

BETWEEN ORTHODOXY AND MYSTICISM:
THE LIFE AND WORKS OF
SHAIKH MUḤAMMAD IBN ṬĀHIR AL-FATTANĪ (914/1508-986/1578)

by

MUHAMMAD ASHRAF EBRAHIM DOCKRAT

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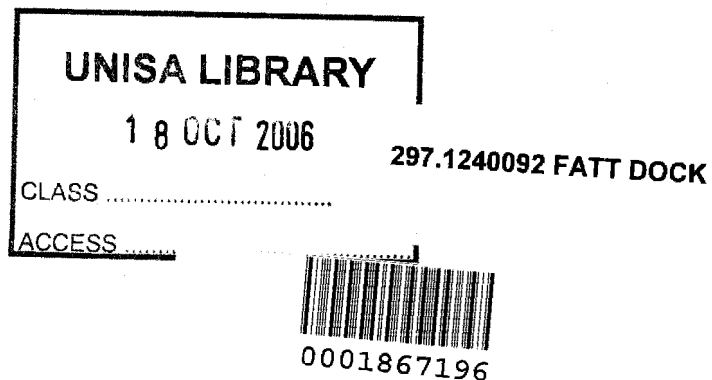
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SUMMARY

This study focuses on orthodoxy and mysticism in the religious thought of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī (914/1508-986/1578), a sixteenth century Sunnī Bohra scholar. Islām had persistently presented two faces: one that was *sharī'ah*-minded and concerned with the outward, socially cognizable behaviour and another mystical-minded, concerned with the inward, personal life of the individual. The former was the domain of the *ulamā*, whereas the *ṣūfī pīrs* accepted the care of the latter. While there were always those who accepted the one face of Islām as genuine and mistrusted the other or even regarded it as spurious, Shaikh al-Fattānī succeeded in marrying the two. He was at once both a mystic *pīr* and an orthodox religious scholar.

A biography of Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī based on the previous works is attempted with the aim being to collect the factual information pertaining directly to the details of his life. The last years of Shaikh al-Fattānī's life were devoted to his reform involvement in his community and particularly to the removal of the Mahdawīyyah thoughts of (Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī) who had declared himself R ?
* the promised Mahdī.

Against this backdrop of the life account of al-Fattānī elements of orthodoxy and mysticism are identified in his scholarly works. Best known for his work *Majmā' biḥār al-anwār fī gharāib al-tanzīl wa laṭāif al-akhbār*, all the extant works of the Shaikh are discussed.

To understand the subject within the context of his ethnic identity, aspects of the Bohra community are studied. It is shown that their occupation as merchants and a history that emphasised their ancient link to the faith of Islām were some of the factors that shaped their group identity. Religious affiliation of the Bohras is explored in detail and after examining the various religious groupings it is evident



that the principal communities amongst them differ substantially in their belief systems. Muslims of Sunnī Bohra descent are to be found in South Africa. The Sunnī Bohra community in general and their '*ulamā*' in particular are today constantly challenged to not only be devoted to orthodoxy but to ṣūfī doctrine and discipline as well.

Notes on Transliteration

The system of transliteration followed in this thesis is as follows:

Consonants

ء ¹		ر	r	غ	gh
ب	b	ز	z	ف	f
ت	t	س	s	ق	q
ث	th	ش	sh	ك	k
ج	j	ص	ṣ	ل	l
ح	ḥ	ض	ḍ	م	m
خ	kh	ط	ṭ	ن	n
د	d	ظ	ẓ	ه	h
ذ	dh	ع	ʿ	و	w
				ي	y

¹except when initial

Short Vowels

اَ	a
اُ	u
اِ	i

Long Vowels

اَـ	اِـ	اُـ	ā
		وـ	ū
	يـ		ī

Diphthongs

اَو	aw
اِى	ai

When the noun or adjective ending in *tāʾ marbūṭah* is indefinite, or is preceded by the definite article, without following *hamzah al-waṣl*, *tāʾ marbūṭah* is transliterated *h*.

When the word ending in *tāʾ marbūṭah* is in the construct state before *hamzah al-waṣl*, *tāʾ marbūṭah* is transliterated *h*.

The relative adjective is transliterated *ī* and not *īy* at the end of a word when not followed by *hamzah al-waṣl*.

The *al* of the article is always transliterated as *al* whether it is followed by a “sun letter” or not, i.e. regardless of whether or not it is assimilated in pronunciation to the initial consonant of the word to which it is attached.

Ibn and *bin* are both transliterated *ibn* in all positions.

Note the transliteration of Allāh alone and in combination:

Allāh

billāh

lillāh

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1. Orthodoxy and mysticism: two contesting trends

The history of Islāmic thought records the conflict between orthodoxy and mysticism as expressions of religious belief.

Orthodoxy may be defined as the principle and system of maintaining uniformity in belief and practice by determining what is true or desirable, by discouraging deviation and applying appropriate social and legal sanctions to enforce conformity. Orthodoxy reflects the tendency of adhering to tradition, of accepting the results of what is held to be valid thought and experience and of objecting to and resisting change as something wrong. There is an orthodox point of view in regard to property, liberty or personal conduct and this view is embodied in the legal system. In matters of religion orthodoxy can be most definite and comprehensive and it is in the context of religion that this term is primarily used. In the religious life of Muslims, the aim of orthodoxy is to achieve system, definiteness and the harmonisation of details with the whole. It is assumed that the individual Muslim and the organisation of his life have to be subject to the system of the shari'ah. Definiteness in beliefs and practices and the logical integration of the details of life so that they form a consistent whole will ensure success in this world and salvation in the next. Correct practice was deduced from true belief.

Orthodoxy regards personal experience of value if it confirms dogma. If it does not it is supposed that, like doubt, it could lead to error and therefore must be rejected. The strength of orthodoxy has always been its ability to clarify the obligations to be fulfilled and to assure Muslims of the liberties they possess and the rewards they would obtain if the obligations which the *shari'ah* has imposed upon them are fulfilled. There has however been amongst Muslims, as amongst the followers of other religions, the mystical type of mind which,

because of its peculiar tendency, seeks confirmation of belief through its own individual experience. Mysticism is therefore the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order. The mystic experience may lead the believer towards a more complete and fruitful acceptance of current and established belief. Such an experience may also however inspire the mystic towards attempts to adjust their belief in conformity with the demands of circumstances. Muslim mystics, who came to be known as *ṣūfis*, described the spiritual path that they followed and the states that they passed through as the *ṭarīqah*.

The question that this thesis hopes to address is whether these two competing tendencies of orthodoxy and mysticism can develop alongside one another and be found in a single individual.

The classical example of an individual who was both *sharī'ah*-minded and an admirer of *ṣūfism* is that of Imām al-Ghazālī (1058-1111). For al-Ghazālī the integration of deeds, virtues and knowledge was the crux of Muslim life. His greatest achievement was his ability to reconcile orthodox *sunnī* belief with Islāmic mysticism.

As a South African Muslim of Indian extraction, I believe that there have been, in the Muslim world, other scholars who were able to follow in the example of the famous al-Ghazālī. A sizeable proportion of South African Muslims, including this researcher, belong to the Sunnī Bohra community. In order to examine the phenomenon in which the trends of orthodoxy and mysticism are found in a single scholar, this thesis will present a second example in the footsteps of al-Ghazālī. In view of his historical relevance and the links to the South African Muslim community, a study of the life and works of the 16th century Sunnī-Bohra academic, Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī is important here.

2. In the tradition of al-Ghazālī

As one tries to examine the religious thought of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī one cannot help but to think of the journey in search of truth that al-Ghazālī (d.1111) undertook. He began his life as an orthodox Sunnī Muslim and was appointed to a lectureship in theology at the Islāmic university of Baghdad. Here after much spiritual and intellectual turmoil, he arrived at a position of total scepticism. This too failed him and after many years of wandering and retreat he found peace and certainty in ṣūfism. He then returned to Baghdad, where he composed his finest work, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn* [The Revival of the Sciences of Religion]. Al-Ghazālī has an indispensable position in Islāmic thought. As Goldziher (1981, 245) asserts: "Since the twelfth century, al-Ghazālī has been the final authority" for mainstream Islām. Al-Ghazālī attempted to combine the spiritual life with the legal code of Islām. The marriage between ṣūfism and law is his great achievement. He has therefore been called the great reconciler of orthodox Islām.

Al-Ghazālī is aware that the real confrontation is between the legalists and spiritualists. He believes that there is a need to reconcile legal and spiritual matters with each other. According to him there is a mutual relationship between legal and spiritual matters that could be compared with the relationship between the body and spirit. For him, legal principles establish the *body* of Islāmic rites where the spiritual principles establish their *soul*. Schimmel (1978, 95) succinctly summarises al-Ghazālī's view as follows:

* All that Ghazzālī teaches...is only to help man to live a life in accordance with the sacred law, not by clinging exclusively to its letter, but by an understanding of its deeper meaning, by sanctification of the whole life, so that he is ready for the meeting with his Lord at any moment...This teaching-a marriage between mysticism and law-has made Ghazzālī the most influential theologian of medieval Islām.

In light of Schimmel's explanation, we could say that the law, which is the domain of the orthodox 'ulamā', is the answer to the question of how Muslims

are to practice religious rites such as pilgrimage and prayers. Ṣūfism is the answer to why they practice religious rites. The law is necessary for the form while ṣūfism is necessary for understanding the content. The tradition of al-Ghazālī is continued in scholars such as Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī who broke with the one-dimensional approaches of the ṣūfīs or the orthodox legalists regarding the relationship between the ritual and the spiritual.

In his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* [Deliverance from Error] al-Ghazālī presents us with an intellectual analysis of his spiritual growth. He divides the seekers after truth into the four distinct groups of the *mutakallimūn* [Theologians], *falāsafah* [Philosophers], *ta'limīs* [Authoritarians] and the *ṣūfīs* [Mystics].

Like al-Ghazālī before him, Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī also encountered the *ta'limīs* and the *ṣūfīs* in his lifetime. [The *ta'limīs* who were also known as the *Ismā'īliyyah* and *Bāṭiniyyah* believed that the truth cannot be attained by reason but by accepting the pronouncements of the infallible Imām.] *Source?* While it was the official ideology of the rival Faṭimid caliphate based in Cairo during the lifetime of al-Ghazālī, it was the religion of the Dāwūdī Bohras which had come to them through preachers from Yemen during the period of Shaikh al-Fattanī.

As far as ṣūfism was concerned, al-Ghazālī believed that it could easily be combined with orthodoxy but was critical of mystical teachings which led to a heterodox theology. Al-Ghazālī received much help from the ṣūfīs in his personal life. The home town of Shaikh al-Fattanī was famously known as Pīran Pattan [Pattan of the Saints]. Both Imām al-Ghazālī and Shaikh al-Fattanī were at great pains to keep their mysticism in harmony with orthodox beliefs and with the performance of the common religious duties. When these scholars became mystics they did not cease to be orthodox Muslims.

3. Relevance of this study

A study of the life and works of Shaikh al-Fattani, a Gujarati, Sunni Bohra scholar, which is attempted here fully for the first time, is not merely important for the subcontinent of India where he lived and taught the Islāmic sciences, particularly *ḥadīth* studies or in the holy lands where his works were taught in the *ḥaramain al-sharifain* [the two sacred sanctuaries of Makkah and Madinah]. They are equally important in South Africa where a large section of Gujarati Sunni Bohra Muslims live. The Sunni Bohras who adhere strictly to the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah* are the products of the Shaikh's age, sagacity and *mujāhadah* [efforts].

India, during the fifteenth century, had experienced a change in its politico-religious structure. The Muslim invasion brought about political changes in a pre-dominantly Hindu society which was characterised by the oppressive caste system. The foreign invasion by Muslim rulers brought in its wake a dramatic debut of Islāmic scholarship that was to impact positively on India's role as a centre of Islāmic learning. From the Khalji dynasty to the Moghul emperors, Islāmic sciences developed bringing about a renewed interest in the Islāmic traditions.

It was in such a milieu that Shaikh al-Fattani was born in Anhilwara, Pattan in Gujarāt to reassert the Islāmic value system taught by the Prophet Muhammad *ṣallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam* through his *aḥādīth* [Traditions] and lived by his *ṣaḥābah*, *tābi'ūn* and *tab' tābi'ūn* [Companions, Successors and Followers]. It was through the teachings of the Qur'ān and *sunnah* that a new atmosphere was created, overpowering the Vedantic or pantheistic tendencies.

4. The differences between orthodox Islām and sūfism

The question that may be raised is what was unique about the sūfism of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Tahir al-Fattani that allowed it to coexist with an orthodox

position which demanded strict adherence to the tenets of the *sharī'ah*. Such a question presupposes the fact that *ṣūfism* that appeared some 1200 years ago underwent a prolonged period of evolution and eventually came to hold an important place in the life of the community. That it is part and parcel of the Islāmic ideological system is evidenced by its active resurgence in many countries even today.

For Shaikh al-Fattanī, his preceptors al-Muttaqī and al-Ḥaithamī and his students *taṣawwuf* teaching was rooted in Islām with *sharī'ah* and *taṣawwuf* inextricably linked. Certainly not all *ṣūfī* tenets were in its long history compatible with Islām; certain *ṣūfī* trends fell foul of the *sharī'ah* and developed autonomously. An attempt will be made to identify some of the trends on which some *ṣūfis* and the proponents of orthodox Islām disagreed. It would be appropriate to try to glean Shaikh al-Fattanī's inclination with regards to each of these trends.

Oglu (1988, 245-250) has identified the six "basic principles distinguishing orthodox Islām from Sufism" as:

1. Attitudes towards the *sharī'ah*
2. The problem of *waḥdah al-wujūd*
3. On the essence of God and soul
4. Attitudes towards Muslim Rites
5. Love and the use of symbols
6. Relationship between magic, reason and knowledge

The *sharī'ah*, as a code which governs the spiritual and secular life, was accepted and formally recognized by the *ṣūfis*. They however distinguished *sharī'ah* from *ḥaqīqah* [the Truth]. The orthodox such as al-Fattanī regarded the *sharī'ah* to be *ḥaqīqah*. The ultimate goal for a *ṣūfī* is not *sharī'ah* but *ḥaqīqah*. Western scholars of *ṣūfism* such as Nicholson (1914) have documented this trend. Ghanī Kasym (1330 A.H., 53) has observed that some *ṣūfis* make a distinction between *sharī'ah* and the Truth. This, he says, is ignorance since *sharī'ah* is the Truth.

Waḥdah al-wujūd was a *ṣūfī* concept that exposed its proponents to severe criticism from the orthodox theologians who regarded its pantheistic conception unacceptable. The *ṣūfis* spoke about the unity between God, man and the material world. They argued that God's essence permeates everything, including man. From an Islāmic and *sharī'ah* viewpoint this was regarded as *shirk* [polytheism] and a negation of God's unity. Although both the theologians of Islām and the *ṣūfis* claimed God to be the creator of the entire material world, when it comes to God's relationship with the material world, some *ṣūfī* teachings are at variance with orthodox teaching.

