدستہ

گلدستہ

مشاعرہ انجمن معراج الادب
امروہہ

جسے
عبدالسمیع تاجر کتب امروہہ
نے
حیرت پریس امروہہ
میں
چھپوا کر شائع کیا

قیمت فی جلد

Guldasta (Amroha)

Illustration 7: Books and periodicals, Amroha. *Mayar* (Amroha)

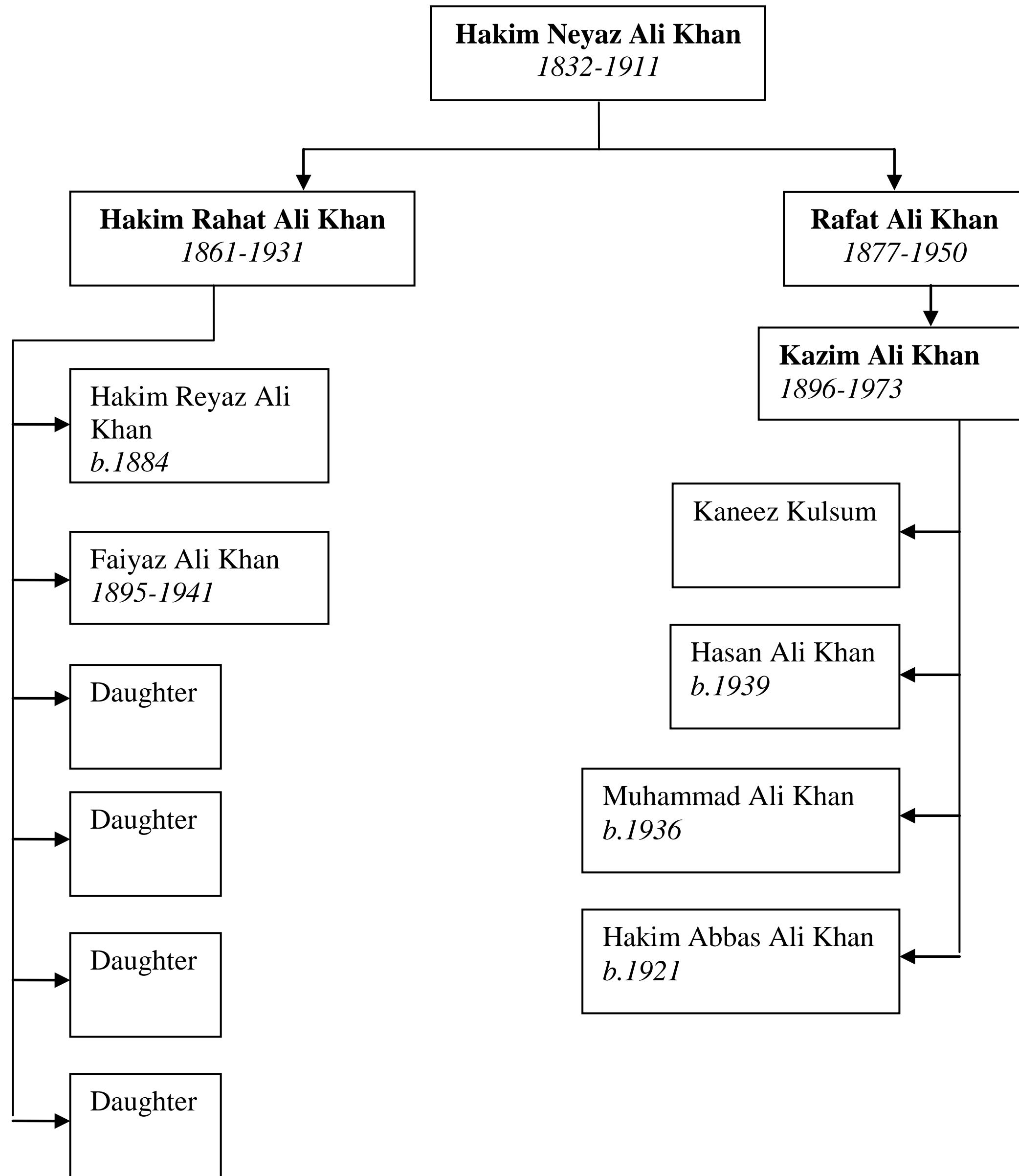
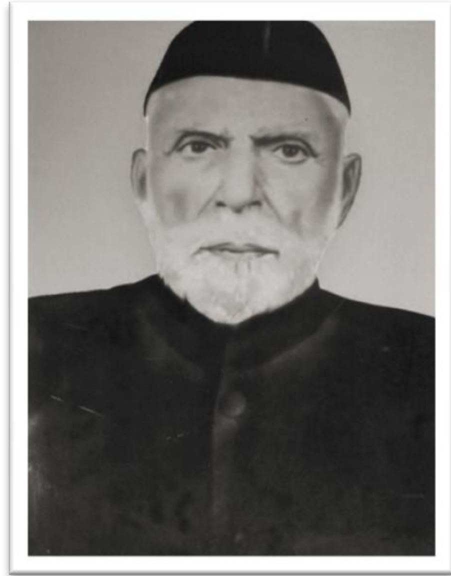
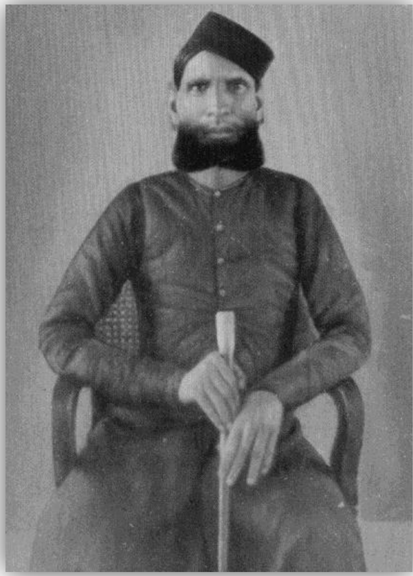


Illustration 8: Shajrah of Kazim Ali Khan of Amroha



Kazim Ali Khan ⇧

⇦ Rahat Ali Khan with his son and daughter



Hamid Ali Khan Amrohvi

Seemab Amrohvi

Illustration 9

These biographies complement each other in the sense that one is a formal, detailed description and the other is an informal, personal narrative. Hamid Ali Khan also left some other writings in Urdu, including *Hamare Hum-asr* (My Contemporaries), and works of literary criticism, *Muqabla Dabir-o-Milton* – a comparison of Dabir and Milton – and *Atish*, on the poet Atish. He also frequently contributed to periodicals, publishing his own articles and promoting other poets and writers such as Asghar of Ghazipur. He wrote in *Mayar*, a journal published from Amroha, with a sampling of Asghar's poetry.[436] Although he did not write as much in English, he penned one interesting piece, *The Vernacular Controversy*. It details the controversy surrounding the Nagri agitation in 1900, after a delegation of some Hindu leaders demanded that the government replace the Persian script with Devanagri. *The Bulwark of India*, which depicts a harmonious relationship between the British and the Indians, and *How to Check Diabetes* were other bits that showcase his talents.

Hamid Ali Khan was also an influential political figure. He served as a member of the Legislative Council of the United Provinces. His participation in Lucknow politics in the early 1890s was supported by Hindus and Muslims alike, and the issue of Devanagri script saw him lead Lucknow Muslims by heading a committee to protect Urdu.[437] Later, he was one among those who traveled to Dhaka in 1906 for the Muslim Educational Conference where the All India Muslim League was founded.[438] Thus, Hamid Ali Khan was a lawyer, a legislator, a writer in English as well as Urdu, and an influential Muslim political figure of the United Provinces. He established connections with most other Urdu poets of the time. It is not surprising that he was one of the leading Muslims of the United Provinces.

But Hamid Ali Khan was not the only educated, articulate, and activist personality from his family who contributed to the public life of Amroha and beyond. His father, Hakim Muhammad Amjad Ali Khan, was born in Amroha on July 21,

[436] *Mayar* 8, 7 (July 1911): 29.
[437] Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, 79, 135.
[438] Ibid., 148, 148 4n.

1827. He was not only a respected hakim but also an expert in the so-called revealed and the rational sciences (manqulat and m‘aqulat). He served as a tahsildar in several places and then as a Deputy Collector,[439] and he was named an Honorary Magistrate of Amroha on June 23, 1892. There are two sides to his personality and they seem to be intertwined. As a government official, he was highly lauded for his contribution to the government and to public works. On the other hand, he used his credentials as a government officer to benefit the residents of Amroha through charities and public service.[440]

Amjad Ali Khan commanded a position of respect among both the British and the people of his qasbah and community. Official British documents testify to his outstanding services as an administrator. Later, as a retired Deputy Collector, Amjad Ali Khan was one of the invitees to the Darbar of the Viceroy and the Governor-General of India on December 13, 1899.[441] This is just one example of many such invitations he received. P. C. Wheeler, the Settlement Officer of Jaunpur, wrote a letter on August 18, 1885 to the higher authorities requesting an extension of Amjad Ali Khan’s services.[442] Wheeler also cited testimonials about Amjad Ali Khan written by various British officials including Alfred Lyall, A. Shakespear, and many others. Amjad Ali Khan’s attendance at local functions in Amroha was also sought after.[443] Post-retirement, Amjad Ali Khan contributed to the local society in multiple ways. In a letter written on October 20, 1898, S. J. Thompson, Sanitary Commissioner of the North-Western Provinces, thanked Amjad Ali Khan for the special assistance he “gave to the operations of the Vaccination Department during the season 1897-98.”[444]

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[439] Lakhnawi, *Yadgar-e-Hamid*, 2-3.
[440] “Government N-W Provinces and Oudh, Powers: Judicial (Criminal) Department,” June 23, 1892, *Amjad Ali Khan Private Papers*, Amroha.
[441] *Amjad Ali Khan Private Papers*, Amroha.
[442] Letter no. 454, P. C. Wheeler, Settlement Officer, Jaunpore to A. J. Lawrence, Commissioner,” *Amjad Ali Khan Private Papers*, Amroha.
[443] Neyaz Muhammad Abbas of Amroha requested for his presence at a function for his young son Mirza Muhammad Jafar. *Amjad Ali Khan Private Papers*, Amroha.
[444] “Letter from the Sanitary Commissioner, N-W Provinces and Oudh,” No. 4341, *Amjad Ali Khan Private Papers*, Amroha.

In his various charitable activities, he was associated with the Rotary Club. His charity also reached beyond Amroha. For example, he was a regular contributor to the Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam, an Islamic social, educational, and political organization in Lahore. He was also a regular participant in the activities of Husainabad Trust in Lucknow, an organization of prominent Shia gentlemen of Lucknow that promoted education among Muslims. Whereas Husainabad Trust represented Shia interests, Anjuman Himayat-e-Islam was predominantly a Sunni organization. Amjad Ali Khan, a Shia Muslim by faith, is thus seen contributing to both Shia and Sunni organizations. There are many examples of people such as Amjad Ali Khan, who break down the stereotypical perspectives of viewing Shias and Sunnis as polar extremes. Amjad Ali Khan was a prominent member of the service gentry, whose contribution to Amroha in particular and Muslim society in general is a representative case for many qasbati Muslims across colonial North India.

Kazim Ali Khan (1896-1973), another rais and lawyer, was married to the daughter of Amjad Ali Khan. A grandson of Hakim Neyaz Ali Khan (1832-1911), Kazim Ali Khan was a rais of Amroha and a hakim. Kazim Ali Khan had two sons: Hakim Rahat Ali Khan (1861-1931), a rais, poet, bureaucrat, and hakim; and, Rafat Ali Khan (1877-1950?), a rais and bureaucrat. Rahat Ali Khan was a poet better known by his pen name Haziq,[445] Rafat Ali Khan became a Superintendant and a Deputy Collector later in his life. Rahat Ali Khan exemplifies the intellectual connectedness of qasbati life. Kazim Ali Khan provides a glimpse into his uncle's schedule and activities.[446] As a hakim, Rahat Ali Khan would start his day by giving lessons in Yunani medicine to his young students in the qasbah. Early evenings would begin with intense scholarly and literary discussion among his friends and acquaintances. They would usually get together at the house of Syed Allahdiya, in the muhallah Saddo, and the discussions would last hours. The Dost Ali ka Imambara was another gathering place within the qasbah where people would meet in the

[445] Kazim Ali Khan, *Intekhab Diwan-e-Haziq* (Amroha, n.d.).
[446] Khan, *Intekhab Diwan-e-Haziq*, 7.

evenings and engage in social, literary, political, and religious discussions.[447] During the time of Muharram, Rahat Ali Khan would spend most of his day in the imambara. Even his medical students would go to the imambara for lessons. This demonstrates his level of engagement with the public life of Amroha and the way he participated in Muharram as a forum of qasbati public sphere.

As a poet himself, he patronized and encouraged a number of poets within Amroha. Poets from Amroha such as Syed Shuja-ul-Hasan, Syed Muajiz Hasan Muajiz, Syed Shajaruddin Shajar, Hakim Faiyaz Ali Khan Faiyaz, Syed Tahir Hasan Goya, Syed Miraj-ul-Hasan Siraj, Munshi Ganeshi Lal Bedil, and Syed Jafar were among those promoted by Rahat Ali Khan.[448] In addition, he patronized a literary society, Anjuman Miraj-ul Adab (literally, Society for the Ascension of Literature) in order to promote Urdu poetry in Amroha. The Anjuman used to hold musha'irahs every month which brought poets together, and the proceedings of such musha'irahs were published from time to time. For example, Rahat Ali Khan chaired a musha'irah held in the muhallah Saddo on March 16, 1924. The presentations made at this particular mushairah were published as a collection by the title of *Guldasta* (bouquet), a generic name used for such collections.[449] Rahat Ali Khan and those associated with him demonstrate how individuals promoted and sustained an intellectual environment within qasbahs by creating avenues for literary dialogue and exchange. Forums such as literary societies and the organization of musha'irahs in qasbahs promoted a culture of expression, debate, and discussion on various issues by way of sharing poetry. At the same time, they also served as a space of community culture where both individual and collective concerns and opinions could find a space. The fact that qasbati Muslims could come together, whether formally in a musha'irah or informally in a place, such as the Dost Ali ka Imambara, indicates the existence of a vibrant public sphere within the qasbah.

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[447] Interview with Syed Faizan Ali Naqvi, Amroha, March 2006.
[448] Khan, *Intekhab Diwan-e-Haziq*, 7.
[449] Abdus Sami, *Guldasta: Mushairah Anjuman Miraj-ul-Adab Amroha* (Amroha: Hairat Press, n. d.).

Kazim Ali Khan was the son of Rafat Ali Khan, the younger brother of Rahat Ali Khan. He held the position of Special Magistrate, and, at the same time, was keenly involved with Urdu literature, particularly poetry. Thus, the family had members involved in writing, traditional medicine, and administration. They belonged to the traditional service gentry, while they also adapted themselves to such advances in the administrative machinery as was possible for the Indians of the time. Waqif Amrohvi, a professor of Urdu at the Punjab University Camp College in Delhi, writes that Kazim Ali Khan was not just a poet but also a critic.[450] Kazim Ali Khan published a collection of poetry, *Gul Parey*, in which he thematically arranged couplets by various poets from Amroha as well as other places. He thus created a forum where he could bring poets like Mushafi and Iqbal together. His themes ranged from poetical metaphors to topics of general concern such as watan, Musalman, and even Amroha. He also edited the poetry of his uncle Rahat Ali Khan "Haziq." Kazim Ali Khan also served as the President of the Dargah Najaf-e-Hind Committee of a neighboring town called Jogipura. Kazim Ali Khan was an Honorary Magistrate and the first advocate from Amroha.[451] Within the family, there was another prominent lawyer, Nawab Ali Khan, who served as a Pleader at the Judge's Court of Moradabad.[452]

Muhammad Masoom Ali Naqvi, alias Seemab Amrohvi, is another prominent contributor to Urdu literature during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He was a poet in both Urdu and Persian. Seemab Amrohvi, the son of Syed Husain Bakhsh and grandson of Syed Fatehullah, was born in the muhallah Pirzadgan of Amroha in 1850. His genealogy traces back to Iraq, where his ancestors emigrated from India during the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban in the early thirteenth century.[453] He is also said to be related to one of the most revered Chishti Sufis of

[450] Kazim Ali Khan, ed., *Gul Parey* (Allahabad: Idarah-e-Anis Urdu, n.d.), 8.
[451] Interview with Kazim Ali Khan's son Muhammad Ali Khan, August 4, 2006.
[452] "Letter from the Inspector-General of Police, United Provinces, Dated January 6, 1910," *Kazim Ali Khan Private Papers*, Amroha.
[453] Hasan, ed., *Diwan Seemab Amrohvi*, 33.

North India – Shah Wilayat of Amroha, who is discussed in Chapter Three. Seemab Amrohvi learned Arabic and Persian from some of the most renowned ‘ulama and scholars of Amroha. He later received a *sanad*[454] of *munshi-e-fazil* after which he had an opportunity to teach not only in Amroha but elsewhere.[455] He worked for four years in the court of Raja Shyam Singh of the state of Tajpur, twenty-five miles from Amroha. A poet at heart, he felt that Tajpur was not appropriate for literary pursuits and left his post.[456] Beginning with masnavi, he wrote in different genres of Urdu poetry and occasionally Persian poetry. He is noted for his ghazals, qasidas, and naat. Literary critics have read a sense of history in his poetry.[457]

Qamar Rais, a writer and professor of Urdu literature, notes that Seemab Amrohvi "possessed God-gifted intelligence and creative ability. He wrote verses for his own personal delight. It is sad that he could neither amass wealth nor publish his diwan. Nor do we find a sample of his good work in the tazkirahs of this time."[458] The only published tazkirah that mentions him is the one written by Sri Ram in 1917.[459] Another tazkirah that mentions Seemab, written by Mahmood Ahmad Abbasi as *Tazkirah-e-Shu‘ara-e-Amroha*, still remains in manuscript form.[460] Qamar Rais further adds that Seemab was one of those poets who wrote for no one, admitted nobody's discipleship, and did not care to publish. His collection of poetry, which was published posthumously, shows his excellent poetic skills. Only a year after his death, a widely recognized periodical from Amroha, *Shayar*, mentioned him as a leading poet.[461]

Amroha's history offers up an array of people from different backgrounds, educations, professions, and interests. As in other qasbahs, most people started off

[454] Diploma, certificate, testimonial.
[455] Hasan, ed., *Diwan Seemab Amrohvi*, 34-35.
[456] Ibid., 39-40.
[457] Ibid., 18-20, 71-73.
[458] Ibid., 7-8.
[459] Sri Ram, *Kham Khana-e-Javed*, Vol. 4 (Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, 1917).
[460] Hasan, ed., *Diwan Seemab Amrohvi*, 35n.
[461] *Shayar*, edited by Ufaq Kazmi Amrohvi, (February 1929).

with an elementary education at home. While some continued studying under their fathers, others went on to semi-formal arrangements such as obtaining a sanad under different teachers within the qasbah. Yet others left the qasbah to further their education: some went to Aligarh for a college degree and a few went to London for the coveted Bar-at-Law. Coming from a background of service gentry, many succeeded in preserving their traditional status by joining the British administrative machinery – some as Deputy Collectors and Magistrates, others as propagators of modern English-style education. And there were examples of people such as Seemab Amrohvi, who stayed detached from the colonial administration. In the majority of cases, accepting an association with the British or working for them did not preclude people from maintaining their traditional social standing or religious precepts. Whether it was Viqar-ul-Mulk or Kazim Ali Khan, they all continued with their traditional social roles within the qasbah and the larger Muslim community. In fact, most of Rafat Ali Khan's poetry depicts him as a highly religious person. In addition to religion, family was a potent unit within this qasbati society, very much like what we found in the case of Rudauli. Now, we shall discuss some examples from Bilgram to observe the similarities as well as differences among the three qasbahs under study.

BILGRAM

Many qasbati Muslims moved to cities and made a mark on society at large. We have discussed several examples of people moving from Amroha and Rudauli to cities such as Moradabad, Lucknow and Delhi. Individuals such as Viqar-ul-Mulk of Amroha went as far as Hyderabad and served as high administrators in the princely state. The qasbah of Bilgram has many such examples. Beginning with Syed Husain Bilgrami, alias Imad-ul-Mulk (1842-1925), a number of Bilgramis moved to the state of Hyderabad. Many also went to the princely states of Rampur and Bhopal. There were also Bilgramis who stayed in their qasbah and connected with the outside world through their writings and services. We mentioned some examples of Bilgramis in chapter three. Here, we shall discuss some of the people from Bilgram whose lives

portray the kind of contributions that Bilgram as a qasbah made to the Indian subcontinent. Examples of such Bilgramis include Imad-ul-Mulk, Syed Ali Bilgrami (1851-1911), Safeer Bilgrami (1834-1890), Hosh Bilgrami (1894-1955), and Syed Shadan Bilgrami (1869-1948). There were also women such as Tayyiba Begum Bilgrami (1873-1921) who made a difference in society around through their involvement in educational and social reform activity.

Intellectually, Bilgram was one of the best endowed qasbahs. We have examples such as Allama Mir Abdul Jalil Bilgrami (1661-1725), who was a famous scholar of Arabic and Persian and a respected poet. His poetry, particularly in the genre of masnavi has been widely acknowledged and appreciated.[462] His son, Mir Syed Muhammad Bilgrami (d. 1772), was also a scholar and an officer in Sind during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Farrukh Siyar. Mir Syed Muhammad Bilgrami's memoirs, *Tabsirat-un-Nazirin*, completed in 1768, consist of commentaries on people and events during the reigns of Farrukh Siyar and Muhammad Shah.[463] Later, Murtaza Husain Bilgrami (1720-95) emerged as a great administrator and historian of the eighteenth century. He is best known for his Persian work, *Hadiqat al-Aqalim* (The Rose Gardens of Regions), a book of geographical, historical, and biographical information related to what is now the territory of India.[464] Maulvi Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami (1704-86) was also highly recognized for his scholarly abilities. He was the nephew of Jalil Bilgrami and well-versed in Turkish. He excelled in Arabic poetry and was a prolific writer in Persian. Annemarie Schimmel notes that Maulvi Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami was tenderly called "*Hassan-al-Hind*" because he composed many Arabic qasidas in honor of the Prophet Muhammad, and thus became comparable to

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[462] For a detailed biography and account on his writings, see Maulvi Syed Maqbul Ahmad Samdani, *Tazkirah-e-Allama Mir Abdul Jalil Bilgrami: Hayat-e-Jalil*, 2 Vols. (Allahabad: Ram Narain Lal, 1929).
[463] Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1995), 536.
[464] Syed Murtaza Husain Bilgrami, *Hadiqat al-Aqalim* (Lucknow: Munshi Nawal Kishore Press, 1879).

Hassan ibn Thabit, the Prophet's panegyrist.[465] One of his works, *Maasir al-Kiram*, which he completed in 1739, is a history of the notables and 'ulama of Bilgram in particular and India in general.[466] His writings are an invaluable source for properly understanding eighteenth-century India. This trend of intellectuals coming from Bilgram continued into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

One of the most prominent and talented personalities of the later period is Syed Husain Bilgrami, commonly referred to by his title Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk. Born on October 18, 1842, his early education began under his father Syed Zainuddin Husain and other tutors. His father served the British government as a Deputy Collector and District Magistrate in the Bihar and Bengal provinces, and his grandfather Syed Karamuddin Husain Nasiruddin Ahmad worked at the court of Nawab Nasiruddin Hyder (r. 1827-37) of Awadh as a mediator and advocate.[467] Thus, he came from a family two generations of which had worked for different regimes. Syed Husain Bilgrami learned Arabic and Persian at home and English at school. He graduated with first class honors in 1866 from the Presidency College in Calcutta and then began a career in academia, teaching Urdu at the Colvin College in Lucknow. Later, he moved on to journalism where he edited *Lucknow Times*, a newspaper run by the taluqdars of Awadh. Mir Turab Ali, alias Sir Salar Jung I (1829-83), the prime minister of the state of Hyderabad, invited Syed Husain Bilgrami to work for him in 1873. From that time on, Syed Husain Bilgrami worked for the Nizam's Hyderabad, holding different positions and high offices. His very first assignment was to supervise and handle all correspondences of the state with the British. He also accompanied Salar Jung during his trip to Europe in 1876. This shows the kind of exposure and qualifications Syed Husain Bilgrami had. With a background in Arabic,

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[465] Annemarie Schimmel, *Pain and Grace: A Study of Two Mystical Writers of Eighteenth Century Muslim India* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 9.
[466] *Al-Nadwa*, the Urdu periodical of Nadwat-ul-Ulama, Lucknow published an essay on Maulvi Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami in one of its issues in 1905. It consists of a brief biography, a list of his writings as well as a sample of his Persian poetry. *Al-Nadwa* 2, 2 (April 1905): 11-23.
[467] Hasanuddin Ahmad, *Anjuman* (Hyderabad: Wila Academy, 1974), 57-58.

Persian, and traditional training, coupled with his English education, he worked for a princely state as its representative to the British.

One of the main contributions of Imad-ul-Mulk was in the field of education. As a part of his administrative responsibilities, he was also in charge of the educational policies of the Hyderabad state.[468] His policy was to extend educational opportunities to all. He also had a sense of preserving historical documents. He was instrumental in the foundation of Dairatul Maarif, an organization that used to collect and publish manuscripts of historical importance; and Kutab Khana-e-Asafiya, a library that collected books and manuscripts.[469] This library acquired books from as far away as Europe, Egypt, Syria, and Beirut. In 1907, Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, nominated Imad-ul-Mulk to be one of the two Indians in his India Council in London.[470] Under the prime ministership of Nawab Salar Jung III (1889-1949), Imad-ul-Mulk was nominated to the Viceroy's Council and was offered a job leading Public Instruction, but he declined, excusing himself on account of his old age. This indicates his recognition by the British as an expert in the field of education.

Syed Husain Bilgrami was given the title of Imad-ul-Mulk in 1890. In 1925, Aligarh Muslim University and Osmania University in Hyderabad conferred on him the honorary degree of LL.D.[471] He served as the president of the All India Muslim Educational Conference during its eleventh convention in Meerut in 1896 and during its fourteenth convention in Rampur in 1900. On these two occasions, he worked with Sir Syed and Muhsin-ul-Mulk for the promotion of education. In 1912, Maulvi Abdul Haq, known as *Baba-e-Urdu* (Father of Urdu), took charge of the Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu, a society for the promotion of Urdu. He invited Imad-ul-Mulk to preside over its meeting, an invitation which he gladly accepted.[472] This shows how closely he worked with the leading educators and Urdu litterateurs for the promotion of eduation

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[468] Qadri, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk*, 13-14.
[469] Qadri, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk*¸29-33. Also, Ahmad, *Anjuman*, 61.
[470] Qadri, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk*, 14.
[471] Ibid., 16.
[472] Ahmad, *Anjuman*, 62.

and Urdu. His contributions to the field of education can even be quantified. When he took charge of the education department in Hyderabad in 1876, there were 151 madrasas and 6880 students. When he stepped down in 1907, the numbers had risen to 2,349 madrasas and 90,313 students.[473] They also increasingly incorporated English as a subject in their curricula. Imad-ul-Mulk was a great advocate of religious education. In 1910, he started translating the Holy Quran into English but could complete only sixteen chapters.[474] His personal involvement in such literary enterprises demonstrates that his involvement in education was more than that of a leader or policy-maker. He was passionately involved with the cause.

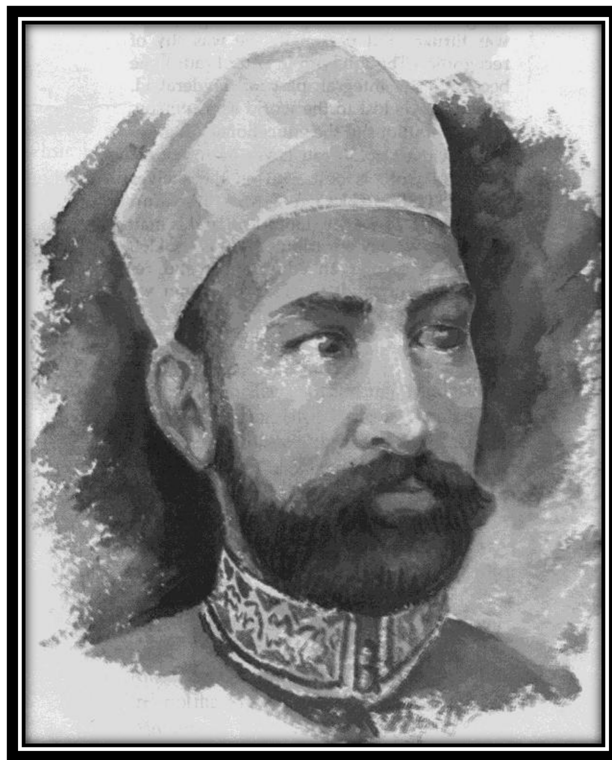

Illustration 10: Imad-ul-Mulk

[473] Qadri, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk*, 16-19.
[474] Ahmad, *Anjuman*, 61.