By the 14th century, well before the time of al-Fattānī, Muslim India was home to three main schools of Islāmic thought on this subject. The *Ijādiyyah*, *Wujūdiyyah* and the *Shuhūdiyyah* emerged as the three main trends in this critical period of the history of the Subcontinent.

The *Ijādiyyah* are the Creationists or Transcendentalists, who believe that God is separate from His Creation, an extra-cosmic God who created the heaven and earth in six days and ascended his throne on the seventh. He is the maker, the engraver, the painter. Everything is from Him [*hama-azust*].

"The simple belief of the Musalmans, " says Sir Sayyid Ahmad, "is that God is one, He exists by his own essence. He brought all things from nothingness into thingness. All things are dependent on Him for their existence. He is not dependent on anything. He is unique in His essence and in His attributes and in His works. Nobody takes part in his actions; His essence and His knowledge are not like our essence and knowledge, His hearing is not like our hearing, nor are His intention, His power and His speech like our intention, our power and our speech. There is no resemblance between these except in name. Creating is His special attribute, for nobody can create a thing out of nothing. Even the action of a man is created by Him, only that in the nature of a man He has created independent intention and will to do good and evil works. He is not contained in anything nor does anything contain Him. He surrounds everything by His

Essence and is near and with everything; but His proximity and propinquity are not understood by us" (Khān n.d., 159). This, in essence, is the position of the Ash'ari school of the mutakallimūn [dialecticians] that has been taken up by a group of the ṣūfīs.

The second school which exerted a significant influence at the time was the *Wujūdīyyah*. One of the main proponents of this school was the great thinker Shaikh Muḥiyyuddīn ibn al-ʿArabī¹ (d. 1241), a native of Spain. Although he died in Syria he is counted amongst the ṣūfīs of the West. His doctrine was that man (or the world) comes out of the knowledge of God and gains the experience of this world and then returns to his own *ʿain* [reality]. Here duality is struck at the very root. There is therefore only one essence, which has manifested in many out of its own knowledge; which knowledge in the second stage of Emanation is itself. Having gained experience, it travels back to its own reality in the knowledge of God. "Everything is Him" [*hama ust*].

For the orthodox, the ideas of *waḥdah al-wujūd* were unacceptable since they claimed that the Prophets instructed man in a *tawḥīd* in which God is one and did not insist that Being is one. The Prophetic religion is based on the premise of *ithnainiyāt* [duality] rather than the identity of God and the world. The second objection was that the concept of *waḥdah al-wujūd* conflicts with many a fundamental principle of Islām and provides, for instance, a justification for idolatry. Since this philosophy identifies the world with God, the worship of any object is the worship of God provided it is worshipped as a manifestation of God. This is what the pantheists and idol worshipper of India believed and this doctrine of the ṣūfīs therefore gained popularity in its Islāmic manifestation. Another objection against *waḥdah al-wujūd* is that the doctrine denies that there is anything evil at all. As a manifestation of God, the Absolute Good, everything in existence is good; it is evil only in relation to something other than itself. Even heresy and infidelity are not evil; in fact they are good in themselves and bad or less good only in comparison to faith and Islām. Such a position, it was held, was contrary to the mission of the prophets and would discourage preaching and proselytisation. The defenders of *waḥdah al-wujūd*

point out that there is an obvious difference between pantheism and their doctrine. Although the One exists, the essence of things are in His knowledge, much as there are plans in the knowledge of a builder. When a plan exists as a plan in knowledge it is no longer the builder itself. Identity no longer exists and in reverting the plan reverts to its type. They point out that Pantheism even in Hindu philosophy is a much abused word. Every stock and stone is not God-it simply means that everything is instinct with consciousness. Pantheism may be the doctrine of Divine Immanence (i.e., God pervades His universe), which the theological sect of the Mu'tazilites came to believe in, but the original philosophy of Ibn al-'Arabī is of a loftier kind. The world was not created causally but exiated in the knowledge of God, and His knowledge is as eternal as His *Dhāt* [Being] itself.

Shaikh 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jilī (d. 811 A. H) the renowned author of *al-Insān al-kāmil* and several other books, was the founder of the next important sect of *Shuhūdiyyah*. Unlike al-Ghazālī, who believed that attributes alone are in evidence and essence is an unknown quantity (a zero), al-Jilī believes that essence itself is in evidence, and attributes are always hidden. Man has no cognizance of benevolence, which is always hidden in the benevolent one, who alone is in evidence. "*Al-ḥaqqu maḥsūsūn, wa al-khalqu ma'qūlun*" [The essence is sensed, the world is only inferred]. He believed that God created the world out of nothingness. Ex-nihilo nihil fit of the Greek philosophy did not find a place in his ideas. He argued that *forms* come out of nothingness and recede into nothingness. Wax is moulded into forms, which therefore come out of nothingness. Forms come out of the knowledge of God; but before they come out they existed in God. Ḥāfiẓ, the Persian poet, was in his poetry, an exponent of Jilī. When attributes become manifest, they receive names [*asmā'*]. Names, are therefore mirrors. For without names, attributes would not manifested themselves. The names [*asmā'*] reveal all the secrets of the being. This, the theory of Divine Immanence, found a place in the thought of ṣūfis in India. They also held that names are mirrors for yet another reason. God created the world out of nothingness. The Divine attributes then became manifest by contrast with the attributes of "nothingness". "Nothingness" has no-speech, no-

sight, no-hearing, no-providence, no-good, etc. The power of speech, sight, hearing and the goodness of God become manifest, by contrast with lack of the same in this "nothingness" or form [*‘ain*].

The essence possesses the attributes of completion and permanency and the *‘adam* [nothingness] has the attributes of "imperfection" and degeneracy and decay. The *Wujūdīyyah* have only one Essence, of God ; and the *Dhat* [Being] of God becomes the *Dhat* of the created in manifestation. The *Dhat* of the created is *‘abd* [slave] and therefore bounded by attributes and names. The *tawḥīd* [Unity] consists in merely "dropping off limitations or indications" [*al-tawḥīd isqāt al-ishārāt*]. The first circumscription was in God descending in his own knowledge. This is the stage of the reality of Muḥammad according to the ṣūfis and of Christos according to the Gnostic Christians.

The *Shuhūdīyyah* however believe in two *Dhāts*-one of the reality and the other of the non-reality; the one of God and the other of the *‘abd*. That of the *‘abd* is however zero [*‘adam*] with *‘adam* being and *idāfī* [relational] and not *ḥaqīqī* [real] concept. If there is an essence called *‘adam*, it would mean that there are two *Dhāts* and a dualism. The *‘adam al-idāfī* is only relatively a *‘adam*. It is a mere zero. Adding zeros to a number does not change its value. *‘Adam* is therefore an emblem in the knowledge of God. Since perfection appertains to the *Dhāt*, God is goodness itself. Imperfection relates to *‘adam*; and hence Evil is the manifestation of *‘adam*. The judgement that we give when we judge an action to be foolish or wicked, a statement false and a work of art ugly are all metaphorical. What is intended is not that there is an existence called error, ugliness or foolishness, but only that there is a given existence and that another is wanting².

Shaikh Muḥīyuddīn Ibn al-‘Arabi held that the Divine one descended into His own knowledge. When knowledge illuminated the being, the world evolved (to outward appearances) gradation by gradation and became manifest. This want of knowledge is however not a deficiency in the essence. In one aspect it is

absorbed in itself and there is no manifestation and in another it frees itself from itself and then the attributed become manifest.

Besides the three schools enumerated above, there are the schools that hold Allāh to be

1. Thought

2. Will

3. Love (Beauty)

4. Light

source ? ?

Those who take God to be Thought are similar to the *Shuhūdīyyah*. Their doctrine states: *Anna huwa al-āna kamā kāna* [He is now as He was before]. Thought makes no change in individuality. Worlds may come and go but He goes on forever-unchanged and unchangeable.

Those who expounded the idea of Will included Shaqīq Balkhī, Ibrāhim Adham, Rābiʿah Basrī and others. The whole is the manifestation of the Will. While Ibn al-ʿArabī held that it is God that is manifest through forms on His knowledge, this group of ṣūfis argued that if there were no Will, the forms could not be manifest.

The "Love" schools held that the Universe is a mirror in which God sees Himself. Hence the Universe is the manifestation of Beauty and Love. Maʿrūf Karkhī and Ḥāfiẓ Shirāz, the famous poet of Shirāz and others were the exponents of this doctrine.

By the sixteenth century, Gujarāt was home to a manifestation of all these schools of *taṣawwuf*. On the question of the essence of God and soul there existed contradictions between the teachings of the ṣūfis and the orthodox *ʿulamāʾ*. In the Qurʾān and other Islāmic sources, the angels, the soul etc are represented as non-corporal. The ṣūfi pantheists however permitted a fusion of God with nature and man and claimed that God was visible. They allowed that God had a definite essence in a definite place. It was al-Ghazālī who sharply

criticised those ṣūfīs who allowed for "a disappearance in Allāh" and "a dissolving or fusion with Him". Al-Ghazālī declared (1987, 250) that: "Almighty Allāh and the angles are neither in the world, nor beyond the world."

The other point on which the ṣūfīs and the orthodox scholars clashed was on account of the attitude that some ṣūfīs had towards the basic obligations and rites that Muslims are required to fulfill. Some ṣūfīs avoided the basic injunctions of prayer, pilgrimage and fasting. Masset (1961, 159) notes some of the devices employed by ṣūfīs as they tried to circumvent Islāmīc observances. He states: "The first is liturgy showing itself in gradually pushing out the five canonical prayers with mystical zeals (*zikrs*); the second one is the ethical showing itself in moving from entrusting God (*tawakkuḥ*) to an absolute passive quietism resulting in actually complete indifference to the outside world." Ṣūfī maxims such as: "The true ka'bah is the heart and not a house of stone vexed and antagonised the theologians. In their zeal the ṣūfīs used the flute and lute during *dhikr* whereas the orthodox *‘ulamā’* had already declared music and singing impermissible.

The idea of the infinite love of God was basic to ṣūfī teachings. Some however took this concept to extremes of practice. They also maintained that truth cannot be known by knowing the appearance of things. Each *ẓāhir* [appearance] has an inner essence known only to men of truth. They therefore employed symbolism in their poetry and other writings.

Nicholson (1914, 12) observed that fortune telling and magic were common among Egyptian mystics. Muslim theologians realised that belief in the supernatural was necessary to support religion and to understand divine truths and that in this respect the role of reason was secondary. On the whole however they held that reason has an important and clearly defined role in the Islāmīc system. The ṣūfīs on the contrary were suspicious of reason and in fact believed that to attain truth reason has to be left behind.

5. Primary sources for this study

The central source-material for this study will be the extant works of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī. While we are aware of some thirty three ~~works~~ of the Shaikh, six of these works are available to this researcher.

1. *Majma' biḥār al-anwār fī gharāib al-tanzīl wa laṭāif al-akhbār.*

This lexicon in the very intricate and hair splitting field of *gharīb al-ḥadīth* [obscure words in the Prophetic Traditions] is the best known work of the Shaikh. The work remains valued by scholars to this day and is testimony to the Shaikh's abilities as a *muḥaddith* [specialist in the study of the Traditions]. It is worthy of note that, as the title of this work suggests, such a study can be classified as a work in the field of *‘ulūm al-Qur’ān* [sciences of the Qur’ān] too.

2. *Tadhkirah al-mawḍu‘āt*

Tadhkirah al-mawḍu‘āt is another work compiled in the field of *ḥadīth* studies. It is an excellent example of writing in this genre. Research in this field demands a wide and in depth study of the Traditions since the compiler of any work in this field must be able to sift the true *aḥādīth* from the fabricated ones using not only his knowledge of the narrators but also a deeper sense for the true sayings of the Prophet that is acquired only through years of selfless devotion to the field.

3. *Qānūn al-du‘afā’*

It is only experts in the field of *ḥadīth* studies who compose works of *rijāl* ("knowledge of the men"). Al-Fattānī's contributions in this field not only show his expertise but also his fresh and novel approach to a field that has seen compilations by the famous scholars of Islam. While other compilations on *rijāl* are more general in nature and cover the biographies and credentials of many persons, al-Fattānī has in his *Qānūn al-du‘afā’* in a very novel way made mention of only those persons who are weak narrators or who have attributed fabrications. The extreme usefulness of

such a compendium would be clear to any serious scholar of the Traditions.

explain

4. *al-Mughnī fi ḍabṭ al-rijāl*.

Another compilation in the same field is Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir's *al-Mughnī fi ḍabṭ al-rijāl*. Here he has provided notes on some of the narrators as he thought appropriate. This list is arranged alphabetically and contains some such information that is not found even in more famous works on the subject.

5. *Kifāyah al-mufritin fī sharḥ shāfiyyah*

As a student and linguist of the Arabic language Shaikh is the author of *Kifāyah al-mufritin fī sharḥ shāfiyyah*. This is a commentary on the work on grammar written by Ibn Hājib.

6. *Kitāb al-tawassul* ?

The book comprises of biographical notes of not only the *ḥadīth* scholars but also includes short biographies of the Companions of the Prophet, their Successors [*tābi'ūn*] and the Followers [*tab' tābi'ūn*] as well as the latter day scholars of *ḥadīth* and the jurists. While giving notice of every great personality al-Fattani traces their descent, mainly by dates of their birth and death, their *riḥlah* [journey in quest of *ḥadīth*] if any, the names of their teachers and at times their successors and students. As far as available he also gives his critical remarks with regards to the position of the *rāwī* [narrator].

error

7. Since al-Fattani was actively involved in teaching, many such *shurūḥāt* and *ḥāshiyyāt* [commentaries and notes] have been prepared by him. These types of works may have been prepared during the course of his lectures and his teaching of these works. This is evident from the complete list of his works provided in Chapter Three.

6. Methodology

Q? The methodology found to be most appropriate to a study of this nature is that propounded by Glaser and Strauss and which has come to be known as grounded theory. This is essentially an emergent methodology that goes through the following often overlapping phases: data-collection, note-taking, coding, memoing, sorting and writing. At the heart of this process is the aim to discover the theory implicit in the data. The reason that this methodology was chosen is that it is explicitly emergent. During the course of this research, the phases of data collection, coding and memoing occurred simultaneously from the beginning. This was followed by the process of sorting. The final phase was that of writing where the data was integrated into a coherent argument. R?

Together with the method described above, this study has, as far as possible, adopted a phenomenological approach as its underlying interpretive paradigm. It is held that models based on this approach are suitable for the study of religions (King 1985, 1:108-125). Phenomenology of religion owes its origin to the philosophical thought of the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1930). Phenomenology may either be an effort to describe religious reality or it can be used in an effort to interpret it. Phenomenology seeks to employ an interesting paradoxical approach: that of the "objective", detached approach, epochê, combined with an empathetic, intuitive approach, the eidetic vision. Epochê can be described as "bracketing", or the suspension of judgement on the part of the investigator. The eidetic vision is an effort to empathise and to grasp intuitively the object of study (Barbosa da Silva 1982, 27). R?