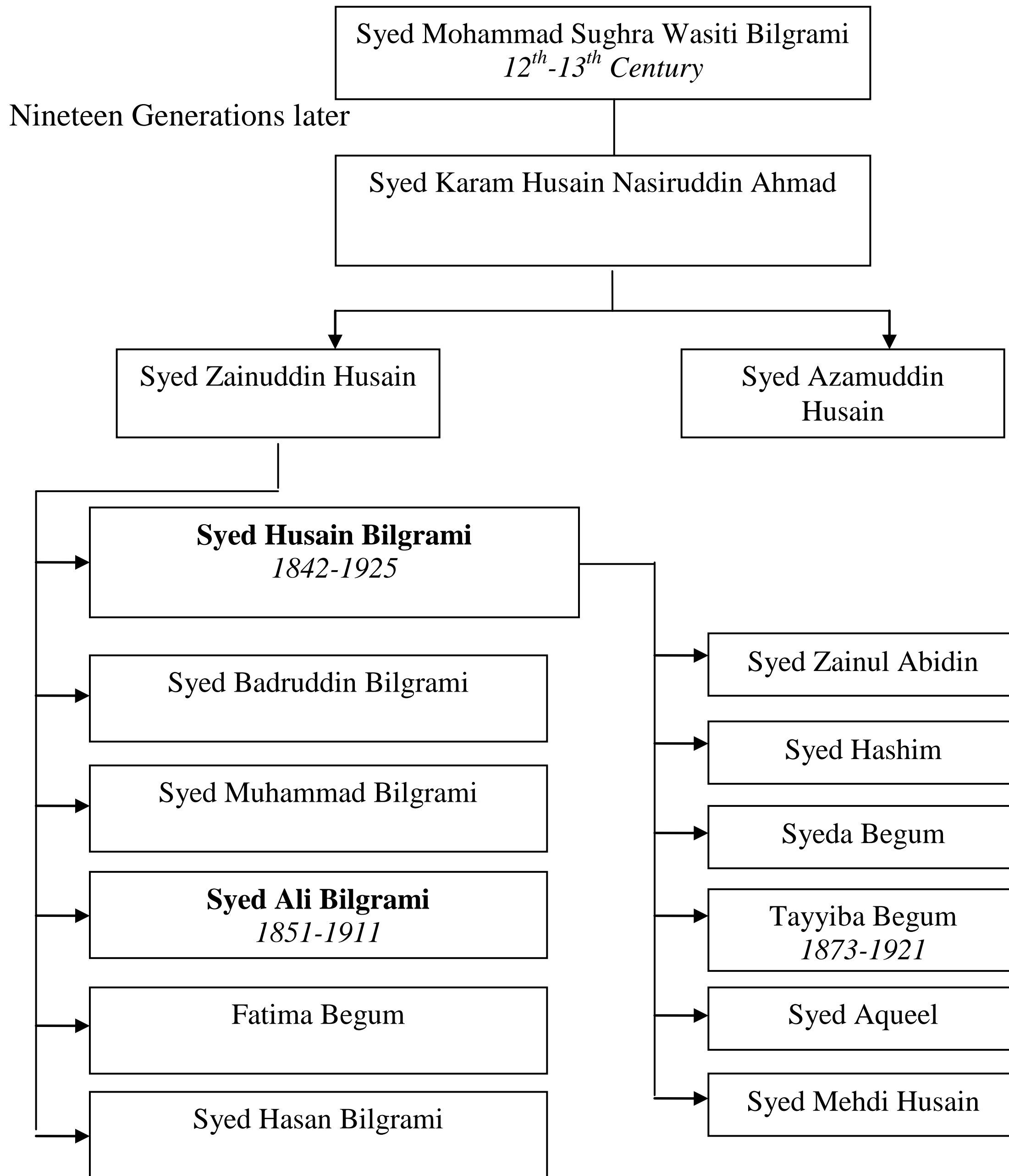

Illustration 11: Shajrah of Syed Husain Bilgrami, *alias* Imad-ul-Mulk

Imad-ul-Mulk also wrote a number of books in English and Urdu. In English, he wrote the biography of Salar Jung I, his mentor under whom he had served as a private secretary.[475] In the form of a memoir, this biography allows us to understand the functioning of the Hyderabad state through the personality of one of its functionaries. Shortly after his arrival in Hyderabad, Imad-ul-Mulk started an Urdu periodical *Makhzan-ul-Fawaid* that for two years published scholarly essays.[476] Later, collections of his essays, poems, and speeches in both English and Urdu were published. Imad-ul-Mulk was not only an efficient administrator but also an educator and writer. During his career, he worked and interacted with the leaders of different fields. Although his work remained focused on the state of Hyderabad, his contributions to educational and intellectual life benefited even those living outside the state. He worked for the promotion of education in general, encouraged Muslim education in particular, worked for the advancement of Urdu language, and encouraged the erasure of illiteracy. Moreover, he promoted both English and Islamic education, on the lines of his own educational background. Imad-ul-Mulk's personality and career mark him as a leading social and educational reformer of his age in both Hyderabad and British India.

Syed Ali Bilgrami (1851-1911) is another person worth considering when talking about the contributions of Bilgramis. A younger brother of Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk Syed Husain Bilgrami, Syed Ali Bilgrami was a multilingual scholar and recognized linguist.[477] He came from a highly respected family of Bilgram. His grandfather served as an ambassador of Wajid Ali Shah, the ruler of Awadh, at the British court at Calcutta. We have seen that the father of the two illustrious brothers, Syed Zainuddin Husain, rose to be a Deputy Commissioner in Bihar, while their

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[475] Syed Hossain Bilgrami, *A Memoir of Sir Salar Jung, G. C. S. I.* (Bombay: The Times of India Steam Press, 1883).

[476] Qadri, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk*, 62.

[477] Immediately after his death on May 2, 1911, *The Aligarh Monthly* published an obituary on Syed Ali Bilgrami written by A. M. Khwaja. A brief write up, it provides a life sketch of the person concerned. His biographical details here are mostly drawn from this source. *The Aligarh Monthly* IX (June 1911): 3-9.

paternal uncle, Syed Azamuddin, was an Oriental translator to Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of India from 1828 to 1835. Their uncle later served as a Political Agent in the Native states. It was under the supervision of his uncle that Syed Ali Bilgrami began his early education, which, as was typical of Muslim families at the time, was confined to Arabic and Persian languages. In 1866, he joined Canning College at Lucknow and, later, graduated in Arts from the Patna College with Sanskrit as his second language. He joined the Thomason Civil Engineering College in Roorkee, but before he could complete his degree, Sir Salar Jung I invited him to work for the state of Hyderabad. His story sounds very much like the story of his brother Imad-ul-Mulk, sometimes to such an extent that it obscures the differences between them. Syed Ali, like his elder brother, joined Salar Jung during his trip to Europe in 1876. However, unlike Imad-ul-Mulk, he stayed in Europe and joined the Royal School of Mines in London. There, he spent time learning mining engineering as well as German, French, Latin, and Greek.

When Syed Ali returned to Hyderabad in 1879, he served the state in various capacities as the Inspector-General of Mines, Home Secretary, and the Director of Public Instruction; he also occupied different positions in the State Railway and Public Works Departments. After retiring from the service of Nizam, he went to England where he taught Marathi at Cambridge University and gave occasional lectures on Arabic and Sanskrit. Syed Ali Bilgrami is mainly known in literary circles for *Tamaddun-e-Arab*, an Urdu translation of *La Civilisation des Arabs* by the French social theorist Gustav le Bon (1841-1931).[478] This translation shows how he attempted to broaden the body of Urdu literature by translating from European languages, a remarkable contribution towards enriching scholarly dialogue between Indians and Europeans. We have multiple examples of Indologists such as William Jones (1746-94), Charles Wilkins (1749-1836), Otto von Bohtlingk (1815-1904), and Max Mueller (1823-1900) who translated Indian works into English, German, and

[478] Gustav le Bon, *Tamaddun-e-Arab*, tr. Syed Ali Bilgrami (1975).

other European languages and thereby expanded European views of India. Syed Ali Bilgrami was one of the few whose contribution, on the other hand, aimed at widening perspectives of Urdu readers.

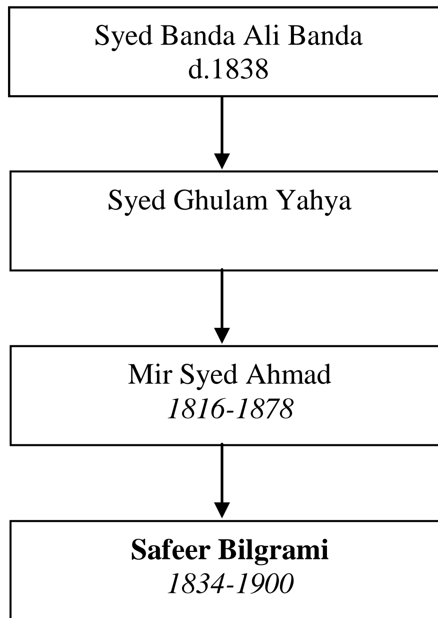

Illustration 12: Shajrah of Safeer Bilgrami

\In an earlier chapter, we mentioned Safeer Bilgrami, a prolific poet in both Persian and Urdu. He was also a favorite disciple of the poet Ghalib. Born in 1834, Safeer Bilgrami spent part of his childhood in Bilgram before his family moved to Arrah in Bihar. However, as pointed out earlier, he frequently wrote about his watan Bilgram and compared it to Greece in terms of its intellectual heritage. His grandfather, Syed Ghulam Yahya, was a Persian poet, as was his father, Mir Syed Ahmad, who also wrote Urdu poetry.[479] This was the legacy that Safeer inherited. He went to a local maktab for his early education. His first tutors were Faqir Muhammad

[479] Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami*, 43-46.

Khan and Syed Muhammad Asghar, who taught him Persian and Arabic.[480] He started writing Persian poetry at a young age. Later, he became a disciple of Ghalib (1797-1869), the most influential Urdu-Persian poet, and Dabir (1803-75), the nineteenth century trendsetter in *marsiya* (elegy) writing. Safeer Bilgrami had a close relationship with both. In fact, he writes about his visit to Ghalib's house in Delhi and the time they spent together. This relationship continued through an exchange of letters.[481] Safeer Bilgrami, thus, had an ideal upbringing for a poet. Moreover, Safeer's reputation as a poet himself can be gauged by looking at the impressive list of his own disciples. This included poets from Bilgram, Patna, Arrah, Bareilly, Koath, Mahrehra, Kannauj, and Ghazipur.[482]

The list of Safeer Bilgrami's writings is also impressive. He started writing his autobiography, *Sair-o-Safar*, but it remained incomplete. His biographer Zafar Auganwi provides a long list of his writings. According to him, Safeer Bilgrami wrote three diwans in Persian and seven in Urdu. Besides these, his compositions included hundreds of rubaiyat, masnavis, marsiyas, qasidas, and so on.[483] His first diwan *Safeer-e-Bulbul* (1863) was in Urdu.[484] This was followed by several works, some of which were published while others remained in manuscript. His other publications included *Subh-e-Ummeed* (1866), a work of the masnavi genre that deals with his interactions with Ghalib; *Naad-e-Ali* (1878), a collection of essays on the twelve imams; *Qat'at-e-Taraqqi* (1874), a general history of India; and *Zamima-e-Izhar-ul-Israr* (1879), a literary criticism of Shad Azimabadi (1846-1927). His most important work is considered to be *Jalwa-e-Khizr*, a two-volume history of Urdu literature, which he wrote with a view to correcting what he considered the mis-statements of Muhammad Husain Azad's *Ab-i-Hayat* (1880).[485] The two volumes

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[480] Ibid., 48-50.
[481] Some of the letters that Mirza Ghalib wrote to Safeer Bilgrami are cited in. Ibid., 59-77.
[482] For a list of his disciples and their brief descriptions, see Ibid., 80-86.
[483] Shadani, *Hayat Shadan Bilgrami*, 610-11; Auganwi, *Safeer Bilgrami*, 91-101.
[484] A manuscript of *Safeer-e-Bulbul* can be found in the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna. This copy was penned by Safeer Bilgrami himself.
[485] *Nadeem*, Bihar Number (1935): 221.

were published in 1885 and 1889 by Nur-ul-Akhbar of Arrah. As a talented poet, he contributed to various genres of Urdu and Persian literature. He also wrote literary pieces in prose. His example shows that he had an edge over other qasbati intellectuals. While it was not unusual for qasbati poets and writers to reach readers and writers outside their respective qasbahs, Safeer Bilgrami had the privilege of working directly with the likes of Ghalib and Dabir. His interventions, both personally and literally, with the eminent litterateurs and writings of his time reveal the level of influence qasbati Muslims could have.

Nazirul Hasan Hosh Bilgrami (1894-1955), also known as Nawab Hosh Yar Jung was another famous personality from Bilgram who went to Hyderabad and served as an administrator there. The son of Munshi Iqbal Husain Bilgrami, he was a scholar of Persian and Urdu. Born in Bilgram in 1894, he compares his birthplace to Cordoba but with the qualification that by the time he was born, the grandeur of the qasbah had started to wane. Although he refers to the decline of general prosperity in this qasbah, he asserts metaphorically that "intelligence is kneaded into the yeast of this land."[486] He went to several madrasas for his early education and combined mastery over Arabic with native fluency in Persian.[487] He entered into the service of the Nizam of Hyderabad and emerged as a close aide of Nawab Mir Osman Ali Khan (1886-1967), the seventh Nizam. In fact, in addition to several administrative positions, he served as the Nizam's private secretary. Prior to that, he had pursued a career in journalism. In 1915, he started a monthly periodical *Zakhirah*, financially supported by Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk who also contributed articles to it.[488] Through his periodical, he corresponded with the writers from other parts of India who contributed articles and poems to his journal. As the editor of *Zakhirah*, he also had the opportunity to interact with some of the more eminent personalities of his time during

[486] Bilgrami, *Mushahedat*, 2-3.
[487] Shirazi, *Bagh-e-Dilkusha*, 424-25.
[488] Bilgrami, *Mushahedat*, 78.

their visits to Hyderabad.[489] He had very good relations with Syed Sulaiman Nadwi (1884-1953), an ‘alim and a scholar of Islam and, had the chance of spending time with the noted Urdu poet Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), since he entertained the latter during his visit to Hyderabad. The list of people he met also includes Maulana Zafar Ali Khan (1873-1956), the Urdu writer, poet, journalist, and editor of the daily *Zamindar* published from Lahore. He also had several occasions to interact with Maharaja Sir Kishen Prasad, the Prime Minister of Hyderabad from 1900 to 1912. Hosh writes about himself that he frequently paid visits to Kishen Prasad. On other occasions, Hosh interacted with Maulana Abdul Majid Dariyabadi (1892-1977) and Neyaz Fatehpuri (1884-1966), while he was in Rampur. Hosh also worked with Maulvi Abdul Haq (1870-1961) in Hyderabad for Anjuman Taraqqi-e-Urdu, a society for the promotion of Urdu.[490] But it was Imad-ul-Mulk who advised him on writing, gave him the takhallus Hosh, and encouraged his literary and scholarly pursuits.

Besides being surrounded by some of the more prominent journalists and writers of his time, Hosh Bilgrami had the opportunity to travel to Bhopal, Agra, Shimla, Jaipur, Rampur, Alwar, Udaipur, Aurangabad, Gulbarga, Aligarh, Raipur, Calcutta, Gwalior, and other cities. He had served the princely state of Rampur and became a trusted officer of Nawab Sir Syed Hamid Ali Khan before returning to Hyderabad and becoming Mir Osman Ali Khan’s confidant.[491] Hosh Bilgrami’s career gave him remarkable exposure as a writer and administrator. More particularly, his contacts with other states and their people made him aware of the cultural, intellectual, and literary developments outside Bilgram and Hyderabad. This awareness is reflected in his memoir *Mushahedat* (Observations). Hosh Bilgrami is a good example of a Muslim who went beyond his qasbah but still admired the place of his birth for its intellectual legacy. He also demonstrates how a qasbati Muslim could become a high level functionary despite lacking an education from formal modern

[489] Ibid., 79.
[490] Ibid., 129-36.
[491] Shadani, *Hayat Shadan Bilgrami*, 636.

institutions. His madrasa background, work as a journalist, experience in the administration of Nizam, and contacts and relationships with distinguished public figures and authors were sufficient to earn him a place among the educated, the scholarly, and the literati.

Allama Syed Aulad Husain Shadan Bilgrami Naqvi Bukhari was a childhood friend of Hosh Bilgrami's father Munshi Iqbal Husain Bilgrami.[492] Born in Arrah in Bihar, Syed Shadan Bilgrami began his education under his grandfather, Syed Fida Husain, by learning Persian before he entered a local madrasa. In terms of educational background, he combined both madrasa and modern college education.[493] He studied Arabic, Persian, and Urdu under Maulvi Ghulam Hyder Arshad Bilgrami, Maulvi Karar Ali Bilgrami, and Maulvi Banda Husain Lakhnawi at the local madrasa in Arrah. He learned English in middle and high school, before moving to Lucknow in 1892 to pursue higher studies in Arabic under Mirza Abu Turab Kashmiri. He later entered the Oriental College of Punjab University, where he passed various examinations in Arabic: *Munshi* in 1896, *Maulvi* in 1897, *Munshi Alam* in 1897, and *Munshi Fazil* in 1898. He went to Rampur in 1900 and served for a long period as a Professor of Persian at Madrasa Alia in the state of Rampur. He joined the Oriental College of Lahore in 1923 and retired in 1938.[494]

Syed Shadan Bilgrami divided his time among several cities owing to his career as a teacher. He also spent time in his ancestral place, the muhallah Syedwada of Bilgram.[495] Syed Shadan Bilgrami wrote prose and poetry in both Urdu and Persian. As an Urdu poet, he mostly wrote ghazals and regularly contributed to a periodical, *Intekhab*, published from Lucknow. His books are literary commentaries and engaging works of literature in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. In fact, the list of his writing is very impressive.[496] While a few of his works have been published, most of

[492] Ibid., 637.
[493] Ibid., 42.
[494] Ibid., 49-50.
[495] Ibid., 213.
[496] Ibid., 231-252.

them are manuscripts. Some of his works include *Dararah-e-Madreh* (1910), a linguistic work on Turkish, Persian, and Arabic; *Tashih Sarguzasht-e-Haji Baba Isfahani* (1929), a biography; *Sharah-e-Diwan-e-Ghalib* (1929), a Persian work interpreting Ghalib; and *Mukhtasar Tarikh Iran wa Zuban-e-Farsi*, a manuscript on the history of Iran and Persian language. He mostly compiled works of explanatory nature on major literary figures and many of his writings were used in the colleges of Rampur and Punjab as textbooks. Syed Shadan Bilgrami's life exemplifies that of an academic from a qasbah background. He studied at home, at a madrasa, at local schools, and then at Punjab University but did not opt for an English education. For his field, he attended some of the best institutions of the time. A career in teaching allowed him to pursue his interest in writing. It also allowed him to academically engage with writers of his qasbah and beyond. He was one of the few prolific writers in the Indian subcontinent who worked on prose as well as poetry of both Urdu and Persian literature.

Women of Bilgrami families and lineage also did excellent work in the field of education. Tayyiba Begum Bilgrami (1873-1921)[497] was the only daughter of Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk. She was the first Muslim woman in India to graduate with a university degree. She completed her first arts (F. A.) examination in 1895 before she married Mirza Karim Khan Nawab Khediv Jung, a medical doctor in Nizam's service. Despite shouldering responsibilities as a wife and mother, she continued her studies and obtained a Bachelor's degree from Madras University in 1910. Like her male Bilgrami counterparts, she knew Urdu, Persian, Arabic, and English.

Tayyiba Begum, also known as Begum Khediv Jung, did a number of things to promote girls' education and other aspects of social reform among Muslims. Understanding the importance of education, she began reform within her own family by sending all three of her daughters to Mahbubiya Girls' School. As a mother, she

[497] Gail Minault has written about Tayyiba Begum based on interviews with her daughters and *Rasa'il-e-Tayyiba*, a biographical work also containing her writings and speeches compiled by her daughter Sakina Begum. The details here are primarily drawn from Minault's book. See Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, 208-12, 272-73.

had a powerful role in shaping the course of her children's lives. She founded the Anjuman-e-Khavatin-e-Islam (Muslims Ladies' Association) and helped raise funds for impoverished girls' education. She also presided over two women's educational conferences in Bhopal and Calcutta in 1918 and 1919, where she asserted her vision that women needed to be earning a living for themselves. She also spoke out against what she considered social evils, such as dowry and the ill-treatment of widows, and wrote fiction putting forth her vision of an educated Muslim society. Tayyiba Begum's contributions were both tangible as well as ideological. It was because of her efforts and organization that a number of girls' schools, social organizations, and other educational institutions opened up in Hyderabad. Her work had an equal impact ideologically by encouraging men and women to work together for social and educational causes. Those convinced of her case continued with her work even after she died in 1921.

There were many other Bilgramis whose contributions were different and unique from those previously discussed. Chaudhary Syed Wasi-ul-Hasan Bilgrami was a Deputy Collector under the British administration. He retired in 1937 and spent much of his retirement reading and writing. He had a huge collection of manuscripts,[498] a common feature among those qasbati Muslims who had an interest in books and could afford to build a collection. Syed Wasi Ahmad Bilgrami (b. 1889),[499] who was also a Deputy Collector, composed and compiled a number of works in Urdu. A graduate of Patna College, he was the son of Syed Noor Ahmad Bilgrami. He worked for the British government in various capacities from 1918 until 1948, after which he migrated to Pakistan. He edited a special issue on Bihar, *Seen-Sheen-Swaad*, for the periodical *Nadeem*, which attracted contributions from different directions.[500] He mostly wrote fiction that included *Dair-o-Haram*, a story based on a dialogue between a believer and an atheist; *Zulf-o-Rukh*¸ an essay on faith and

[498] Shadani, *Hayat Shadan Bilgrami*, 634.
[499]Ibid., 614-18.
[500] *Nadeem*, Bihar Number, 1935.

infidelity in Islam; *Gul-e-Daudi*, an interesting account of incidents around the birth of prophet Sulaiman; and *Sipahi ki Beti*, a story of, on, and about Urdu. *Sipahi ki Beti* was well received and favorably reviewed by Maulvi Abdul Haq, popularly known as *Baba-e-Urdu* (Father of Urdu). Syed Noor also wrote *Tarikh-e-Iran*, a manuscript on the history of Iran, and *Din-e-Zartusht*, a history of ancient Iran and Zoroastrianism. In a different literary contribution, Syed Ali Asghar Bilgrami, the officer in charge of old monuments for Nizam's Hyderabad, wrote a book *Maasir-e-Dakkan* (Memorials of Deccan), on the buildings and monuments of Hyderabad.[501] It is a descriptive account of various monuments and their conditions.

Individuals from Bilgram contributed to the Indo-Muslim culture and society in different ways. While some of them worked in administration, others enriched literature; while some promoted education, others helped social reform in print; while some managed mines and savings banks, others built historic monuments; while some wrote, others taught. Since the time Imad-ul-Mulk moved away from Bilgram, there was a continuous outflow of talent from Bilgram to Hyderabad. But such migration did not sap the educational environment of the qasbah. Bilgram continued to produce more and more qualified individuals who went out to serve not only the Nizam of Hyderabad but also the Nawab of Rampur and the British administration. Bilgram was a very significant qasbah, and Bilgramis, wherever they lived, stayed connected to it by visiting, writing about, and showing pride in the qasbah of their birth.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has made an attempt to capture the life and works of certain qasbati Muslims and to appreciate the diversity that qasbahs contained in terms of the personalities they produced. It is clear from the discussion above that there were similarities as well as differences among individuals across the qasbahs. In terms of education, one broad likeness that we find in almost all individuals discussed above

[501] Syed Ali Asghar Bilgrami, *Maasir-e-Dakkan* (Hyderabad: Darul Taba Jamia Osmania, 1924).

was their early education. By and large, a child's elementary education started at home under the supervision of a father, uncle, grandfather, or private tutor. The home schooling always included teachings of basic Arabic and Persian. Mother and fathers were the early molders of their children's personality and instructors in basic religious observances and cultural attitudes.[502] We have seen how Tayyiba Begum Bilgrami influenced her daughters by sending them to school. Home schooling was followed by admittance of the student to a local madrasa, maktab, or a government school. Some of them learned English, depending on the choices their families made or if the institution concerned offered English language as a part of its curriculum. After this stage, there was great variety in what students chose to do to further their education. Some would continue studying in a madrasa for higher degrees, while others would go to Aligarh or one of the several English-medium colleges that had been established towards the second half of the nineteenth century. Some learned and mastered English, with a background in madrasa education and still others managed to do without English and obtained degrees in Arabic or Persian from a madrasa or college.

Professionally, the educated qasbati Muslims attained success in a variety of fields. We discussed in this chapter various professionals and sometimes individuals who had more than one profession. Those who were educated might don one or more of the following professional garbs: lawyer, hakim, writer, poet, journalist, teacher, politician, administrator, legislator, educator, historian, and publisher. Additionally, a number of the educated class from a qasbah might enter the service of the British government or one of the princely states. An individual usually belonged to one of the professions but would still pursue his or her interest in another field, even if as an amateur. A lawyer would write poems, a poet would engage in education, an educator would be a novelist; a teacher would be a literary commentator, and so on. Such examples were not confined to the qasbahs under study. Rather, instances from

[502] Gail Minault, "Purdah Politics: The Role of Muslim Women in Indian Nationalism, 1911-1924." In Gail Minault and Hanna Papanek, eds., *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, and Delhi: Chanakya, 1982), 247.

various other qasbahs reinforce this pattern. Nizami Badayuni of the qasbah of Badayun was a historian, writer, publisher, educator, as well as a government servant.[503] From the qasbah Dariyabad, Abdul Majid Dariyabadi was a scholar of Islam, literary critic, editor, philosopher, and political activist.[504] Maulana Karamat Husain, who came from a service gentry family of the qasbah of Kantor in the district Bara Banki, was a lawyer, educator, professor, judge, Islamic scholar, and an ardent advocate of girls' education.

The families which adapted to the new education succeeded in preserving their privileged position in the local society. We elaborated upon several individuals who came from family backgrounds where their grandparents' generation served one of the Indian states such as Awadh or Hyderabad or Rampur while their parents' generation adjusted to new conditions that the British imposed. People from such families learned some English and made themselves eligible to work for the British or in the professions. They also sent their children to English schools and colleges, and, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, it is these children who we find occupying government positions, obtaining college degrees and serving other states in key offices. English education opened up new vistas of opportunity which they embraced. This, however, did not mean a total eclipse of those who still chose to pursue a traditional education, but their options were certainly narrower. Such people could still continue as teachers, assistants, writers, poets, but could not become Deputy Collectors or Directors of any Department.[505]

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[503] Muhammad Ahmad Kazmi, *Nizami Badayuni: yani Sawaneh Hayat Maulana Nizamuddin Husain Nizami Badayuni* (Badayun: Nizami Press, 1949).

[504] Maulana Abdul Majid Dariyabadi, *Aap-biti* (Lucknow: Maktab-e-Firdaus, 1978); Salim Kidwai, *Abdul Majid Dariyabadi* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1998).

[505] People with traditional education did better in the princely states in India. Hosh Bilgrami is one example who served the states of Hyderabad as well as Rampur. Another example from a different qasbah is that of Jalil Manikpuri. Primarily a poet, he was the disciple of the famous poet Amir Minai (1826-1900) who was highly respected by his contemporaries such as Ghalib. Jalil Manikpuri came from the qasbah of Manikpur in the Pratapgarh district of Awadh. Mir Osman Ali Khan, the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad appointed him on a fixed salary as a poet. His work included helping the Nizam who had started writing poetry. Mir Osman Ali Khan also gave him the title of *Ustad-us-Sultan* (Preceptor of the Sultan). However, such opportunities were not many, especially in the face of the

In a qasbati context, the family serves as a major unit of analysis. Examples suggest how certain families made their way through changing times. It is here that we see the importance of genealogies in understanding how different people and families were doing. We have seen how certain families did well and others less well, whether it was in regard to education, profession, ideology or reform activities. This was true of women as well as men. Women coming from certain families had an educational edge over others depending upon how they were encouraged by either parent. We discussed how several members of a family dominated the intellectual space of qasbahs – whether it was the family of Siraj-ul-Haq of Rudauli, Hakim Neyaz Ali Khan Amrohvi, or of Imad-ul-Mulk. This chapter attempted to provide a glimpse of the variety of people within the educated community of the qasbahs. Different educational, professional, personal, and social roles defined the intellectual landscape of qasbahs. How did these Muslims view themselves living in a qasbati environment? What were their notions of identity vis-à-vis different social groups within the qasbahs? At a time when the British rule introduced certain socio-cultural changes and situations, how did they identify themselves as Muslims? Most importantly, what made them adopt the new education and how did they adapt to the consequent changes without disregarding their religious precepts and perceptions? How did religion function in the face of modernity? These are some of the questions that we shall be dealing with in the following chapters.

growing options in the British government. Zaki Kakorvi, *Jalil Manikpuri: Hayat aur Karnamey* (Lucknow: Nizami Press, 1978), 56-64.

Chapter Five

THE *QASBATI* WAY OF LIFE AND ITS RELIGIOUS CONTENT

Having taken a look at some qasbati Muslims personalities, we now seek to understand how religion figured in the lives of these Muslims. There are numerous questions one can ask about religion and its significance in local qasbati society. During the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, the qasbatis learned about aspects of Western culture through their growing interaction with the British. An exposure to British individuals and English education helped qasbatis to find out more about the West. In this colonial encounter, qasbati Muslims dealt with new ideas, concepts, and perceptions. How did this affect their lives as Muslims? What were their religious perceptions and precepts with regard to various issues? How did they deal with issues foreign to their culture without contravening their religious precepts? These are some of the central concerns of this dissertation. Muslims living in qasbahs were categorized into several groups, such as Shias and Sunnis, ashraf and *ajlaf* (low born). They also co-existed with members of other religious communities. How did such distinctions affect the way qasbati Muslims viewed themselves? What was the nature of Hindu-Muslim relationships in the qasbahs? How did social and sectarian divides operate in the qasbati environment? Religion meant different things to different individuals. In the face of colonialism, how did community identity operate in relation to personal choices? These are some questions that need to be discussed when it comes to the religious life of qasbati Muslims.

This chapter will discuss identity issues faced by educated Muslims with reference to Islam and its various components. The discussion will be based on individuals' writings from different qasbahs, in addition to historical accounts, memoirs, and religious literature. Islamic education meant a lot to qasbati Muslims, as did the newly introduced English and vernacular education. How were qasbahs tied

to institutions of learning? What were the aspects of the syllabi, especially with regard to religion, in the Islamic madrasas as well as other types of schools? We shall see how various aspects of the syllabi were debated, reformed, and adopted in different madrasas which qasbati Muslims attended. In the context of religious practices, this chapter will also touch upon issues such as traditional dress code, i.e. the practice of veiling among women, and the challenge to tradition by the wearing of neckties by Muslim men. Finally, didactic religious literature will be analyzed in order to understand religion as practiced and argued about by its adherents in the qasbahs.

RELIGION IN THE QASBAH: PRECEPTS, PERCEPTIONS, AND PRACTICES

Nothing can be more misleading than to assume or apply fixedness to the concept of religion. Thanks to scholarship in the past few decades, we have moved beyond ideas that once treated religion as a monolithic category. The studying of religion in the lives of qasbati Muslims reinforces the theory that all adherents of a particular religion should not be viewed as a homogeneous category. Moreover, such a study also brings to light a few more points for consideration about South Asian socio-religious life. First, Muslims living in qasbahs have a rich legacy of interacting with people of other faiths. The sharing of qasbati space by different religious groups allowed for the development of institutions that accommodated all groups. Second, although Muslims lived together with non-Muslims in qasbahs for centuries, this did not entail a natural progression towards a merger of cultures, as has been argued by some scholars.[506] Third, although the religious precepts, rituals, and practices of

[506] Some scholars have characterized Indian culture as a "composite culture" in order to emphasize the co-existence of different cultural and religious groups in India. This viewpoint considers India as one of the greatest confluences of cultural strands. Tara Chand, Rasheeduddin Khan and M. Mujeeb were among the pioneering scholars to articulate this view. Critics have attacked this model for its complicity to a melting-pot syndrome that implies assimilation and ignorance of pluralism. See Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture* (Allahabad: The Indian Press, 1963); Rasheeduddin Khan,

Muslims had many commonalities, they also varied to a great extent. I will explain the arguments by drawing upon certain aspects of Muslim life in qasbahs: communal living and harmony, Hindu-Muslim relationships, the observance of festivals, commemoration of Muharram, Shia-Sunni interactions, and the role of women in the qasbah.