7. Chapterisation

It might help to see this study as located within several concentric circles: most narrowly within the biography of the subject; a little more broadly within his scholarly contribution; next in the context of his ethnic identity and still further in terms of his religious belief.

In keeping with the approach described above the plan followed in this study will be to firstly construct a biography of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī relying on the sources. The study that follows focuses on Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī's formulation of religious thought. It may therefore be appropriate to begin by reconstructing the essential biographical details in the life of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī. A biography of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī based on the previous works is attempted here with the aim being to use available resources to collect as much factual information pertaining directly to the details of al-Fattanī's life. Later in the (thesis) other dimensions of his life, which (is) contributory to a better appreciation of al-Fattanī's contribution, are discussed. XPTCV

The aim in Chapter Three is then to provide an overview of the works of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī which are available to this researcher. Since the Shaikh has left no single work in which he expounds his beliefs, the purpose of the analysis in this chapter would be to identify aspects of Shaikh al-Fattanī's religious thought as reflected in his works.

The religious thought of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī has also been shaped by other systems of belief that he came into contact with. Chapter Four and Chapter Five will be devoted to a discussion of these. In Chapter Four, the identity of the community to which al-Fattanī belonged i.e. the Bohra will be explored. Since he devoted his reform activities towards this community, this background information is important. In the following chapter the beliefs and practices of the Sunnī Bohra will be examined and the process that led to them adopting a religious identity that was distinct from that of the Dāwūdī and other types of Bohras will be outlined.

Chapter Six is then devoted to drawing conclusions about the religious thought of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī in the light of his literary contribution, his opposition to the Dāwūdī Bohra and the Mahdawiyyah.

CHAPTER ONE: NOTES

¹ Ibn al-ʿArabī's philosophy has very adequately been explained by Dr. A.E. Affī in his *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid al-Dīn Ibnul ʿArabī* (n.d. C.U.P., reprint Lahore, Ashraf). ʿAfī has also edited Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* with copious notes on it (1946. Cairo). Titus Burckhardt's *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (1968. Lahore) is in fact an introduction to Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine. Henri Corbin's *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn al-ʿArabī* (1969. Princeton University Press) is a penetrating study into Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought. *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts of Sufism and Taoism* of Toshihuko Izutsu (1966-67. 2 vols. Tokyo) has captured the main concepts of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought based on his *Fuṣūṣ*.

² The *Shuhūdiyyah* usually project the following Qurʾānic verses in order to substantiate their rational arguments: 2:115, 20:46, 27:18, 55:26, 55:26, 24:35.

CHAPTER TWO

An account of the life of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī

1. Introduction

The historical and biographical details on Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī have been scattered in fragmented forms in various libraries of Gujarāt such as the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library and the library of the Dār al-ʿUlūm of Pattan as well as the library of Nadwatul ʿUlamā of Lucknow. Information is also to be found with certain descendents of the Shaikh as well as Sunnī Bohras of Pattan who have chosen to settle in Jeddah, Madinah and Makkah in Saudi Arabia. This closely knit group of people are now Saudi citizens and are known as Fattānī Jamāʿat. It was this Jamāʿat which arranged for the publication of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī's famous work *Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār fī gharāib al-tanzīl wa laṭāif al-akhbār*. It would have proved a difficult task to collect these materials were it not for the help of Professor Bombaywala, Dr. Kakiwala and Dr. Ziauddin Desai (all of Aḥmadabād) who provided this researcher with some of the materials needed in this study apart from their own observations on the life of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī.

2. Kitāb al-manāqib

The most detailed account of the Shaikh's life is to be found in a work entitled *Risālah-i-manāqib*. While the work is not long it is the most extensive single account of the Shaikh's life. The author has detailed most of the important biographical details.

This *risālah* is held at the library of the *madrasah* [Islāmic school] founded by the Shaikh at Pattan. Some of what has survived of the personal collection of the

books the Shaikh as well as other manuscripts dating back to his era are housed here.

The *Risālah-i-manāqib* is a short treatise written in Persian. The calligraphy is nastaliq and the calligrapher's name is not mentioned at the end of the work. The opinion of some scholars at the library is that another biography of the Shaikh was also prepared in Arabic which is extinct. Whether the Persian *Risālāh* is a translation of the biography that was written in Arabic or a separate work cannot be determined.

~~Information that is available in later biographical sources mention details of the~~
author of this treatise. A study of this material is valuable since it gives us some insight into the role that the family of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī played in public life after the Shaikh's demise. Insights are also gained regarding the nature of the relationship at the time between the *'ulamā'* [religious scholars] and the Moghul rulers and the official religious posts that had been established.

The name of the author of *Risālah-i-manāqib* has been given as Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahhāb.¹

Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahhāb is the paternal-grandson of the Shaikh. 'Abd al-Wahhāb's father was Aḥmad, the Shaikh's son. In the introduction of the *Risālah* 'Abd al-Wahhāb refers to himself as: 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Shaikh Aḥmad Ṣiddiqī Pāttanī.

The above mentioned work represents only the chief source used for a study of the life of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī. Many other historical researchers were referred to during the preparation of this thesis. It is also important to remember that the literature produced by the Shaikh himself was a source of very useful information. Apart from being the fruits of his scholarly endeavours it serves to mirror his opinions and thoughts on the society he lived in, worked with and directed his reform efforts towards.

Before embarking on the biography proper these secondary sources will be briefly reviewed here.

3. Other Sources

The following are the most important works consulted which provide useful information on the life and works of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī:

1. *Al-Nūr al-sāfir fī akhbār al-qarn al-‘āshir* of Shaikh Muḥi al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-‘Aidarūs (d. ca. 1031/1622) is an account of scholars and ṣūfīs in Gujarāt and South Arabia which is most valuable (GAL II 419, S II 617; Aḥmad, 1968, 2:8, 3:22, 4:19, 5:14, 8:6, 10:5; Marshall 1967,117).

The members of the al-‘Aidarūs family settled in Bijāpūr and promoted Arabic learning. Following in the tradition of his seniors, Ja‘far al-‘Aidarūs (d. ca. 1653) translated Prince Dara Shikoh’s hagiography *Safīnah al-awliyā’* into Arabic (Aḥmad 1968, 8:12).

Since al-Fattanī was a scholar of the *qarn al-‘āshir* [tenth century] ‘Abd al-Qādir al-‘Aidarūs has mentioned him. Here information about the date of birth and death as well as a few lines on his student life are given.

2. After a lull of four centuries, an attempt by Sayyid Ḥakīm ‘Abd al-Ḥai al-Ḥasanī has been made to address the lacuna of biographical works in modern times. His magnum opus *Nuzha al-khawāṭir*, compiled in six volumes, written in Arabic illustrates the writer’s acumen in presenting the readers with the intellectual contributions of eminent scholars from the advent of Islām to the present century. Al-Ḥasanī has provided invaluable insight, albeit briefly, on the intellectual milieu of Shaikh al-Fattanī’s times and the social context in which he worked ceaselessly to uphold the highest standards of Islāmic learning. His account is more detailed

than that of al-ʿAidarūs, since he mentions the circumstances of the Shaikh's death as well as al-Fattani's interaction with Akbar and the Mahdawwiyyah movement of the time (al-Ḥasani 1350 A.H., 4:78).

3. *Akhhār al-akhyār fī asrār al-abrār* is written by ʿAbd al-Ḥaq Dehlawī Bukhārī (d. 1052/1642) completed before 996/1588 but revised and completed in 999/1590-1. Here he researched the biographies of some 225 of the famous of saints and scholars of his time. ʿAbd al-Ḥaq Dehlawī popularised the study of Prophetic Tradition in India and laid the foundations of the schools of ḥadīth which were to remain centres of orthodox piety up to our day. Not less than sixteen of his Arabic and Persian books deal with Tradition studies, ten with history, including bibliographies of saints and twelve with ṣūfism. He was a member of the Qādirī order which had gained a firm footing in India since the mid 9/15th century. That the *muḥaddith* was also a poet in his own right (writing under the pen-name Haqqī) goes without saying (Schimmel 1973, 39).

Together with a basic biographical sketch of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattani, ʿAbd al-Ḥaq also mentions the Shaikh's association with Shaikh ʿAlī al-Muttaqī. The Shaikh's efforts at reform of his own people, the Bohra, is also mentioned (ʿAbd al-Ḥaq 1914, 280).

4. In his *Sibḥah al-marjān fī āthār al-Hindustān* [*The Coral Rosary about India*] ʿAzād Bilgramī has given some details of al-Fattani's life. His treatment is no more extensive than that found in any of the above mentioned biographies (Bilgramī 1903, 44). Bilgramī deserves further mention for two reasons. The first is that his literary production is large Secondly he represents a growing trend of biographers that produced works in the 12/18th century.

Bilgramī's works range from an Arabic commentary on Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* to poetry in honour of the Prophet which gained him the honorific title of Ḥassān al-Hind, recalling the Prophet's panegyrist Ḥassan ibn Thābit. *Sibḥah al-marjān* his

famous biography is divided into four parts. In the first part he attempts to prove by Prophetic *ahādīth* [Traditions] that India is the real homeland of prophecy. The argumentation sounds very convincing to a modern reader. The second part of the book is devoted to biographies of outstanding Indian Muslims. Here he has mentioned some details of the life of al-Fattānī. The third chapter contains a discussion of literary beauties and specifically examines the Indian ideals of poetical beauty. The fourth part explains some of the expressions of love employed in Indian and Arabic poetry. This work is therefore an unusual compilation of varied subjects. He wrote two other biographical works. His *Ma'āthir al-kirām* (cf. 1:196 for details of al-Fattānī) contains the biographies of 150 important people of his home town. He also compiled a dictionary of 143 poets who were born in or visited India, including eight poets who wrote in rekhta i.e. Urdu.

5. Mawlānā Sayyid Muḥammad Deobandī (1991, 1:343) in his '*Ulamā'-i-Hind ka shāndār māqī*' has dedicated a few lines to discussing Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī.

6. Apart from these monographs other materials have become available such as a document in Persian in the possession of Muḥammad Nūr Quṭub Pattānī which describes the Shaikh's house. The document states:

"The house of Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī is built by baked bricks and contains two rooms. Each one is supported by a large amount of wood. There are two rooms on the roof side which has a roof made of wood and baked tiles. There is a court-yard in the house. During the period of 'Abd al-Barakāt, it was sold for a sum of four hundred *rupees* on 4 *Jumad al-thānī* 1085 A.H/5 September 1674."

7. A short note on the Shaikh appears in the editions of *Tadhkirah al-mawdu'āt* and *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* written by Shaikh Muḥammad 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Sāmrodī and Shaikh Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aẓamī respectively.

8. At times the references to the Shaikh's works were found to be erroneous. Schimmel in her *Islamic Literatures of India* (1973) states referring to the *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* that the Shaikh had composed this *Persian dictionary* on difficult words in the *ḥadīth*.

4. The Biography of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī based on the sources.

4.1. Name, genealogy and place of birth.

4.1.1. The name

His name was Muḥammad. His title was Majd al-Dīn. Besides Majd al-Dīn, the title Jamāl al-Dīn has also been used. The last page of the second and third volumes of *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* indicates that the title Jamāl al-Dīn was also used. In *al-Nūr al sāfir* it is mentioned that Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was the "king of the *muḥaddithīn*" [Traditionalists] of India (al-ʿAidarūsī 1934, 361).

His father's name was Ṭāhir. His grandfather's name was ʿAlī ibn ʿIlyās Khwājah. Khwājah means master and this name was conferred on him because of the high esteem in which the people held this family.

Some works refer to the Shaikh as Muḥammad Ṭāhir suggesting that his first two names are Muḥammad Ṭāhir. Many Bohras are also of the opinion that the Shaikh's name is Muḥammad Ṭāhir. Amongst the Bohras there is the custom to sometimes append the name Muḥammad to certain names. The name ʿĀdil would thus be made Muḥammad ʿĀdil. This gives support then to the contention that the same could have happened in the case of the Shaikh and his name is in fact Muḥammad Ṭāhir. Another custom amongst the Bohras however does not render support to this theory.

Very often Bohras give the name of the father and son without using *ibn* [son of] in between. They would, for example, say that Muḥammad Qāsim conquered Sindh, when in fact they mean Muḥammad ibn Qāsim. It is likely that the same has occurred with the name of the Shaikh.

In the third volume of the hand-written manuscript of the Shaikh's work *Majma' biḥār al-anwār*, which was written thirty nine years after the Shaikh's demise it is stated:

"*tamma Majma' al-biḥār Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Muḥaddith al-Fattanī muwaṭṭīnan*". (al-Fattanī n.d., 3:443)

The Shaikh himself writes in the beginning of his *Tadhkirah al-mawḍū'āt*: "*wa ba'da qāla aḍ'af 'ibādallāh al-qawī Muḥammad bin Ṭāhir bin 'Alī al-Fattanī al-Hindī maskanan wa al-Bohrah laqaban al-Ḥanafī madhhaban*" (al-Fattanī 1161/1748,1).

Muḥammad Ghawthī Shaṭṭārī, a pupil of Shāh Wajī al-Dīn and a contemporary of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī has written a work called *Gulzār-i-abrār* [The Garden of the Pious People] where he has written very briefly about the Shaikh. Here he mentions the Shaikh's name as Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir. This biographical dictionary was composed during the reign of Jahangīr in 1036/1626 and is available in the Gujarāt Widya Sabha Library in Aḥmadabad. *R?

The Shaikh writes in the prolegomena of his work *Sharḥ al-shāfiyyah*: "*fa yaqūlu al-'abd al-multajā' ilā Allāh al-'anī aḥqar 'ibād Allāh ibn Ṭāhir bin 'Alī ayyada Allāhu li luṭfihi*" (al-Fattanī n.d., 2). Here he has only used his father's name instead of his own first name. It is clear therefore that Ṭāhir is his father's name. Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir ibn 'Alī is thus the Shaikh's name. 7

4.1.2. The family

Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir's grandfather, ʿAlī, was a prominent trader in Pattan. Being a family of traders, they were called Bohras. At the time they traded as far as Yemen, Jeddah, Makkah, Madinah, Ṭāif, Basrah, Sirāf and Hurmuz. They were dealers in commodities such as paper, silver, and golden brocade, Yugarti utensils, various types of cloth products, swords, daggers and small knives. The bulk of the trade was however in paper and cloth. To this day a type of cloth is manufactured in Pattan which is found nowhere else. | ?