HINDU-MUSLIM RELATIONSHIPS

As a vast topic, religion and religious life requires more space than one can devote in a work such as this. As such, this work will concentrate on those issues that emerged dominantly in qasbati writings. It is interesting to note the religious composition of qasbahs. As shown in Chapter Two, Muslims, in the beginning of the eleventh century, settled in various towns that later developed as qasbahs. Obviously, qasbahs were inhabited not just by Muslims but people of other religions as well. Historical works on qasbahs clearly make this point. Muslims made up the majority of these qasbahs and next to them were Hindus of different castes and social standing, who numbered 10,178 in Amroha in 1921, about one-fourth of the total population. Brahmans, Vaishyas, Khatris, Jats, Kayasthas, Ahirs, and various other professional castes lived in Amroha.[507] Qazi Shariful Hasan Bilgrami writes that an already existing Hindu population in Bilgram was continuously enlarged by migration from neighboring regions. He adds that the immigration started right after the arrival of Muslims in Bilgram, continued until 1856, and practically stopped once the East India Company annexed Awadh.[508] Hasan Bilgrami's claims are not corroborated by data, but he does show that Hindus formed a significant portion of Bilgram's population. Rahim Bakhsh, who wrote *Tawarikh-e-Wastiya* in 1904, mentions various caste groups living in Bilgram.[509] The main caste groups of Rudauli were Brahmans,

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ed., *Composite Culture of India and National Integration* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1988); M. Mujeeb, *The Indian Muslims* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1985).

[507] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 153-68.

[508] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 309.

[509] Naqvi, *Tawarikh-e-Wastiya*, 41.

Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Kayasthas.[510] The Brahman caste can be subdivided into groups of Kanyakubjas, Saryuparis, Sakaldipis, and Pandas, and the Vaishya class consisted of Khatris, Agarwals, Marwaris, Baniyas, Thatheras, and Kalwars. Occupational groupings continued even beyond that. In addition to Hindus and Muslims, some Christians also inhabited Bilgram. It is noted in *Tarikh-e-Asghari*, written in 1889, that many Christians continued to move to Bilgram following the revolt of 1857.[511] The historian Syed Asghar Husain Naqvi highlighted the co-existence of Hindus and Muslims by noting that the two communities have lived together; whereas Hindus lived in Bilgram from the earliest times, Muslims had been residing in the qasbah for the past eight centuries.

The fact that Hindus and Muslims co-existed in qasbahs does not lead us to a simplistic conclusion. One needs to understand the nuances of community living. In her study of the medieval Hindu-Muslim encounters in India, Cynthia Talbot has strongly underlined the importance of understanding the changing contexts of Hindu-Muslim relationships.[512] A long-term relationship between the two communities has been more nuanced than previously acknowledged.[513] As the social fabric of a qasbah was diverse, so were the norms and practices of the people living in it. There were certain institutions such as Sufi dargahs that served as a resource for bringing Hindus and Muslims together. The openness of dargahs to accommodate other religious and cultural symbols made Sufi shrines a site of co-existence, bringing various communities together. We have discussed in an earlier chapter that Vaishnavite symbols were used by the Sufis of Rudauli. The shrine of Waris Ali Shah (1818-1905) in a qasbah named Dewa, next to Rudauli, continues to draw a huge number of Hindus. Of the two ‘urs celebrations organized every year, the one called Mela

[510] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 76-94.
[511] Syed Asghar Husain Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Asghari* (Moradabad: Gulzar Ibrahim, 1889), 32.
[512] Cynthia Talbot, “Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, 4 (October 1995): 719.
[513] Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism*, 12.

Kartik, named after a Hindu month, continually outdraws the other ‘urs.[514] In regards to the adoption of non-Islamic idioms and practices, Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui shows how the Chishti Sufis adopted certain non-Islamic exercises that were found not to clash with the Quranic teachings, even though they had their origins in Brahmanism, Buddhism, or Shamanism.[515] Because of this accommodative nature of Sufi shrines, Hindus could participate in the activities of dargahs without inhibition. Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, a British lady who recorded her observations on Muslim social life in India, wrote that a real Sufi "enjoys universal respect and veneration of all classes of people."[516] With a remarkable presence of non-Muslims in and around qasbahs, dargahs served as a center that brought together Muslims, Hindus, and others. Hameeda Salim narrates her childhood days in Rudauli in the following words:

> [It] used to be famous for its *mazars* (shrines), dargahs, and ‘urs. The ‘urs of Makhdoom Saheb held tremendous importance when we were kids, and probably continues to be so. As per lunar calendar, this urs used to fall in the middle of the month of Jumad-as-Sani. I remember the urs from those chilly winter days. It's literally engraved on my mind. This urs of Shah Waliullah Makhdoom Abdul Haq is organized at his mazar, and a fete is set up on a grand scale. Muslims as well as Hindus participate in it equally.[517]

Sites such as dargahs provided Hindus and Muslims with common celebratory moments. But in the overall picture of qasbati living, harmonious existence did not preclude separate identification. Religious precepts played a significant role in the cultural make-up of qasbahs. Although Hindus and Muslims shared the space of the shrine in the public sphere, they lived in separate quarters in the private sphere. Each community lived in its own *giroh* (group), separate from that of the other, and it was rare that members of one community would move to a neighborhood inhabited by

[514] Liebeskind, *Piety on its Knees*, 210.
[515] Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, "Sufi Cults and the making of a Pluralist Society," in Anup Taneja, ed., *Sufi Cults and the Evolution of Medieval Indian Culture* (Delhi: Northern Book Centre, 2003), 36.
[516] Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 337.
[517] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 30.

members of another community.[518] The various hierarchical structures among both Hindus and Muslims further complicated social life in the qasbahs. This is not to suggest that there was a rigid dichotomy of public and private spheres. Rather, we need to understand the complexity of social organization. Both the public and private spheres in qasbahs were internally differentiated, while also overlapping each other. Hindus and Muslims could share a dargah but lived within clearly demarcated boundaries as reflected in their habitations. On a private level, Hindus lived in different pockets but treated their Muslim neighbors like brothers and prospered in different walks of life.[519] Hindus and Muslims lived in neighborhoods near each other, learned from each other, but practiced their faiths based on their respective religious precepts.

The celebration of different festivals in qasbahs also illustrates the nuanced Hindu-Muslim relationship. Historian Asghar Husain writes that Hindus and Muslims in Amroha observed different festivals and ceremonies on a fixed schedule throughout the year. Hindus had six main festivals including *Rakhi*, *Diwali*, and *Holi*. Regarding Holi, he writes that Muslims participated in various celebratory aspects of this festival as spectators.[520] In addition to various festivals, including *Barah Wafat* and *Eid-ul-Fitr*, Muslims participated in *Taziadari*, a procession with paper and tinsel representations of the tombs of Karbala that occurred during the month of Muharram. While all of these festivals required their own exclusive rites and rituals performed only by Muslims, Hindus also participated in taziadari. Writing about the qasbah Nathor, Qurratulain Hyder notes that as Shia Muslims would start reading out the list of martyrs of Karbala at the imambara, Hindus would be ready with their tazias.[521] Thus, even though Hindus and Muslims celebrated most of their festivals separately from each other, they also had some degree of participation in the other's ceremonies.

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[518] Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Asghari*, 33.
[519] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 309.
[520] Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Asghari*, 239-40.
[521] Hyder, *Kar-e-Jahan*, 81.

Moreover, the level of their mutual participation was defined and guided by their respective religious precepts.

QASBATI MUSLIMS: DYNAMICS OF HIERARCHY AND SECTARIAN DIVIDE

Just as Hindu-Muslim relationships varied within qasbati communities, Muslim-Muslim relationships also cannot be reduced to any one particular understanding. There existed some broader divisions such as those along the sectarian divide between Shias and Sunnis, and status groupings as in ashraf (high born) and ajlaf (low born) Muslims. Although Shia Muslims were the minority in all qasbahs, they were in positions of power and wealth, particularly in Awadh, where they flourished under a Shiite dynasty that ruled the region for over a century. Although the difference between Shias and Sunnis rests primarily on a reference to the early history of Islam, everyday living in qasbahs showed how that differentiation was stressed by certain cultural and religious practices. Among Muslims, the early settlers in qasbahs were mostly sadaat or Syeds, who traced their roots to the family of the Prophet. Most Shias and certain Sunnis fell under this category. The qasbati society was by and large divided into two major groups: ashraf Muslims and ajlaf Muslims, those who traced their origin to the central Islamic lands and those who were descendants of indigenous converts to Islam.[522]

Using the Weberian category of "status groups," Juan Cole has discussed how through endogamy and declarations of common ancestry, the ashraf Muslims in India

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[522] For a detailed discussion on how the Muslim society in India has been caste-ridden, see Imtiaz Ahmad, ed., *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India* (Delhi: Manohar, 1978). Before this work came out, Ghaus Ansari wrote a book on caste among the Muslims of Uttar Pradesh based on an analysis of British government records and census reports. Ghaus Ansari, *Muslim Caste in Uttar Pradesh: A Study in Culture Contact* (Lucknow: Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society, 1960). Of late, there is a work in Hindi that deals with the caste discrimination among Muslims of northern India, particularly in the state of Bihar. Written by a journalist, this book uses oral history, interviews, and statistics. Ali Anwar, *Masavat ki Jung: Pasemanzar Bihar ka Pasmanda Musalman* (New Delhi: Vani Prakashan, 2001). For a detailed analysis of Muslim social stratification in Bengali society, its different aspects, and a comparison with the Hindu caste system, see Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7-27.

moved towards becoming castes.[523] Rafiuddin Ahmed has also shown how the stratification in Bengali Muslim society, especially the *ashraf-atrap* dichotomy, was linked to ethnic origin – real or putative.[524] We earlier discussed in Chapter Two how compilations of shajrahs or genealogies held significance among qasbati sadaat Muslims and how genealogies were used for reinforcing endogamy. Different works of history mention a diverse group of Muslims living within the qasbah. They describe the ashraf Muslims, also called shurafa, as those who came from Islamic lands and consisted of Syeds, Shaikhs, Mughals, and Pathans, as against converted Hindustani Muslims called *arzals*.[525] However, the term used for the latter group is *peshewar* (occupational) Muslims, i.e. those engaged in various occupations. They include *bunkar* or *julaha* (weavers), *sabzi-farosh* (greengrocers), *assar* (oil pressers), *shirini-farosh* (sweetmeat makers), *ghosi* (milkmen), *kasegar* (clay workers), *qassab* or *qasaii* (butchers), *bahisti* (water carriers), *darzi* (tailors), *manihar* (bangle makers), *mocha* (cobblers), *maemar* (masons), *faqir* (beggars), *dhobi* (washer men), *bawarchi* (cooks), *barhai* (carpenters), *lohar* (ironsmiths), *hajjam* or *naaii* (barbers), *mirasi* (singers), and *safai mazdoor* (cleaners).[526] These various occupational groups correspond to Hindu castes and are mentioned in local historical accounts. It was the Hindustani or Hindi Muslims that were engaged in different occupational activities and lay behind their shurafa brethren, who were in an advanced position – socially, economically, and culturally. Moreover, occupational rankings also mattered within the arzals, and they roughly corresponded to the Hindu caste order, with one exception. Whereas certain castes were classified as ‘untouchables’ among the

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[523] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism*, 72.
[524] Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims*, 8.
[525] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 60-62; see also, Imtiaz Ahmad, “The Ashraf-Ajlaf Dichotomy in Muslim Social Structure in India,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 3 (1966): 268-78; Zarina Bhatty, “Social Stratification among Muslims in India,” in M. N. Srinivas, ed., *Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar* (New Delhi: Viking, 1996), 244-62.
[526] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 66-76; Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 200-13; Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 284-90.

Hindus, Muslim social hierarchy did not have such a group since exclusion of any kind was against Islamic principles.

Although Islam did not, theoretically, allow for a caste system, it did exist in qasbahs and the rest of the Indian subcontinent. For the study of the caste structure among Muslims, qasbahs are a very fertile zone. Imtiaz Ahmad acknowledges that caste was "a highly localized phenomenon and needed to be analyzed within the context of a local community."[527] However, no scholar to date has dealt with how social stratification functioned among qasbati Muslims. The majority of existing works that study the impact and nature of the caste system among Muslims focus either on rural or urban areas.[528] In a qasbati environment, Muslim social hierarchy was much more complex, in addition to the ashraf-ajlaf dichotomy. Qasbahs, with their predominantly Muslim populace, need to be explored further for an understanding of how and to what extent social stratification played a role among Muslims. Louis Dumont's analysis of the espousal of the caste structure by the Muslims in India argues that it was a conscious adoption, a compromise that Muslims had to make in a predominantly Hindu society.[529] This point further emphasizes the need for studying qasbahs where Muslims and not Hindus dominated. As noted above, it should also be kept in mind that the Muslim caste structure was different from that of the Hindus, which based itself on a system of deference, an ideology of purity-impurity, and religious sanction. The caste system among Muslims in India exists as a social reality despite the principles of Islamic egalitarianism prohibiting any such social arrangement.

The qasbati Muslim society was divided along Shia and Sunni sectarian lines. Gathering at dargahs, celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Zuha, observing Ramazan and saying daily prayers were certainly common among followers of both sects. But

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[527] Ahmad, *Caste and Social Stratification*, 1n.

[528] The volume edited by Imtiaz Ahmad consists of essays based on fieldwork conducted by some scholars in various towns and villages spread across India. It is noted for its pioneering contribution in the field and similar studies can be conducted in qasbahs as well.

[529] Louis Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1970), 205-06.

at the same time, the two sects also maintained their own individual spaces and approaches regarding the observation of rituals and celebration of festivals. For both the sects, institutions related to religious practices and rituals were primarily based on *awqaf* (sing. waqf) or religious endowments. Prayers were conducted in mosques while Islamic education was imparted through madrasas. With structural similarities, there also existed clearly defined differences. Whereas Sunni Muslims would congregate in the Eidgah in Amroha to say their Eid prayers, Shia Muslims said their congregational prayers at Ashraful Masajid in muhallah Shafaat Potah of Amroha.[530] Whereas Madrasa Mir Kallu and Madrasa Muhammadiya were run by Sunnis, Nur-ul-Madaris, Syed-ul-Madaris, and Imam-ul-Madaris catered to and were operated by their Shia neighbors in the qasbah of Amroha.[531] Such differences hold true for other qasbahs as well. Historical documents also mention lavish imambaras built in qasbahs by Shia gentlemen, while madrasas such as Madrasa Islamia of Amroha were supported by the Sunni school of Deoband.

The differences between Shias and Sunnis can be seen to an even greater extent in everyday life. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi shares some remarks about such practices. For instance, he talks about how Shia Muslims insist on delaying the time of *iftar*, or the breaking of the fast during the month of Ramazan, while Sunnis vie for an early break of the fast.[532] Realizing perhaps that in this way both groups try to accentuate their respective identities and assert their opposition to each other, he even suggests that they should find a middle path and follow a standard time. The point here is that despite a common religion and uniformity of beliefs, practices and precepts varied even among Muslims.

Religious practices among qasbati Shias and Sunnis can be further understood by looking at two ritualistic observances that form the core of religious life in qasbahs. They are the observation of Muharram among Shia Muslims and Barah

[530] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 133; Husain, *Medieval Towns*, 15.
[531] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 141-46.
[532] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 4.

Wafat among followers of Sunni Islam. We will first discuss Muharram. There are not many incidents in the history of Islam of the same magnitude and impact as the battle of Karbala fought in 680 AD, or 61 hijri, as per the Islamic calendar. Husain b. Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, along with his entourage was martyred in this battle on the tenth day of Muharram in that year. Since then, the history of this martyrdom is unfailingly evoked and commemorated every year by Muslims all over the world. Although Sunnis also participate in the observation of Muharram, most rituals are performed by Shias. Though there are similarities in the rites observed across Muslim societies, Karbala as a symbol has been understood differently in different regions. Syed Akbar Hyder examines how this religious symbol has inspired millions in South Asia in multiple ways.[533] Commemorating Muharram involves observation of *matam* or *azadari* (mourning) through various institutionalized practices. Two central rituals for Shias dominated Muharram: the mourning session, or majlis, held in an imambara, or a private dwelling, and the procession.[534] The processions taking place during Muharram were of two different types: the first type would imitate Imam Husain's march towards Karbala with armed men, drummers, and marchers carrying banners or *alams*; the second type of procession recreated the burial of Husain and his followers.[535] In this latter kind, a replica (called tazia) of Imam Husain's tomb in Karbala is carried in homage to the original site. In the South Asian Urdu-Persian world, Muharram is observed by organizing majlises and reciting different poetical subgenres in Urdu such as marsiyas and *nauhas* (elegies). It also includes taziadari or a procession with relics of tombs in Karbala and self-flagellation by devotees on streets. Although such rites and rituals may seem similar to the observation of Muharram in other parts of the world, the meaning of this event varies with shifting locales, ideologies, memories, and the way in which the language of

[533] Syed Akbar Hyder, *Reliving Karbala: Martyrdom in South Asian Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3-4.
[534] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism*, 105.
[535] Kozlowski, *Muslim Endowments*, 30.

religion is negotiated through intertwined and conflicting idioms.[536] Bilgramis, for instance, strongly feel that every single Bilgrami is so much attached to the Muharram rituals of the qasbah that even those working elsewhere make it a point to visit Bilgram during the first ten days of the month of Muharram.[537] Muharram was thus an important vehicle for reinforcing the qasbati identity.

Historical writings present a detailed picture of how Muharram was commemorated in qasbahs. The importance of the ritual observation of Muharram can be gauged by simply looking at how historians of qasbahs provide minute details regarding it. Some common patterns that emerge out of most writings are: almost universal qasbati participation, particularly of Shias; performance of rituals in all their details; participation of women in the rituals; and the use of public halls and imambaras within the qasbahs for the enactment of rituals. The historian Syed Asghar Husain Naqvi, writing in 1889, elaborates on the various aspects of Muharram as observed in his qasbah Amroha.[538] He writes that Muslims, particularly Shias, used to observe solemnity for the first ten days after they had viewed the moon for the month of Muharram. They would hold majlises, recite marsiyas, and read Hadis and other texts pertaining to the martyrdom of Imam Husain and his followers. The description of events and the suffering met by Imam Husain and his party would make everyone cry. This would be followed by the men beating their chests and shouting “Husain! Husain!” The historian goes into great detail, including how thousands of men traveled in a procession to imambaras bearing alams (spear headed banners) and tazias. Interestingly, he also mentions the particular localities through which the processions would go and the houses where women of the qasbah would gather and participate in the rituals.

In Rudauli, azadari would begin on the eve of Muharram and continue until *yaum-e-‘ashura* or *‘ashura* (the tenth day). During this time, majlises would be held

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[536] Hyder, *Reliving Karbala*, 3.
[537] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 268.
[538] Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Asghari*, 25-30.

in Shia households. Although a few Sunnis also organized majlises, most kept tazias inside their homes.[539] The imambara of Chaudhary Saheb in Rudauli served as the center of activity. Since Rudauli was known for its elaborate ways of commemorating Muharram, people from surrounding areas would flock there. The procession consisted of elephants, camels, insignia, alams, flags, and *zul-janah* (the name of the horse of Imam Husain). A group of *nauha-khwans* and *soz-khwans* (singers of elegies) would walk alongside, rendering nauhas. The procession would leave at nine in the evening and would not return before dawn. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali ascribes the length of the procession to the "enthusiasm of faith" and mentions that his house would entertain people at that time with cups of tea and arrangements for saying morning prayers.[540] The Irshad Manzil of Rudauli was another venue that remained crowded with people during Muharram. This was the location of the imambara of Chaudhary Saheb. Processions took place until the tenth day and the level of participation was remarkable. This indicates the level of energy among the qasbatis in regards to their participation in Muharram.

The intensity of observation of Muharram in qasbahs is best exemplified by the practices in Bilgram. Mufti Umrao Ali, alias Makki Mian, of muhallah Maidanpura in Bilgram has written a comprehensive account of Muharram commemoration in the qasbah.[541] His account sketches a history of Muharram in Bilgram beginning in 1834 AD. His description suggests that Maidanpura's was the most eventful place with its tazias and alams known well beyond the qasbah. There were also certain *diwankhanas* (public halls) where people used to gather for ritual practices. Mufti Umrao Ali provides a detailed description of the involvement of different individuals and how they planned activities for each day during the first ten days of Muharram. People of different backgrounds helped make the commemoration possible through their contributions. These included Mir Wazir Ali, the Deputy

[539] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 185.
[540] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 13.
[541] Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*, 251-69.

Collector and rais of Maidanpura; Syed Zulfiqar Hyder, a lawyer; Syed Mir Muhammad, a tahsildar; Muzaffar Husain, a zamindar; and many others, including Maulvi Muhammad Hasan, Ibn-e-Hasan Khan, Mir Muhammad Kazim, Maulvi Muhammad Alam, and Muhammad Ashraf, all ordinary residents of Maidanpura. Interestingly, the list of contributors included Roshan Khan, who was born in Bilgram but resided in the qasbah Koath in the Arrah district of Bihar.[542] We discussed in a previous chapter that a number of Bilgramis had moved to this qasbah in Bihar. A contribution coming from Roshan Khan of Koath demonstrates the extent to which Bilgramis felt attached to their qasbah of origin. Muharram served as a vehicle for the articulation of this feeling of qasbati association.

Participation in Muharram was not just limited to men. The Shia couple of Mir Muhammad Kazim and his wife, both from the muhallah Maidanpura, patronized various activities related to azadari and Muharram.[543] The wife, who is not named in the document, had brought an alam which had "doubled the grace of azadari" in muhallah Maidanpura. This alam became such an important part of Muharram processions in the qasbah that the gentlemen of Bilgram decided to build an imambara at the place where it was taken out. Consequently, an *imambara-e-zanana* was built in the house of Mir Turab Ali. This became a place where exclusive majlises were held for women during Muharram. Majlises were organized and managed by several women of Bilgram: Umra Bibi, wife of Mir Turab Ali; Mariyam Bibi, daughter of Umra Bibi and wife of Mir Wazir Ali; Nemat Bibi, wife of Syed Mir Muhammad, the tahsildar; and Kulsum Bibi, wife of Mir Raza Ali, an inspector of police. At the majlises, the women would recite marsiyas (elegiac verses). Some of these women were so skilled in rendering marsiyas that women from surrounding muhallahs and other areas traveled to attend their majlises. Thus the influence of women in Bilgram reached beyond their qasbah. It is impressive to note how an alam brought by a woman of the qasbah became the centerpiece of a separate imambara for

[542] Ibid., 255.
[543] Ibid., 256.

women, where majlises completely managed by women were held. Additionally, this particular alam also elevated that imambara's position as the one holding the most important alam of the area. Such developments are significant indicators which underscore both the importance of women in qasbati life and the importance of the religious symbolism of Muharram in the development of qasbati culture.

Although Shias organized most activities and performed ceremonial rites during Muharram, other groups were allowed to participate. However, this does not mean that participation were open enough to blur the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims or Shias and Sunnis. Mrs. Meer Hasan Ali, who lived in Awadh, writes that there was no restriction for "any profession of people from visiting their assemblies; there is free admission granted when the Emaum-baarah is first lighted up, until the hour of performing the service, when strangers, that is the multitude, are civilly requested to retire."[544] She notes that the tazias graced the houses of Shia Muslims and not Sunnis, and although Hindus would bow their heads on approaching a tazia, they probably "mistook the Tazia for a Bootkhanah (the house of an idol)." These statements indicate that despite similarities in terms of open participation, the observation of Muharram was marked with differences. Garcin de Tassy (1794-1878), a French Indologist, who wrote *Mémoires sur les particularités de la religion musulmane dans l'Inde* in 1832, noticed the nuanced existence of Muslims in India. He wrote: "Sunnis and Shias do not have in India the animosity that divides the Turks from the Persians. Ordinarily, they live in amity and, except in certain cases, they participate equally in festivals." He also added that "some Muslims are at the same time both Shia and Sunni."[545] Hameeda Salim also writes about how Sunni and Shia families of Rudauli would both busy themselves with preparations months in advance of Muharram.[546] Although these observations about the syncretic aspects of the two sects are well taken, we do find differences in their participation in festivals.

[544] Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns*, 27.
[545] de Tassy, *Muslim Festivals in India*, 34.
[546] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 38.

The festival of Barah Wafat (literally, death on the twelfth), although not exactly similar in magnitude to Muharram, is nevertheless another important congregational observation in qasbahs. Also known as *Mawlid* or *Milad-un-Nabi* (birth of the Prophet), this particular day happens to be both the birth and death anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad and is celebrated on the twelfth day of the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal. Garcin de Tassy wrote about his observation of Barah Wafat:

> The moon of Rabi'ul auwwl [tells Jawan] is also called Baharia and by the vulgar, The Twelve Dead. According to Sunnis, God's friend (Muhammad) left this perishable world on the twelfth day of this month. As it spread into the world, this stunning news produced a general consternation and everybody rushed to offer to God their vows and prayers for the peace of the Prophet's soul. This holy exercise continued for 12 days and it is undoubtedly for this reason that Twelve Dead is the name given to this month. It is probably in imitation of the first Muslims that Indian Muslims assemble to repeat the act mentioned above.[547]

On this day, Muslims assemble, pray, and commemorate the advent of the Prophet and his righteous deeds. According to Syed Asghar Husain Naqvi, the Sunni Muslims of Amroha used to hold majlises and sweets were distributed on the occasion of Barah Wafat.[548]

The most interesting account of the celebration of Barah Wafat comes from the memoirs of Hameeda Salim who recounts her childhood experiences in the qasbah of Rudauli. She remembers it as one of the most important festive occasions in the qasbah. Rudauli was divided into different neighborhoods or muhallahs, one of which was Muhallah Khwaja Haal. In this locality was an enclosure of a few houses called Bani Khana.[549] There was a huge gate at the entrance of this enclosure, and the gate constituted a complete building in itself. On one of its walls stood a door-like structure that was covered with a green curtain. According to Hameeda Salim, a

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[547] de Tassy, *Muslim Festivals in India*, 60.
[548] Naqvi, *Tarikh-e-Asghari*, 30.
[549] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 34-35.

wooden box lay behind this curtain which was supposed to contain *mu-e-mubarak* (a sacred hair of the Prophet). Irrespective of the question of veracity of the relic that was never raised, the celebration of Barah Wafat focused around the life of the Prophet Muhammad assumed considerable significance in the qasbah.[550] The family of Hameeda Salim was one of three in charge of organizing the ceremonies of Barah Wafat in Rudauli. The first twelve days of Rabi-ul-Awwal were full of activities: *qawwalis* were performed every day, lamps were lit every evening, and a fete was organized over the last three days.[551] According to Ali Muhammad Zaidi, milad (birthday) ceremonies were organized on the twelfth day in particular and throughout the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal in general.[552] Veneration of the Prophet on such occasions also included reciting *fateha* (thanksgiving verses), *naat* (poetry in praise of the Prophet), *darood* (blessings) and readings of Quranic texts.[553] This shows that Barah Wafat provided Sunni Muslims of qasbahs with an opportunity to engage in activities similar to Muharram as it was commemorated by the Shias. Both Barah Wafat and Muharram ran for ten days, but Barah Wafat was more about celebration than commemoration.

Although Shias and Sunnis generally acknowledged and respected each other's beliefs and practices, there are official reports concerning sectarian differences and disputes. One grim example of such disputes occurred in Amroha in 1895, regarding the *azan* (call to prayer), which was used in the Shia mosques of muhallah Shafaat Potah and Darbar Kalan. This azan used a particular phrase *khilfat-*

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[550] It is interesting to note that the only place in South Asia in possession of the holy relic which has been extensively written and talked about is the shrine of Hazrat Bal in Kashmir. Syed Mir Qasim, former Chief Minister of Kashmir (1971-74), writes in detail about the *mu-e-muqaddas* in his autobiography. He explains that the relic was brought to India by one Syed Abdullah from Madina in 1635. Abdullah claimed to be a direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad, and after his death, the relic was passed on to his son Syed Hamid who gave it to a Kashmiri businessman named Noor-ud-din. Noor-ud-din was arrested by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb but was later released. The relic finally finally was taken to Kashmir and was placed where the Hazrat Bal shrine was built later. Mir Qasim, *My Life and Times* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1992), 93-94.

[551] Salim, *Shorish-e-Dauran*, 35.

[552] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 187.

[553] Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*, 159-63.

un-bila fasl, which means "without intervening or connecting link." The Sunnis of the qasbah complained to the government, asking for the outlawing of this azan because it contradicted a belief held by them. To them, this particular azan was a denial of the rights of the first three caliphs – Abu Bakr, Umar, and Usman – as legitimate successors of the Prophet. The phrase in use was interpreted as declaring that Ali – the fourth caliph according to the Sunnis – had directly succeeded the Prophet, an issue that is at the base of the Shia-Sunni schism within the history of Islam. The Shias of Amroha brought their objection to an order of the Magistrate Mr. Hardy and the Commissioner that forbade the use of this phrase at the end of the azan. The matter quickly escalated. Petitions were submitted to higher government officials not only by Shias from Amroha, but also by Shias from other qasbahs, towns, and states. Shias from the qasbah of Jalali, the princely state of Patiala in Punjab, and from districts including Ballia, Chhapra, Saran, Arrah, Champaran, Atrauli, Shikohabad, Bulandshahr, Moradabad, Aligarh, and Allahabad submitted petitions to various officials pushing for the withdrawal of the ban on azan. Such petitions questioned "the high handedness and defiant attitude of the Sunnis" on the one hand and underlined "the submissive and law abiding spirit" of the Shias of Amroha, on the other. In response, Muslims of the Ahl-e-Sunnat wa Jamaat, a Sunni movement, submitted a petition to the government supporting the ban. The matter was finally settled in favor of the Shias, although the government's intent was to neither support Sunnis nor Shias, but simply to ensure that "there is no violence." The government, in fact, was enraged by the fact that the Sunnis of Amroha had "sent telegrams to the Sultan of Turkey" on the issue, thereby displaying "disloyal" tendencies.[554] It is interesting to observe how politicking took place around the issue of the azan. It concerned a belief that divided the sects, engrossed people not only within the qasbah but also outside it, and invited government intervention in a matter of religious belief. Additionally, the entire episode tells a lot about the relationship between Shias and

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[554] *Dispute between Shias and Sunnis of Amroha, Moradabad District*, File no. 106C, General Administration Department, 1896, UPSA.

Sunnis within a qasbah and how that relationship could be shaped by the intervention of government and people from outside that qasbah.

Differences among Shias and Sunnis living in qasbahs were further accentuated by the pursuit and promotion of education within the qasbah. We discussed earlier how Shias and Sunnis used to have separate madrasas and mosques. When it came to government intervention, education among Shias and Sunnis was treated with equal attention. A draft scheme regarding Amroha High School recommended that the management of the school funds be vested in a committee consisting of the Inspector of Schools of the Rohilkhand division and two gentlemen each from Hindu, Shia and Sunni groups. In addition, the draft scheme notes that in the event of death or resignation of any of the members, a new member shall be elected by the remaining members of the said committee provided that a Hindu shall be elected to succeed a Hindu, a Shia to succeed a Shia, and a Sunni to succeed a Sunni.[555] In another example of an attempt to ensure equal representation of different groups, the Provincial Maktab Committee, a governmental body that managed Muslim elementary school education, divided the syllabi into secular and religious curriculum, with the religious part further divided into Sunni and Shia theology.[556] The committee that prepared the separate syllabi was headed by Abul Hasan, the Inspector of Muhammadan schools, UP and President of the Provincial Maktab Committee. The Provincial and District Maktab Committees worked together to implement the policies of the Department of Public Instruction of the United Provinces. These policies aimed to extend the sphere of these committees from the village maktabs to Islamia schools and cover Muslim education in the districts. The fact that both provincial and local governments worked towards separate Shia and Sunni education is evidence enough that the need for distinct educational spheres for the two sects was recognized within as well as outside the community. Although

[555] *Amroha High School Endowment Fund, Moradabad District*, File no. 341 , Education Department, December 1910, UPSA.
[556] *Proceedings of the Provincial Maktab Committee*, File no. 180, Education Department, August 1916, UPSA.

Muslims formed one single religious group within qasbahs, sectarian differences reinforced the idea that the community was not monolithic. These facts also challenge arguments that present qasbahs as a uniform structure without any visible sectarian differences.[557] It also needs to be emphasized that harmony or peace in qasbahs did not necessarily flow from the eschewal of differences. Rather, the examples from these qasbahs suggest that differences were recognized and not shunned. Qasbati Muslims accepted their mutual differences, and followers of both sects had the option to pursue whatever kind of education they wanted.

A close examination of community living is the key to understanding the dynamics of qasbati life. Examining relationships between Hindus and Muslims, Shias and Sunnis, and the internal structure of Muslim qasbati society allow us a better perception of what a qasbati life was all about. Festivals, commemorative ceremonies, educational pursuits, and similar issues enable us to see a nuanced qasbati existence. Most importantly, all of these make us better understand this society's internal dynamics in the context of religion. Although Muslims were numerous, there were Hindus too. Although Shias were powerful, Sunnis formed the majority. Although sadaat Muslims dominated, historical writings acknowledge the presence of various ajlaf groups of Muslims in the qasbahs. In the midst of all these, how did Muslims living in qasbahs view themselves? In other words, what formed the identity of a Muslim living in a qasbah during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century? To discuss such questions, we will look at some specific examples.

MERA MAZHAB: EPITOME OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN A QASBAH

This section attempts to explore individual perspectives on Islam and life as a Muslim in late nineteenth and early twentieth century North India by focusing on the religious autobiography by Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi. The title of the section draws its name from Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's autobiography *Mera*

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[557] Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism*, 145.

Mazhab, or “My Religion.” A fascinating and unique example of writing about religious life, *Mera Mazhab* deals with various topics and issues concerning Islam and Muslims. In this work, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali deals with his thoughts and perspectives on a range of issues vis-à-vis religion: his family background, upbringing, claims to an overarching Muslim identity, Shia belief and leanings, the institutions of the Caliphate and the Hajj, and rituals such as *namaz* (prayers) and Muharram processions. Through a close reading of his work along with occasional observations, comparative insights, and examples from some of his contemporaries living in the qasbahs of Rudauli, Amroha, and Bilgram, this section will attempt to capture what religion meant to qasbati Muslims. The writings of educated Muslims living in qasbahs demonstrate the fluidity of their self-identity and their religious views. Qasbati-Muslim identity included a mixture of being a Muslim, a Shia or Sunni, a local resident, and also part of the larger Islamic world. This section also proposes that *Mera Mazhab* makes a fascinating example of *adab* literature in the light of existing research on *shari'at* and its ambiguities.[558]

A few remarks must be made before we proceed. First, *mazhab* as we understand it in this context means religion or “a body of tenets or articles of belief.”[559] It is different from other terms often used interchangeably such as *deen* (faith; as contrasted with *duniya*), *aqidah* (an article of belief or faith), or *iman* (faith, religion; in the sense of conviction). Second, as mentioned in Chapter Four, although Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi professed to be a Shia Muslim, he came from a family and environment that had both Shias and Sunnis in it.[560] Moreover, as mentioned before, he married a Sunni Muslim named Abida Begum. Although it is difficult to know exactly how much his environment influenced him, it is clear that he

[558] Katherine P. Ewing, ed., *Shariat and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California, 1988).
[559] Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu,* 1018.
[560] He mentions one Maulvi Wajid Ali as one of his childhood teachers. He adds that when he would not completely follow Shia rituals and practices, others in the house would blame it on this Maulvi who had regularly instructed his young pupil to follow what his mother would tell him. Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 10-11.

grew up with a mixed ancestry, beliefs, and practices. Throughout his autobiography, he defines himself as a Muslim – a point he articulates very clearly. At the same time, one can easily see that his identity was grounded in Shia faith, norms, and practices.

CHAUDHARY MUHAMMAD ALI: MUSLIM IDENTITY

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's work *Mera Mazhab* is a combination of different genres of literature such as autobiography, travelogue, theology and religious history. Among his many arguments, one that he pursues throughout the book is that Muslims need to be recognized as Muslims, not necessarily as Shias and Sunnis, and he refers to himself in this regard. On being asked by a friend whether he had turned into a Sunni since he was not performing any of the Shia rituals at one point, he writes thus:

> I answered: If had I to become a Sunni, why wouldn't I remain just a Shia? Oftentimes I was asked about my faith. And, when I would say that I call myself a Muslim and may God consider me as a Muslim, those who heard would not get convinced. A Godsend name, a name brought by the Prophet "Muslim" became insignificant. Until you put the tag of Shia, Sunni, or Wahhabi, people do not understand what your religion is.[561]

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali is not the only person whose acts blur his religious identity. He himself mentions an author, Mirza Muhammad Saeed Dehlvi, who wrote a book titled *Mazhab wa Batini Taleem* (Religion and its Inherent Message). According to Muhammad Ali, this book expressed such a powerful message downplaying sectarianism that both Shias and Sunnis decried the author for his ill-motives against their respective faiths.[562] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali had similar convictions to Dehlvi. Religiously, he self identified as simply a Muslim, a fact that he emphasized on a number of occasions and under various contexts. Praying before God in the form of saying namaz is one of the five pillars of Islam. Usually Shias and

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[561] Ibid., 57.
[562] Ibid., 62.

Sunnis prayed separately in their own mosques.[563] However, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali said his prayers in the company of both Shia and Sunni Muslims and behind both Shia and Sunni *Imams* (prayer leaders). Commenting on this issue, he wrote: "I do not find any such differences between the namaz of the Shias and that of the Sunnis, differences that would jeopardize one's prayer if they prayed together."[564] He acknowledged that there were certain differences between the schools of law of the Sunni Hanafis and the Shias but was convinced that such differences should not prevent them from praying together.

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's autobiography further reinforces his argument for replacing Sunni-Shia identities with one larger Muslim identity through his discussion of the personal efforts he would undertake in order to bridge gaps between the two sects. He mentions that originally he had no plans to go on Hajj, another one of the five pillars of Islam, this one requiring every capable Muslim to visit Mecca and Medina at least once during one's life span. His wife insisted on going for the pilgrimage, which he agreed to but excused himself from joining her. Once she had left though, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali realized that it could be a once in a lifetime opportunity for him as well. He immediately traveled to Bombay and joined his wife there. In his autobiography, he credits his wife for the pilgrimage that he undertook. About this, he writes: "Since my wife was a Sunni and because of the benevolence brought by her that I was blessed with Hajj, I preferred staying with a Sunni *muallim* (preceptor). I did most of the pilgrimage rituals with this very Sunni muallim. I consulted the books of both the sects, did my pilgrimage with the muallim or tutors of both. I found out that if superfluities that have been called necessities are removed, you will hardly notice any differences."[565] He thus shows the basic unity that existed between Shia and Sunni Islam. It is important to note that in the political rhetoric of

[563] An incident related with Syed Muhammad Abbas Shustari (1809-88) who pursued a religious career in Awadh attests how impossible it was for the two communities to pray together in Lucknow. Juan Ricardo Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism*, 243.
[564] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 121.
[565] Ibid., 31.

this period, most advocates of Muslim unity tried to unite the Muslims of India either against the Hindus or the British. In contrast, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's approach did not contain any such leanings.[566]

CHAUDHARY MUHAMMAD ALI: SHIA IDENTITY

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's views on Sunni Islam seem to be accommodative and inclusive. However, this does not mean that he did not assert his Shia identity. On a number of issues of theological importance, his writing demonstrates that he was resolute and articulate about his identity. On the larger question of Caliphate or Khilafat, his position reflected that of an average Shia Muslim. He believed that Ali ibn Abi Talib was the rightful heir to Caliphate after Prophet Muhammad. Among those who succeeded the Prophet, he holds the first caliph, Abu Bakr, in high esteem but makes clear his dislike for the caliph Umar for the specific reason that Umar was against *Ahl-e-Bayt* or "People of the House," the family of the Prophet. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali also expressed his dislike for Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the famous Arab scholar, and Shibli Numani of Nadwa because they had high praise for caliph Umar.[567] On the other hand, he overtly expressed his liking for Abu Bakr for the latter's confession to Ali that had he known Ali would be against his caliphate, he would have not accepted the caliph's position in the first place.[568] This again re-affirms his Shia faith as an ultimate champion of Ali's caliphate. About the third caliph Usman, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali feels that Usman's piety, righteousness, generosity, and love for the Prophet is worthy of praise

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[566] Maulana Mohamed Ali Jauhar (1878-1931) indicates that the differences between Shias and Sunnis are primarily political and not theological. But as a champion of Muslim rights and political demands, his stress on Shia-Sunni unity seems to be politically motivated since he attempted to unite Muslims politically against both the Hindu and British forces. Hasan, ed., *My Life*, 187-89.

[567] Ibn Khaldun wrote about the early Muslim conquests and lauded the *Khulafah-e-Rashidun*, the first four caliph including Umar. Shibli Numani wrote *Al-Farooq*, the biography of Umar in which he acknowledged Umar as the first conqueror, founder, and administrator of the Muslim Empire. This book was received very well in the Muslim world, and was translated into several languages. Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 75-78.

[568] Ibid., 80-81.

and admiration.[569] Muhammad Ali also showed his support for Ali when he quotes several verses from Quran in support of *Imamat man Allah*, Ali's caliphate and succession to the Prophet.[570]

While Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's perspective on the caliphate is clearly that of a Shia Muslim, it remains unlike the mainstream Shia thought that holds a blanket opposition to all the three caliphs who came before Ali. His analysis of different caliphs is based on their individual merit; he writes: "I was born in a Shia family and received Shiite training. But I always disdained *tabarra*…. Tabarra remained something against my wishes and if I ever said it during my early years, I felt ashamed for it."[571]

Tabarra and *tavalla* are two ritualistic utterances a Shia Muslim voices in many situations. Whereas tavalla is an oath of allegiance to the Imams and does not conflict with Sunni beliefs, tabarra is a public pronouncement cursing the first three caliphs who, according to Shia belief, usurped the caliphate from Ali. Such a pronouncement stands in direct opposition to Sunni Muslims, who hold the first three caliphs in reverence and believe that those three along with the fourth caliph Ali form *Khulafah-e-Rashidun* or the "Rightly Guided Caliphs." W. H. Sleeman (1788-1856), a British resident in Lucknow from 1849 to 1856, reported on how strictly tabarra was practiced in the city. The chief *mujtahid* (jurisprudent) of the kingdom of Awadh from 1820 to 1867, Syed Muhammad Nasirabadi held that the cursing of the caliphs was as necessary a ritual obligation for Shias as sounding the call to prayer.[572] For Chaudhary Muhammad Ali, who respects all but one caliph, tabarra's disdain for three caliphs made it out of question. His views were formed not from mainstream thought but by his own individual consideration of Shia beliefs. Although he disavowed the ritual of tabarra, his analysis of caliphs was based on their individual respect for the Ahl-e-Bayt, the basic point of reference from which rituals such as

[569] Ibid., 82.
[570] Ibid., 84-88.
[571] Ibid., 10, 17.
[572] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiism*, 242.

tabarra sprung. Therefore, his beliefs, though unconventional, do confirm his identity as a Shia Muslim.

Commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husain ibn Ali in the Battle of Karbala during the month of Muharram is another topic which reflects Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's identity as a Shia Muslim. The story of the martyrdom of Imam Husain and his family and the ritual observances Shias developed to commemorate it proved central to the formation of a Shia identity in Awadh.[573] There are many examples of qasbahs such as Rudauli, Amroha, and Bilgram[574] that commemorated rituals relating to the incidents of Karbala on a scale larger than most other towns or cities in North India. Hosh Bilgrami (1894-1955) recalls his childhood days during which he witnessed the rituals of Muharram.[575] Qurratulain Hyder, in her fictionalized autobiography, *Kar-e-Jahan Daraz hai*, presents a lively picture of the commemoration of Muharram in her ancestral qasbah Nathor. She particularly mentions of the imambara in the qasbah, where people take their seats to listen to *Shahadatnama* (list of those who were martyred).[576] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali says that no other sect within Islam is as aware of its faith as the Shias because majlis or mourning sessions are an institution of learning beyond comparison.[577] He asks what could be a greater tragedy than Karbala and further reinforces his faith in the institution of azadari (mourning) by emphasizing that those who do not get moved by listening to retellings of Karbala are definitely hardhearted. Although he believes in weeping clean one's heart, his emphasis is on understanding the actual meaning of mourning. He quotes from the poetry of Akbar Allahabadi (1846-1921), a famous Urdu poet, to convey his point:

Gham se ibrat ka zauq haasil hai
Gham nihayat mujalli dil hai

[573] Ibid., 101.
[574] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*; Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*; Bilgrami, *Tarikh-e-Khitta-e-Pak-e-Bilgram*.
[575] Bilgrami, *Mushahedat*, 17.
[576] Hyder, *Kar-e-Jahan*, 81.
[577] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 50.

Gham se matlab woh gham jo dagh banay
Naa kay jo rasm ka chiragh banay.[578]

From mourning comes the delight of "ibrat"
Mourning is heart-rending
Mourning is that which leaves scars in its wake
Not that which lights up [the world of] rituals.

Similar to the ritual of mourning, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali celebrates the ritual pomp of tazia. While relating the tradition of mourning Imam Husain's martyrdom to the larger Islamic world, he notes that the custom of taziadari is found only in India. In regards to this exclusivity of location, he says that it could be because of the local influence of Hindu culture, though he explicitly cautions that his argument should not be taken as a claim that taziadari in any sense relates to any kind of idolatry. Within Shiism, visiting Karbala is of great significance, particularly during the month of Muharram.[579] On the basis of Juan Cole's argument that the devout visited the imambaras as a substitute for the expensive pilgrimage to Karbala, it can be argued that tazia in the Indian case similarly served as a less expensive way of "reliving Karbala"[580] in its different aspects.

Although we have learned from our earlier discussion that many Sunnis also participated in taziadari, others decried the practice. Maulana Abdul Majid Dariyabadi, a Sunni Muslim, spoke against the ritual of mourning during Muharram and more particularly appealed against the practice of taziadari among the Sunnis of Awadh, a custom that had crept in because of the dominant Shia influence in the kingdom of Awadh. On September 22, 1925, he wrote a small piece asking the *ahl-e-Sunnat* (Sunnis) to refrain from this practice.[581] He argued that the rituals of mourning

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[578] Ibid., 54-55.
[579] Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of Ashura in Twelver Shiism* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978), 180-96.
[580] The idea that different ritualistic aspects of Muharram were aimed at creating an environment that allowed the devout to "relive" the day of the Battle of Karbala fought in AD 680 is borrowed from Syed Akbar Hyder's work. Hyder, *Reliving Karbala*.
[581] *Hashmi Amroha* 6, 5-7 (November 1977): Preface.

and taziadari were not required by any religious code. The practice of mourning was started by the Shia vizier of an Abbasi caliph in 962 AD, while taziadari was instituted by Tamerlane, the fourteenth century Turco-Mongol conqueror. In addition, Abdul Majid Dariyabadi also quoted the *fatwas* (religious verdicts) of Imam al-Ghazali, the eleventh century Muslim theologian and philosopher, and Shah Waliullah Dehlvi, the eighteenth century Islamic reformer. These fatwas, presumably against such rituals, came from two highly respected Sunni scholars. Dariyabadi also made an argument that the best way to pay tribute to Imam Husain was by keeping fasts, indulging in prayers on the day of ʻashura, and adopting the values he lived and was martyred for. A comparison between Chaudhary Muhammad Ali and Abdul Majid Dariyabadi shows that while they both agreed that taziadari was a common Indian practice, Muhammad Ali, as a Shia, pursued the practice, and Dariyabadi refrained while also asking other Sunnis to participate in other ways of commemorating Muharram. Varieties of opinion and dialogues like this were a commonplace in qasbati context.

In addition to relating himself to the larger Islamic world on topics such as namaz and Hajj and identifying himself with Shia beliefs and practices in ritualistic aspects, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali also discusses his association with the local life and culture. His description of Muharram is specific to the way it was observed in Rudauli.[582] He mentions how on the seventh day of Muharram, a tabernacle or ark (*mehndi*, typically carried in Muslim procession on the eve of someone's death anniversary) would be taken to the dargah of Abbas. He describes how this entire ritual took place early in the morning and how people would come to his house, sit over cups of tea, and say morning prayers before leaving for their homes. In Rudauli, the majlis would endure for hours and *mazakrehs*, or the remembrances, would be extremely edifying. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali also mentions the fact that bigger majlises in Rudauli started hiring professional weepers. In short, because he grew up

[582] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 12-13.

observing Muharram, he has much to say on the subject. Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi writes in his memoir, *Apni Yadein: Rudauli ki Batein*, how lively Rudauli would become during Muharram, a fact known far and wide.[583] Commemoration of Muharram in qasbahs had its own unique character. People would gather in imambaras to perform rituals. The imambara constructed by Chaudhary Irshad Hussain, a local taluqdar, still stands as a testimony to that.

The most illustrative example of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's sense of qasbati identity comes from a conversation between him and a person whom he met on Mount Arafat, a region east of Mecca where the Prophet had delivered his farewell sermon that is visited during the Hajj.[584] While riding a camel, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali finds an Urdu speaker who happens to be from Lucknow and wastes no time before identifying himself as from Rudauli and detailing the 'urs at Rudauli and mentioning the sajjada nashin of that dargah, who also happened to be there for Hajj. Although one can interpret this incident variously, the simple fact that he preferred to identify himself by the qasbah rather than any other feature is remarkable.

Another example of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's devotion to his local culture can be seen in his recounting of the last leg of his pilgrimage to Mecca, when he had to perform a specific Shia ritual with a Shia muallim.[585] This Shia muallim knew that Chaudhary Muhammad Ali had performed most of the other rituals with a Sunni muallim. Therefore, he proposed to Muhammad Ali that he should utter a few verses after him to set right his earlier ritual performances. To his shock, Muhammad Ali noticed that instead of saying the verses in Arabic, the muallim was asking him to repeat after him in Persian. Muhammad Ali immediately retorted: "Listen, sir. Intention (*niyat*) comes out of heart and may be returned through the tongue. There is no objection in that. I will say my niyat in Arabic which is the tongue of my Prophet

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[583] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 185-87.
[584] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 37-40.
[585] Towards the end of the Hajj, Shias have to do a *tawafunnisa* which if not performed does not validate one's marriage, i.e., wife. Ibid., 42-43.

or in Urdu which is my mother tongue. On what basis should I do it in Persian?"[586] Such a remark is characteristic of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's assertion of his identity as a Muslim relating himself to Islam as identified with Arabic as well as a person rooted in his local culture. His emphasis on Urdu and qasbati identity, as expressed though his interactions with individuals shows how he defined his own identity. In a way, it is his ritual practices and social interactions that constitute his identity. This goes hand in hand with Clifford Geertz's influential analysis of the cultural construction of self in Morocco, where he finds rituals and the etiquette of social interrelationships to be the defining factors of self-identity.[587]

Besides contributing to the notion of fluidity of identity, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's articulation of his mazhab is a fascinating example of how the culture of adab operates within both South Asian Islam and the classical Islamic tradition. Adab, translated variously as etiquette, righteous manner, correct behavior, and respect in its plural form, involves a certain amount of deference and humility, as we see in the personality of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali. Not only the literal meaning but also the arguments made by historians with regard to adab fit in nicely with Muhammad Ali. Barbara Metcalf rightly argues that Islam as a religion is permeated by the importance of moral exemplification represented by the lives of prophets and saints.[588] On the other hand, Ira Lapidus contends that the notion of adab in its religious sense includes '*ilm*, or knowledge, as its component and taken together religion and knowledge form the basis of an action helpful in fulfilling the religious goals of human existence.[589] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's autobiography combines adab, knowledge, and moral exemplification. Whereas Ahl-e-Bayt or the Prophet's

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[586] Ibid., 42.
[587] Clifford Geertz, "From the Natives' Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding." In R. Shweder & R. LeVine, eds., *Culture Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 123-36.
[588] Barbara Daly Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 1-2.
[589] Ira M. Lapidus, "Knowledge, Virtue, and Action: The Classical Muslim Conception of *Adab* and the Nature of Religious Fulfillment in Islam." In Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct*, 39-40.

immediate family stands as the epitome of moral exemplification for Chaudhary Muhammad Ali, his criticism of Umar, Muawiya, Ibn Khaldun, Bukhari, and Shibli Numani still reflect some degree of adab or respect. For instance, despite all his criticisms of caliph Umar, he writes: "After saying it all, I would like to add that the one who does not accept the role of Umar in bringing grandeur and magnificence to Islam is a bigot."[590] Moreover, accepting the limitations of his knowledge he humbly submits that his purpose is to just express his *aqaid* (beliefs) thorugh his autobiography.[591] *Mera Mazhab* can be taken as a writing that has the adab of being courteous, basing itself on knowledge, which in turn is transformed into an action expected of an educated person. The inherent moral content of this work probably serves as a means to obtain an authority with regards to dealing with religion.

On the problem of tensions within Islam in terms of moral principles, some scholars of South Asian Islam, in 1981, discussed a methodology of studying ambiguity in connection with shari'at or Islamic law. As Katherine Ewing states, there exists an ambiguity between the prescriptive shari'at or the canon of Islamic law and everyday behavior. To investigate how the conflicting values and codes are reconciled involves an examination of the pragmatic social functions of specific actions.[592] Such a method can be applied to *Mera Mazhab*. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's religious self-identification explains Islam as defined both by shari'at and everyday practices in his qasbah. Drawing upon Ewing's notion, the concept of "ambiguity" between the scriptural and the practical Islam is on display in *Mera Mazhab*. As a Muslim, as a Shia, as a Rudaulvi, and as a part of the larger Islamic world, Chaudhary Muhammad Ali had to live with different prescriptives though not necessarily codified expectations. In his work, we find him tangling with this issue. The result is a person who finds, expresses, and confirms multiple identities under various contexts.

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[590] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 78.
[591] Ibid., 71.
[592] Ewing, ed., *Shariat and Ambiguity*, 3, 6.

THE SUBSTANCE OF *MERA MAZHAB*

Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi's work can be examined as a religious autobiography. But unlike most other soul-searching writings coming from "people of religion," such as 'ulama in Muslim societies, this work comes from a person for whom religion is only one of many aspects of his identity. Not only was Chaudhary Muhammad Ali well read in Persian, Urdu, and English literature, he also wrote numerous articles, books, letters, biographies, memoirs, and stories. His varied interests ranged from socialism, the condition of women, the psychology of sex, girl's education, and western ideologies. Unlike most of his contemporary intellectuals, he was not educated formally in an institution of higher learning. He defined himself as a person driven by *azad khayali* (freedom of thought), even though he said he was disliked for it.[593] His knowledge and awareness is reflected in his writings such as his short story *Ishq-e-bawasta* (Love of Reason), a good example of literary realism.[594] He was also an activist who encouraged people and participated actively in various forums of public sphere.

As discussed earlier, he was one of the first members of the progressive literary movement in India. Despite his progressive thinking, he identifies himself with his religion, unlike Hosh Bilgrami who took a very secular approach: "Be it temple or a church, a synagogue or a mosque – all of them are places of worship where it is the same Almighty who is worshipped."[595] Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's writing on religion is just another side of his multifaceted personality. *Mera Mazhab* brings out the multiple layers of his identity – a Shia Muslim, a Muslim above sectarian categories, a Muslim attaching himself with the larger Islamic world, and a qasbati Muslim who grew up in a particular Islamic culture. Among many questions one could ask about the origins of his views, one could ask how and where Chaudhary Muhammad Ali was educated. He did not go to an institution of higher

[593] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 17.
[594] Rudaulvi, *Kashkol*, 17-24.
[595] Bilgrami, *Mushahedat*, 26.

learning to obtain a formal degree. He was not the lone personality with regard to his educational background and literary output. What kind of a system did such individuals come from? Many went to the English colleges such as the one at Aligarh, yet others attended madrasas within and outside their qasbahs. What role did religion play in their education? We shall now turn to a discussion of these and other related questions.

THE CONTEXT OF RELIGION: ASPECTS FROM THE QASBAHS

Individuals are products of their respective societies. Chaudhary Muhammad Ali's personality was in part shaped by the intellectual and cultural milieu of his qasbah, Rudauli. A qasbah's interaction and engagement with its surroundings, in turn, determined its social make up. The qasbahs under study were surrounded by towns, cities, and other qasbahs of Awadh and Rohilkhand. Qasbahs had their own network of educational institutions, both Islamic and vernacular. In addition, the surrounding towns and cities also housed eminent Islamic and English educational institutions. Such institutions were a vital part of the intellectual life of the qasbahs as much as the qasbahs were crucial for the existence of such institutions. Educated qasbati Muslims helped run these institutions as founders, teachers, and supporters, while also providing these institutions with students in large numbers. In this section, we shall discuss the intersection of these institutions and qasbahs.

Subsequently, we shall also deal with two more aspects of the way religion influenced the social life of qasbati Muslims in the context of modernity. Every society follows certain norms regarding dress code, here defined very loosely as "the way people dress." We will analyze the meaning of dress among the Muslims of the United Provinces in general and qasbahs in particular. We shall move from a general discussion of dress code to a specific treatment of the question of the wearing of neckties by Muslims. The necktie is taken here as a symbol of changing dress codes among Muslims, and we shall seek to make sense of the differing perspectives on the issue. Finally, this section will end with a brief discussion of qasbahs' role as a

provider of instructional religious literature for women. There is a whole body of literature on *dastur-ul-‘amal* for Muslim women in South Asia. The concern here is to make a case for the leading role that qasbahs played in its production and dissemination.

NISAB-E-T‘ALIM: EDUCATION, RELIGION, AND QASBAHS

Education is a fertile area for understanding the role of religion in the lives of qasbati Muslims during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To evaluate better what the many personalities of a qasbah were, it is important that we have a clear understanding of the questions surrounding education and Islamic reform. What were the methods of education in the qasbahs? How did these methods differ? What curricula and syllabi were generally followed? Most importantly, how did the qasbati educational environment work, particularly in the face of the introduction of English education? Before proceeding further, we need to understand the varying educational backgrounds of qasbahs. Within a qasbah, there were different ways of obtaining education. Of these, the earliest method was a system based on an *ustad-shagird* (teacher-disciple) relationship. Second, we have discussed earlier the existence of various madrasas in the qasbahs. Some of these madrasas survived from the time of early Muslim settlement. Third, after the British began showing an interest in education, various schools run by government bodies started which combined traditional education along with English language, literature, and Western subjects. There were also certain Anglo-vernacular schools that aimed at producing people who could substantially help the local governments run their business.

The oldest system of discipleship was quite different from the education system that we witness today in qasbahs. In this system, a teacher would personally undertake to teach a child in a particular subject. Education would begin with training

in Persian and Arabic. Persian texts such as *Gulistan* and *Bostan*[596] formed the core of a list of books during this part of education. Individual experts taught a number of subjects ranging from how to read the holy Quran to the principles of *hikmat* (functions of a physician) and the art of poetry writing.[597] *Sanads* or certificates were then issued by the teacher on completion of the prescribed book or books. Later, English became a part of this tradition. Until it gave way to formal educational institutions, this kind of system was the predominant method of imparting knowledge in qasbahs. Syed Husain Bilgrami, alias Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk (1842-1925), noted for his indispensable role in the affairs of the state of Hyderabad, was initially taught under the system of discipleship. Syed Zainuddin Husain, Imad-ul-Mulk's father and Deputy Collector and District Magistrate of the Bihar and Bengal provinces respectively, placed him under charge of a Maulvi who thoroughly taught him Arabic while his father taught him English.[598]

A comparable example is Mirza Muhammad Askari (1869-1951), not to be confused with Muhammad Hasan Askari (1919-78), who was noted for his knowledge of the history of Urdu literature. In his autobiography *Mann Kistam* (Who am I?), he writes that his early education started under a maulvi in Lucknow by learning the alphabet. He mentions the names of Maulvi Hedyat Husain and Shams-uz-Zoha, both of whom taught him.[599] As he grew older, he went to the local mosque to learn under Maulvi Muhammad Yahya who introduced him to the texts *Gulistan*, *Bostan*, and *Anwar-e-Suhaili* in Persian, and *Mizan Nashab* and *Panj Ganj* in Arabic. Classes at the mosques could be individual or collective. In fact, mosques were the only place of organized teaching in medieval times, teaching pupils the basics such as

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[596] *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden) and *Bostan* (The Fruit Orchard) were written by the famous Persian poet Sadi in 1259 and 1257 AD respectively. While the former is a collection of stories and poems, the latter contains Sadi's anecdotes and personal experiences. Both these are classic medieval texts and still used as a basic reference for teaching Persian literature.

[597] The best place to see examples of these are the works of tazkirah literature that detailed who studied what and under whom. For examples of such education in a qasbah, see Siddiqui, *Shu'ara-e-Amroha*.

[598] Saidul Haq Imadi, *Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk: Social and Culural Activities of Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk Syed Husain Bilgrami in Hyderabad* (Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1978), 9.

[599] Askari, *Mann Kistam*, 14.

the Quran and Hadis, the traditions of the Prophet. In many cases, madrasas grew out of mosques in qasbahs.

With the emergence of madrasas as more viable institutions of learning, Islamic education became more organized. Madrasas were based in different places within as well as outside the qasbahs. Major examples of them included Darul ‘Uloom in the qasbah Deoband of district Saharanpur, Darul ‘Uloom Nadwat-ul-‘Ulama in Lucknow, and Madrasa Firangi Mahal in Lucknow.[600] The qasbahs under study also had a multiplicity of madrasas, as mentioned in chapter three. The madrasas named here were greater in size, resources, and the eminence of people involved than those in the qasbahs. Moreover, numerous Muslims traveled from their qasbahs to attend these madrasas for higher learning. Once back in their respective qasbahs, several of these alumni began administering and teaching in local madrasas. It was these people who had the power to decide on the teaching curricula of the qasbati madrasas. Thus, syllabi become an important factor in understanding the different kinds of education imparted through various madrasas in qasbahs.