When ʿAlī died he was survived by two sons. The worth of his inheritance can be judged by the fact that when his wealth had to be divided amongst his heirs it was not done by counting the gold and silver coins of the time, but instead they were weighed in order to be divided.

The Shaikh's father was a businessman too. He spent his entire life as a trader. It has not been established how many children he had or when he passed away. What is known however is that in *Adhkār-i-abrār* the author, who is a student of Shāh Wajīh al-Dīn and a contemporary of Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir, states that the Shaikh's brother's name was Nūr Muḥammad and he lived in Ajīn. * !!!

4.1.3. Genealogy

Ḥakīm Muḥammad Qāsim Surtī has received the genealogy of the family from their descendants and researched this particular aspect. The genealogy is as follows:

Muḥammad
Ṭāhir
ʿAlī
ʿIlyās
Abū al-Naṣr Dāwūd
Abū ʿIsāʾ ʿAbd al-Malik

Abū al-Faṭḥ Yūnus Shāmī²

Ibn ʿUmar Shāmī³

ʿAbdullāh

Abū al-ʿAṭāʾ Ḥusain Muftī

Abū al-Ḥāmid Aḥmad Gharīb

Abū Qāsim Muḥammad

Abū al-Ṣalāḥ Muḥammad

Abū al-Faiḍ Muḥammad

Abū al-Riḍāʾ ʿAbd al-Raḥmān

Abū al-Baqāʾ Qāsim al-Birr Muḥammad

ʿAbbās

Abū al-Naṣr Muḥammad Ṭayfūr Shāmī

Abū al-Majd Khalaf

Abū al-Majd Aḥmad

Abū al-Wujūd Shuʿaib

Abū Ṭalḥah

ʿAbdullāh

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān

Abū Bakr al-Siddīq (the first Caliph of Islām)

4.1.4. Place of birth

Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was born in Pattan in 914/1508. The author of *al-Nūr al sāfir* has put this date at 913/1507 (al-ʿAidarūsī 1934, 361). This was the period of Muḥammad Aʿẓam who is famous in the history of Gujarāt as Maḥmūd Begard. *Begard* is derived from the words *be*-meaning two and *gard* meaning castle. Muḥammad owned two grand castles.

Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir calls himself a Pattanī. In his Arabic works he writes his name as al-Fattanī since the letter *pe* does not exist in Arabic and is usually replaced by the *fā* instead. History shows that Pattan is an ancient area.

The founder of Pattan was a friend of Vanraj [The Forest King] Chowra (Chaora) by the name of Anhil. Anhil had selected this area and his friend decided to name it after him. The Arabicized form of the name that is found in all Arabic books of history is Naharwalah. In later times people started to use the name Pattan alone. In Hindu usage the name Pattan was used to describe a large city. Examples of these are the names Rāj Pattan, Pāk Pattan, Prabhas Pattan, Sownāth Pattan and Verawal Pattan. Even in the examples cited above, very often these towns became known as Pattan alone (Khān, 1927, 1:26).

The Ismā'īlī or Dāwūdī-Bohras have their own explanation for the name Pattan. According to them Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh Tātār Khān ibn Sulṭān Muẓaffar Shāh I, who was the founder of the Kingdom of Gujarāt, named the area Pirān-Pattan, in honour of Haḍrat Ḥasan Pīr. The word *pirān* is however the plural for *pīr* which means saint. Due to the large number of graves of saints, which were frequently visited, the area was named Pirān-Pattan.

The very first king of Pattan was Vanrāj who had been elected by the Bhils in Gujarāt to be their ruler. He was from the Chowra family who together with the Jethwas and Walas constituted the Rajputs. Vanrāj died in 804 and was succeeded by Yogrāj, then Kshemrāj, Bhuwad, Wirsinha, Ratnaditya and Samatsinha in the order named. Their name suggests that they were plunderers, the word "Chowra" being derived from the Gujarāti word *choriya*, a band of robbers. From the ruins of the temple that they built at Pattan it would seem that they regarded Shankar as their principal deity. Leadership remained in this family for 196 years until 696/1296. The Solankī family were the next to rule, Molrāj was their first leader and this family continued their reign over Pattan for 156 years. After the death of the Kumārapal in 568/1173, who ruled for thirty years, the Solankī dynasty began

to decline in power. Before it ended in 641/1244 it was able to put up a weak defence against the overwhelming onslaught of the Muslims who had already by the middle of the century began changing their policy of plundering raids against the region into permanent occupation of Gujarāt. Between 1178 and 1241 successive invasions were made. In about 1179 Shahāb al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghori of Ghaznā made a raid on Gujarāt but was driven back with loss. Sixteen years later he despatched an army under the leadership of Quṭub al-Dīn Aibak which plundered the country, but returned to Ghaznā after doing so. In 1296 ‘Alā al-Dīn Khiljī seized the throne in Delhi and in the next year sent his wife’s brother, Sunjar Khān-more generally known as Alaf Khān-with his Prime Minister, Malik Nasrat Jalesari, into Gujarāt (Wilberforce-Bell 1980, 48-52).

At the time the Bāgīlā family reign over Gujarāt with Kirn Bāgīlā was their king.) *error?*
He was ousted by the forces of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khiljī. The Bagīlā family ruled Gujarāt for 126 years (Khān 1927, 1:15).

4.2. Academic Career

4.2.1. Early education

The early education of the Shaikh took place at home where Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir memorised the Qur’ān before the age of maturity (approximately 924/1518). He then began his study of other subjects. By the age of fifteen (929/1522) he had completed his study of the prevalent religious and rational sciences of the period. Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir then turned his attention to writing and composing works.

During his student days the young Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was well known for his intelligence. Whenever he had any discussion or debate with any student he defeated that student. Such a person never dared to come to him to debate a matter again. He also had the leadership qualities that made him look distinguished as compared to his other contemporaries. This was however the reason why many fellow students were envious of him and tried to trouble him. Likewise some of his teachers also had a strained relationship with him for which

the Shaikh underwent some hardship. It is for this reason that Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir resolved and took a vow [*nazr*] at this stage of his academic career already, that if Allāh gave him the good fortune to be a teacher he would respect the students of religion and treat them with a great deal of kindness (ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, n.d., 6).

The Shaikh was true to his noble intention. Whatever he received from his father's inheritance he spent mostly on his students. He never deprived anyone of knowledge and it is for this reason that the *ḥalqah* [circle] of his students was very large (al-ʿAidrūsī, 1934, 361).

4.2.3. Indian teachers

Shaikh Nāgorī, Shaikh Burhān al-Dīn Samhodī and Shaikh Yadullāh Sūhī are amongst Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir's famous teachers. The Shaikh qualified under Mullā Mut.

This researcher has been unable to get details on the biographies of these teachers. What may be said is that they were the experts in their fields since Pattan (Naharwala) was a centre of knowledge and learning. Being an ancient metropolis, many *ʿulamāʾ*, *ṣūfis* and other experts were attracted here as is testified by many works of history.

At the age of fifteen then, Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir began his career as a teacher. This is an indication of his abilities and depth of knowledge. It is for this reason that the Shaikh produced many students who became accomplished scholars.

About Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir's career Sidī ʿAidrūsī writes:

He was born in 913/1507 and before reaching the age of maturity memorised the Qurʾān. He exerted himself greatly to acquire knowledge. For fifteen years he remained involved in this pursuit until he became an expert in certain sciences.

He excelled his contemporaries to the extent that in the field of *ḥadīth* [Tradition] studies he had no equal among the *‘ulamā’* [scholars] of Gujarāt. He was pious, God fearing and an ocean of knowledge. In the field of *ḥadīth* [Tradition] studies he has compiled several works. He taught in Pattan for fifteen years (Khān 1927, 116).

4.2.4. The journey to Makkah and the pilgrimage [*Hajj*]

In 944/1537 the Shaikh decided to perform *Hajj*. He left Pattan for either Kambāyath [Cambay] or Dev, the two main ports used at the time. Surat was developed into a port only later under the leadership of the navy in Gujarāt by Safar Sulaimānī. Dev was the busier of the two ports and most passengers would travel to Makkah via Jeddah from here.

The Shaikh first visited Makkah and after fulfilling the rites of *Hajj*, visited the Prophet's city Madīnah. He then returned to Makkah. This was during the reign of Sulṭān Maḥmūd al-Thānī ibn Laṭīf Khān ibn Muḥaffar Khān al-Thānī.

4.2.5. Studies in Makkah

On his return to Makkah, the Shaikh noticed that this was a centre for scholars from many parts of the Islāmic world. He decided to take the opportunity of benefiting from the company and knowledge of these teachers and spent a while here.

The Shaikh was more inclined towards Tradition studies and thus searched out teachers who were accomplished in this field.

The following are some of the Makkan teachers from whom the Shaikh took knowledge:

1. Shaikh Abū ‘Ubaidullāh al-Zabīdī
2. Sayyid ‘Abdullāh ‘Idrūs ‘Adnī

3. Shaikh ʿUbaidullāh Hadramī
4. Shaikh Jārullāh ibn Fahd Makki
5. Shaikh Barkhordār Sindhī
6. Shaikh Abū al-Ḥasan Bahrī Makki
7. Shaikh ʿAlī ibn ʿIrāq Madanī

However, the two teachers who had the greatest influence on Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir were Shaikh ibn Ḥajar Ḥaithamī Makki and Shaikh ʿAlī al-Muttaqī, the famous *ḥadīth* scholars of the time. The influence of these two teachers on Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir is apparent and the chief reason why he was inclined to specialize in *ḥadīth* studies.

4.2.6. Shaikh ʿAlī al-Muttaqī

ʿAlī ibn Husām al-Dīn ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Qāḍikhān al-Muttaqī al-Burhānpūrī was born in Burhānpūr in 885/1480. His family was well respected in the area.

At a young age his father sent him to the Chistī ṣūfī Shaikh Bahāu al-Dīn. Al-Muttaqī took the oath of allegiance [*baiʿah*] at the hands of the Shaikh and benefited from the spiritual training this ṣūfī master had to offer. On the death of Bahāu al-Dīn, Shaikh ʿAlī al-Muttaqī renewed his *baiʿah* with Bahāu al-Dīn's son ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm ibn Bahāu al-Dīn. Soon ʿAbd al-Hakīm saw the progress that al-Muttaqī made spiritually and appointed him as his *khalīfah* [vicegerent].

ʿAlī ibn Husām al-Dīn then left for Multān and studied under Shaikh Husām al-Dīn al-Muttaqī. Here he studied *Tafsīr al-Baiḍāwī* and other works (Ikrām 1958, 305-311). It is because of his tutelage under Shaikh Husām al-Dīn al-Muttaqī that he is called "al-Muttaqī". He spent two years here before moving to Aḥmadabād, which was at that time under the rule of Bahādurshāh (d.943/1536). When Bahādurshāh heard of the piety of al-Muttaqī, he came to meet him personally. After meeting with al-Muttaqī, he gave him a large sum of money which al-Muttaqī gave away to another scholar close to the king, Qāḍī ʿAbdullāh Sindhī.

When in 941/1534 Humāyun defeated Bahādurshāh and conquered Aḥmadabād, al-Muttaqī left for Makkah. In Makkah, al-Muttaqī attended the classes of Shaikh Abū al-Ḥasan Bakrī al-Shāfiʿī and Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ḥajar al-Makkī (d.973/1565). The latter was the Muftī of the Arabian Peninsular at the time and a very distinguished scholar. He was the author of many works including *al-Sawāiq al-muḥriqah*, a popular book in refutation of the Shīʿah. JR?

Al-Muttaqī also met the ṣūfī Shaikh Muḥammad Sakhāwī. It is from him that al-Muttaqī acquired *ijāzah* [permission] in the other ṣūfī ṭuruq [confraternities] i.e. Qādariyyah, Shādhliyyah, Madaniyyah and Maghribiyyah.

Al-Muttaqī studied under other scholars in Makkah and after some time devoted himself to teaching and writing.

He wrote his *Kanz al-ummāl* where he re-arranged the Tradition collection of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī according to chapters pertaining to jurisprudence. Al-Jalbī states that it is only after al-Muttaqī had prepared his work that the *Jāmiʿ al-saghīr* and *Jamʿ al-Jawāmiʿ* of al-Suyūṭī became accessible since al-Suyūṭī had arranged his collection alphabetically and not thematically (al-Saqāʾ 1989, 16:786). *Kanz al-ummāl* is in sixteen volumes. Besides this famous work al-Muttaqī wrote other books as well. *Al-burhān fī ʿalāmāt al-mahdī ākhīr al-zamān*, is a work on the topic of the Mahdī. Previously al-Suyūṭī had written a brief work on this subject entitled *al-ʿUrf al-wardī fī akhbār al-mahdī*. Al-Muttaqī's work expands on what al-Suyūṭī has written and also includes Traditions on the subject from *Jamʿ al-jawāmiʿ* and *ʿAqd al-durar fī akhbār al-mahdī al-muntazar*. txt

Al-Nahaj al-atam fī tartīb al-ḥukum, *al-Wasīlah al-fākhīrah fī sulṭah al-dunyāʾ wa al-ākhirah*, *Talqīn al-ṭarīq fī al-sulūk li ma alhamahu Allāh subḥānu*, *al-Burhān al-jalī fī maʿrifah al-walī* and *Risālah fī ibṭāl daʿwah al-sayyid Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf* txt

Jawnpūrī, are other works of al-Muttaqī. From the titles of these books it is clear that al-Muttaqī was a versatile scholar able to research in a number of fields.

It was this academic ability and spirituality that attracted Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir to al-Muttaqī while in Makkah. Al-Muttaqī was very particular about practising on the Traditions and this influence is to be found in his disciples. His teacher Ibn Ḥajar recognised the piety of his student and became his disciple (Khān 1927, 89). Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir frequented al-Muttaqī's gatherings and benefitted from his spiritual guidance. He took the *bai'ah* [spiritual oath of allegiance], thus becoming his disciple. For Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir, al-Muttaqī was not only his teacher of *ḥadīth* but also his spiritual guide. The words of praise for al-Muttaqī in his various works are testimony to the love that he had for his master.

While resident in Makkah 'Alī al-Muttaqī came to Gujarāt twice. When in 952/1545. Sulṭān Mahmūd took over leadership of Gujarāt himself and Asif Khān was made the chief minister, al-Muttaqī came to Gujarāt. The Sulṭān became a disciple of al-Muttaqī and resolved to govern the affairs of state in accordance with the Islāmic law [*sharī'ah*] and take the advice of al-Muttaqī in all matters.

Al-Muttaqī appointed one of his disciples to manage the affairs of the state and ensure that they were in accordance with Islāmic law. After some time this person began accepting bribes. The Sulṭān got news of this and was very disappointed. He ordered that all the governors of Gujarāt should rule their territories as they saw fit. When al-Muttaqī got news of what had happened he went back to meet with the Sulṭān but saw that the Sulṭān's attitude was now very different.

Al-Muttaqī left the king's palace and made up his mind to return to Makkah. When he reached Sarkhez he met with some of the ministers who insisted that he should not leave. Al-Muttaqī did not agree and explained to them that he had always heard the adage that *dīn* [religion] and the *dunyā'* [the world] are like two wives of one husband. He had come from Makkah only to experience that

this was in fact so. On return to Makkah the Shaikh remained occupied with religious activities (al-Ḥasanī 1937, 4:235).

In 975/1567, at the age of ninety, al-Muttaqī passed away. He died in Makkah and was buried there near the tomb of Fuḍail ibn ʿAyād (Khān 1927, 87).

ʿAlī ibn Ḥusām al-Dīn had many students and disciples. Of these the famous ones are: Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī, Shaikh ʿAbd al-Ḥaq Muḥaddith Dehlawī, Shaikh Raḥmatullāh Sindhī and Shaikh ʿAbdullāh Sindhī.

4.2.7. The return to Pattan

The exact date when the Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir returned to Pattan is unknown. It can be presumed that he spent four or five years away from home and returned in about 950/1543.

On his return he continued lecturing and teaching at Pattan. The Shaikh received a large sum of money from his father's inheritance and spent most of this on his students. He would send money to other teachers and ask them to identify good students and send them for further studies to his classes. Once these students came to him he would question them as to whether they are poor or wealthy. If the student was from a wealthy home the Shaikh would encourage him to study without any concern for all else. A poor student was given the guarantee that his and his family's expenses would be taken care of. He had an excellent relationship with all those who were poor and destitute and came for assistance to him.

It was because of this inclination that a large number of students gained proficiency in various fields of learning and spread throughout the length and breadth of undivided India (al-ʿAidarūs 1934, 361)

4.2.8. Pupils

The kind treatment of the Shaikh and influence became proverbial. Students started arriving at Gujarāt and particularly to Pattan from far away places. Shaikh had the honour of teaching a very large number of pupils who in turn established their own *ḥalqah* and centres of imparting knowledge. Some of the most prominent of his pupils are listed below:

1. Abū al-Bashar Muḥammad Faḍl
2. Shaikh Ḍiyā' al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad Gaws (Gawalyārī)
3. Abū al-Faḥ Mawlānā Mia Aḥmad Khān Pattanī
4. Shaikh Dāwūd ibn Shaikh Ḥasan
5. Mawlānā Mia Burhān al-Dīn Wa'z
6. Mawlānā Aḥmad
7. Mawlānā Muḥammad Ishāq
8. Mia Jalāl ibn Makhan (popularly known as Mah 'Ālam)
9. Mawlānā Shāh Muḥammad Ḥasan
10. Mawlānā Mia Nūr Muḥammad Ḥasan
11. Mawlānā Mirā 'Abdul ibn Faḥullāh Sāringpūrī
12. Mawlānā Shaikh Muḥammad Shaṭṭārī
13. Mawlānā Shaikh Jivan Surtī
14. Mawlānā Shaikh Ḥusain Surtī
15. Shaikh 'Abd al-Hādī Aḥmadabādī
16. Shaikh Farīd Kāsib Pattanī
17. Shaikh 'Abd al-Nabī (*ṣadr al-ṣudūr* during the period of Akbar)

4.2.9. The successorship

At about the same time that the Shaikh returned to Pattan from Makkah and began teaching, his *ustādh* [teacher] Shaikh Mut passed away. Shaikh Mut was the most senior and respected scholar in Pattan. The elders of the area could not decide on a successor to their leader who had passed away. Eventually it was decided that the prayer-mat from which Shaikh Mut led the prayers be left empty

and whoever felt capable of this position should himself come forward and lead the prayers. Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir, unaware of this decision, came to say his prayers and led the prayer. The people understood by this that Allāh had decided to make Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir the successor of his teacher and none even questioned this.

4.3 The Shaikh as a reformer

Besides teaching and lecturing to scholars, the Shaikh also gave public discourses from which the lay people learned much. The Shaikh was inclined more towards Tradition studies because of the close attachment he enjoyed with Shaikh ‘Alī al-Muttaqī and Shaikh ibn Ḥajar al-Haithamī Makkī.

The pious and good hearted always actualise in their own lives what they teach to others. In this regard Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was no exception - an ardent follower of the *aḥādith* [Prophetic Traditions] himself, he longed to see others adhering to the Prophetic way too. Piety has to begin at home and it is for this reason that the Shaikh focused his reform activity on his own family and people first.

4.3.1. Dāwūdī Bohras

The Bohra people were made up of both Sunnī and Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ah. Initially the majority of the Bohras at the time of the Shaikh were Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ahs. Together with trade they would propagate their religious beliefs as a result of which many new Muslims became Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ahs.

22 Mullah Ja‘far Pattanī became a Sunnī Muslim. After this event the number of Sunnī Muslims increased and they became known as the *barī jamā‘at* [big grouping]. The Shī‘ah Bohras were called the *choti jamā‘at* [small group]. In both these groupings however many old customs continued. The Sunnī and Dāwūdī Bohras could not be differentiated in their social habits and ways. This situation had two major harms.

Firstly, the Sunnī Bohras had adopted some customs from the Dāwūdī Bohras that were not permitted for Sunnī Muslims. Sunnī-Bohras adopted these beliefs and due to the close ties and for the sake of unity never raised a voice against them. The second problem concerned inheritance where many Sunnī Bohras were influenced by the Shī'ah system of inheritance practised by the Dāwūdī Bohras.

It is for these reasons that the Shaikh resolved to remove from his nation all those customs and ways that were against the Sunnī creed. He began speaking about the ills of these customs in his public discourses. The Ismā'īlī Bohras were naturally not pleased with the Shaikh's activity.

By his tireless efforts he was able to create a firm distinction between the Sunnī and Shī'ah Bohras and in all societal matters there was a change. The give-and-take of daughters and sons in marriage also came to an end.

Mir'āt-i-Aḥmadī mentions that the innovations present in the Muslim community were all removed by the Shaikh. Those who were Dāwūdī (and Ismā'īlī) became distinguished from those who were Sunnī (Khān 1927, 116-117).

Shaikh 'Abd al-Ḥaq Muḥaddith Dehlawī writes:

Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was from the town of Pattan in Gujarāt. He was a Bohra. After acquiring knowledge in that country, he studied in Makkah and Madinah. He was a specialist and excelled in the field of *ḥadīth* [Tradition] studies. He benefitted from the companionship of Shaikh 'Alī al-Muttaqī and was his disciple too. When he returned to his hometown he made concerted efforts to root out innovations and customs ('Abd al-Ḥaq 1914, 280).

Azād Bilgrāmī writes:

Shaikh Pattan was resident in Gujarāt. Initially he studied under local teachers and later benefitted from teachers at Makkah and Madinah. He

especially studied under and remained associated to Shaikh ʿAlī Muttaqī. Returning to his hometown he involved himself in teaching and propagating the truth. Like his teacher he also resolved that he would try to reform the Bohra Mahdawīyyah from amongst his people (Bilgramī 1980,44).

From the above quoted historical evidences it would seem that the Shaikh was concerned primarily with the reform of his own Bohra community. He was really not interested at this early stage in changing the beliefs of the Dāwūdī Bohras.

4.3.2. The visit to Aḥmadabād

This intention was not fully understood by the Dāwūdī Bohras as the incident of the Shaikh's visit to Aḥmadabād proved. Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir had come to Aḥmadabād to further his mission of reform amongst his own people when news spread that the Shaikh had come to create a change amongst all Bohras.

This disturbed the Dāwūdī Bohras and their leader Sayyidinā Dāwūd ibn ʿAjab Shāh (d. 997), who was the Dāʿī at the time, went into hiding. The Dāwūdī Bohras were completely shattered. All this was however due to their own misunderstanding and mere rumours. When after a few days, the reality of the situation and the nature of the Shaikh's visit became clear to the Dāwūdī people, the leader was relieved and he came out of hiding (Shāh 1950, 113).

The visit that Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir undertook to Aḥmadabād created a considerable amount of interest because of the reaction of the Dāwūdī Bohras. It cannot however be determined correctly in which year the incident took place.

ʿAbd al-Wahhāb is of the opinion that the Aḥmadabād visit took place during the reign of Sulṭān Maḥmūd the third (ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, n.d., 7). Sulṭān Maḥmūd III had become a Mahdawī and imposed taxes on the Muslims. The Shaikh came to Aḥmadabād to correct the Sulṭān. This opinion is, it would appear, incorrect.

f 7

Tadhkirah-i-Abrār states that the Shaikh met ‘Allāmah Shāh Wajīh al-Dīn and exchanged ideas. The author further writes that after Emperor Akbar conquered Gujarāt, then in the reign of Khān Aẓam he came to Aḥmadabād in order to reform his people. Khān Aẓam was ruler of Aḥmadabād from 980/1572 to 982/1574.

The author of *Mosum Bahār* places the visit during the period of Sayyidinā Dāwūd ibn ‘Ajab Shāh. Shāh Wajī al-Dīn died in 998/1589 and Sayyidinā died in 997/1588. It can also be established that the Sayyidinā became the Dā‘ī in 975/1567. The Shaikh died in 986/1578. It is therefore possible that the Shaikh visited Aḥmadabād somewhere between the year 975/1567 and 985/1577.

The author of *Tadhkirah-i-Abrār*’s father was a student of Shāh Wajīh al-Dīn and lived up to the time of Jahāngīr. *Tadhkirah-i-Abrār* was also written during this period. The author of *Mosum Bahar* has quoted the incident of the Shaikh’s visit to Aḥmadabād from a work entitled *Sawānīh-i-Da‘wat* written by Sayyidinā Dāwūd himself.

It is quite possible that Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir came to Aḥmadabād more than once. To conclusively establish this is however difficult.

4.3.3. The meeting with Shāh Wajī al-Dīn

When the Shaikh left Pattan for Aḥmadabād to preach there he also met Shāh Wajī al-Dīn.

Shāh Wajī al-Dīn was the most respected scholar in Aḥmadabād at the time. When for example a *fatwā* [juristic verdict] that Sayyid Muḥammad Ghaws Gawaliar should be executed was presented to Sulṭān Maḥmūd III which carried the signature of many of the *‘ulamā* [scholars], the Sulṭān rejected the *fatwā* only because Shāh Wajī al-Dīn’s signature did not appear on it.

When Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir went to visit Shāh Wajī al-Dīn they both met with a great deal of mutual respect and exchanged views for a long while. At the end of the discussion Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir expressed some of his reformist thoughts and programmes to Shāh Wajī al-Dīn. Shāh Wajī al-Dīn listened to all the Shaikh had to say and then expressed the following thoughts:

My valuable brother, because of his mind and heart which is able to recognise the truth, knows very well that the reason for the creation and its perfect order is the manifestation of the Divine Perfection that prevails in the Heavens. This manifestation in this world, is connected with the qualities of *jalāl* (might) and *jamāl* (beauty) of Allāh.

According to the exegetes the *ṣirāt al-muṣtaqīm* is of two types: *ijābī* [acceptable] and *ijādī* [innovative]. In the Qurʾān, wherever this word has been used in the indefinite case then the *ijādī* sense is meant. Those verses where the definite case is used with the word *ṣirāt al-muṣtaqīm* then here the *ijābī* sense is intended. Understand this matter well and ponder over it.

The second thing is this that man, who is a microcosm of the bigger world, why does he not draw a lesson looking at his material manifestation that his existence is dependent upon the balance and smooth operation of a few clean and dirty organs. It is for this reason that even if a pain occurs in the intestines, the entire garden of the body becomes disturbed.

Now, oh my brother, politics is not a matter of depth of understanding. One has to remain decorated with the truth and not the creation. This is the time of silence and to remain at home.

4.3.4. Mahdawīyyah

The last years of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir's life were devoted to his reform involvement in his community and particularly for the removal of the Mahdawīyyah thoughts which many people had accepted.

Sulṭān Maḥmūd Aẓam (d. 918/1512) was the ruler of Gujarāt when at the end of his reign Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī came to Gujarāt. He invited people to follow the *sharī'ah* [Islāmic law] and the *sunnah* [Prophetic paradigm] and from there went to Khurāsān where he died.

4.3.5. Sayyid Muḥammad: The founder of the Mahdawīyyah

His name was Muḥammad and his honorific titles were *Khātam al-awliyā'* [The seal of the saints] and *Mahdī al-maw'ūd* [The Promised Messiah] His lineage was as follows: Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh ibn 'Uthmān ibn Mūsā' ibn Qāsim ibn Najm al-Dīn ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā' ibn Ni'matullāh ibn Ismā'il ibn Mūsā' Kāzim ibn Ja'far Sādiq ibn Bāqir 'Alī Zain al-Ābidīn ibn Ḥusain ibn 'Alī.

He was born on Sunday 14 Jumād al-awwal 847/1443 at night. His mother Āminah had given birth to a son before him called Aḥmad. Jawnpūr, the place of his birth was neighbouring Banaras. When Muḥammad was five years old (852/1448) he began his basic education under the tutelage of Shaikh Dāniyāl Jawnpūrī a famous teacher of the town. At the age of seven (845/1441) he memorized the Qur'ān. By twelve he had completed his education.

Because of his vast reading, he was a sea of information. Even the senior scholars were very surprised whenever they came into contact with him and came to know of his knowledge. It is for this reason that his contemporary 'ulamā' gave him the title *asad al-'ulamā'* [the lion of 'ulamā'].

In 862/1457 or 863/1458 Husain Shāh Sharqī attacked Orissa. In the battle the Rājah was wounded and agreed that he would pay taxes on his land. He failed to

keep to his word and therefore was attacked again in 864/1459. Aged seventeen, Muḥammad Jawnpūrī joined the army of Shāh Sharqī with the intention of receiving a reward from Allāh. After the Rājah was killed and the army returned victorious, Muḥammad Jawnpūrī turned his attention towards asceticism. He became completely drowned in ṣūfism and ṣūfi practices. Mahdawī sources claim that Jawnpūrī remained in the condition of *sakr* [spiritual intoxication] and fluctuated between consciousness and unconsciousness for ten years.

When Muḥammad Jawnpūrī reached the age of twenty-seven this state passed and he continued to live a pious and dignified life in Jawnpūr for approximately twelve years.

4.3.6. *Hijrah* [Emigration]

In 887/1482 Muḥammad Jawnpūrī migrated to Dānāpūr (ʿAzīmābād Patnā). He stayed for a while in the jungles of the area accompanied by his wife, eldest son Mirān Sayyid Maḥmūd, Shaikh Bīk and other students. At the time he was thirty-five years old.

Leaving this place he moved to Chandharī and then went to Mando, in the Malwa district. The king of this region, Giyāth Muḥammad Jawnpūrī (d. 905/1499) became a follower of Muḥammad Jawnpūrī. Many other people were also influenced and impressed by his character and his preaching. Then he left Mālwa in 888/1483 and came to Janpanīr, Gujarāt where he stayed for one and a half years. He continued to guide people to the right way. His wife died while he was stationed here in 890/1572 and was buried near the fort at Damankoh.