What were the syllabi different madrasas adopted and followed? How were they similar or different among madrasas? What constituted various parts of the *nisab-e-t‘alim* (curriculum) of a madrasa? How did the syllabi and their different parts reflect modernity? Did they teach only manqulat (revealed sciences) such as the Quran and the Hadis? Or did they also teach m‘aqulat (rational sciences)? One of the earliest studies on madrasa curriculum in India was done by G. M. D. Sufi. His study showed how madrasa curriculum evolved through the medieval to the modern era. In discussing various curricula, Sufi mentions Fatehullah Shirazi (d. 1588), an Iranian

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[600] For detailed studies on them, see Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, Robinson, *The Farangi Mahall*, and Syed Masroor Ali Akhtar Hashmi, *Muslim Response to Western Education: A Study of Four Pioneer Institutions* (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1989). Nadwat-ul-‘Ulama still awaits a work of the magnitude of those by Metcalf and Robinson on Deoband and Firangi Mahal respectively. Jamal Malik, however, provides a good overview of Nadwat-ul-‘Ulama’s history in an essay that deals with Nadwa in regard to Islamism and national integration. See Jamal Malik, “Between National Integration and Islamism: Lucknow’s Nadwat Al-Ulama” In Mushirul Hasan, ed., *Knowledge, Power and Politics: Educational Institutions in India* (New Delhi: Lotus, 1998), 221-238.

scholar in Akbar's court, who greatly influenced the curriculum of madrasa education in Mughal India by emphasizing the importance of m'aqulat, in opposition to the stress laid on manqulat so far.[601] This proved highly significant as it shaped the madrasa curriculum in South Asia. This trend continued for many centuries afterwards and was made official by Mulla Nizamuddin (d. 1748), a prominent educator in eighteenth-century India. He belonged to the illustrious family of Mullah Qutubuddin Sihalwi (d. 1691), the man who helped Emperor Aurangzeb compile the *Fatwa-e-Alamgiri*, a collection of fatwas issued by Hanafi muftis (jurisconsults). Sihalwi's descendants started a madrasa in Lucknow in a house given to them for that purpose by Aurangzeb. This madrasa came to be known as Firangi Mahal (literally, the European Palace) since the building that housed it was the one confiscated by Aurangzeb from a Dutch trader. Mulla Nizamuddin prepared a syllabus for this madrasa and came up with a selection of texts. The way this syllabus attained significance in the Islamic education of South Asia can be seen by the fact that its basic structure is still followed in almost all of the madrasas of the region.[602]

Known as *Dars-e-Nizami*, after its architect, the recognition of Mulla Nizamuddin's syllabus stemmed from its emphasis on rational sciences, according to Francis Robinson. In the same vein, Robinson also shows the interconnectedness of Dars-e-Nizami with the madrasa curricula followed in the Ottoman and Safavid empires.[603] A continuation of its popularity, however, was due more to its approach of balancing manqulat and m'aqulat than it simply emphasizing rational sciences. If the fame of Dars-e-Nizami was due to its emphatic inclusion of the so-called rational sciences along with the revealed sciences, what about other syllabi? There was another curriculum introduced in the Madrasa Rahimia of Delhi around the same time

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[601] G. M. D. Sufi, *Al-Minhaj: Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslims Educational Institutions of India* (Delhi: Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1977 reprint, first pub 1941), 54-55.

[602] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 31. Also, Rashid Ahmad Jaladhari, *Bartanwi Hind mein Musalmanon ka Nizam-e-Taleem: Ek Naqadrana Jayezah – Darul Uloom Deoband,* Vol. I (Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 1989), 83 and Yoginder Sikand, *Bastions of the Believers: Madrasas and Islamic Education in India* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2005), 46.

[603] Robinson, *The Farangi Mahall*, 212-17.

by Shah Waliullah (1702-60), the eminent Muslim reformer. Both Dars-e-Nizami and Shah Waliullah's syllabi included *sarf wa nahw* (grammar and syntax), *balaghat* (rhetoric), *usul-i-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), hadis (traditions), *al-kalam* (scholasticism), and tafsir (commentary) under the revealed sciences. Under maqulat, both the curricula covered mantiq (logic) and *riyaziyyat* (mathematics).[604] However, there were two main reasons why the syllabus of Mulla Nizamuddin and not that of Shah Waliullah became popular. First, Nizamuddin's syllabus provided a more careful and greater selection of texts under each subject taught. This indicates the flexibility of options and the richness of choices that Mulla Nizamuddin presented, something absent in the rigid choices of Waliullah's syllabus. Second, the selection of texts shows that Mulla Nizamuddin omitted subjects such as tasawwuf (mysticism) in order to provide more choices in areas like mantiq (logic) and hikmat (philosophy). This was in tune with Shah Waliullah's efforts to foster manqulat in bringing people closer to the central teachings of Islam, while denying the value of study of m'aqulat because they were mere intellectual exercises.[605]

Francis Robinson ascribes the influence of the Dars-e-Nizami to its utilitarian approach. He argues that the Dars aimed to train capable administrators for Muslim states, not just specialists in religion *per se*. He also argues that knowledge of mysticism was not what trainee administrators wanted.[606] It is difficult to accept this argument, however, particularly when we learn that medicine was one of the subjects in the syllabus of Shah Waliullah, and not in Mulla Nizamuddin's. If popularity was contingent upon the utilitarian value of a subject, why would a professional subject such as medicine be not included? If the purpose of Dars-e-Nizami was to train professionals, it may have been limited to just administrators. In addition, one cannot discount Sufi ethics and mystic ways of life as something outside the scope of philosophy. To reiterate the argument made above, it was more likely the

[604] Sufi, *Al-Minhaj*, 68-75.
[605] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 38.
[606] Robinson, *The Farangi Mahall*, 53.

reconciliatory factor of balancing the m'aqulat and manqulat, coupled with the selection and flexibility of texts, that contributed to the immense popularity of the Dars-e-Nizami.

Madrasa syllabi were constantly revised to address immediate concerns and to keep up with changing times. In fact, it was Mulla Qutubuddin Shaheed, father of Mulla Nizamuddin, who began working on what later became Dars-e-Nizami. While his son technically completed the work, the process of revision continued after both of their deaths. Nizamuddin's son, Maulana Abd Ali Bahrul-'Uloom (1731-1810), and later his grandson, Mulla Abdul Ala, continued to make changes as needed.[607] For instance, the subjects of munazrah (religious debate) and *usul-e-Hadis* (principles of Traditions) were incorporated after Mulla Nizamuddin passed away.[608] When Darul 'Uloom Deoband was established in 1866, it adopted a modified version of Dars-e-Nizami.[609] Additionally, a revision committee altered the syllabus heavily in 1872 by replacing the old books of Persian and philosophy with new ones.[610] Calcutta Madrasa, later known as Madrasa Alia, founded in 1781 by Warren Hastings (1732-1818), also started off with Dars-e-Nizami.[611] It changed later as it faced the need to address English education. All of these changes demonstrate the openness, flexibility and endurance of the Dars with respect to changing times, which contributes to its survival through the ages and until now.

As is clear from our discussion so far, madrasas imparted religious instruction while they also taught subjects outside religion. With changing times, madrasas also had to gradually engage with the teaching of English. In British India, there were two primary types of madrasas: those founded and funded by Indians and those aided by

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[607] Muhammad Raza Ansari Firangi Mahali, *Bani-e-Dars-e-Nizami* (Lucknow: Nami Press, 1973), 261.
[608] Jaladhari, *Bartanwi Hind*, 84.
[609] Mohammad Akhlaq Ahmad, *Traditional Education among Muslims: A Study of Some Aspects in Modern India* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1985), 71.
[610] Jaladhari, *Bartanwi Hind*, 127.
[611] Abdul Sattar, *Tarikh-e-Madrasa-e-Aliya, 1781 isvi ta 1909 isvi* (Dhaka: Research and Publications, Madrasa-e-Aliya, 1959).

the government. Madrasas such as Darul 'Uloom Deoband were sustained economically by donations, *sadaqat* (gifts), *'atiyat* (grants), and *zakat* (alms) that came from Muslims of all classes.[612] On the other hand, the Calcutta Madrasa and the Delhi College were patronized and supported by the government. Founded in 1825, Delhi College stood as an adaptation of an old madrasa named Madrasa Ghaziuddin, originally established in 1792. In 1828, soon after its foundation, Delhi College adopted English in its curriculum which was opposed by Hindus and Muslims alike.[613] This happened at least seven years before English replaced Persian as the official language of British India. In a letter dated December 19, 1841, Felix Boutros, Principal of Delhi College, wrote to Garcin de Tassy, the famous French Indologist: "There are two departments of instruction in Delhi College. In the first one, in addition to English and Indian languages, sciences of modern Europe are taught. And in the second one are taught the oriental languages, i.e., Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit."[614] This indicates an interesting curriculum and a rather unheard of experiment for the time. Whether Oriental and Western, all subjects were taught in the vernacular, Urdu.[615] Although Delhi College was early in its adoption of English language and a Western curriculum, these subjects were an increasing reality during the second half of the nineteenth century and onwards. It was hard for even those autonomous madrasas run without any governmental grants to neglect the need to teach their students English and other Western subjects, especially in view of the fact that knowledge of Persian could no longer provide the livelihood it did earlier. A report on the syllabus of Madrasa Alia Nizamia in the state of Rampur clearly advocates combining Oriental knowledge with English.[616]

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[612] For a general, not very analytical discussion on the upkeep and maintenance of madrasas, see Ahmad, *Traditional Education among Muslims*, 76-86.
[613] Maulvi Abdul Haq, *Marhum Dehli Kalej* (New Delhi: Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu, 1989), 17.
[614] Ibid., 9.
[615] Gail Minault, "Master Ramchandra of Delhi College: Teacher, Journalist, and Cultural Intermediary," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 18 (2003): 95.
[616] *Report Babat Nisab Jadid Bara-e Madrasa Ali Riasat Rampur* (Rampur: Madrasa Alia, 1944), 1-21.

The growing market for English education forced many madrasas into a debate over whether to include English in their syllabi. Darul 'Uloom Nadwat-ul-Ulama in Lucknow, founded in 1894 by Maulana Shibli Numani, was one of the institutions caught in this debate. Shibli Numani had taught at Aligarh but was not happy with some of its features. The Nadwa envisioned itself as producing educated Muslims who could engage with the ruling power, not as western-educated Muslims but as members of the 'ulama. They were supposed to be internal leaders of their community, grounded in traditional learning, not in western culture.[617] This put the institution on a very fragile footing since potential scholars wanted religious learning but also some kind of Western education. It is interesting to see how the internal debate on the adoption and teaching of English took shape in the Nadwa between Maulana Shibli Numani and the Nadwa's Headmaster. Whereas the Headmaster insisted paying more attention to the teaching of English and hiring another teacher, Shibli Numani wrote in 1909 that the purpose of Nadwa was not to prepare students for the entrance examinations of English schools.[618] Despite differences of opinion, however, English was enlisted in the Nadwa syllabus and continued to be an important component thereof. A detailed Nadwa syllabus published in 1914 has a separate section on *Nisab-e-Angrezi*, the English curriculum. As per this report, the instruction in English covered composition, speed reading, grammar, and translation.[619] This shows that English could not be neglected in the Nadwa, even though its founder wanted it to remain a mere subsidiary branch of the overall curriculum.

Different educational institutions had differing preferences regarding the selection of subjects and the extent to which they would promote the instruction of English. Firangi Mahal promoted a curriculum that was a mix of the rational and the revealed sciences while also emphasizing the flexibility of Islamic learning – an

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[617] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 335-36.

[618] *Yaad-dasht – Muatalliq Taleem-e-Angrezi, Darul Uloom, Nadwat-ul-'Ulama* (Lucknow: Qaumi Press, 1912), 7, 11.

[619] *Nisab-e-Taleem, Nadwat-ul-'Ulama, 1914 isvi* (Lucknow: Nadwat-ul-'Ulama, 1914), 15.

approach that became a trend in South Asian Islamic education. The madrasa at Deoband developed a model that remained open to change, along the lines of Islamic tradition and without adopting western values. It benefited itself by adopting the organizational structure of a western educational institution. The madrasa at Deoband was an institution that promoted the "integration" of its members into society, rather than making them an exclusive group of Islamic scholars. With a continued focus on Islamic knowledge and Arabic-based education, it produced a set of reformist 'ulama who guided Muslims in civil and religious matters. Deoband's students became writers and debaters, as well as prayer leaders and preachers.[620]

The Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh was totally different from the madrasas. It introduced the Muslims of colonial India to an "English-style education." Its founder Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98) and his collaborators tried to combat attitudes that considered English education and European ideas as obstacles in the way of Islam's religious learning.[621] In fact, magazines and periodicals from Aligarh addressed both English and Urdu readers. The journal that served as the vehicle of Sir Syed's reformist ideas was simultaneously titled *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* and *The Mohammedan Social Reformer*. The periodicals *Aligarh Magazine* and *Aligarh Institute Gazette* carried parallel columns in English and Urdu. By contrast, despite the fact that the Nadwa adopted some English, its curriculum and inclination maintained an emphasis on traditional learning. The 'ulama of Nadwa, as mentioned above, sought to combine traditional and western needs. It aimed to produce students grounded in tradition yet able to deal with the changing times. Nadwa felt that one of the most pertinent issues it needed to address was the guidance of Muslims in "customs and traditions," as Syed Sulaiman Nadwi exhorted in a speech in 1915.[622]

It should be emphasized that the Muslims from qasbahs in Awadh and Rohilkhand usually attended one of the above mentioned institutions when they chose

[620] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 348.
[621] Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 87.
[622] Sulaiman Nadwi, "Taqreer Syed Sulaiman Sahib Nadwi," *Al-Nadwa* 11, 5 (May 1915): 4.

to pursue higher education. In fact, these institutions and others were so intertwined with lives of Muslims in surrounding qasbahs that the qasbahs cannot be seen as divorced from the madrasas mentioned above. Moreover, qasbati Muslims both attended and helped run these institutions. As mentioned in chapter two, the madrasa at Deoband was founded by "three men," Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833-1877), Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1829-1905), and Haji Imdadullah (1817-1899) – all natives of the qasbahs of the upper Doab. Moreover, the alumni of Deoband ran certain madrasas located in the qasbahs. One such example was the Madrasa Islamia of Amroha, which was part of the Deobandi network and was run by Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Hasan Muhaddis Amrohvi, a Deoband graduate.[623] Similarly, Nadwa and Firangi Mahal were attended by numerous qasbati Muslims who later taught at madrasas, went back to their respective qasbahs, pursued literary careers, or traveled around holding government offices.

Apart from madrasas, qasbati Muslims also worked and studied at the college at Aligarh, and other colleges in Bareilly, Agra, Delhi, Lucknow, Moradabad, etc. Although some Muslims opposed English education as introduced by Sir Syed, many still sought to attend Aligarh.[624] People such as Maulvi Nabi Bakhsh Sharar of qasbah Badayun bitterly opposed Sir Syed.[625] But there were many others such as Nawab Mushtaq Khan, alias Viqar-ul-Mulk, of Amroha who did everything possible to make sure that the Aligarh movement would leave its mark on history. While his contribution of writings to the journal *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* was immense,[626] his role in the Aligarh movement was more than journalistic, as discussed in the previous chapter. He had worked in the state of Hyderabad holding key administrative positions but chose to sacrifice a flourishing career to come to Aligarh and work for

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[623] Abbasi, *Tarikh-e-Amroha*, 142-43.
[624] See Map 2 for an idea on the origin of Aligarh students.
[625] For a general account on the opponents of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, see Ziauddin Ansari, "Sir Syed ke Mukhalefin," *Namwaran-e-Aligarh,* Vol. I*, Fikr-o-Nazar* 22, 1-3 (January-December 1985): 211-42.
[626] Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 118.

the cause championed by Sir Syed. In fact, Viqar-ul-Mulk was one of the principal leaders of the Aligarh Movement following Sir Syed's death.

How qasbati Muslims felt about their association with various educational institutions is readily apparent. Those associated with or influenced by particular institutions were not shy about stating their admiration. Maulana Abdul Majid Dariyabadi, an eminent personality from the qasbah of Dariyabad, lauded Aligarh even though he never went to the college. In a letter written to Rashid Ahmad Siddiqui (1894-1977), a distinguished Urdu professor at Aligarh, Abdul Majid Dariyabadi wrote that he had been reading the periodicals *Aligarh Magazine* and *Aligarh Monthly* ever since their inception and had liked them.[627] He also opined that whereas the Urdu section in both journals was good, the section in English was rather mediocre. A close examination of *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* confirms that the Urdu section concentrated on religious concerns such as "religion and education," "Islam," and so on.[628] Dariyabadi's consistent readership indicates the wide appeal that Aligarh's journals had among qasbati Muslims. The periodicals exerted an influence on Dariyabadi, particularly during his formative years.

Individuals often express pride in their institutions of learning. We find this sense of pride etched in the poetry by Anisuddin Ahmad Rizvi of Amroha, an Aligarh graduate and an obscure poet. He wrote in 1928:

Mach rahi hai sharq se ta gharb yeh duniya mein dhoom
Hai Aligarh aajkal mawa-e-akhlaq-o-ulum
Sirab-o-Baghdad ki wahid nishani hai yahi
Qirwan-o-Qurtaba ka aaj saani hai yahi
Is se phir jaari feyuze-ilm ka chashma hua
Yaan se phir partau-figan Islam ka lam'a hua.[629]

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[627] *Aligarh Magazine* 1, 1 (January 1922): 11.
[628] The basic idea behind *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* was to show compatibility between Western learning and Islam. However, the topics it chose to focus on, especially in its inaugural issues, were religious in nature. For instance, one of its first articles argued that the tradition of learning was impossible without an inclusion of religious learning. *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* 1, 2 (January 2, 1871): 9-12.
[629] Anisuddin Ahmad Rizvi Amrohvi, "Islam ki ilmi aur Akhlaqi Futuhat aur unka Ahya Aligarh mein," *Aligarh Magazine* 2, 5-7 (July-October 1928): 95.

East to West! Everywhere, there's uproar
House of virtues and learning is here in Aligarh
As the lone remnant of Sirab and Baghdad
Shadow of Qirwan and Cordoba, yes, it is today
Fountain of knowledge has sprung from here
From here, again, the rays of Islam radiate.

These verses are more than an expression of association with the college at Aligarh. They show a sense of pride to the extent of viewing Aligarh as beacon of learning in the Islamic world. In addition, the kinds of comparisons made in the verses exhibit the widened knowledge of the glory and heritage of a global Islamic landscape. Such articulations were not uncommon among qasbati Muslims regarding their alma mater.

There is another point to be emphasized regarding the linkages among madrasas, colleges, and qasbahs. A qasbati Muslim would typically attend one or two prominent educational institutions. And even if someone did not attend an institution, he or she might take some influence coming out of the mighty presence of an institution. Therefore, a qasbati Muslim would have a rather more complicated position vis-à-vis different madrasas and colleges or their curricula than strict categories might allow. For example, Muhammad Ahsan of Nanautah went to Delhi College and took up employment as head Persian teacher at the government's Bareilly College.[630] Abdul Majid Dariyabadi, mentioned above in connection with Aligarh, went to Canning College in Lucknow but read Shibli Numani's writings regularly and visited him on a frequent basis. Over and above his own teachers from college, Dariyabadi considered Shibli as the inspiration for his writing career.[631] This shows how Shibli Numani's religious thought might have influenced non-Aligarh or non-Nadwa students. Moreover, religion was a major component in the general educational make up of a qasbah, whether institutions imparted "traditional" or "modern" curricula or a mixture of the two. Individuals from qasbahs chose to go to

[630] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 82.
[631] Dariyabadi, *Aap-biti*, 136.

one institution over another, and some even went to more than one. No one, however, could avoid religious learning that formed the core of the syllabi across institutions. At the same time, no one could neglect the growing need for English education and Western sciences.

The British government exercised a calculated choice in institutions where it had a role in the transmission of knowledge. Within qasbahs, there were schools run and controlled by government bodies. Through such control the government sought to serve its own needs. As the government expanded in the United Provinces, it needed more and more people to work in the administration. The best policy was to control early schooling so that students were prepared for a future education that would produce people that met governmental needs. There were three kinds of educational institutions that the government controlled in a qasbah: madrasas, maktabs, and vernacular schools. Governmental control was exercised through the devices of fellowships, stipends, freeships, grants, admission policies, and curricula. All this was administered under the Department of Education and the Directorate of Public Instruction. There were certain madrasas that accepted the government's financial support without reservation. E. F. L. Winter, Collector and Magistrate of Amroha, wrote that the government invested a lot of money in Syed-ul-Madaris of Amroha to offer free education to poor Syeds in order to prepare them for Amroha High School and to have some control over an Arabic education so as not to leave the students "discontented and fanatical, and disloyal."[632] The fact that madrasas accepted government money is interesting because by doing so, they allowed the British to intervene in their internal affairs.

With growing interventions, the government added an Urdu section in madrasas and maktabs "mainly to train boys for the English school" since English schools needed boys with some knowledge of Urdu so that they could be trained to work bilingually for the government. Moreover, Winter recommended granting

[632] *Free Admission of Students from the Syed-ul-Madaris to the Amroha High School*¸ File no. 21, Department of Education, September 1911, UPSA.

scholarships to lure students to governmentally controlled institutions. C. F. De La Fosse, Director of Public Instruction, suggested that eight freeships be awarded annually to Syed scholars entering class three of the Government High School at Amroha from the local madrasas: Syed-ul-Madaris, the Madrasa Islamia, and the Imam-ul-Madaris. This government initiative was not, however, entirely begrudged: Maqbool Ahmad, Secretary of Imam-ul-Madaris; Syed Madhibin, Secretary of Sanjid-ul-Madaris; and Muhammad Husain, Secretary of Noor-ul-Madaris, all expressed their gratitude to the government for the freeships provided. While the government was trying to entrench itself in the local educational network as a strategic move, the qasbati Muslims who ran these schools took advantage of the new money by expanding their instructional offerings. By and large, the qasbatis were able to do so because an inclusion of Urdu in the curriculum did not alter the basics of madrasa teaching while they could also continue with the religious component of their syllabi. Moreover, freeships made the educational environment more competitive and the students better prepared for educational life beyond the local madrasas.

Besides madrasas, there were also maktabs in the qasbahs. Maktabs were institutions of learning where elementary education in Arabic and basic mathematics took place. They were different from madrasas in the sense that study in a maktab led to study in a madrasa. Maktabs and madrasas were more formal and organized, than the other institutions of traditional Islam within qasbahs, such as mosques and private tutoring.[633] What was the level of governmental intervention in these maktabs? How did it relate to issues of religion? The United Provinces government had formed a Provincial Maktab Committee to keep tabs on their operations. But that did not mean a total governmental control. The government definitely had a policy to regulate

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[633] Of course, these institutions existed besides the less formal ones such as the teaching that took place in mosques and under reputed individual teachers. However, Makdisi shows how there were a range of institutions of learning in classical Islamic society. They included *Majalis*, *Jami*, *Halaqa*, and so on. The Jami in Damascus, under Umayyads, had further a breakdown of institutions: *Halaqa/Miad*, *Tasdirs*, *Sabs*, and *Zawiyas*. For details, see George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981), 9-24.

maktabs but the local Muslims played an important role by serving on such regulatory bodies.

The first meeting of the Provincial Maktab Committee took place on May 14, 1916 in Lucknow at the house of Maulvi Syed Karamat Husain, a champion of Muslim women's education. He came from a Shia service gentry family who had close ties with the qasbah of Kantor.[634] The Provincial Maktab Committee meeting recommended that endeavors be made to induce the promoters of various maktabs in their districts to adopt a standard religious curriculum.[635] It advocated a revision of the existing curriculum for the *Mullah* and *Fazil* examinations so as to include religious instruction separately for Shias and Sunnis. But it maintained the policy, as far as the British were concerned, of strict neutrality in religious matters. This approach, which drew a line between the British government and the Muslims of the province, allowed both to pursue a common educational policy. The British wanted people trained in religion as well as the vernacular for their various offices. Muslim leaders, seeing no harm in pursuing such a curriculum, stepped forward and helped the government fashion such a set of courses. Abul Hasan, Inspector of Muhammadan schools for the United Provinces and President of the Provincial Maktab Committee, headed the committee that presented a curriculum in September 1917. It had two parts: a secular curriculum and a religious curriculum. The secular curriculum for maktabs included Urdu, Arithmetic, Geography, Persian reading and grammar, and the Gulistan of Sadi. The religious curriculum mandated Quranic reading for all but included theology components for Shias and Sunnis. In this way, the government pleased everyone, while still fulfilling its own requirements.

A. H. Mackenzie, Director of Public Instruction of the United Provinces, released a progress report on the new curriculum in 1928. It showed that the curriculum resulted in considerable improvements in the teaching of vernacular

[634] Minault, "Sayyid Karamat Husain," 155-64.
[635] *Proceedings of the Provincial Maktab Committee*, File no. 180, Education Department, 1916, UPSA.

languages, not only in schools but also universities. McKenzie noted: “The position of the vernaculars, Urdu and Hindi, has been strengthened. They have been introduced into the provincial universities and are now subjects of study for the B. A. and M. A. degrees. In order to promote the development of Urdu and Hindi literature, Government in 1926 established the Hindustani Academy, which encouraged the translation of Western works into Urdu and Hindi and the production of original works in these languages.”[636] The policy indicates the success a secular educational policy could achieve while maintaining an autonomous domain of religious learning.

Qasbahs had different kinds of educational institutions for Muslims. All of these had religious content in their curricula, whether they were madrasas, maktabs, or government schools. Each institution, whether inside or outside the qasbahs, had the option to choose its own curriculum. Given the circumstances of the time, institutions could neither steer clear of an Islamic curriculum nor the English language and Western subjects. While qasbati Muslims learned English and read European sciences, their knowledge of religion and its various aspects remained integral to the learning process. Thus, we find qasbahs as a space with a great learned tradition that promoted both Islamic knowledge and Western learning together.

DECODING THE DRESS CODE AND RELIGION: EXAMPLES & A *FATWA*

Another aspect of religious life in qasbahs in the context of modernity was the dress code. Clothing is a cultural statement, often guided by religion. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Muslim societies in South Asia were undergoing a process of Islamic reform that had started with the early eighteenth century call by Shah Waliullah to bring Islamic practice into conformity with its scriptural and prophetic sources. Islamic reformers and revivalists worked in various walks of Muslim life to restore what they considered to be the original and pristine Islam. Dress attracted the attention of reformers for the obvious reason that it could

[636] *The Progress of Education in the United Provinces under the Reforms*, File no. 568, Education Department, 1928, UPSA.

immediately identify one's adherence to traditional culture or alternatively, to changes seeping into one's community, or to a mixture of the two. Here, we shall examine the practices of dress and dress codes in qasbahs and the debates surrounding them, including the practice of purdah or veiling. We shall also attempt to understand the norms of religious reform by analyzing a fatwa issued by a particular group of 'ulama concerning the wearing of neckties.

Poshaak or *libaas* (dress) formed an important component of one's identity in qasbati society. Syed Ali Muhammad Zaidi lists the kinds of dress Hindus and Muslims customarily wore.[637] According to this list, a Muslim male would typically dress in *kurta*, *pajama*, *sherwani*, and a flat cap. Zaidi adds, however, that because of the British presence, some English-educated Muslims started wearing western suits. According to custom, Muslim women of Rudauli wore *shalwar*, *kurta*, *dupatta*, *gharara* etc. Hindu men of the qasbah wore *kurta*, *dhoti*, and a round cap, while women wore *sari* and other dresses. Thus, a Muslim could be identified from his or her dress as different from a Hindu of the same qasbah. However, the dress code between the two groups varied only slightly, and with changing times, Muslim women also took up new fashions such as *sari*, *choli*, short *kurta* and *shalwar*. Emma Tarlo has shown how many educated urban women and some rural women added blouses and underskirts to their *saris* by the late nineteenth century.[638] Qasbati society also participated in changes by adapting to new fashion and remaining flexible in their approach to dressing. While Muslim men and women predominantly dressed in a way that differentiated them from Hindus, the intent was to create a separate Muslim identity through dress but not be rigidly different from Hindus. Thus, their choice of dress reflected an affirmation of self-identity but not like that of, for example, the Amish community of North America. The dress code of the Amish, an Anabaptist Christian denomination, is encoded in the oral tradition of their church. Following this code not only unites them as a group but also separates them from the

[637] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 138-39.
[638] Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (London: Hurst & Company, 1996), 28.

non-Amish people.[639] Muslims in qasbahs had an Indo-Persian dress code but it was not exclusivist in nature. There definitely existed a sense of pride in wearing traditional dress as opposed to modern dress. Qasbati Muslims dressed to identify themselves as Muslims but this process of self-identification was more in contrast with the British than the Hindus.

An article titled *Libaas* appeared in an issue of *Sala-e-Aam*, a periodical popular in the region under study, in December 1910.[640] It discussed the history of human dress and emphasized differences based on nations and communities. Most interestingly, the writer of this article, Muhammad Amin, does not see differences between the dress of Hindus and Muslims. Rather, he contrasts Indian dress with European dress, not on the basis of shari'at or other religious differences, but because they reflected different customs, habits, and needs. This is in contrast to Yedida Stillman's argument that in Arab society clothing has been intimately related to differentiating the believer from the unbeliever.[641] Amin also makes an important point by sharing his observation that someone walking on the streets of Europe in Indian dress could easily become an object of laughter since no one there dresses like that. This leads us to the thought that dressing like a European in Europe was probably sensible. But then Amin questions the growing popularity of European dress in India, asking whether Muslims of India should adopt European fashion. He quotes an article from the English daily *The Pioneer* of Allahabad, in which an Englishman wrote about how he felt more comfortable dealing with Indians who dressed as Indians than those who dressed like Europeans but failed to carry themselves well. Amin's own thought coupled with this man's experiences leads us to a probable conclusion that even the British would have felt more comfortable meeting with

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[639] Donald B. Kraybill, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 59.
[640] Muhammad Amin, "Libaas," in *Sala-e-Aam* 12, 3 (December 1910): 35-40.
[641] Stillman's generalization may be true, but one suspects that she has not adequately gauged the wide variation in Arab dress in different countries, classes, and urban as well as rural environments. Yedida Kalfon Stillman, *Arab Dress from the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times: A Short History*. Edited by Norman A. Stillman (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2003), 1.

Indians who dressed traditionally and were not pretending to be Europeans. Amin's article is an important insight into the whole question of Islam and its dress code. The writer shows two sides of the debate very clearly: one, that there was no Islamic injunction regarding the dress code, and two, that every style of dress has its own integrity and the beauty of dress does not lie in imitating others.

The question of dress among qasbati Muslims highlights an important cultural debate that different societies of colonial India faced. Qasbati Muslims did not have strong objections to Western dress, though the majority preferred to dress traditionally. The popularity of traditional dress in the face of European fashion is reflected in the dress habits of those men who were associated with the Aligarh Movement. Like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, people such as Viqar-ul-Mulk and Nizami Badayuni wore *sherwanis* with a fez cap. In fact, this became the official uniform of the Aligarh Movement. While the sherwani reflected Indianness or Islamic identity, the fez was a symbol of openness to modernity. Both the sherwani and the fez also illustrate how innovative the Muslims of India were in their encounter with modernity by presenting these dresses as an alternative to western suit and hat. They also combined the fez, an Ottoman symbol, with western suits. Wearing a fez contrasted instead of a Western hat carried the message that modernity for the Muslims of India was not an imitation of the West, but a movement marked by their own preferences and choices. Early Indian nationalists such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Balakrishna Gokhale, Mahadev Ranade, and Balgangadhar Tilak also used headgear to represent their respective cultures. Later, the "Gandhi cap" became a symbol of nationalism for the leaders of the Indian National Congress. Tarlo makes the argument that wearing one's own headgear "implied a desire both to protect themselves from the whole-hearted identification with the British, and to retain their own sense of religious, regional, or caste identity while wearing the otherwise secularizing European dress."[642] The qasbati Muslims' dress underlined their openness to Western fashion

[642] Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, 57.

and concepts, while they kept their traditional Muslim identity intact through selective choices and innovations.