At this stage Janpanīr was not yet conquered. Sulṭān Maḥmūd Aʿzam had surrounded the city and stayed at Muḥammadabād, a town next to Janpanīr. Sulṭān Maḥmūd got news of Muḥammad Jawnpūrī's piety and inspirational discourses and expressed the desire to meet with him. The advisors to the king felt that such a meeting was not appropriate when there were more pressing problems of the war

to attend to. They were also concerned that the king should not be influenced by Jawnpūrī to give up his kingdom and live a purely spiritual life.

Sultān Maḥmūd Aẓam never did meet with Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī. A prominent leader of Jālur, Zubdah al-Mulk ʿUthmān Khān however, did meet with Muḥammad Jawnpūrī and became his ardent follower. Jawnpūrī was forty years old at the time.

In 890/1485 Jawnpūrī left Chanpanir and came to the metropolis of Khandes, Burhānpūr. From there he went to Dawlatabād where he stayed for a short period after moving on to Aḥmadnagar the metropolis of Niẓām al-Mulk, the chief marine commander. Niẓām al-Mulk was very impressed with Jawnpūrī and became his follower. The thoughts and ideas of Jawnpūrī were spread in the family of Niẓām al-Mulk, even after the Nizam's death and they in turn propagated these ideas to others until the number of people holding Jawnpūrī as their spiritual leader increased significantly.

Jawnpūrī moved onto Baidarsharīf which was the seat of the royal Barid family. Soon the leader here, Qāsim Barid also became a *murīd* [disciple] of Jawnpūrī. From Baidar he went to Gulbargha, the capital of the Bahamni Sultāns. He preached here and people joined his thought pattern. Next he went to Dābul, a port town and then by sea left for Makkah. Jawnpūrī was fifty-one years old.

In 901/1495 he completed his *ḥajj* and returned via the port of Dev. He returned to Aḥmadabād and took up residence at the Tāj Khān Sālār Mosque in Jamalpūr. Here Jawnpūrī became famous for his piety, good character and excellent talks. Many people benefitted from his advices.

Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn, better known as Shaikh Jivan ibn Sayyid Maḥmūd ibn Sayyid Quṭub ʿĀlam heard about Jawnpūrī and came to meet him. On his arrival Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī recited a verse from the Qurʾān, to which Shaikh Jivan

replied with another verse. In reply to this Jawnpūrī recited a third verse and Shaikh Jivan, after replying again only citing a Qurʾānic verse, bade Jawnpūrī farewell and left. When Shaikh Jivan was asked for his impressions of the meeting he replied:

The man has reached certain stages spiritually, however the things that should be told to the elect or super-elect amongst those gone higher in spiritual upliftment he tells to the uninitiated in public. Always remember the adage that you should talk to the public according to the understanding that they possess. The result of his neglect of this adage is that his followers will be confused after him and create a *fitnah* [mischief].

Suṭān Maḥmūd Āẓam (Begra) had returned from his tour of Bāgar and Idar and came to know of Jawnpūrī. He again expressed his desire to meet with Sayyid Muḥammad but once again his ministers prevented him from doing so.

The author of *Mirāt-i-Sikandarī* narrates a story that had become famous at the time. A lover went to his beloved's house one night and for some reason they had a fierce quarrel. Towards the latter part of the night he became intoxicated and with sword in hand went to the banks of the Sabirmati River. He saw Sayyid Muḥammad and some of his disciples standing there and in an aggressive tone asked them why they had come there and what they were doing. Sayyid Muḥammad replied that that person who has become angry with his beloved and has come here, will be inclined by my guidance towards good deeds. As soon as he heard this remark he fell unconscious and when he regained consciousness he renounced the world and also became a *murīd* [spiritual disciple] of Sayyid Muḥammad.

Likewise there is a story of the son of a gardener who from an early age was very much inclined towards Allāh-consciousness and worship. The people of his household considered that he was mentally deranged and therefore put him out of

the house. When he became mature he wanted to perform the *hajj* pilgrimage. He came to Aḥmadabād and someone took him to Tāj Khān Mosque to meet Sayyid Muḥammad. The moment that their eyes met he fell on his feet and died.

At the time nobody in Aḥmadabād, opposed Sayyid Muḥammad's teachings and he engaged himself in his works and propagation without being disturbed in the least.

In most historical records dealings with the subject the reasons and circumstances surrounding Sayyid Muḥammad's departure from Aḥmadabād are mentioned. Jawnpūrī had declared one day that in this very world with these naked eyes, he was able to see Allāh. This statement did not go down well with all the '*ulamā*' [religious scholars] of Aḥmadabād and they became disturbed. They agitated against him and declared "eyes cannot see Him" and by saying so gave the *fatwā* [juristic verdict] that he should be killed. However Mawlānā Tāj Muḥammad Khān, who was the most prominent scholar at the time, warned the '*ulamā*' against issuing such a severe *fatwā*. He particularly told his pupils whose circle as very large: "have you learned knowledge from me for this reason alone, that you may give a *fatwā* for the killing of a Sayyid?" Mawlanā's position in the matter resulted in none of the rulers taking any steps against Jawnpūrī. Other '*ulamā*' were however not supportive of Tāj Muḥammad's leniency for Jawnpūrī and tried their best to inform the public against him. With this situation in Aḥmadabād, Sayyid Muḥammad decided to leave Aḥmadabad after a stay of one and a half years. In 903/1497 he left for Solasanitij. R 7

Before leaving Aḥmadabād two influential people became his disciples. In the year he left Aḥmadabād Malik Burhān al-Dīn and Malik Gohar took Muḥammad Jawnpūrī as their spiritual leader. At this stage Jawnpūrī was fifty-three years old.

After a few days, Jawnpūrī went to Naharwālā (Pattan) and stayed at the Khān Sarwar Dam. Here a scholar called Sayyid Mīr Khund Pattanī became Jawnpūrī's

disciple and later on his second caliph and was given the honorary title of *siddīq-i-wilāyat* [the true successor]. 29

Jawnpūrī stayed for a long while in Pattan. Here all sectors of the community benefitted from his teachings.

After a year, at the end of 904/1498 he left Naharwālā and came to Barnī a place some nine miles from Pattan. There is no reason recorded why he left Pattan.

4.3.7. The Promised Mahī

Tārīkh-i-Pālanpūr, states that after leaving Jawnpūr he spent a few days in the jungles of Dānāpūr and it was here that for the first time Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī received an intuition that he was the *mahdī*. Those people who had accompanied him believed in his claim. At the time he was thirty-eight years old. The incident took place in 888/1483.

When he went for *hajj*, then at the Ka'bah between the *rukn* and the *maqām al-Ibrāhīm* Jawnpūrī declared himself as the *mahdī*. In response Shāh Niẓām al-Dīn and Qāḍī 'Alā' al-Dīn supported his claims, and confirmed that he was the *mahdī*. This incident took place in 901/1495. R?

When Jawnpūrī came to Aḥmādabād in 903/1497 he made a similar claim repeatedly. From here he went to Barnī, where he stayed for six months. In 905/1499 he openly and forcefully made the announcement of his being the *mahdī*. This immediately created a commotion amongst the '*ulamā'*' and public, resulting in a *fatwā'* being issued sentencing him to death. When Jawnpūrī saw that sentiments were raising against him he left Barnī. At the time he was fifty-five years old.

The author of *Gulshan-i-Gujarāt* states that besides the common-folk, three hundred and eighty 'ulamā' [religious scholars] testified to Jawnpūrī's claim at Barnī.

Some of these were:

1. Mawlānā Lār Shāh Gujarātī
2. Mawlānā Yūsuf Suhaib
3. Mawlānā Aḥmad Shāh Qadan
4. Mawlānā Abūjee Ḥafīz
5. Mawlānā 'Abd al-Rashīd
6. Mawlānā Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn
7. Mīa Sayyid Khund Mīr Pattanī
8. Malik Barkhordār Pattanī
9. Malik Himār Pattanī
10. Malik Allāhdād Pattanī

What has been discussed above concerning the claim of Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī has been sourced from Mahdawīyyah works on him. This information is not collaborated by what is found in other general histories. These sources claim that Sayyid Muḥammad went from Aḥmadabād to Pattan and from there to Barnī and only at Barnī did he declare that he was the *mahdī*. These accounts would seem to be more correct.

Before his declaration at Barnī, wherever Jawnpūrī went to he was welcomed and well loved. This could only have been the case if his beliefs were not in conflict with the belief pattern of the general Muslim public. He was never opposed by anyone until he expressed his view concerning the beatific vision with the naked eyes. At this, Muslims opposed him.

In the jungles of Dānāpūr, if he had made any claim, then there was really none to verify it. The announcement at Makkah would however not have been the same. Had he made an announcement here it would have created a commotion not only

there but throughout the world. The *‘ulamā’* of Makkah and Madinah would have certainly engaged him in debate. There is however no mention in any history books, even in the Mahdawīyyah sources of any opposition. This is quite surprising.

From Barnī Sayyid Muḥammad went to Tarād, and from there to Jālūr. At the time Malik Buddan was the ruler. The government received Jawnpūrī with a great deal of respect. Jawnpūrī stayed here for a period of four and a half months before moving on in 907/1501 to Nāgor (Malwar). As he travelled he gained many followers. From Nāgor he passed through the town of Jaysalmir and reached Naṣarpūr where he spent the month of *Ramaḍān*. On the 26th of *Ramaḍān* he prayed two *rakā‘ah* of *ṣalāh* with the congregation.

From Naṣarpūr he came to Thāt, the capital of Sindh and a major port city. Here Shaikh Ṣadar al-Dīn Muftī and Daryā Khān the chief minister, both became his disciples. From here Sayyid Khund Mīr and Shāh Ni‘mat were dispatched with a group of followers by Sayyid Muḥammad to return to Gujarāt to do the propagation of his thoughts. Sayyid Muḥammad himself went with a group of nine hundred of his sincere followers to Khurāsān. The first place they reached was Kandarha. Shāh Beg Argūn, the leader of this place showed great respect and hospitality to them. In *Rabī al-Awwal* 910/1504 the party reached a place called Farḥ.

After only three months Sayyid Khūnd Mīr returned with his leader’s son, Mirā Sayyid Maḥmūd to Farḥ. Muḥammad Sayyid lived for another six months and ultimately on Sunday 19 *Dhu al-qa‘dah* 910/1504 at the age sixty he died. The cause of his death was tuberculosis.

Mirā Sayyid Maḥmūd performed the funeral prayer and he was laid to rest between Raj and Farḥ. Shāh Qassām Irāqī built a mausoleum over Sayyid Muḥammad’s grave.

The numerical value of the date of his death may be calculated to be “*ishk tam*” [complete love]. It is interesting to see how Jawnpūrī’s opponents have also derived other equivalents for this date. These include “*daʿwat kidhb al-mubīn*” [the claim is a clear lie], “*laysa dhālika mahdīyyan*” [that is not a mahdī], “*kadhaba bi daʿwāhu*” [he has lied in his claim].

Abū al-Faḍl, a famous scholar in the court of Akbar has mentioned in his *ʿAin-i-Akbarī* a few notes about Sayyid Muḥammad. The information here is however not entirely verifiable. It is not correct, for instance, that Sulṭān Maḥmūd Gujarātī became his disciple, since both of them never actually met.

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn (Shaikh Jivan) had after his meeting with Sayyid Muḥammad made certain observations, which included a prediction about what would happen after the death of Jawnpūrī. His predictions became a reality. The followers of Jawnpūrī came to Gujarāt after their leader’s death and instead of propagating his teachings of following the Prophetic way emphasised the fact that Jawnpūrī was the *mahdī*. They were able to win the support of many people from various positions in the community to their Mahdawīyyah thought.

In a few months the Mahdawīyyah became a strong force and grouping. They became so acute in the matter of the *mahdī* that they declared all those who rejected their *mahdī* as *kāfir* [unbeliever]. Mahdawīyyah thought became so popular and bold that if any influential person denied that Sayyid Jawnpūrī was the *mahdī*, they would be killed. Each one of his followers was so worked up that they were prepared to sacrifice their lives even in the service of their Mahdawī beliefs. During the reign of Sulṭān Maḥmūd ibn Laṭīf Khān (944/1537), the position they took became almost similar to the stance taken by Ḥasan ibn Sabāḥ’s Ismāʿīliyyah. The radical nature of this movement resulted in a great deal of confusion and bloodshed. Ultimately the Sulṭān decided to exile the group and made sure that Gujarāt was free from Mahdawīyyah influence.

2? Sultān Maḥmūd's death was sudden and the Maḥdawīyyah got some opportunity to spread their doctrines. They first popularised amongst the people in Gujarāt stories of the supernatural feats of their leader and other saints. This is how they were able to return to Gujarāt. In the time of the last sultān, Muḥaffar Shāh there was a great deal of political confusion and instability in Gujarāt and the result of this state of affairs was that neither Muḥaffar Shāh nor the governor of Pattan Sher Khān ibn ʿAin al-Mulk concerned themselves with the Maḥdawīyyah. Mawlānā ʿAbd al-Rashīd Gujarātī was the spiritual leader of the Maḥdawīyyah at the time.

During the reign of Emperor Akbar, the Maḥdawīyyah once again mobilised their followers. At the time Khān Aẓam was the minister of Gujarāt and Amīn Sanjar Khān was his deputy. Sanjar Khān was favourably disposed towards the Maḥdawīyyah and gradually established relations with them. He expressed his desire to become a follower of the group and convinced the Maḥdawīyyah to bring their leader Mawlānā ʿAbd al-Rashīd to him so that he could take the oath of allegiance to him. Together with his important leaders and supporter Mawlānā ʿAbd al-Rashīd went to meet with Sanjar Khān.

Sanjar prepared an elaborate banquet for his guests, which numbered a few hundred. He then asked about the founder of this group and his teachings. Mawlānā ʿAbd al-Rashīd gave the answer to Sanjar Khān's question at length without any hesitation. After he had heard ʿAbd al-Rashīd's response Sanjar Khān kept silent allowing the guests to complete their meal. After they had finished their meal, he ordered that they should all be killed. Only one young boy by the name of Mustafā was spared and sent to Khān Aẓam.

After this incident the Maḥdawīyyah did not emerge as an influential grouping during the entire reign of Akbar. Even the period of Jahāngīr was a quiet one. While Shāh Jehān was ruler however an incident took place that is worthy of note. Aurangzeb was the governor of Gujarāt for one and a half years. He came to

Aḥmadabād in *Rabīʿ al-awwal* 1055/1645 and left in *Shabān* 1056/1646. It was during this period that the Mahdawīyyah rose once again.

The Mahdawīyyah had a very prominent place in their teachings for *jihād* and had thus excelled as soldiers. In fact over the years their numbers in the military increased. ʿĀlamgīr was known for his strict application of the *sharīʿah* [Islāmic law] and the Mahdawīyyah also propagated a strict adherence to the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*. This commonality was further supported by the fact that they were both Hanafī and sunnī. Due to this apparent similarity Aurangzeb was unaware of the true Mahdawīyyah beliefs. For some time this situation continued until one day Aurangzeb said a few words of praise of Sayyid Rāju, the leader of the Mahdawīyyah group. Upon hearing this some of the advisers of Aurangzeb exposed the actual belief pattern of the Mahdawīyyah and Sayyid Rāju. Aurangzeb was however not convinced.

Once when Aurangzeb was at a meeting with Sayyid Rāju, the Emperor asked him concerning his beliefs. Rāju replied that the promised *mahdī* was Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī who had already lived and died. No other *mahdī* will now come. Aurangzeb now turned towards the *ʿulamāʾ*, who presented him with all the relevant Traditions concerning the *mahdī* and the signs mentioned in the Traditions whereby the *mahdī* is to be identified. The king now asked Rāju what proof he had to his claim that Sayyid Muḥammad was the *mahdī*. Since he was a soldier and not a scholar he became more and more angry as he was being questioned by the *ʿulamāʾ*. Finally he replied: "my answer is my sword."

Aurangzeb saw that the discussion had got quite out of hand and concluded the meeting. In order to make sure that this movement was quelled he dismissed them all from service as soldiers. After their dismissal they all gathered at a place called Gulābbāgh. At a meeting here they resolved that all the Mahdawīyyah of the entire Gujarāt must be gathered and together they must wage a war. To die was better than to live disgraced.

They sent out letters to all areas of Gujarāt encouraging their supporters in this way. When Aurangzeb got news of this he asked the *‘ulamā’* for a *fatwā’* in this matter. They replied that while it was not permissible to kill them they should be ordered to leave Gujarāt. The emperor issued a decree to this effect but the Mahdawīyyah refused to leave. A group of people were sent out from the court to convince the Mahdawīyyah to leave but when Sayyid Rāju, the Mahdawīyyah leader, refused, Aurangzeb issued an order that the Mahdawīyyah tents be destroyed and they must be forced out of their places. There was the fear that a civil war could break out as Aurangzeb sent some of his army as well. As expected when their tents were being uprooted the Mahdawīyyah took up their swords and skirmishes took place.

Mahdawīs from Aḥmadabād, mostly artisans, and the surrounding areas also came and joined the battle. When Aurangzeb got news of the situation, he sent reinforcements. The battle was fierce. The artisans who had come to support Sayyid Rāju fled from the battlefield but Rāju and his soldiers fought on bravely until their end. The Mahdawīyyah declared that Rāju was a martyr and till today visit his mausoleum for blessings and veneration.

The author of *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadī* writes:

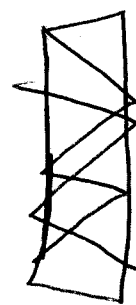
The Sayyid who people call Nūr Bakhsh was a resident of Jawnpūr. The word Jawnpūr is originally Jawna pūr. The actual name of Sulṭān Muḥammad Taghluq was Jawna, which is a Turkish word. Fayrozshāh Taghluq named this city in his memory and gave it the name Jawnāpūr. Eventually it was shortened to Jawnpūr. The genealogy of Nūr Bakhsh reaches Shaikh Najm al-Dīn Kubrāʾ. He received divine illumination and performed supernatural acts. He had many disciples. Once he even came to Gujarāt. Because he had performed many miracles, his followers began to regard him as the *mahdī* of the last time. This belief became entrenched into their belief system. Their

leader Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī, however never made any such claim, but this was an innovation of his disciples.

Source

Shaikh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Muḥaddith Dehlawī writes in one of his letters:

Sayyid Muḥammad possessed every perfection of character and faith that the Prophet, peace be upon him, had except that he was not blessed with divine revelation and prophethood. The only difference was that the Prophet Muḥammad was the original and Sayyid, by following him had become a copy.”



4.3.8. The Mahdawīyyah in Pattan

Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī came to Aḥmadabād in 901/1495 during the rule of Sulṭān Maḥmūd. He then went to Pattan in 903/1497. Here he remained occupied with preaching. He stayed near the Khān Sarwar Dam in Pattan. From here he moved to Barlī or Barnī, a place nine miles away from Pattan. The author of *Tārīkh-i-Pālanpūr* is of the opinion that, while in Barnī Sayyid Muḥammad claimed that he was the *mahdī*.

According to the author of *Gulshan-i- Gujarāt* three hundred and seventy ‘ulamā’ verified his claim. Of these scholars ten were Gujarātīs and four were from Pattan itself.

In 906/1500 Sayyid Muḥammad dispatched a group from Nagor to Gujarāt for the sake of propagating their beliefs. At the head of this delegation was Sayyid Khund Mīr and Shāh Ni‘mat. When Sayyid Jawnpūrī personally visited Sindh and Khurāsān and died in 910/1504, then a large number of his followers returned to Gujarāt and peacefully continued the propagation of their religion.

When during the reign of Sulṭān Muẓaffar II (d. 932/1525) the Mahdawīyyah started to become fanatical, then Muẓaffar Shāh was compelled to suppress them. The measures taken by Muẓaffar Shāh also resulted in the Mahdawīyyah losing

their strength. Some of them ran away and others became silent and secretive about their beliefs.

In the period of Bahādur Shāh, who ruled after Muẓaffar Shāh II, the Mahdawīyyah once again were able to spread their thoughts. This was so because Bahādur Shāh remained occupied with his conquests for most of his life and did not pay attention to the Mahdawīyyah who then had a free hand to do as they liked.

In 944/1537 Sulṭān Muḥmūd II ascended the throne and for a while the situation remained the same. Then in 952/1545 Sulṭān Maḥmūd II tore himself away from the clutches of his ministers and became more authoritative. At that time Asif Khān was the chief minister. Shaikh ‘Alī al-Muttaqī had at the time also left Makkah and was resident at Aḥmadabad. Shaikh ‘Alī al-Muttaqī was deadly against the Mahdawīyyah and had written a treatise against them. His preaching against the Mahdawīyyah was very strong which made many of them leave Gujarāt. Those that remained behind became very silent and kept their beliefs to themselves.

Sulṭān Maḥmūd II died in 961/1553. The Mahdawīs spread the news that the sulṭān died as a result of a miracle of their leader and other pious people. They returned to Gujarāt where the conditions were very favourable for them. There was no king appointed, the ministers were all involved in a power struggle amongst themselves and the political situation generally did not allow anyone to pay attention to the Mahdawīyyah.

Sulṭān Aḥmad III was next to come to the throne. The situation remained very much the same for the Mahdawīyyah. When Sulṭān Muẓaffar Khān III became king in 968/1560 then Iṭimād Khān was the chief minister of the Sulṭān. Sher Khān and Musā’ Khān Fulādī decided to wage war with the governor of Pattan but returned to their city unsuccessful. About this time Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Rashīd

weak
language

Gujarātī, the leader of the Mahdawīyyah took full advantage of this to spread their thoughts freely. It was at this time that the ruling family of Pattan joined this new movement. Since the Mahdawīyyah was a new religious thought it now got some official support. The *'ulamā'* of the time did not have the courage to raise their voice against the government.

Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī (d. 930/1523) had completed his studies during the reign of Sulṭān Muẓaffar Shāh II. He began teaching and remained in this profession for fourteen years. In 944/1537 Sulṭān Maḥmūd II was king when the Shaikh left for Makkah. It is not established exactly how long Shaikh spent in Makkah before returning to Pattan. It is possible that he spent five or six years in further studies there and returned to India by 950/1543. The company of great scholars in Makkah had the effect of widening the Shaikh's ideas and views. It was also from here that he thought of reform of his people. When he came back to Pattan he saw his community involved in innovations. Since a sizeable part of his people, the Bohra, had accepted Sunnī Islām after they had been Shī'ahs and lived in close contact with the Hindu religion, much of the practices of the old religion and its thoughts and customs of the locals were continued. The Shaikh therefore decided to reform his own home and people first. His efforts created a commotion ^{weak} within his community. ^{long} ~~The~~ ^{usage} Shaikh challenged the Shī'ah Bohra beliefs and preached openly against it. The talks were directed against the Shī'ah Bohra because his Sunnī Bohra community had adopted many beliefs, customs and practices that were, for the Shaikh, against the Prophetic paradigm embodied in the *sunnah*.

Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir used to spend his time in the reformation of his people, teaching and research. In what remained of his time Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir wrote and compiled books.

The initial period of the reign of Sulṭān Muẓaffar (the last Sulṭān of Gujarāt, 968/1560) saw much petty squabbling between almost all the ministers. This gave

the Mahdawīyyah full opportunity to gain a degree of ascendancy. This was given an added impetus when the family of Sher Khān Fūlādī, the governor of Gujarāt became a Mahdawī.

When the Mahdawīyyah became very bold and declared all those who denied the Mahdawīyyah thought as *kuffār* (unbelievers) and could even be killed, then Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir began his efforts against them. He opposed them in writing and through his speeches by using both rational arguments and producing relevant proofs from the Islamic sources. The Shaikh's main thrust was against the Mahdawīyyah theology. The ruler of the time was also made aware of the flaws in Mahdawīyyah beliefs. During this time *Naṣīḥah al-wulāt* was written by the Shaikh. This treatise was sent to Sher Khān, who accepted it with great respect. The ruler also commented that had the Shaikh not written this treatise he would have held the Shaikh responsible on the Day of Judgement. Due to the effect of this book there was silence for some time. After a little while however, the Mahdawīyyah resumed their activities. During this period Sher Khān's own family members even were very much engaged in the preaching of Mahdawīyyah views. Hence in the preface of *Sharḥ al-shāfiyyah* there is a hint to this situation:

"I was hesitant to write this work because of the difficulties and the enemies who are constantly encroaching on my privacy."

At the conclusion of the book he writes: "All praise is due to Allah who, despite the difficulties I have experienced at the hands of opportunists and the changing conditions, has made it possible for me to complete this work."

This book was completed in 960/1552.

4.4. Gujarāt during the Shaikh's life (1506-1578)

4.4.1. The Muslim occupation of Gujarāt

The first Muslim attack against Gujarāt was in 416/1025 by Maḥmūd Ghaznawī. He defeated Bīm Dev to take control of Pattan. However, after Maḥmūd Ghaznawī left the area, Bīm Dev once again restored his power in the region.

In 591/1194 Quṭub al-Dīn Aibak conquered Pattan but after having collected the spoils of war left the region. Then in 593/1196 he once again attacked the area and conquered Pattan. This time he appointed a governor before he returned. Due to his preoccupation with battles in different regions, Quṭub al-Dīn could not support this governor financially. The Rajāh was thus able to bring Pattan under his control once again.

4.4.2. Muslim rule in Gujarāt

In 797/1394 ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khiljī received a request from Mādū, the governor of Rājah Kirn Bāgīlā, that he should send an army to invade his territories. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn dispatched Rānī Khān to conquer Gujarāt. With the fall of the Khiljī dynasty, the Taghlūq's replaced them. The last king in this family was Maḥmūd Taghlūq. During his reign the Sultanate of Pattan became independent.

Sulṭān Muḥammad Tātār Khān ibn Muḥaffar Khān was the first king. On his death his father Muḥaffar Khān became king. He became known as Muḥaffar Shāh. Next his grandson Sulṭān Aḥmad Shāh ibn Muḥammad Shāh Tātār Khān became the king.

Sulṭān Aḥmad Shāh made Aḥmadabād the seat of his government in 813/1410. Aḥmad Shāh was succeeded by his son Muḥammad Shāh and thereafter his son Quṭb al-Dīn.

Quṭub al-Dīn built the Nahriyyah Dam and the mausoleum of Shaikh Aḥmad Katto. On the death of Quṭub al-Dīn his brother Maḥmūd Begrā (Begard)

succeeded him. It was during his reign that Aḥmadabād was fortified. He ruled for 25 years and died in 918/1512. Muẓaffar II, his son ruled until 932/1525. On his death his son Sikander became the ruler and after a few months his brother Bahādur Shāh ruled.

During the reign of Bahādur Shāh Deccan was conquered and most of the principalities were brought under his control. In fact almost half of India came under his rule. His nephew Maḥmūd ibn Laṭīf Khān ibn Muẓaffar II became the ruler in 944/1537. When he was killed, Aḥmad Shāh succeeded him.

Upon the death of Aḥmad Shāh, Muẓaffar Shāh became the last ruler of Gujarāt. In 980/1572, Akbar, the King of Delhi, conquered Gujarāt and included it into his kingdom. Since this time Gujarāt has been a province of India.

Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī was born in the last part of the reign of Maḥmūd Begrā. He was educated during the period of Sulṭān Muẓaffar and it was in the reign of Sulṭān Maḥmūd that he left India to seek knowledge. When the Shaikh returned Sulṭān Maḥmūd ibn Laṭīf Khān was the ruler. This was a period of instability caused by internal strife. Sher Khān's conversion to the Mahdawīyyah must be understood against the background of political events that began in 944/1537.

4.4.3. Political instability

When in 944/1537 Sulṭān Maḥmūd ibn Laṭīf Khān was made king, he was of a very young age. Due to this the ministers took over the leadership of the country. ʿImād al-Mulk ruled and he was soon removed by Daryā Khān who in turn was removed by ʿAlim Khān. Daryā Khān fled to Hindustān where he died. Soon thereafter Mujāhid Khān took over the leadership from ʿAlim Khān. At this point after several years of internal power mongering, Maḥmūd Shāh, the king took over the leadership position once again.

This was a short-lived stability since in 961/1553 Sulṭān Maḥmūd Shāh was assassinated by a servant called Bartān. Aḥmad Shāh III became the new king. He was also very young and was thus placed into the guidance of Iʿtimād Khān. Nāṣir al-Mulk opposed the appointment of Iʿtimād Khān. In response to this Iʿtimād Khān lobbied the support of the chief-minister Mubārak Shāh and other ministers and banished Nāṣir al-Mulk from Gujarāt.

At this very time there was other dissent developing. Ikhtiyār al-Mulk Ḥasan Khān Daktī and Fataḥ Khān Balūch joined together to declare a new king by the name Shāhujiyo. Shāhujiyo was the paternal uncle of Aḥmad Shāh.

All the ministers of the government met and began to divide the country amongst themselves. Pattan, Cambay, Dulha, Dandhuk, Ghjogha, Janpanir, Baroda, Karwanch and Balasinwar were all given to Sayyid Mubārak. Sayyid Mubārak gave control of Pattan to Musāʾ Khān and Sher Khān Fūlādī. ʿAlim Khān returned to Gujarāt after Sayyid Khān had given him the guarantee that he would protect him. Soon however he resumed his mischievous activities. He was eventually defeated by the joint efforts of Iʿtimād Khān ʿImād al-Mulk and Sayyid Mubārak.