The practice of veiling among Muslim women is a fascinating example of the argument made above regarding religious injunctions and cultural practices. Veiling is a controversial issue that has sparked much discussion and research. The physical seclusion of Hindu women existed in South Asia even before the Muslims arrived. As the Turkish Muslim rule spread, purdah, or veiling, a custom prevalent among Turkish tribes, was further reinforced among both Muslims and Hindus as a symbol of respectable status and high position.[643] In South Asia, many Muslims had already started speaking and practicing against veiling in the nineteenth century. Gail Minault has shown how people such as Muhibb-i-Husain of Etawah, UP, and Rokeya Sakhawat Husain of Bengal were among the outspoken opponents of purdah.[644] A rais of the qasbah of Amroha, Syed Ghiyasuddin Ahmad wrote that circumstances need to be taken into account with regard to the observance of purdah and it should not be seen out of context.[645] Within qasbahs we find an array of opinions on this issue. There were people such as Syed Mujahid Husain of Amroha who promoted the cause of purdah with religious rhetoric.[646] Use of religious rhetoric was very common in the didactic literature for women, as we shall see in the following section. Although Syed Ghiyasuddin Ahmad of Amroha did not deal with the issue of veiling *per se*, he did give a list of dos and don'ts regarding the kinds of dresses a woman could wear to maintain the decency required of her by Islam.[647] Also, there was a whole generation of women in the early twentieth century who opposed purdah and never participated in it. Such women included Qurratulain Hyder, Ismat Chughtai, Safia Akhtar, and Hameeda Salim.

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[643] Barbara N. Ramusack, "Women and Gender in South and Southeast Asia" in Bonnie G. Smith, ed., *Women's History in Global Perspective*, Vol. 2 (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 105
[644] Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, 108.
[645] Ahmad, *Kitab-e-Niswan*, 27-28.
[646] Syed Mujahid Husain Jauhar, *Hayat-e-Niswan* (Amroha, n. d.), 129-30.
[647] Ahmad, *Kitab-e-Niswan*, 85-87.

It should be noted that the entire question of purdah did not attract as much attention in the qasbahs as it did in other contexts. Qasbati literature does not even mention purdah, choosing instead to focus on the lives women led. There are several examples that decenter purdah as a topic of discussion. They rather focus on how women in nineteenth-century India commanded respectful positions. Qurratulain Hyder writes in detail that her maternal grandmother Ashraf Jahan Begum was a woman with great self-respect.[648] Similarly, Abdul Majid Dariyabadi writes that his mother Bibi Nasir-un-Nisa (1852-1941) was pious and caring towards all. Dariyabadi adds that she used to manage and control all the affairs of the household.[649] Furthermore, purdah does not become a topic of discussion even in the lives of those who lived with it. The women of the Bilgrami family never saw any problem in reconciling purdah with education. The older generation continued the tradition of home education, but the younger ones were educated in school. In 1910, Tayyiba Bilgrami (1873-1921) was the first Muslim woman to receive a Bachelor's degree from Madras University.[650] Most examples of qasbati women demonstrate that their condition was not one of oppression, be they veiled or not veiled. This was certainly true of the educated class of Muslims under current discussion.

Another illustration of the interplay of religion, modernity, and the dress code in a colonial context is the question of neckties. Primarily a cultural issue, neckties serve as a metaphor for the interaction between Islamic and Western cultures. There are two fascinating documents that help us understand the problem. In October 1907, a periodical called *Makhzan* published an article on the wearing of neckties. The second document is a fatwa issued by an *alim* of Ahl-e-Sunnat wa Jamaat of Bareilly that prohibited Muslims from wearing neckties. The *Makhzan* article is written in the form of a debate in which two characters *Qadim* (the old) and *Jadid* (the modern)

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[648] Hyder, *Kar-e-Jahan*, 157-59.
[649] Dariyabadi, *Aap-biti*, 42-47.
[650] Tayyiba Begum's example, moreover, shows that the Muslim women of the nineteenth century India proved that the practice of veiling was not an obstacle on way of their education. She did her Bachelor's degree as a private candidate, while combining purdah with education. Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, 208.

engage in a dialogue with each other as representatives of two different generations and time periods.[651] The old character is a stickler for traditional culture and dress and dismisses the wearing of both collars and neckties as symbols of Western domination. He derides the young men who choose to espouse the "new dress" in the name of freedom but are actually symbols of slavery. His frequent derogatory references to the collar as *tawq* and the tie as *patta* incite the young person in the dialogue to respond vehemently. The word *tawq* refers to the neck-ring worn as a badge of servitude, and *patta* refers to a dog's collar. The young person, representing modern times, lashes back with arguments as to why he chose to wear the collar and the tie. To him, not wearing them was a sign of choosing to remain stay put, and in no way did wearing neckties reflect servitude, which was more prevalent in the old society laden with customs and hierarchy. He additionally points out that collars help keep coats clean and that the necktie is aesthetically pleasing. The conversation ends with the old man saying that the young person seems to be trained in loquaciousness and not argumentation and that a speech is not going to change his ideas. Overall, this tête-à-tête highlights some very interesting aspects of the controversy, while also touching upon many other aspects of a society faced with colonial encounter. It is most important to note here that the older generation is skeptical towards change, while the younger generation seems more amenable to newer and more fashionable changes.

The conversation discussed above took place between two Muslims. Although the problem was posed as the issue of East versus West and Indian versus English culture, it also harped on religious concerns. The 'ulama of Ahl-e-Sunnat wa Jamaat issued a fatwa forbidding Muslims to wear neckties. This group was primarily composed of Barelwi 'ulama, who were mostly Pathans from the city of Bareilly and the qasbahs of Badayun and Mahrehra in Rohilkhand. More significantly, this was one of the leading Sunni movements with a major support base and considerable

[651] Muhammad Ikram, "Collar Tie," in *Makhzan* 4, 1 (October 1907): 24-30.

influence in qasbahs and rural areas of the United Provinces.[652] The fatwa on the neckties argued that Ahmad Riza Khan (1856-1921), the central figure of the Ahl-e-Sunnat wa Jamaat, was sternly opposed to English fashion and manners.[653] Another leader of this movement, Maulana Muhammad Akhtar Riza Khan Azhari issued an explanatory and illustrative fatwa on April 25, 1897 against the use of the neckties by Muslims. The argument this fatwa made was that a tie, when fastened and knotted on the chest between two shoulders, represented the *saleb* (cross), the sign of Christ's crucifixion. It said that this sign, a Christian religious symbol, meant protection from misfortune and a means of prosperity for its followers. The fatwa further adds that since the cross is an emblem of Christianity, a Muslim should never wear a tie.[654]

It is interesting to note the contrast between the two different kinds of opposition to the same issue. Whereas a religious leader argued on the basis of religious symbolism, two common men argued the same question based on cultural grounds. If we try to understand the whole problem by looking at three different perspectives, three different revelations emerge: first, even though the people of the older generation feared losing their culture in the face of new cultural trends, they were still open to persuasion by the merit of an argument. Second, the newer generation, particularly those with an exposure to English education and culture, were increasingly convinced that new and foreign trends would not damage their existing precepts. Rather, such trends could easily be adopted in tandem with their inherited beliefs. Third, the 'ulama utilized symbolism as a major tool in propagating the idea that Western culture posed an imminent threat to Islam as a culture and religion. The presence of different strands of thought and approaches suggest that changes brought about by colonial situations did not necessarily result in acceptance and adaptation among qasbati Muslims. Instead, we find a range of choices among them ranging from adoption, rejection, and acculturation. Additionally, while the issuing of a fatwa

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[652] Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 297.
[653] Shahabuddin Rizvi, *Tai ka Maslah* (Bareilly: Al-Riza Markazi Darul Ishaat, 1991), 12-13.
[654] Rizvi, *Tai ka Maslah*, 2-14, 32-38.

represented the resolving of a cultural issue the religious way, the publication of the *Collar-Tie* article meant exploring cultural solutions to a quasi-religious question.

DASTUR-UL-'AMAL: INSTRUCTIONAL RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

Thus far, we have discussed a number of sources pertaining to religious questions from, about, or related to qasbahs. Religious monographs, autobiographical reflections, articles, personal correspondence, and local as well as institutional histories enable us to understand the religious life of a multifaceted qasbati society. Sufi writings, such as malfuzat and institutional compilations of fatwa literature, provide specific insights into certain unique aspects of religion in the qasbahs. One point that has come up very clearly throughout the discussion in this chapter is that qasbahs were highly interconnected with other qasbahs and with a network of religious institutions and movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Qasbati Muslims contributed immensely to various institutions and movements, including madrasas and colleges. There is one more area to which their contribution deserves credit, the area of instructive literature on religion. Periodicals such as *Ismat*, a journal published from Delhi, sought to educate women in scientific and educational subjects.[655] However, qasbahs seem to have had many religious scholars and 'ulama who wrote to instruct women in religious matters.

Barbara Metcalf has brought to our attention the significance of *Bihisti Zevar* (Heavenly Ornaments), an instruction manual for women written in Urdu in 1905 by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi (1864-1943). Although commonly known among the Muslims of South Asia, its academic presence owes a great deal to Metcalf's translation of the work. Ashraf Ali Thanawi was a leader of the madrasa at Deoband and, thus, one among the many "reformist" ulama that Deoband produced. He was born in the qasbah of Thana Bhawan in the Saharanpur district of Rohilkhand, where he also received his early education. He returned there during the last years of his life.

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[655] *Ismat* 1, 1 (June 1908). For an excellent analysis on the role of this journal in the lives of Muslim women in India, see Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, 35-48

Bihishti Zewar intended to provide basic education for respectable Muslim women.[656] As an encyclopedic work of over a thousand pages, its purpose was to cultivate in women the style of personality as defined by Islamic adab (moral values and correct behavior).[657] Explaining that the Islamic discourse about women has been "historically formulated within a corpus of legal texts based in the shariat," Metcalf writes that "it [shariat] has been sustained by codes of honor and shame internalized by both women and men. Thanawi's goal in this work is to communicate correct teachings from the shariat."[658] *Bihishti Zewar* included biographies of great Islamic women, stories from hadis, a guide to letter-writing, an Islamic medicine reference, guidance in everyday religious practices, etc. Although this work has attracted a lot of criticism for prescribing a subdued role for women within the household, Gail Minault rightly points out that Thanawi sincerely espoused ideological egalitarianism, i.e. that women have an equal obligation to seek knowledge on par with the education obtained by men.[659] This must have had tremendous impact on the lives of Muslim women in the early twentieth century. There are two noteworthy aspects with respect to this work: first, this writing was representative of a section of contemporary qasbati Muslims. Second, so great was its influence that to this day, it continues to reach almost the whole of South Asia.

Thanawi is not the only one to write such an influential work regarding women. Production of this kind of literature was a norm in qasbahs. There are at least two contemporary works that came out around the same time as *Bihishti Zewar*. *Hayat-e-Niswan* (Life of a Woman) was written by Syed Mujahid Husain "Jauhar," the editor of a journal called *Ijtihad* published from Amroha. The writer boasted that he brought out a second edition of the book in a very short time and adds that he was

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[656] Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawai's Bihishti Zewar – A Partial Translation with Commentary* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 3.
[657] Barbara Daly Metcalf, "Islamic Reform and Islamic Women: Maulana Thanawi's *Jewelry of Paradise*." In Metcalf, ed., *Moral Conduct*, 185-186.
[658] Metcalf, *Perfecting Women*, 6.
[659] Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, 65.

told by many readers to either publish enough copies or to allow them to publish copies on their own. He also promised a third edition in the near future.[660] Although similar to *Bihishti Zewar* in many respects, this book explores more practical aspects of life. For example, it deals with a number of issues pertaining to motherhood and suggests solutions to problems by presenting short moral stories, not necessarily from hadis. Although *Hayat-e-Niswan* deals with religious issues, it also gives recipes, child rearing tips, and presents a more "domesticated" role for women. The *Kitab-e-Niswan* (Book of Women) written in 1914 by Syed Ghiyasuddin Ahmad, a rais of Amroha, is a book larger in size. It defines itself as a *dastur-ul-'amal* (instruction manual) for the women of India, claiming a larger constituency. Compared to *Hayat-e-Niswan*, it was also more detailed and thematically organized. The *Kitab-e-Niswan* addresses a series of topics such as childhood, moral advice, counseling, the benefits of education, rights, letter-writing, accounting, craftwork, recipes, cleanliness, women's health, marriage, pregnancy, child rearing, disease, and some general information such as how to travel in a train. Thus, it appears more oriented towards making a woman independent and self-reliant. At a surface level, it may seem that this kind of literature was an attempt to train women in domestic science, very much like the "domesticating" literature that was widely prevalent in North America. But these writings went beyond the advice books for women that proliferated in nineteenth-century America.[661] The *Kitab-e-Niswan* did promote female competence in the domestic sphere but at the same time it underlined the need for women to acquire self-reliance and knowledge in various fields, including education.[662] By doing so, this work did not attempt to widen the gender gap, unlike the advice literature for women in nineteenth-century America.

Qasbahs took a front seat in producing instructive literature for women by the turn of the twentieth century. From today's perspective, these works or manuals of

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[660] Jauhar, *Hayat-e-Niswan*, 1-2.
[661] Metcalf, *Perfecting Women*, 13.
[662] Ahmad, *Kitab-e-Niswan*, 14-18.

instruction may appear to be encouraging a greater role for the female in domestic sphere. No doubt they did that by insisting that women should learn to handle certain domestic duties, but apart from that, they also promoted learning and education among women in areas outside of domesticity. They thus helped do away with a gendered outlook on education, learning, and knowledge. The mere availability of literature targeted at an exclusive women's readership, be it in the form of dastur-ul-'amal, was indicative of the opportunity for women to learn at home, which worked in favor of women's education in the long run.

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on some aspects of religion in the social life of qasbati Muslims. Religion always remained entrenched in various social, educational, and cultural activities of the qasbah. Islam did matter as a feature in qasbati societies; however, religion did not operate as a monolithic factor in the functioning of the qasbati society. Beneath one single religion operated various affiliations such as Shia-Sunni, ashraf-ajlaf, or even Deobandi-Barelwi. These divisions also mattered when it came to exercising differing religious precepts. Different categories of people mingled on various occasions, but they also limited the extent of their co-participation. Beyond communities and group affiliations, religion also operated at the level of individual choices. The example of Chaudhary Muhammad Ali illustrates how individuals in qasbahs attempted to view themselves. It also demonstrates that religious concerns in qasbahs were much more nuanced than category-driven paradigms for viewing qasbahs leave room for. This chapter also contends that a qasbah provides a microcosmic structure that combines features of the larger Muslim society of colonial India. The entwined systems of education in qasbahs – Islamic, English, and vernacular – further reinforce this assertion.

An attempt has been made here to understand religion in its "lived" aspects in a Muslim society, particularly in the context of modernity. We took into consideration the practical aspects of Muslim social life: the way they lived among themselves and

with other groups, the way they celebrated festivals and commemorated Muharram, how they defined themselves, and how their educational and societal aspects were shaped. At the same time, religious texts and the debates they inspired made their way into Muslim qasbati living. One conclusion that seems inescapable in our discussion is that religion *per se* was an essential component of Muslim life in a qasbati setting. In addition, this grounding in religion under colonial conditions is interestingly found to be more a facilitator of than an obstacle to dialogue, challenge, and change.

Chapter Six

UNDERSTANDING "MODERNITY" HISTORICALLY:

A *QASBATI* PERSPECTIVE

"How far can we reconcile Islam with Modern Ideas?"[663] – This was the title of an article published in the *Aligarh Monthly* by Khawja Abdulah, a law graduate and a *munsif* at Pawayan in the Shahjahanpur district of the Rohilkhand division. It was written in response to an article that had appeared previously in the same periodical. Abdulah refutes certain arguments made in the previous article by rejecting the idea that "Islam is irreconcilable with modern ideas." He asserts the need for social reform in Islam and challenges the notion that English-knowing Muslims are indifferent to religion. His views represent the ideas of an early twentieth-century Muslim who went to the college at Aligarh and was based in a provincial location in colonial North India. The disagreement at hand over the compatibility of Islam with modern ideas suggests that there were people such as Abdulah who welcomed English education with open arms while emphasizing that it did not interfere with Islamic religious practices, but there were others who found English and Islam irreconcilable. And while these two representatives took clear stances on the issue, there were others in society whose beliefs fell somewhere in the middle of the spectrum with permutations and combinations of the two views. For example, an anonymous writer in another article reflected on the fear of any clear answer to this dilemma: "What is *taraqqi* (progress)? And, are we progressing or not? I ask this question to my countrymen. By this I make it clear that I will not answer it. The one who asks the question is waived from the responsibility of answering. Rather I have

[663] *The Aligarh Monthly* II, IX (September 1904): 114-122.

sat down to write this essay merely to clarify my question. To answer or not to answer is your prerogative."[664]

This statement shows a preference for ambiguity or, more probably, an inability to fully assess the situation. Although we have dealt with modernity through the lived experiences of qasbati Muslims in the preceding chapters, in this chapter we set out to understand the nature of the "modernity" of qasbati Muslims. The English-Islam debate permeated this project's period of study. It is now imperative to detail the existing theoretical concerns regarding modernity. Despite extensive discussion on the issue of modernity, the term remains poorly understood. This is due partly to the nature of the term and because it has always been highly debated. The second reason why modernity lacks a rather comprehensive understanding is because certain perspectives coming from people's lived experiences have remained outside the discussion. What has modernity meant to humanity? How has it been defined and analyzed differently? What do we need to do about proposing an alternative look at modernity? In our case, why is it important to understand modernity as it was experienced in the qasbahs? What makes modernity different in the qasbahs? What were its different ingredients as discussed, written and understood by qasbati Muslims? How do qasbati experiences of modernity help us to understand modernity with regard to South Asia and Islam? We shall deal with these and other questions in this chapter.

The plan of this chapter will be to engage some of the relevant literature on modernity before exploring empirical data that will explicate the arguments made. Recent years have seen an outburst of theoretical works on modernity. These conceptual works have enriched the debate, and it is hard to discuss the subject without taking into account this body of literature. Moreover, an analysis of these works is imperative to understand and situate the contributions of the present study. Furthermore, there exists a plethora of studies on modernity with multiple definitions,

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[664] *Sala-e-Aam* 2, 6 (February 1913): 21.

postulations, meanings, and applications of the term. Thanks to the newer studies, academia has moved beyond the classical conceptualization of the term, which claimed the West as "the ideal" destination – socially, culturally, and technologically – for other societies to follow in a unilinear fashion.[665] This chapter will outline the existing debates on modernity in general and then in the context of South Asian society, Islam, and South Asian Islam. This will be followed by a brief look into the modernity of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century qasbahs. This will allow the reader to follow the factual data more clearly. Qasbahs were societies in transition – economically, educationally, and to some extent culturally. They faced aspects of modernity as brought by the British. But the qasbati experience of modernity was equally informed by religion and religious precepts. The last section of this chapter will examine different ingredients of modernity and how they played out in qasbati living. These ingredients include different branches of science, technology, logic, reason, philosophy, the notion of progress, and the idea of equality. This chapter will thus aim to show that modernity, in a qasbati context, was highly interactive, debated and contested.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND:
MODERNITY, ISLAM, AND SOUTH ASIA

Because European colonial powers carried the legacies of the Enlightenment to different parts of the world, colonized societies had to deal with aspects of modernity in the form of new ideas, concepts, perspectives, and cultural habits. However, the post-Enlightenment notion that all societies necessarily marched on a

[665] Classical theorists conceptualized modernity as an evolutionary process leading humanity across the globe on a linear path from ancient times to the modern era. Such thinkers included Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Walter Benjamin, among others. Coming from the industrial age and capitalist development, these philosophers found the Western model as the ideal. One must also note that they lived in a world of post-Enlightenment thinking and colonial expansion – both indicating a triumphal time for Western states. Emanating out of this particular context, their views essentialize a West/non-West dichotomy, where they place the West as the inevitable ideal. There are a number of works that summarize the classical theories of modernity. See, for example, Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 4-36.

journey from *the ancient* to *the modern* (read, the West) has been increasingly challenged, particularly by those who study non-Western societies. Challenging such post-Enlightenment notions, Prasenjit Duara, in his study of early twentieth-century China, has shown that even the emergent nations started to embrace the narrative of the evolutionary, linear, teleological model of Enlightenment history.[666] The Enlightenment was definitely a pervasive ideology, but non-Western societies did not simply accept it as passive recipients. In the history of colonial-colonized interactions, exchange was never unidirectional. Scholarly research over the last two decades has rescued our understanding from classical characterizations of the non-West as the follower in a one way game. In the context of South Asia, Arjun Appadurai has emphasized the "global cultural flows" of modernity, and Partha Chatterjee has claimed that modernity is specific to the society and marked with inherent ambiguity.[667] These studies thus refute the idea of modernity's linearity by introducing global and multicultural aspects to the experiences of modernity.

The present study limits itself to the qasbati Muslim environment in colonial India, particularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By doing so, an attempt is made to capture what modernity meant to a set of people in the Indo-Islamic world. Though contemporary scholars and theorists have worked on refuting the notion of an overarching, sermonizing, and civilizing Western modernity, we are still a step behind in recognizing the multifarious and variegated nature of modernity. We can begin to catch up by pursuing scholarship that strips modernity of its universalistic claims and posits variegated perspectives on this global phenomenon. Theories of modernity have already traveled from being considered the universal to the global. They now require that we understand the local to better appreciate the global as an aggregate. A few studies have appeared of late emphasizing the need to

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[666] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 17-50.

[667] Such studies include Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Partha Chatterjee, *Our Modernity* (Rotterdam/Dakar: SEPHIS and CODESRIA, 1997), 3-20.

make sense of the local in order to get a more nuanced picture of modernity. Ben-Lan Goh's anthropological work on the city of Georgetown, Penang in Malaysia is an attempt to reconsider aspects of Southeast Asian modernity.[668] On somewhat similar lines, there is also a volume of recent research on urban topographical studies as they pertain to modernity.[669] Another collection of essays has focused on understanding modernity through the local, although the local hardly gets beyond nations, including Belize and Egypt.[670] These studies approach modernity by focusing on nation as the unit of analysis. There are, however, some studies on modernity in the local context of Africa.[671] Joel Kahn has studied modernity in Indonesia by looking at villages of West Sumatra during the Dutch colonial period.[672] This attention to the local in global studies on modernity has been encouraging, although such studies are few in number and restricted in scope. The Comaroffs rightly say that "our grasp of global modernity is still rather limited."[673] One can argue that it is more important to be analytical in approach than taking into account regions and spaces, but it is undeniable that incorporating more locales, people, and segments of societies would enrich and expand our understanding of modernity.

In regard to South Asia, research on modernity has been remarkable and trendsetting in many ways. As mentioned above, Appadurai and Chatterjee have played a significant role in advancing the study of global modernity by reclaiming the

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[668] Based on a study of cultural politics around the transformation of landscape and architecture in Penang, Beng-Lan Goh's work looks into the experience of modernity in Malaysia through a critical discussion of the multiple, shifting, and contested cultural discourses over nation, ethnicity, and class in Malaysia and the institutional and individual practices that produced them. Beng-Lan Goh, *Modern Dreams: An Inquiry into Power, Cultural Production, and the Cityscape in Contemporary Urban Penang, Malaysia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Southeast Asia Program, 2002).
[669] Gyan Prakash and Kevin M. Kruse, eds., *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).
[670] Daniel Miller, ed., *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
[671] For example, see Charles Piot, *Remotely Global: Village Modernity in West Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Jean and John Comaroff, eds., *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).
[672] Joel S. Kahn, *Constituting the Minangkabau: Peasants, Culture, and Modernity in Colonial Indonesia* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993).
[673] Comaroff, eds., *Modernity and its Malcontents*, xi.

agency of the formerly colonized societies in the process. Partha Chatterjee, in his essay *Our Modernity*, acknowledges the existence of various modernities by saying that "the forms of modernity will have to vary between different countries, depending upon specific circumstances and social practices."[674] Although his contribution is immense in recognizing the differences among countries, he tends to see countries as inherently monolithic, a view which oversimplifies reality. In India, for example, the scholarship suggests a diversity of experiences based on region, religion, class, caste, language, and so on. Extending the scope of studying modernity, Appadurai's global framework reveals a consideration for locality. He adds that he looks at locality more "as primarily relational and contextual than as scalar or spatial."[675] Going by his approach, we see how the present study incorporates both contextual and spatial dimensions. Dipesh Chakrabarty, another major contributor to the debate on modernity, has given a call to not only "provincialize Europe"[676] as a pattern of thought but has also noted that "modernity is easy to inhabit but difficult to define."[677]

A number of works have followed these pioneering studies and enlarged our understanding of aspects of modernity in India. Vasant Kaiwar and Sucheta Mazumdar suggest that "the complexities of modernity are best understood by examining its antinomies, at the core of which lie a compact set of ideas about the nature of economics, cultures, nations, identity, and alterity."[678] To understand modernity it is helpful to delineate what falls outside its pale before considering what comes under it. Moreover, modernity needs to be understood against the histories of particular situations, since no theory of modernity is universal. This approach

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[674] Chatterjee, *Our Modernity*, 8.
[675] Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 178.
[676] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).
[677] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), xix.
[678] Vasant Kaiwar and Sucheta Mazumdar, eds., *Antinomies of Modernity: Essays on Race, Orient, Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 2.

resolves part of Chakrabarty's difficulty in defining modernity. Javeed Alam recognized the need to overcome the foundationalism of western theories of modernity at a time when studies on Indian modernity were sparse.[679] Studies such as his pointed out that modernity always considered its Other "as something outside the West's internal social world."[680] Recognition of the dichotomy between the self and the Other was an acknowledgement of the hegemony one structure had over others. Such views sought to establish modernity as a contested space and the need to combat dominant theories with counter-approaches which discussed India's role in the formation of this complex phenomenon. Dilip Gaonkar, furthermore, has drawn our attention to what he considers "alternative modernities" by establishing that societal modernization is different from cultural modernity.[681]

More recently, we have seen some additional works on the subject of Indian modernity. Sanjay Joshi's well-researched book on the emergence of modernity among the middle class of Lucknow shows how modernity in India was "fractured."[682] This label comes out of the connections he sees between modernity in India and modernity in Europe. He argues that the tensions that we see in Indian modernity are actually similar to European patterns. Manu Bhagavan, on the other hand, has argued that the princes of Baroda reclaimed the University in Baroda from the British and decolonized it while also decolonizing modernity itself.[683] This viewpoint puts forth the idea of appropriation and indigenization of the colonial by the Baroda princes. Although recent scholarship has boldly argued for multiple modernities, most works still tend to focus on prominent personalities, cities, and

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[679] Javeed Alam, *India: Living with Modernity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 223.
[680] Ibid., 11.
[681] Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1.
[682] Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[683] Manu Bhagavan, *Sovereign Spheres: Princes, Education and Empire in Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 179.

institutions as case studies. The local diversity that we find in South Asia has not been adequately covered by the existing scholarship.

Since the present study concerns Islam, it is necessary that we familiarize ourselves with some of the theoretical issues of modernity in the Islamic world. Because such theoretical issues are too vast an area to be explored in entirety here, for practical concerns we shall confine ourselves to a handful of writings that have impacted the way Islam has been studied and written about vis-à-vis modernity. "Islam and modernity," a term much in use in this context, arose out of certain socio-political concerns, which often equated modernity with Westernization. This trend was mainly due to Islam's frequent associattion with "the East," which in turn is posited as lagging behind on the road to progress as compared to the West. The earliest works on Islam and its relationship with the West were written by H. A. R. Gibb and G. E. Grunebaum, both of whom, as characteristic of their times, tended to see Islam as a large monolithic group and portrayed "the West" as an advanced entity ahead of Islam.[684]

Recent scholarship has challenged the assignment of modernity to "the West" and tradition to "the East."[685] Moreover, whether Islam and modernity are described as polarized[686] or reconcilable,[687] both explanations still recognize the two as

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[684] H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947); Gustave von Grunebaum, *Modern Islam: The Search for a Cultural Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962).

[685] Postmodernist criticism has questioned the very concept of modernity by complicating the strict differentiation of Western and non-Western culture. Reinhard Schulze, "Is there an Islamic Modernity?" In Kai Hafez, ed., *The Islamic World and the West: An Introduction to Political Cultures and International Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 29.

[686] The debate on the cultural oppositions and reconciliations between Islam and modernity is longstanding. In this case, modernity has often been equated with Westernization. The idea of a "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West has been explored at length by Bernard Lewis and followed by Samuel P. Huntington and others. This idea argues that Islamic and Western civilizations are in conflicting relationships with each other. In Huntington's schema, Islamic and Hindu civilizations are the only "religious" civilizations on the spectrum of conflicts, and other religious groups are absent and implicitly included in other groupings. Additionally, "Islamic" and "Western" civilizations are positioned as those engaged in a fierce battle against each other. See, Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990): 47-60, and Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

exclusive domains. Along with the dichotomy of the West and the non-West/East, the dichotomy of Islam and the West also needs to be rejected. Marshall Hodgson, a leading scholar of Islam in the twentieth century, rightly argues that modernity has often been confused with an aping of the West. He calls it "the Westernistic bias," through which many modern Western scholars tried to see the "impact of the West" on Islamdom. According to Hodgson, this impact is seen "as if it were that Western progress had finally reached the point where Muslims could no longer escape it, rather than that something new had happened to the Western culture which thereby was happening to Islamdom and the whole world as well."[688] Edward Said's *Orientalism* exposes this bias by analyzing how "the West" treated "the Orient," in particular the "Muslim Orient."[689] In his writing, he offers sharp criticisms of Gibb and Grunebaum, the scholars mentioned above.[690] The fact is that neither has the East remained the sole domain of Islam nor the West a sphere untouched and uninhabited by Islam. Similarly, modernity and its components are dispersed through all the cardinal directions as opposed to being confined to and led by the West. Modernity as an experience has acquired multiple paths. Timothy Mitchell rightly underlines that

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[687] One such strand of thought was advocated by Fazlur Rahman, a prolific scholar of Islam's encounter with modernity and a declared Islamic modernist. He believed that it was the Western presence in Muslim countries that made development possible there. Rahman also said that Jamal al-Din al-Afghani was "the real father this [Islamic] modernism." Fazlur Rahman, "Islamic Modernism: Its Scope, Method and Alternatives," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1, 4 (October 1970): 318. For a detailed understanding of his approach, see Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[688] Hodgson adds that the Westernistic world image found its first major expression in Hegel's philosophy of history. Furthermore, that "since the Middle Ages, Islam has been seen as the skewed imitation and doomed rival of the West; that it should loom so great at so late a date may befit old notions of Antichrist, but is a stumbling-block to the Enlightenment notion of progress." Speaking about historical works, he says that even the writings of Spengler and Toynbee, despite their awareness of the importance of non-Western cultures, remained tied to the paradigm of the fall of Rome. Even William McNeil, the world historian who has written *The Rise of the West*, is blamed by Hodgson for his "condescending attitude toward Islam," for seeing Islam as stagnant after the High Caliphal Period and exaggerating the traits of "the West." Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization, Volume Three, The Gunpowder Empires and the Modern Times* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 204-205, 11n.

[689] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

[690] Ibid., 105-07, 296-99.

"if modernity is defined by its claim to universality, this always remains an impossible universal."[691]

Scholars who work on South Asian Islam have touched upon specific issues of modernity among the Muslims of South Asia. These works can be broadly divided into two categories: first, those that pioneered the study of Indian Muslim perceptions of the West, particularly the British. The second category, consisting mostly of more recent scholarship, looks at the question of colonial encounter through the problem of modernity. In the first category, we have Gulfishan Khan, who has worked on how Muslims of India perceived the West during the eighteenth century, a period when the British had just begun to gain political power in India.[692] She has analyzed the Persian writings of seven members of the declining Muslim elites, of whom three had visited Europe. The remaining four wrote about Europe as they understood it through their interactions with Europeans in India. Her interesting account tells us a lot about these men who appreciated the new culture and knowledge, and tried to gain professional advancement. Before Khan, Muhammad Khalid Masud conducted a fascinating study on the legal-juridical aspects of Islamic responses to lifestyle changes brought about by modern technology.[693] Using fatwa literature, Masud explored how Indian Islamic society dealt with apparatuses that were new to them. He used the examples of the toothbrush, the gramophone, and so on. Farhan Nizami has also conducted an in-depth study on the Muslim response to the British presence in India during the first half of the nineteenth century.[694] By focusing on Muslim religious elites and institutions, he shows that the British presence created an acute consciousness of Islamic identity, which was expressed through internal reforms and occasional opposition to foreign rule. There are a couple of other studies on the perceptions of

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[691] Mitchell, ed., *Questions*, xiv.
[692] Khan, *Indian Muslim Perceptions*.
[693] Masud, *Trends*.
[694] Nizami, *Madrasahs*.

the West by Muslims of Bengal and Delhi but they lack the required depth of analysis.[695]

In the second category of studies that discuss South Asian Islam and modernity, Jonah Blank has conducted a study on the Bohra Muslim community. He shows how this minority Shia community has managed to preserve itself culturally while simultaneously incorporating modernity.[696] Ayesha Jalal has written an essay on colonial modernity among Muslims in India which analyzes the categories of race, nation, territory, and communalism. Her argument on modernity recognizes the competing visions of nationalism and the politics of cultural difference. She illustrates this argument through the discourses articulated by some of the leading political and literary figures including Syed Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Iqbal, Muhammad Ali, Maulana Azad, Maulana Altaf Husain Hali, and Muhammad Husain Azad.[697] Faisal Devji has written an article titled "Apologetic Modernity," in which he analyzes the conceptual status of modernity in the South Asian Muslim world. By looking at the dominant Aligarh Movement and thoughts of its leader Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Devji describes modernity among the Muslims of India as apologetic in nature.[698] Recently, Francis Robinson has attempted to explain Islamic modernities in South Asia through the device of Islamic reform. His argument revolves around the tradition of *tajdid* or renewal, which has always been sought after by all Islamic communities. To Robinson, both political and social elites have reformed their practices and

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[695] Mujeeb Ashraf looks into "the important leaders, political centers, institutions, and movements that emerged among the Muslims either in reaction to, or in favor of, British rule and Western culture during the first half of the nineteenth century." To him, the 'ulama resisted because the British tried to propagate the tenets of Christianity and their culture while denouncing Islam. Such resistance was "open and direct in Bengal, where the British presence was in total control of governance. It was ambivalent in North India, where the British thought it expedient to avoid denouncing the Muslims openly and blatantly." Soumitra Sinha's sociological work analyzes the process of modernization among the Muslims of Bengal. He concludes that despite "the honest and sincere attempts of these Bengali Muslims discussed… the forces of reaction and communalism were more strong and ultimately won the day." Mujeeb Ashraf, *Muslim Attitudes towards British Rule and Western Culture in India* (Delhi: Idarah-i-dabiyat-i-Delli, 1982), vii, 272; Soumitra Sinha, *The Quest for Modernity and the Bengali Muslims, 1921-47* (Calcutta: Minerva Associates, 1995), 132.

[696] Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe*.

[697] Jalal, "Negotiating Colonial Modernity."

[698] Devji, "Apologetic Modernity," 61-62.

institutions to answer the challenges posed by the West.[699] What is apparent is that most of these studies which deal with modernity focus on colonial India in general. Their examples are drawn from certain prominent figures and institutions. They revolve around Delhi, Punjab, Bengal, and if they discuss the United Provinces, it is mostly with regard to Aligarh. Only Blank's work centers on a different community, though it is an ethnographical study. This necessitates an investigation that goes beyond the much studied conventional areas and uncovers aspects of modernity from corners rich in content but unheard from so far.

PERSPECTIVES FROM QASBAHS

Modernity as a term is loaded, as an issue complex, and as a topic much debated. It is clear from our discussion above that modernity can be defined, tested, and applied in multiple ways. That makes the concept attractive yet problematic at the same time. To simplify our discussion, let us note a few points as understood from the above survey of the literature regarding modernity. Recent scholarship has concluded that modernity is varied in nature and scope. Unlike the post-Enlightenment claims of its universal applicability, modernity has increasingly been understood as a much contested area. We can further conclude that it can no longer be seen as a simple impact-response phenomenon. The colonial powers did have the privilege of carrying the ideas of the Enlightenment to their non-Western subjects, but to believe that the non-West did nothing but follow them or frame their responses around given situations would be flawed.

But for the most part, it was the local culture and people, their preferences, cultural choices, religious precepts, traditional leaning, and institutions that mattered in shaping qasbati modernity. Taking them together, it is an aggregate of historical factors that make the study of modernity more interesting and nuanced. Scholars such as Arjun Appadurai and Partha Chatterjee have successfully shifted the debate on

[699] Robinson, "Islamic Reform," 259-281.

modernity from its fixation on Europe to the global, and numerous studies indicate this shift. Multiple paths of modernity have taken us from one continent to several, from a few nations to many. Outside of studies on modernity, scholars everywhere have demonstrated the existence of diversity within nations. Taken together, we can see that whereas a nation may display an energizing consciousness of unity, its diversity can neither be ignored and nor treated monolithically. Thus, we need to study the local to fully understand the nation. South Asia is a conglomerate of different religious and cultural groups. Despite commonalities, these groups differ from each other. Studies on modernity among the Hindus of Bengal might be good for comparative purposes, but such studies would not constitute a comprehensive South Asian approach. Similarly, South Asian Islam is itself a fascinating and complex example of diversity. Only when we take note of the parts will the complete picture become clear. The study of modernity with regards to qasbati Muslims will only augment such studies which provide us with a detailed view of the picture of modernity.

Besides presenting modernity in its nuances and diversity, studying qasbahs offers an opportunity to understand modernity in its historical context. In terms of population and education, qasbahs have two clear advantages: first, the Muslim elite occupying top official positions inhabited the qasbahs; and second, there were educated Muslims of different professional backgrounds. The strong presence of the elite and the educated Muslims together in good numbers was a unique aspect of qasbahs. Together, they created a formidable cultural and intellectual environment, a context apt for studying modernity. More importantly, the educated qasbati Muslims were exceptional because of their position within the larger Muslim society of South Asia. They influenced and were influenced by all major trends, while they simultaneously strengthened their ties to and took pride in their native qasbahs. The ideological, institutional, and sectarian affiliations, in addition to the variety of education, make the qasbahs unique in comparison to the urban areas that have been featured predominantly in studies pertaining to modernity. Hence, qasbati modernity

must be studied in its own right. Aligarh's impact on South Asian Islam cannot be understated, but it is undisputed that the stance of Aligarh was not the only choice made by the Muslims of India in their negotiation with modernity. The qasbahs presented a broader spectrum of opinions that demonstrates the heterogeneity of South Asian Islam.

In the context of heterogeneity among the Muslims of South Asia, it is important to consider differences in perspectives. Because of their colonial rule, the British clearly had a position of power for introducing or implementing new social codes and technologies in the lives of Muslims. But the question is not whether Muslims were or were not in control of the debates on modernity vis-à-vis the British, as Faisal Devji argues.[700] More than controlling the debate, the question is rather how they exercised their conscience in making choices. Here is a classic case of how an interpretation of modernity changes depending upon one's vantage point. From an Aligarhi perspective, understanding modernity entails studying whether and how the Muslims had a say in the debates regarding modernity. But a qasbati perspective necessitates an exploration of social factors and choices made under different contexts. For qasbatis, modernity was how they availed themselves of newer trends and ideas while retaining their autonomy. Modernity for them was thus neither apologetic nor defiant.

Obviously in the context of our study, modernity entailed an interaction between the Muslims and the British. As one of the main contentions of this study, I propose that this interface was yet another episode of interaction in the lives of the Muslims of India in general and qasbahs in particular. Muslims have been living in India for about a millennium. In this very long history, they have interacted with people of different religions, sects, and cultures, including Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Christians, and Parsis. During the period of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, Muslims and other foreign travelers from different regions of the world

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[700] Devji, "Apologetic Modernity," 61-62.

arrived in India.[701] Muslims of India, thus, interacted not only with their Muslim brethren from different parts of the world but also people of different religious and cultural groups. Speaking of the qasbahs in particular, we have discussed in Chapter Two how Muslims began to settle in large numbers in the qasbahs in the eleventh century. They included those Muslims who came from Wasit in modern day Iraq and settled in the qasbah of Bilgram as well as those from what is now Afghanistan who settled in the qasbah of Amroha. We also discussed qasbatis' sense of nostalgia during the early days about the ideals of the larger Islamic world and the pride they took in their history writing. One of the arguments we made was that this feeling gradually became diluted, and we described how later historical writings in Urdu depict a growing sense of rootedness associated with India and other Indians. All these and other related factors lead us to another conclusion that they must have encountered several issues of cross-cultural nature and learned to negotiate and deal with them. The qasbahs became a hub for some of the early Sufis. In Chapter Three, we talked about various Sufi figures from the qasbahs, particularly from Rudauli, and how their version of Sufism incorporated Hindu religious and spiritual ideas. Since the qasbati Muslims had the experience of such cross-cultural exposure, interactions with the British for them were yet another episode of their history. It was unlike a situation in which one set of people were encountering another set for the first time and in a completely unknown manner. Therefore, modernity of the qasbati Muslims should not be seen as a radical encounter. It was rather an area of assertion, claim and

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[701] Muslims from Arab territories had come to the western coastal areas in the eighth century for trade purposes. From the eleventh century, Muslims from Afghanistan and Central Asian regions started settling once the Delhi Sultanate, founded in 1206 AD, opened up new vistas of opportunity. Along with those who settled in India, it is interesting to note that foreign travelers kept coming to Indian territories. Although a number of studies have been conducted on foreign travelers visiting India and how they perceived India, its people, and culture, it would be interesting to explore how the people living in India perceived different cultures by seeing, meeting, and interacting with foreign travelers. Muslims living in India must have socialized with and learned about people from other cultures such as the Mongols, the Russians, the Portuguese, and the Italians before they in fact interacted with the British. Michael Fisher has written on some European travelers visiting the Mughal India: they include the Russian Nikitin, the Portuguese Monserrate, and the Italian Manucci. See Michael H. Fisher, *Beyond the Three Seas: Travellers' Tales from Mughal India* (New Delhi: Random House, 2007).

everyday negotiation. In sum, studying qasbahs enables us to understand modernity in its nuanced, contextual, and interactional character.

MODERNITY: HIGHLY INTERACTIVE

Modernity in the context of the qasbahs was highly interactive. We shall analyze this by looking into various aspects or ingredients of modernity. At the outset though, we need to ask a question. What does modernity consist of? Because modernity is so open to interpretation and local conditions, different studies have defined it differently while focusing on one or other facets of human life. Whereas a number of studies regarding modernity in Africa discuss issues of witchcraft, magic, ritual and power, scholars of Southeast Asia tend to discuss gender, urban space, and cityscape. In South Asian studies, many scholars have studied public culture as expressed in cricket, movies, radio, museums, martial arts, hotels, and dining out as spotlights to understanding modernity.[702] Another collection of essays has centered on the topics of history, language politics, anti-colonial movements, identity politics, and the nation.[703] On the basis of the works mentioned earlier, topical themes on South Asian modernity have also covered the subjects of middle classes and religious and social reforms. Modernity in the context of South Asian Islam has been studied around the Aligarh Movement, fatwas or religious verdicts, and eminent literary and political personalities.

Urdu writings related, directly or indirectly, to Muslims of qasbati background discuss a number of themes concerning modernity under colonial rule. Religion, philosophy, science, astronomy, economy, language, the idea of progress, the notion of reason, the knowledge and writing of history, western concepts of freedom and equality, and education were major themes dealt with by the Urdu-speaking and writing people in the regions of Awadh and Rohilkhand. This study is based on these

[702] Carol A. Breckenridge, ed., *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
[703] Kaiwar and Mazumdar, *Antinomies of Modernity*.

ingredients of modernity that allow us to consider the choices made by those who participated in the history of modernity.

To begin with the subject of history writing as observed in the local tradition, one notices the kind of changes that came about as a result of coming in contact with the Western practice of history writing. Indian Persian historians were recognized and respected for their craft of history writing. This was true not only of the renowned and patronized, such as Ziyauddin Barani (1285-1357) and Abul Fazl (1551-1602), but also those who wrote local and regional history. Maulvi Ghulam Basit, a resident of the qasbah of Bijnor in Rohilkhand, is noted for his *Tarikh-e-Mamluk-e-Hind* (1753).[704] In Chapter Two, we discussed the transition that qasbati history writing went through. From admiring and linking the history of the qasbahs to larger Islamic cities, qasbati history moved to relating qasbahs to the local people and circumstances. A similar transformation or adaptation can be seen in the way Urdu historical works incorporated certain English practices of history-writing.

An examination of some historical works of the regions under study reveals that from the late nineteenth century onwards, local historians were affected by the practices of their English counterparts. However, this acceptance did not involve any renunciation of older practices. The prolific historian of Awadh and Rohilkhand, Maulvi Hakim Muhammad Najmul Ghani (1859-1932) wrote the much acclaimed *Tarikh-e-Awadh* in five volumes, which showed the good as well as the bad side of the rulers of Awadh.[705] Although it is hard to say if he was at all influenced by late nineteenth-century English historians, we cannot help but compare them. Characteristic of a positivistic age, English historians of this period were openly contemptuous of philosophy or theory in history, while they also tried to remain neutral and true to the facts.[706] Although Najmul Ghani did not depart from the old traditions, his writing does seem to have undergone some change such as an

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[704] Anwar Husain Akbarpuri, *Awadh ke Tarikh Nigar* (Faizabad: Nishat Offset Press, 1991), 271.
[705] Akbarpuri, *Awadh ke Tarikh Nigar*, 299-300.
[706] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 126-33, 143-44.

admittance of flaws of the rulers. It has to be kept in mind that eulogy was a prominent feature earlier for many court historians, if not all.

A conscientious effort to adopt Western features of history writing is evident in the historical memoir of Chaudhary Ali Muhammad Zaidi of Rudauli. His work *Apni Yadein: Rudauli ki Batein* (Our Remembrances: Memoirs from Rudauli) is more of a historical account of the qasbah of Rudauli and a characteristic example of qasbati history that evinces both a sense of pride in the qasbah and offers a glimpse of cross-cultural heritage. The way the author has arranged this work bears resemblance to gazetteer writing. Similar to governments elsewhere, British rule in India introduced the practice of compiling extensive geographical directories with districts as units. The primary purpose of these directories was to compile information about a region or district in order to provide British officials serving in that area with a necessary guide. Therefore, the structure of the gazetteers was kept such that the readers could gain general knowledge on various aspects of a geographical area. Likewise, *Apni Yadein* contains descriptions under several headings such as geography, historical overview, population, political structure, education, sports, entertainment, society, occupational groups, and so on. But the content beneath remains as same as any other qasbati historical work since it too deals with religion, festivals, dress, poetry, and genealogy. Examples of historical writings thus illustrate the dynamic nature of the local culture, wherein new elements introduced by the British were adopted by the local writers and people but not at the cost of giving up the old.

The notion of progress, as an essential ingredient of post-Enlightenment modernity, is also worth examining in the local context. The nineteenth century witnessed new technologies brought to India by the British, including the introduction of steam-engine railways and the telegraph. David Arnold disagrees with the unidirectional argument of technology transfer as a tool of the Empire. Rather, he tends to view technologies as discrete bodies of knowledge more likely to take the

form of a “dialogue” than a simple process of diffusion or imposition.[707] In an earlier chapter, we discussed above how print technology was appropriated by qasbati Muslims. Similarly, local histories of qasbahs celebrate the use of technology to help connect qasbahs with their surroundings. A bus started to run in the qasbah of Rudauli in 1922, connecting the qasbah to the district headquarters in Bara Banki and beyond to Faizabad, which was a big advance over the earlier modes of transportation.[708] It needs to be added, however, that this service was started not by government initiative but by a local businessman. Maulana Abdul Majid Dariyabadi writes about the excitement of traveling when he was growing up at the turn of the twentieth century. He also complains that the railways and buses were not the same after Indian independence as they were earlier.[709] Nonetheless, both Dariyabadi and Chaudhary Muhammad Ali speak of the convenience they had in performing Hajj because of the new modes of transportation.[710] An anonymous writer in an article asks whether the Muslims have progressed. The writer argues that Muslims attained considerable progress under the British government. He asks: “Who could have availed in the past of the convenience available today to the pilgrims visiting dargahs, going to Hajj and performing journeys?”[711] Technology, no doubt, was liked and easily put to use in the lives of the qasbati Muslims. As in the case of Southeast Asia, qasbati Muslims rarely challenged European convictions regarding their technological superiority.[712] However, in the choices they made, one can clearly see that technology was frequently adopted to augment, or in conjunction with, their religious precepts – an argument made in the previous chapter. The increase in religious pilgrimage is one case in point.

[707] David Arnold, *Science, Technology, and Medicine in Colonial India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92.
[708] Zaidi, *Apni Yadein*, 204-05.
[709] Dariyabadi, *Aap-biti*, 327-28.
[710] Ibid., 331; Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 21.
[711] *Sala-e-Aam*, 2, 2 (February 1913): 21-24.
[712] Barbara Watson Andaya, “Historicising “Modernity” in Southeast Asia,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 40, 4 (1997): 399.

Although arguments about modernity for the most part were ideological, technology gave it a tangible dimension. Introduction of railways, telegraph, and similar technological conveniences changed the lives of the Indians. In this way, the introduction of mass technology actually impacted the Indian minds with the idea that their colonial masters were more powerful. In Urdu periodicals, the "mightiness" of the West through the Empire is found writ large. But that was not the only stance that we find. We also find a renewed sense of belief in one's traditional ideals. The idea that the West was advanced and ahead of the "dying East" made the Urdu-speaking Muslims of North India question the notion of "progress" itself. An article titled *Maghribi Tahzib* (Western Civilization), published in 1907 and written by a person named Aziz, recounts the age of Renaissance and Enlightenment in Europe.[713] It says that the leadership in the world keeps changing, and it is time for Europe to take the stage. It states that taraqqi (progress) began with England and was followed by its neighboring countries. Here, the notion of progress seems to be intermingled with the industrial revolution in Europe. The article provides specific details on how Italy led the scholarly, and Spain and Portugal the political domains of Enlightenment. With a volte-face, the author gets to the basic argument that all of Europe's advancement, however, is based on the exploitation of others and support from *dahariyas* (agnostics). In this way, the author indicates that whereas progress is a European forte, Indians should not emulate this strength or look up to the British as their model for progress.

Another argument related to the question of progress was whether it was solely tied to Europe. Many of the Urdu writings engaged with the intellectual heritage of Islam vis-à-vis European achievements. An anonymous author claims that as far as progress is concerned, India saw more progress under the Mughal rulers.[714] He goes so far as to say that it is evident from research and history that the Mughal era in India was no less than the Renaissance in Europe when it came to intellectual

[713] *Makhzan* 12, 2 (March 1907): 39-52.
[714] *Sala-e-Aam* 2, 4 (April 1909): 14-18.

and artistic progress. This argument is followed by specific examples of achievements from the time of each Mughal emperor and focuses on how India accommodated a diverse pool of talents and promoted toleration and diversity. Taking it a step further, a piece published in *Aligarh Magazine* presents the dilemma of "modern" versus "tradition."[715] This essay is an imaginary dialogue between the writer and Socrates, representing the new and the old era respectively. Discussing the issues of love, individualism, community, and nation, the author basically tries to reason out these new concepts by satisfying questions that could arise from the older generation. For example, discussing the concept of love as a basic human attribute, the writer extends it to family and *qaum*, or nation. The feeling of nationalism is thus presented as a basic human attribute. This suggests that rationalizing the ingredients of modernity was an essential aspect of Muslim participation in modernity.

A similar strategy is seen in the description that Muhammad Saeed Ahmad of qasbah Mahrehra presents in his essay on the handicrafts and discoveries of India.[716] He writes that before the arrival of the British, India was known for its artwork and handicrafts. His factual details trace a history of achievements of India. He recounts the time when Indian commodities and crafts would travel to Baghdad and Europe, and would stun Caliph Haroon Rashid and Charlemagne. He laments the dependency of the same India on England. This essay, like the one discussed above, provides a detailed account of achievements from various Indian rulers from Chandragupta Maurya to Aurangzeb and shows how even Francois Bernier (1625-88), the French traveler and personal physician of Emperor Aurangzeb, testified to the material advancement of India over Europe. In fact, Muhammad Saeed Ahmad Mahrehrawi's essay deals with the situation of modernity in a more logical way. He does not simply claim advancement over Europe or present an imaginary dialogue with a Greek philosopher to reject Europe's mastery over India. Rather, he takes a more logical, factual, and substantial approach in proving his argument by analyzing historical

[715] *Aligarh Magazine* 18, 4, (February-April 1921): 15-30.
[716] *Zamana* 8, 2 (February 1907): 81-89.

examples. Moreover, he underlines that the British victimized India by pushing it back from its global lead in progress and prosperity. This essay reflects one of the powerful ways in which the qasbati Muslims dealt with modernity by claiming elements of modernity as inherent parts of Indian and Islamic history.

Urdu-speaking Muslims attacked the very foundation of European thought and Europeans' exclusive claim to advancement through the Renaissance and Enlightenment. They acknowledged that Renaissance as a movement originated in Europe but attempted to prove that the Europeans were not the sole creators of development, progress, and the much touted newer concepts and ideologies. Another piece published in *Al Nadwa* makes an even greater claim. It takes up the concept of equality and explains how it is originally an Islamic construct, long before being a product of any European ideological revolution.[717] It says that equality is the most basic principle for the progression of any civilization, but until Islam was preached as a religion, nobody could conceive of this notion. The article thus argues that the concept of equality as it existed in Islamic tradition came about much earlier as compared to Enlightenment thought and recent political developments. All of these articles make arguments that challenge Europe's universal claim to modernity.

These alternative claims are extended to the field of politics as well. An article in *Sala-e-Aam* argued that participating in the legislative politics as representatives of Indian people does not necessarily mean opposition to government.[718] Rather, it means benefiting one's community and the nation. As an Urdu writer, the author of this article also argues that for the sake of addressing a larger mass of people and their interests, it is necessary to write about politics in Urdu and not in English. This article finds resonance in the way qasbati Muslims participated in politics. Hamid Ali Khan Amrohvi contested the state legislative council election. A law graduate from London, he preferred to write in Urdu and had a clear and elegant style, as is evident from his biography of Maulvi Syed Karamat Husain. We know that during the time

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[717] *Al Nadwa* 1, 2 (August 1904): 1-15.
[718] *Sala-e-Aam* 2, 7 (July 1909): 5-6.

he was in London, he also wrote good prose and poetry in English but gave up that practice in order to appeal to a larger audience.

Language was another major terrain which Muslims claimed, articulating their views in clear and persuasive Urdu rather than simply following the requirements of learning English. While some people chose to learn English fully in pursuit of higher education, others elected to educate themselves with just enough English to secure and maintain a government position; yet others opposed the language entirely due to its imperial roots. Of the personalities that we have discussed who chose to pursue an education in English language, most still had their reservations. By and large, learning English did not mean giving up one's culture. One of the charges against those learning English was that they would abandon their religion. Khawja Abdulah of Shahjahanpur tried to dispel this common fear by relating his personal experience at Aligarh College, where all the students learned English living in the boarding house but also offered their daily prayers, observed fast in Ramadan, and celebrated the completion of the Quran in the month of Ramadan.[719]

Those who opposed English had their own share of arguments. For such people, the question involved everyday life for Muslims. An article criticized the presence of the British in Hindustan and wondered if any nation in the history of humanity had developed by adopting a foreign language.[720] The argument the writer used was from the Quranic tradition. He wrote that even though Moses and the people of Israel lived in Egypt for a long time, the conversation between God and Moses took place in Hebrew not Arabic. Similarly, referring to Holy books such as the Quran, Bible, and Torah, the author argued that all Holy books were always revealed in the mother tongue of a given community. On the basis of such arguments, he concluded that no community in this world could see progress without promoting its own language. The issue of promoting one's own language over English was another argument pursued within qasbahs. Another writer complained of the declining status

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[719] *The Aligarh Monthly* II, IX (September 1904): 121.
[720] *Sala-e-Aam* 9, 2 (September 1909): 13-15.

of the Urdu language and literature in its own land.[721] This complaint implicitly refers to the development of English at the expense of Urdu.

Qasbati Muslims were quite proactive in answering questions regarding the education of Muslims. We have already discussed their efforts in opening up, patronizing, and running several madrasas. We also saw how they adopted English as a part of the curricula for Muslim children in madrasas and maktabs while sending their wards to local government schools. Maulana Shibli Numani of Nadwat-ul-Ulama wrote a persuasive essay in 1910 on the Dars-e-Nizami, the madrasa syllabus, and argued about the declining state of Islamic education in India.[722] He wrote that in the face of the growth of Western education, it would be difficult in a few years to tell what constituted traditional education. Although this may have been an exaggerated fear, such an opinion sent a warning to promote and protect the format of traditional Islamic education. In another article, Shibli Numani raises the question of whether Muslims needed both traditional and modern education and whether religious education could be imparted without traditional education. His suggestion was that both traditional and modern education should work hand in hand to safeguard religious and community interests. Shibli Numani's intervention was a sign of participation by Muslims in shaping their educational future. Had Muslims not intervened in the debate on their education in this way, the outcome certainly would have been different. In part, this could have affected the way they participated in modernity since education lies at the base of it. The campaign for converting MAO College at Aligarh into a Muslim University had similar purposes of securing an educational future for the Muslims of India. Its leaders wanted political control over university structure since "the promoters of the university had to decide for whom it would be and what they wanted their students to become."[723] Although Muslim leaders accepted and promoted English education, they wanted to ensure that their

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[721] *Sala-e-Aam* 3, 2 (March 1909): 11-15.
[722] *Al Nadwa* 7, 12 (December 1910): 3-21.
[723] Minault and Lelyveld, "The Campaign," 145.

pursuit of modernity worked on their terms and would not interfere with their religious precepts.

Similar discourses by some of the ideologues also affected women's involvement in education. Articles by Rashidul Khairi in the periodical *Ismat* pleaded with the parents of Muslim girls to send them to schools for education.[724] Female writers such as Kaneez Muhammad Begum emphasized the need for modern and religious education of Indian Muslim girls.[725] We have seen this kind of persuasive appeal in the case of Syed Karamat Husain's Girls' School in Lucknow. Families from qasbahs sent their daughters to this school or promoted girls' schools within qasbahs, as well as private tutoring in the absence of such schools. In Chapter Five, we discussed how qasbati Muslims influenced the syllabi followed in different kinds of educational institutions including maktabs, madrasas, and government schools. Their basic contestation was to ensure that different curricula had a religious component. To sum up, education was another highly contested area where qasbati Muslims exhibited their participation in the shaping of modernity.

In his work on the emergence of modernity among the middle class of Lucknow, Sanjay Joshi has noted certain similar yet dissimilar points about education and other aspects of modernity. He chose to study Lucknow for two obvious reasons: English-style education and new forms of communication such as newspapers. He defines Indian modernity as "fractured modernity," which combined as varied elements as patriarchy and equality and was achieved through the middle class shapers who worked in similar ways as their western counterparts.[726] Modernity, in the context of qasbahs, was definitely built upon existing foundations, as Joshi argues.[727] But the model of qasbati modernity demonstrates certain dissimilar features when compared with his study of middle class Lucknow. First, qasbati modernity is about individuals from both traditional and English educational backgrounds. Second,

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[724] *Ismat* 13, 6 (December 1914): 49-52.
[725] *Ismat* (January 1926): 12-19.
[726] Joshi, *Fractured Modernity*, 186.
[727] Ibid., 3, 185.

it was not only middle class but all classes of people that we find participating in modernity. This point becomes clearer when considering the public sphere, a major category Joshi uses to explain his model of fractured modernity. According to Joshi, public spheres in Lucknow were created under the influence of British public-sphere activists.[728] On the other hand, qasbahs were more influenced by indigenous institutions. The core of the public sphere for qasbati Muslims consisted of the commemoration of Muharram, the organization of mushairahs, and the culture of literary production. They provided greater options for self-definition. Third, concern for religion and religious precepts was at the heart of qasbati modernity, as discussed earlier. Joshi is right in suggesting that modernity was shaped by its own contexts and concerns, but qasbahs offer a different site than Lucknow as studied by him. He writes that "religiosity failed to achieve the secular-modern ideal,"[729] which is completely in contrast with qasbati religious life. Muslims in qasbahs made sure that their participation in modernity did not put their religious precepts and practices at risk, and they never aimed at a secular model. Rather, through various examples, we have seen how religion stood at the heart of Muslim modernity. Similarly, we also discussed that qasbati Muslims challenged, contested, and participated in different ingredients of modernity rather than being simply influenced by them.

In the contemporary as well as historical literature on modernity, reason and rationalism are frequently taken as the benchmarks of modernity. Rationalism marked the European Enlightenment but was not exclusive to it. Rationalism, to simplify, may be taken as a way to understand something on the basis of reason. In this light, we have already discussed the curriculum of madrasa education in the qasbahs which incorporated m'aqulat, or the rational sciences including logic, philosophy, and rhetoric. Wael Hallaq argues that the notion of rationalism is by no means a philosophical one. In the context of Islamic jurisprudence, he argues that rationalism "merely signifies a perception of an attitude toward legal issues that is dictated by

[728] Ibid., 57.
[729] Ibid., 182.

rational, pragmatic, and practical considerations."[730] In other words, rationalism is "substantive legal reasoning" that does not draw directly, for the most part, from textual sources, i.e., the Quran and the Hadis. With regard to qasbati Muslims, "reason" is frequently referred to in Urdu writings. In Urdu, the term used is *'aql* and rationalism is *'aqliyyat*. The term is used often in combination with mazhab (religion) and 'ilm (knowledge). Abdus Salam Nadwi (1882-1956), an assistant editor of the monthly *Al Nadwa* and a noted historian, wrote an article titled *Mazhab aur 'Aql*.[731] He begins by posing two contrasting arguments. He writes that there used to be two groups within early Islam: one believed that 'aql should not interfere with religion, while the other argued that if religion and 'aql were separate, why was it that humans were uniquely concerned with religion and not also animals who were not rational? Nadwi then continues, siding with the latter theory and illustrates his argument with examples from Islamic history, tradition, and texts including stories of prophets, verses from the Quran, and anecdotes from the Hadis. The message clearly comes out that reason is to be an inherent ingredient of Islam. Moreover, his essay indicates that reason and religion are intertwined and not just compatible. This example strays from Hallaq's suggestions that "reasoning" should not rely on textual sources. But it reinforces Fred Dallmayr's interpretation of Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) of Egypt in order to understand Islam and modernism. According to Dallmayr, Abduh argued that rationalism was not only compatible with Islamic teachings but was actually enjoined by such teachings.[732] The example we discussed here reinforces this argument, and shows how it was carried out in Muslim discussions on modernity.

However, Hallaq rightly posits that the notion of rationalism is not a philosophical one. It is eminently practical, even in the case of qasbati Muslims. The example above shows how reason was exercised in everyday life through writing.

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[730] Wael B. Hallaq, *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 74.
[731] Abdus Salam Nadwi, "Mazhab aur 'Aql," *Al Nadwa* 7, 10 (October 1910): 12-25.
[732] Fred Reinhard Dallmayr, *Border Crossings: Toward a Comparative Political Theory* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 16.

Reason may be derived from religion but it was also applied to it, and the process was simultaneous. Another example is seen in an article written by Maulvi Khwaja Ghulam Hasnain of the qasbah Panipat. Focusing on *Ilm-o-Aql* (Knowledge and Reason), this essay underlines the inevitability of ‘aql in religion.[733] He argues that reason and knowledge go hand in hand. One cannot reason until one has the necessary knowledge required for it. He attacks the atheists who deny God on the basis of so-called reasoning. He adds that their reasoning may not be called reasoning because it is based on a fictive imagination rather than on an understanding of facts. It is important to note that the writer claims as much reason and rationalism for his arguments in favor of religion as the atheists do for their arguments against it. Both this example and the formerly mentioned one stress the role of reasoning in Islam and thus religion in general.

Similar to reason and rationalism, Muslims of the qasbahs and surrounding areas asserted that philosophy was also part of Islamic tradition. Maulana Abdul Bari (1878-1926) of Firangi Mahal in Lucknow gave a speech on religion and rationalism at the annual meeting of All India Muhammadan Educational Conference held in Surat in 1918. In this long speech, he underlined the need to understand the interconnections between religion and philosophy. He said: “A big part of the building of religion rests on the secret foundations of soul and life.”[734] He also added that “we have two thousand five hundred years of history of philosophy. We need to know if philosophy has been a rival or partner of religion in their interactions over such a long period. [Francis] Bacon has provided the right answer to this…. [that] little and superficial knowledge of philosophy leads to heresy but its profound knowledge brings one closer to religion.”[735] Urdu-speaking Muslims of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century India thus saw philosophy as interwoven with their religion and found nothing outside their tradition in that pairing.

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[733] Maulvi Khwaja Ghulam Hasnain Panipati, “Hikmat wa Mau‘izat,” *Akhbar Asr-e-Jadid* 8, 7 (January 7, 1915): 79-80.
[734] Maulana Abdul Bari, *Mazhab wa ‘Aqliyyat* (Lucknow: Kakori Offset Press, 2002), 25.
[735] Bari, *Mazhab wa ‘Aqliyyat*, 20.

At the same time, qasbati Muslims also realized that philosophy was not unified. Many pieces published around that time refer to two different kinds of philosophy: the old and the new, or modern, philosophy. Known as *falsafa* in Urdu and Arabic, philosophy has been studied by writers through different phases of its history: pre-Islamic and Arabian, also referred to as old and modern. The articles published argued that pre-Islamic or Yunani (Greek) philosophy was established by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.[736] When Muslims occupied power, they studied, translated, promoted, and preserved the tradition of Greek philosophy. An Arabian philosophy was thus born, which consisted of some of the finest philosophers in the world including al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Imam Ghazzali, Ibn Rushd, and Ibn Tufail. In an Urdu essay, an anonymous writer argued that Muslims brought old and modern philosophy closer together.[737] Thus, the classical philosophy was appropriated by the Muslims as part of their Islamic tradition. This made classical philosophy a common claim of both Muslim and Western philosophers. It is no wonder then that Chaudhary Muhammad Ali Rudaulvi wrote that Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), the legendary historian and philosopher, was someone “who taught history to all of Europe.”[738] Philosophy thus was another highly contested field for qasbati Muslims, who did not deem it to be a post-Enlightenment phenomenon.

One more ingredient of modernity that qasbati sources discuss is science. We are not concerned with the “spirit of science” that has already been discussed in the terms of reason, logic, and philosophy. Here, we confine ourselves to “hard sciences,” or particular disciplines of studying natural phenomena such as physics, neurology, and surgery. Whereas logic, philosophy, and reason could be claimed by Islamic historians, western science was something new and clearly came from the West. Just as the Muslims availed themselves of technological innovations, so they learned and appropriated the benefits of modern science. However, this did not mean that science

[736] *Al Nadwa* 12, 6 (June 1916): 2-14.
[737] *Al Nadwa* 2, 2 (April 1905): 1-10.
[738] Rudaulvi, *Mera Mazhab*, 74.

per se went completely unchallenged. Urdu-speaking Muslims discussed among themselves the advantages of modern Western science. Periodicals ran special articles on various aspects of western science. The Theory of Relativity, Galileo's achievements, and astronomy were some of the topics discussed plainly without much thought as to how they related to Muslim life.[739] This indicates curiosity about an acceptance of the achievements of western science, and the recognition of the fact that western science could not be ignored. Rather, readers felt an urgent need to engage with it through learning. However, similar to Maulana Abdul Bari's call stressing the need to learn philosophy for a better religious understanding, certain writers linked science to religion. An English-educated Muslim wrote a small piece titled "The true science and the true religion are like twin brothers."[740] He added that if a religion stands in the way of science or vice versa, then neither the science nor the religion can be true. He also underscored that Islam as a religion taught humankind about their scientific attributes and thereby ensured their happiness. It is remarkable how science is not only adopted but claimed to be inherently compatible with Islam. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan also declared several modern scientific ideas as consistent with Islamic doctrines, and for this, he was attacked by many.[741]

Such a claim was not abnormal though. We have other writings describing various sciences as compatible with Islam and Muslims, as we shall see here. The purpose behind such writings was to exhibit Muslims' own contribution to science, rather than simply acknowledging Western accomplishments and discoveries. This was somewhat similar to certain Hindus in the nineteenth century trying to build a coherent anthology of "Hindu science."[742] The only big difference is that whereas the

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[739] *Al Nadwa* , *Makhzan*, and *Aligarh Magazine* published a series of articles on many such topics. A few examples were "Nazariya-e-Nisbiyya: Theory of Relativity," *Aligarh Magazine* 2, 1-2 (February 1923): 1-11; "Jadid 'Ilm-e-Falak ka ek Safha: Aftab aur Siyyarat," *Al Nadwa* 11, 5 (May 1915): 16-30; "Hakim Galileo," *Makhzan* 7, 5 (August 1904): 33-36.
[740] *Al Nadwa* 3, 7 (August 1906): 14-19.
[741] Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, 110-11.
[742] Pratik Chakrabarti, *Western Science in Modern India: Metropolitan Methods, Colonial Practices* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 227-28.

Hindus criticized the European preoccupation with Greece, Muslims of India not only engaged in such a criticism but also claimed the Greek science as the basis of their own Islamic heritage. Abdus Salam Nadwi took the same approach regarding Islam and science as he did with reason and religion. In an article titled "Comparing Science and Religion," he explored science in Islamic sources.[743] Syed Sulaiman Nadwi championed the past achievements of Muslims in the field of science while also lamenting that Muslims had lost their past leadership. He celebrates Muslim scientists such as Zehrawi who developed the science of surgery (*fann-e-jarrahi*).[744] While he laments the fact that Muslims were lagging behind in terms of discoveries in science, he also takes pride in the community's past achievements. We have discussed how Yunani medicine was actively practiced and patronized in the qasbahs. It is true that Muslims acknowledged the advancement of the west in different fields of science, but whether through writings, practices, or celebrations, they also tried to create a genealogy of their own community's achievements in the field.

Through day to day experiences and writings Muslims from the qasbahs of Awadh and Rohilkhand and their surrounding areas were engaged with issues of modernity. They showed that ingredients of modernity were a part of their own historical and religious traditions. Their position vis-à-vis the British in India cannot be characterized as simply that of being impacted and asked to respond. Qasbati Muslims dealt with aspects and ingredients of modernity in an issue-based pattern. They engaged with the issues at hand and participated in various aspects of modernity, sometimes adopting, sometimes rejecting, but in most cases developing adaptations based on negotiations and innovations.

CONCLUSION

This chapter complements the previous chapters in developing an understanding of modernity in qasbahs. Religion, education, and cultural choices,

[743] Abdus Salam Nadwi, "Tatbiq Mazhab wa Science," *Al Nadwa* 7, 6 (June 1910): 3-18.
[744] Syed Sulaiman Nadwi, "Musalman aur Surgery: Zehrawi," *Al Nadwa* 6, 6 (July 1909): 23-30.

such as dress, were some of the aspects of qasbati life that we dealt with in the preceding chapters. This chapter set out with two goals: first, it attempted to situate this work in the larger, overworked field of modernity. As outlined, modernity has been studied variously and by different disciplines such as political science, literary studies, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, urban studies, architecture, and so on. There have also been some important historical studies. While it is a field allied with a myriad of interests and perspectives, there is one underlying fact that we need to keep in mind: since historical conditions and experiences vary among societies, no two societies can be understood by way of one simple theory. Global history is a conglomeration of social groups and units. Over the past decade, modernity studies have attempted to replace Europe as the center of modernity. But the displacement of universal modernity by global modernity does not advance us unless we go beyond the nation as the basis of studying modernity, particularly when a nation such as India is known for its historical diversity. Moreover, understudied societies such as the qasbahs in India provide an alternative picture of modernity.

The second part of this chapter attempted to understand modernity through qasbahs and Muslim intellectuals. Qasbati Muslims dealt with modernity more actively than passively. Their engagement with aspects of modernity shows that their political status as subjects of the Empire did not remove their personal agency. Rather, they took advantage of the colonial situation and developed an interactive relationship with modernity. This chapter tried to provide a view of the context within which the qasbati Muslims worked and the way in which they made modernity a live terrain with contested and debated propositions. Since it is a history of negotiations, contests, and claims, the modernity of qasbahs denies any claim to universality or exclusivity. It instead reinforces the idea that modernity is an aggregate of experiences which a society lived within a given context.

Chapter Seven

CONCLUSION

In most Urdu writings pertaining to any of the qasbahs, the author opens the discussion by describing a qasbah as one of the *mardum-khez* qasbahs, basically meaning a qasbah "producing civilized men or people." Qasbahs did produce men and women of eminence. Their contributions are writ large in history. Literature, theology, education, bureaucracy, administration, journalism, publication, judiciary, and legislature – the history of each of these in South Asia cannot disregard the role that qasbati Muslims have played. Scholars working on different aspects of South Asian history have credited individuals from qasbahs in the context of their own research, as mentioned in the beginning. Such scholars have been explicit about the contributions made by the qasbahs. Despite the recognition that qasbahs deserve, we find this field understudied. No more than a handful of individuals have felt the need to explore and contribute scholarship on qasbahs, that too only by way of mentioning it. Expanding on the idea that the qasbahs need to be included in academic writing, this dissertation has addressed a deficiency in South Asian historiography.

Combining official British and qasbati Urdu sources, this dissertation has worked at two levels. It attempted to construct a history of the qasbahs in a comprehensive manner while also highlighting the features that make each qasbah unique. Qasbahs were always significant economically. In fact, the reason why they developed as an abode of the rich, educated, pious, and powerful owes a lot to successive regimes planting such people in the qasbahs through land allotments and grant making. How precisely did qasbahs become intellectual centers then? With the decline of the Mughal Empire during the eighteenth century, regional and successor states increasingly replaced Delhi. The rulers of the regional kingdoms and successor states sought legitimacy by emulating what the Mughal Emperors had done. They began patronizing arts and letters, the way the Mughal Emperors used to do. Scholars have shown how cities such as Lucknow, Hyderabad, and Murshidabad became the

new centers for artistic and literary activities. The argument this dissertation has made, that qasbahs promoted intellectual dialogue and a literary environment, actually extends this ‘decentralization theory’ from the Mughal to the regional states. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the British administration had become more powerful and organized overtaking the British East India Company in 1858. The new British government displaced the regional states such as Awadh. With the collapse of the regional states and their rulers, the new nucleus of power shifted to qasbahs which housed taluqdars and the zamindars. They were the new reliable partners of the British and had money and means, although not as much as the Nawabs. However, they sought to emulate their former Nawabs with the purpose of making their power more pronounced, rooted, and legitimate. A few ways of doing so were to patronize literary work and engage in the construction of palatial structures. Whether they did so as a matter of moral responsibility or professional ambition is a matter for further investigation. But it was the landed and wealthy in the qasbahs as patrons, and the middle class as participants, that promoted a qasbati culture of education, writing, intellectual activities, architecture, and publishing. Because of their financial standing and sound educational backgrounds, the wealthy also had the time and resources to write and the luxury to get their poetry and prose published. However, this point does not relegate the significance of the Sufis, teachers, writers, journalists, and other professional Muslims without whose contributions, no intellectual project could sustain itself.

Besides the wealthy patronizing arts and culture, there were some other reasons too behind the qasbahs becoming *mardum-khez*. What prompted ordinary educated qasbati Muslims to continue with their literary pursuits? It is agreed that some of them might be making a living out of their engagement in professional activities as a writer or a teacher. But the majority was driven by a concern for history. The compilation of genealogies among families and the practice of writing local history are strong examples which illustrate an exceptional sense of history that the qasbati Muslims possessed. The production of works of biographical nature in

large numbers was for most part the expression of a desire to document history. Whether it is the memoirs or autobiographies, biographies, or biographical dictionaries, they all celebrate features of the qasbati life. The lives and works of poets are also indicative of the level of intellectual attainments of the qasbahs. Most of these writing enterprises grew under the overall support system provided by the wealthy people of the qasbahs, but the qasbatis' own passionate interest and a sense of history acted as the main impulse. One cannot fathom the specific motivations of the authors but whether their writings centered on individuals or the community, the fact that they produced historical literature is enough to assess their enthusiasm for history. In part, it is this sense of history that propelled the qasbati Muslims in their pursuit of literature and literary production.

Religion also shaped the lives of qasbati Muslims in a significant way. Almost all qasbati Muslims, regardless of their educational or professional background, were well grounded in their religious beliefs. Given that qasbahs were small-sized and close-knit societies, the general social environment promoted a close watch on the members of the society. This was one of the major reasons why religion figured prominently in their lives. However, that does not mean that the religion of Islam acted as a kind of primordial identity. Rather, we find different hierarchical, social, sectarian, ideological, and other such realities that marked the religion of Islam with differences. Moreover, the religious literature that we come across in the qasbahs depicts them as societies that combined individual as well as collective identities. The emphasis on religion in the qasbahs was further supplemented by the way religion figured in education, the role religion had in the culture of dress, and didactic religious literature for women. Life in the qasbahs was driven by religious concerns and precepts, even though religion itself was marked with multi-layered and multifocal realities.

This study has underlined that qasbahs, as the centers of cultural and intellectual heritage, make a perfect site for studying modernity. Qasbati Muslims were trained in either Islamic or English-style education or a combination of the two.

Modernity to them was more a way of life than a mere concept. It involved their participation in specific situations brought by British rule. They lived with some of the concepts, perceptions, and challenges that the British introduced to the colonized. Qasbati Muslims adapted to such aspects of modernity while simultaneously confirming their own faith and culture. This dissertation argued that the qasbati modernity was highly contested and interactive. Moreover, contemporary writings reclaim the whole project of modernity as a part of the Islamic tradition. The qasbati Muslims adopted, adapted, and turned away aspects of modernity depending on their individual or community's preferences and/or guided by their religious precepts. But as we analyzed, they also contested some ingredients of modernity as a part of their own heritage from the Islamic past.

As compared to individual towns and cities, qasbahs as a whole made a collective mark in history. While one city could be highly educated, another might have had very poor literacy rates; there could be a city known for its history of cultural legacy and architectural splendor, while many other cities would not even qualify to be rated for the same qualities. But when it came to qasbahs, they all shared certain basic characteristics. Whether in regards to education, religion, literature, intellectual dialogic environment, or cultural practices – all qasbahs shared similarities. That does not refute or ignore their differences, however. Each qasbah had its own typical characteristics from within the features that aligned them with other qasbahs. In other words, features that defined the qasbahs were found in a manner accented by differences of degrees. The qasbah of Rudauli was renowned for Sufism and people who registered their presence in the domain of Urdu literature. The qasbah of Bilgram was strong in sending young educated people to make fortunes as administrators in regional kingdoms and princely states. Amroha was different from either and enjoyed a status in which both the religious and the wealthy, apart from administrators and litterateurs left their marks on history.

The various issues discussed in the context of qasbahs make a good comparison with similar themes in the history of other societies. Cross-cultural

encounters are experiences that every society at one point or other has faced. South Asian Islam has been particularly rich in that it came across a wide array of religious and cultural groups in a period spanning more than a millennium. The qasbati encounter with Western culture and ideology was yet another episode in a long history of encounters. Because of this rich heritage, qasbah studies make a valuable comparison for similar historical situations. Societies that underwent colonization in the past few centuries did have comparable experiences of modernity. Within India, qasbati culture can be seen as a microcosm of South Asian Islam. Muslims in qasbahs lived in a society accented by demographic concerns, caste groups, Shia-Sunni relationships, Hindu-Muslim interactions, class differences, observation of festivals, and so on. In the same framework, qasbati modernity can be seen as a microcosm of Muslim modernization in colonial India. This will also compare well with other religious and regional modernities within India such as modernity among Hindus in North India or in the Bengali society. This study of qasbati modernity, thus, complements existing studies on modernity in different societies.

Coming back to religion, the role South Asian Islam has played in the history of the Islamic world is remarkable. As one of the areas with the largest Muslim population, its contribution to Arabic and Persian literature, Islamic theology, Islamic education, Sufism, intercommunity living, and Muslim modernization has been acknowledged. Studying qasbahs broadens our understanding of the role they have played in the history of South Asian Islam despite their provincial location. Richard Bulliet showed long back the importance of cities lying on the periphery through his study of the city of Nishapur in Iran.[745] But similar to Lucknow, Delhi, and Aligarh in India, the cities of Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Tehran, Isfahan, Samarkand, Jakarta, and Kuala Lumpur, to name a few, have claimed most of the limelight for their role in shaping the history of Islam. No one can deny their significance but the places lying on the edge are worth examining, especially those outside the urban classification.

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[745] Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

Bulliet rightly suggests that the roots of Islamic urbanization differ significantly from those of other major episodes of urbanization in world history.[746] An extension of his statement can be applied to non-urban areas as well. Understanding the macro through the micro always tends to yield a nuanced picture. Non-urban areas in the Islamic world can be possible areas of inquiry in this direction. If nothing else, they will certainly add to our knowledge of Islamic world by studying its constituents.

This dissertation has presented a history of the qasbah in the most comprehensive manner possible at an early stage of qasbati studies. Looking at disparate and various sources, an attempt has been made to construct a history of the qasbahs set in colonial India but informed by its *longue durée* precolonial-colonial continuities and discontinuities. While this study paints a history of the qasbahs, it also makes a case for qasbah studies. However, studying qasbahs also entails challenges, the nature of which vary from investing a longer time than usual to deal with a disorganized set of sources, not easily collected. Other challenges include an overwhelming amount of materials that are hagiographical in nature and the reality that a good part of source materials was lost during the partition of British India. A number of qasbati families moved from India to Pakistan. Many of them attempted to carry their history along by loading invaluable documents in their trunks. Such attempts point to their continued interest they kindled in preserving history. While it was hard to save lives, property, and other belongings in one of the largest migrations in history, documents were also lost. The second blow that hit the qasbahs hard was the UP Zaminadari Abolition and Land Reforms Act of 1950 which was enforced in 1952. Within a few years of partition, it changed the course of history by altering the qasbati structure, for better or worse. Declining financial conditions hit the families hard that had once lived and thrived on a sustained source of income. Qasbahs today are no more than the ruins and remnants of yesterday. However, there is some good news. The pride in the past is not lost, wherever people from the qasbahs live – in the

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[746] Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 68.

qasbahs, the metropolises, or even outside of contemporary India – qasbatis continue to draw a sense of pride in their *mardum-khez* qasbahs.

Glossary

aanchal	veil, the border of hem of a cloak.
adab	respect, virtuous or ethical behavior, moral conduct, refinement, etiquette; also, literature.
ajlaf	base, lower order, low-born.
alam	spear-headed banner of Hasan and Husain, carried in the procession of Muharram.
'alim (pl. *'ulama*)	learned man; in particular, one learned in Islamic legal and religious studies, normally used to denote a Muslim priest.
arzal (sing. *razil*)	common people.
ashraf (sing. *sharif*)	noble, respectable, high-born; gentility among Indian Muslims, including those who trace their ancestry to the Prophet Muhammad, his companions, or to Mughal or Mathan ruling classes.
ashurkhana	a house for the reception of the banners etc. used in the procession for Muharram; a temporary structure for the observation of Muharram rituals.
aswaq (sing. *suq*)	market.
ataliq	tutor.
atrap	same as *ajlaf* ; ordinary Muslims, as opposed to *ashraf.*
awqaf (sing. waqf)	see *waqf*.
azadari	mourning; the ritual of mourning.
azan	call to prayer .
barah wafat	literally, "death on the twelfth," twelfth day of the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal of the Islamic calendar; also known as *Eid-e-milad*, a festival commemorating both the birth and death

	anniversaries of the Prophet Muhammad.
bawli	step-well with several levels.
bigha	a measurement of land, a little less than an acre.
chakla	a district consisting of several paraganas, under the administrative control of a *chakladar*.
chakladar	see *chakla.*
chaudhri/chaudhary	an honorific form of address, a title.
chunari	piece of cloth worn over shirt, by women.
dahariya	Agnostic
darbar list	a list prepared by the British government to honor their Indian allies.
dargah	a Sufi shrine.
darwaza	gate.
dipak	lamp, oil lamp.
diwan	a collection of poems.
doha	a couplet, usually in Hindi.
eidgah	place for performing *Eid* prayers.
falsafa	philosophy.
fan-e-balaghat	rhetoric.
farman	ordinance.
fatwa	a religious verdict pronounced by a religious authority, usually a *mufti*, based on his expert understanding of Islamic law.
faujdar	the military commander of a district or administrative unit.

fiqh	Islamic jurisprudence.
ganj	rural fixed market.
ghazal	love ode, in Urdu, a lyric poem with a rhyme scheme aa, ba, ca etc.
ghazi	a warrior, conqueror, one who fights against the infidels.
giroh	group, ghetto.
haat	periodic peasant market of the countryside.
hadis (hadith)	the traditions, the record of the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad based on the authority of a chain of transmitters.
hajj	the annual pilgrimage to Mecca performed during the month of Zil-Hijjah, required of every Muslim at least once in his or her lifetime.
hakim	a practitioner of the yunani system of medicine. see *tibb*.
hasb-o-nasb	lineage.
haveli	mansion.
hikmat	philosophy.
iftar	evening meal to break the fast during the month of Ramazan.
ilm	knowledge.
imambara	a building used as a hall for poetic recitation and to store models of the martyrs' tombs in regards to Shiite rituals commemorating Muharram.
iqta	an administrative unit, under the charge of an *iqtadar*.
jadid	modern.
jagir	the right given to individuals to collect revenue of a piece of land given by the Mughal emperors as a reward for services.

jagirdar	a holder of *jagir*.
jahez	dowry; money and goods given to the bride by her parents at the time of marriage.
jama	amount of collection.
karamat	miracle, as performed by a saint.
karvansarai	house of the caravan.
khandani	of noble deeds, pertaining to a family, an extended kin group.
khanqah	a Sufi hospice, a building for Sufi activities where the *pir* and his family as well as devotees live.
khas	proper.
khwaja	a title.
kos	a unit of distance.
kuan	a well.
madad-i-ma'ash	revenue-free land grants.
madrasa	Islamic seminary, school for higher Islamic learning.
mahal	an administrative unit, below pargana.
maidan	an open field, extensive plain.
majlis	assembly or gathering; mainly among Shias, where poetic recitations take place during the month of Muharram.
maktab	mosque school; primary school for teaching the Quran, as opposed to a *madrasa*.
malfuzat	collection of sayings, particularly of Sufi saints.
malik	master, an honorific title.
maniharan	female bangle vendor.

manqulat	revealed sciences, the Quran and the hadis, as distinguished from *maqulat*, which are the products of man’s reasoning.
mansab	rank in the Mughal administration, held by a *mansabdar*.
mansabdar	the holder of a rank in the Mughal administrative system.
mantiq	logic, part of the Islamic curriculum.
maqbara	tomb.
maqta	administrator.
m‘aqulat	rational sciences , as different from *manqulat*.
mardum-khez	producing civilized men or people
marsiya	elegy.
masjid	a mosque; a place of worship for Muslims where *namaz* is performed.
masnavi	epic poem on a heroic theme.
matam	mourning.
maujeza	miracle.
mauza	an administrative unit, below a pargana.
mazhab	religion.
megh raag	name of a musical mode in Indian classical music.
milad (maulud)	birthday, the anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad’s birth.
mir adl	chief justice.
mu‘afi	land exempted from paying revenue.
mu‘afidar	a holder of revenue-free land.
mu‘allim	preceptor.

mufti	jurisconsults; a scholar of Muslim law, entitled to issue a *fatwa*.
muhallah	neighborhood, section of a town or qasbah.
muharram	the first month of Islamic calendar; commemoration of the incident of the martyrdom of imam Husain (Prophet Muhammad's grandson) and his followers in the battle of Karbala.
munazara	religious debate.
munsarim	administrator.
munsif	the lowest grade of judge under British government in India.
mushayara	a gathering of Urdu poets for the purpose of reciting poetry.
na'at	poetry in praise of the Prophet.
naii	new.
namaz	the canonical Islamic prayer, performed five times daily.
nawab	a Muslim princely ruler; a style assumed by governors of provinces in later Mughal times.
nazm	a term for Urdu verse, as opposed to specific verse forms.
niyat	intention.
pargana	the administrative unit of a district.
patta	a dog's collar.
peshewar	occupational; classified on the basis of profession.
pir	a Sufi religious master who leads disciples on the mystical way.
puja	worship, in the context of Hinduism.
pundit	a Hindu priest; a knowledgeable person.

purdah	the practice or custom of veiling among women.
qanungo	an officer in a district or pargana.
qasida	an ode in praise of a person, usually the poet's patron.
qazi	an Islamic judicial officer , with local administrative, judicial, and religious authority.
rabi-ul-awwal	the third month of Islamic calendar.
rais (pl. *rausa*)	chief, an honorific title; an Indian of respectable position.
risala (pl. *rasa'il*)	a journal, pamphlet.
rozina	stipend.
rubaii (pl. *rubaiyat*)	quatrain.
saawan	a month in Hindu calendar, when it rains the most.
sadaat	descendants of the Prophet Muhammad.
sadr	one who presides.
salahkaar	adviser.
sanad	a grant, a title deed; a diploma or certificate.
shaikh	a Muslim believed to be descendent from the companions of the Prophet
sha'ir (pl. *shu'ara*)	poet
sha'iri	poetry
shajrah	genealogy, family tree.
sharif (pl. *ashraf*)	see *ashraf*.
shayyukh	pl. of *shaikh*
shu'ara	see *sha'ir*.

shurafa	respectable Muslims. see *ashraf*.
silsilah	order, the chain of Sufis who share spiritual descent from a common founder.
sirat	biography.
suba	a province in the Mughal empire, under the governance of a *subadar*.
taluqdar	an intermediary for land revenue collection; a landholder who collects revenue not only from lands under his control but also from other landholders.
tabarra	a public pronouncement practiced by some Shia Muslims cursing the first three caliphs.
tafsir	Islamic exegesis; commentary on Islamic texts.
tahsil	sub-division of a district, held by a *tahsildar.*
tahsildar	see *tahsil*.
tajdid	renewal.
takhallus	a poet's pen name, pseudonym.
taluqa	an area.
tanazzuli	decline.
tarannum	musical recitation of Urdu poetry.
taraqqi	progress.
tarikh	history; also, date.
tasawwuf	mysticism, in a Sufi context.
tawq	neck-ring worn as a badge of servitude.
tavalla	an oath of allegiance to the Imams in Shia Islam.

tawafunnisa	a Shia ritual performed during Hajj.
tazia	an effigy of a tomb; replica of a tomb of Hasan and Husain, carried in Muharram processions.
taziadari	see *tazia*.
tazkirah	biographical dictionary.
thanedar	a police officer.
tibb	the classical Islamic system of medicine, practiced by a *hakim*; also know as *yunani* medicine.
'ulama (sing. *'alim*)	see *'alim*.
ulum-e-diniya	Islamic sciences.
'urs	death anniversary of a Sufi saint; the festival commemorating that date held at the shrine since a saint's death in Sufism is considered as his/her union with god.
ustad	a tutor or master.
wahdat-ul-wujud	a Sufi doctrine; unity of appearance in contrast to unity of being.
waqf (pl. *awqaf*)	religious endowment for charitable purposes.
watan	country, community, nation, land of birth.
watan-parasti	adoration of one's homeland; patriotism.
yunani	literally, "Greek." a medical system based on Greek science.
zamindar	landlord with the right to collect rent and to regulate the occupancy of all other tenures on his estate.
zamindari	pertaining to the lifestyle of a landlord ; rights of a *zamindar*.

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VITA

Mohammad Raisur Rahman was born in 1975 to Azizur Rahman and Najma Bano in Ranchi, Jharkhand, India. After obtaining a Bachelor's degree in History from St. Xavier's College, Ranchi, he entered the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi from where he received an M. A. and M. Phil in Modern Indian History. He entered The University of Texas at Austin in 2002 to pursue a Ph.D program in History under the guidance of Gail Minault. He has native proficiency in Urdu and Hindi, and has learned Persian and Bengali. Having conducted dissertation research every summer since 2002, he spent 2005-2006 in India working with formal archival and informal collections and private repositories. He worked as a Teaching Assistant at the University of Texas at Austin for nine semesters. He will join the Department of History at Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem in North Carolina as an Assistant Professor of South Asian History in August 2008.

Permanent address: Department of History
Wake Forest University
P. O. Box 7806
Winston-Salem, NC 27109

This dissertation was typed by the author.