Sher Khān Fūlādī was an ally of ʿAlim Khān. They both joined forces to take over the area of Kari. Iʿtimād Khān sent Ikhtiyār al-Mulk to protect ʿAlim Khān. In this battle ʿAlim Khān was killed. After this event, Iʿtimād Khān killed a very powerful minister called Taghluq Khān. When Sulṭān Aḥmad witnessed all these developments he became afraid. Without informing ʿImād al-Mulk and Iʿtimād Khān, Sulṭān Aḥmad fled to Sayyid Mubārak Shāh. At this very time Ḥājī Khān Afghān had been defeated by Humayun, the king of Delhi and was fleeing towards Pattan. At this stage he had five thousand horsemen and one hundred and fifty battle elephants. Iʿtimād Khān got the wrong impression that Sayyid had requested the assistance of Ḥājī Khān and relying on this strength had called Aḥmad Shāh to him.

Iʿtimād Khān and ʿImād al-Mulk prepared their armies and left for Maḥmūdābād at night. By morning they had reached Maḥmūdābād and a battle ensued between them and the army of Sayyid Mubārak Shāh. Sayyid Mubārak Shāh fell in battle and the new rulers were now ʿImād al-Mulk and Iʿtimād Khān.

Soon however, ʿImād al-Mulk and Iʿtimād Khān began disputing amongst themselves. ʿImād al-Mulk requested his son Janghīz Khān to enter the town together with his army and armaments. Iʿtimād Khān sent a message to Tātār Khān, who was at Junāghar to come to his assistance. He also elicited the assistance of Ḥājī Khān, Sher Khān and Musāʾ Khān from Pattan and was thus able to expel ʿImād al-Mulk from the city. ʿImād al-Mulk fled to Baruch. As a reward for his assistance Ḥājī Khān was given half of the area of Kari.

ʿImād al-Mulk, on the advice of some residents of Surat itself, attacked Surat. Khudāwand Khān, the ruler of Surat, agreed to surrender and make peace with ʿImād al-Mulk. He invited ʿImād al-Mulk to a banquet at his Fort where he killed him. Janghīz Khān, in revenge of his father's death, killed Khudāwand Khān. Janghīz Khān then took over the reigns of power and ruled over the entire country.

At about this time Alf Khān Habshī died. His nation elected his son Juchār Khān in his place. Janghīz Khān got news of this development and was displeased by it since he felt he should have also been consulted in this matter. He thus decided to attack the newly appointed Juchār Khān. Janghīz Khān was defeated and retreated to Aḥmadabad where he sought the protection of Iʿtimād Khān.

Eventually Tātār Khān gave him the counsel that he should give away the control of Baroda and come to an agreement. Iʿtimād Khān however did not agree to this and this angered Tātār Khān who wrote to Sher Khān at Pattan that he should attack Faṭḥ Khān the ruler of Radhanūr. When news reached Iʿtimād Khān that Faṭḥ Khān was defeated he left Baruch and returned to Aḥmadabād. At this time Sulṭān Aḥmad Shāh had reached the age of puberty and began to realise his

inadequacies and limitations. In his frustration at the situation he found himself in, the young king expressed his desire to kill I'timād Khān and his two ministers Radi al-Mulk and Wajī al-Mulk. When the king's intention became known to I'timād Khān he got the sultān killed in 968/1560 by one of the servants. The body of Sultān Aḥmad Shāh was bathed on the banks of the Sabirmati river, shrouded and prepared for the burial which took place early the following morning. Sultān Muẓaffar Nanno was made the king. He was the son of Sultān Maḥmūd and also still of a young age.

I'timād Khān now decided to wage war against Musā' Khān and Sher Khān Fulādī. He could not get the support of the other ministers who were not pleased with the way I'timād Khān had killed Sultān Aḥmad. This meant that at the time of going out in battle, besides the Habshīs and Ḥājī Khān nobody else supported I'timād Khān. As expected I'timād Khān was defeated and he returned to Aḥmadabād. In his disappointment he took back the area of Kari from Ḥājī Khān. Ḥājī Khān left for Pattan. Sher Khān and Musā' Khān accepted Ḥājī Khān as their brother and gave him the area of Jāghir.

Sayyid Mirā ibn Sayyid Mubārak Shāh did not get the treatment and respect he had expected from I'timād Khān. He therefore went to Tātār Khān for assistance. Tātār Khān and Sayyid Mirā both went and joined forces with Sher Khān and Musā' Khān Fūlādī. With a fully equipped army and ready for battle, I'timād Khān reached Pattan. Sher Khān also prepared for battle and he felt greater confidence with the support he had from Ḥājī Khān. Sher Khān was able to defeat the army of I'timād Khān who was forced to retreat to Aḥmadabād. Once again half of the area of Kadī was given to Ḥājī Khān, this time by Sayyid Mirān. Sayyid Mirān was also able to convince Sher Khān to relinquish control of Pattan. From Aḥmadabād I'timād Khān summoned Sayyid Mirā, reassured him and gave him the areas of Dholka to be included in his territory.

After a few days I'timād Khān took the support of Janghiz Khān and once again launched an attack against Sher Khān. At this stage a dispute had arose between Janghiz Khān and Alf Khān Ḥabshī. Janghiz Khān felt that even though he was faced with a fierce enemy such as Sher Khān he could not be convinced of the full support of I'timād Khān. If Sher Khān was destroyed then I'timād Khān will not acknowledge and be grateful for the support that he had offered him. He therefore began secretly plotting with Sher Khān. During this period Musā' Khān Fūlādī died. Janghiz Khān took advantage of this event and declared that it would be against all dignity to wage war at a time of the death of someone. With the loss of his support I'timād Khān was forced to return to Aḥmadabād.

During this time a group of persons originally from Khurāsān including Mirzā Ibrāhīm Ḥusain, Mirza Muḥammad Ḥusain, Shāh Mirzā and Mirzā Ashraf Dīn Ḥusain fled from the royal court of Akbar at Delhi and sought refuge with Janghiz Khān who gave them all employment. Janghiz Khān felt strengthened with his new recruits and approached Sher Khān that they attack I'timād Khān from opposite fronts and drive him out of Gujarāt. The plan was agreed upon and both armies made advances. Sher Khān reached Kari. By this time however, Janghiz Khān had already defeated I'timād Khān and his army and had taken over Aḥmadabād. I'timād Khān took Sulṭān Muḥaffar and went into hiding in a mountainous region. The area of Gujarāt was divided between the two conquerors with the Sabirmati River as the boundary divide.

Very quickly Janghiz Khān became powerful and displayed his abilities at governance. People became attracted to him and favoured his province. Aware of this success Sher Khān became afraid and regretted removing I'timād Khān.

I'timād Khān managed to make contact with the governor of Burhānpur, Muḥammad Khān, who promised to assist him. I'timād Khān then left for Baroda. While at Baroda he received a letter from Janghiz Khān wherein Janghiz Khān

stated that I'timād Khān's ministerial position was still vacant, he should come and occupy it and then they would both eliminate all other hostile armies.

When Sher Khān came to know of this plan, he wrote to Muḥammad Khān. In his letter he promised that he would support Sulṭān Muḥammad Shāh who should allow him two days to prepare his army and meet with him. The Sultan agreed. In the meanwhile, Sher Khān informed his son Muḥammad Khān that he should prepare an army. Muḥammad Shāh camped with his army a short distance out of Ahmadabad. Janghiz Khān led his army out of Ahmadabad and camped close to Muḥammad Shāh. Janghiz Khān first sent out his Moghul forces to confront his enemy. They were expert archers and for a full day, continuously pelted their enemy army with their arrows. Muḥammad Shāh fled at night and his entire army was destroyed.

After this victory Janghiz Khān become very confident of his strength. Besides I'timād Khān all other ministers had come into his court. He began living with all the pomp of a king. Sher Khān was very concerned with this state of affairs. It was during this time that Tajalli Khān Ḥabshī became unhappy with Janghiz Khān due to some land that he felt was due to him. Tajalli Khān convinced Alf Khān and Jūjahār that Janghiz Khān planned to kill them both. Falsely deceived they both found a suitable opportunity to kill Janghiz Khān in Chughān in 976/1568.

Sher Khān proposed to Alf Khān and others that Aḥmadabād should be given into his sole control. The other areas could be given into the rule of the ministers who were in charge of them. Alf Khān agreed to this plan.

In 980/1572 Sher Khān decided to occupy Aḥmadabād. He took his army out until he reached Adamka where the battle began. I'timād Khān took the assistance of the Mirzas and also sent a message to Akbar at Delhi that the Afghāns had surrounded Aḥmadabād and that if Akbar did not come to assist I'timād Khān would give Aḥmadabād to the Mirzas for fighting against the Afghāns. At the time

Akbar was at Mālwa. He immediately came to Gujarāt and conquered Pattan from where he advanced. He eventually took over the entire Gujarāt.

This was the first time that Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir and Emperor Akbar met. It was on this occasion that Akbar tied a turban on the Shaikh's head.

4.5. The attack on Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir

Musā' Khān and Sher Khān tried every ploy to silence Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir but could not do so. Their every effort could not stop the Shaikh from his reform movement, his task and writings. They therefore devised a plan to kill the Shaikh. Disguised as students they would often enter the *madrassah* [school] of the Shaikh waiting for the opportunity to murder him. One day while al-Fattanī was alone in his residence they went there and struck a blow with their swords on his shoulder. The Shaikh was wounded and his attackers fled down a flight of steps. While one of the attackers was descending he fell. From a distance one of the Shaikh's pupils, Khair al-Dīn, observed what was happening and quickly ran towards his teacher. He cut off the neck of the fallen attacker and quickly hid his body. Khair al-Dīn mounted the attacker's horse and left Pattan.

When Sher Khān came to know about this he sent people on horseback to search for Khair al-Dīn. He was found near Aḥmadabād at a place called Kāli Talawarī. Khair al-Dīn was killed.

Al-Fattanī has mentioned this incident at the end of his *Majma' biḥār al-anwār*. The Shaikh writes that as his wound was being stitched he felt no pain except for three stitches. A doctor would come on a regular basis to treat the wound and within a short period of twenty to twenty-five days he was completely cured. His enemies failed in their mission.

Being influenced by this incident Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī thought of going to the central government at Aḥmadabād so that this movement can be quelled at

once. Hence he went to Aḥmadabād where he met with a number of leaders, ministers, noblemen and viziers. He found all of them to be selfish and only concerned with their own personal quarrels.

The chief minister and some others responded to the Shaikh by informing him that Pattan is under the jurisdiction of Sher Khān Fulādī and hence they did not want to interfere in the matter.

weak language
Disappointed, the Shaikh returned to Pattan where he continued to resist the nefarious activities.

4.6. Akbar and Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī: Removing the turban

As time passed Shaikh became more concerned about the Mahdawīyyah. In Gujarāt sometimes the Mahdawīyyah would become completely quiet and then suddenly again become very prominent. Ultimately Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir resolved that he was going to rid Gujarāt of the Mahdawīyyah, who he considered *error?* a menace. As a symbol of his resolve he removed his turban from his head. His *whom* gesture meant that he was not being recognised as an *‘ālim* [scholar]. This was evident from the actions of the leaders who did not want to practice on his proposals for the eradication of the Mahdawīyyah. Obedience to an *‘ālim*, who has substantiated what he is saying from the Qur’ān and Traditions was in the Shaikh’s mind essential. Their disobedience is tantamount to their denying his position and thus the turban generally worn by an *‘ālim* is also not recognised by them. Since this action the Shaikh also started reading a *du‘ā* [prayer] that this *shar* [evil] be curbed. This incident took place in 980/1572.

A minister from the court of the Mughal emperor, Akbar, went for *hajj* and came across Shaikh al-Fattanī’s *Kifāyah al-mufrītīn*. The minister enjoyed the book very much and decided that as soon as he gets back to his homeland he will meet with the author. The Shaikh had only said the prayer for ten or fifteen days when this minister came to visit him. The Shaikh spent a long time explaining to the minister

why he was so opposed to the Mahdawīyyah. Two letters were also penned by the Shaikh. One was addressed to Emperor Akbar and the other to Shaikh ‘Abd al-Nabī Ṣadr al-Ṣudūr. The minister agreed to give the letter to his superiors. The letters contained the Shaikh’s advices and opinions on the political situation and unrest in Gujarāt and the innovations and irreligious practices.

From the very beginning of his rule Akbar had desired to rule those areas over which his father Humayūn had reigned. This letter had given him more reason to fulfil his long held desire. Akbar had come to Malwa when he received the invitation from I’timād Khān, the vizier of Sulṭān Muẓaffar Gujarātī. Sayyid Abā Turāb Sherwanī, the trusted advisor of I’tmād Khān, had been successful in persuading Akbar to come to Gujarāt. From Malwa Akbar went directly to Pattan. Sher Khān was at this time along the banks of the Sabarmati River with a large army and was launching an attack against Aḥmadabād. Akbar took control of Pattan and took the initiative to meet Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Pattanī. Akbar tied a turban on the Shaikh's head and said that in the future all matters of *sharī‘ah* [Islāmic law] would be decided in consultation with Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir. Akbar also announced that he had conferred the title and position of *Shaikh al-Islām* to the Shaikh.

From Pattan Emperor Akbar went to Aḥmadabād from where he conquered the entire Gujarāt. His half-brother Khān A‘zam Mirza was appointed governor of Gujarāt. Khān A‘zam Mirza was a Hanafī and a Sunnī. Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir and the governor enjoyed a very good relationship since Khān A‘zam was also very particular about observing the religious requirements. They joined together to suppress the Mahdawīyyah.

With the Mahdawīyyah under control the Shaikh was satisfied and went back to teaching and research.

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error!?

4.7. Regrouping of the Mahdawīyyah

In 986/1578 Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir got news that at the royal court in Akbar, Abū al-Faḍl and Faiḍī had misguided the Emperor and that he now held certain irreligious views. Another political development also became a source of concern to the Shaikh. Khān Aẓam who had, because of his religious nature, always supported the Shaikh in his reform efforts and was very different from the other politicians as far as his attitude to religious efforts was concerned, had been replaced as governor. In 981/1573 ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Mirza Khān became the new governor of Gujarāt. The first difficulty for the Shaikh was that ʿAbd al-Raḥīm was a Shīʿah. Secondly he was young and a free thinker. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm did not concern himself much with the Mahdawīyyah. The scattered and weakened Mahdawīyyah once again gathered strength as their activities and propagation was given a new opportunity. Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir drew the governor's attention to the problem but ʿAbd al-Raḥīm paid no attention to the Shaikh's concerns.

ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Mirza Khān was called back to the royal court of Akbar in 933/1526. Wazīr Khān replaced him. His governorship was very tumultuous and politically unstable. He made a fatal mistake in a matter with Sulṭān Muẓaffar Nattu and had to face defeat as a result. Wazīr Khān could not manage the affairs of his province and was therefore in no position to help Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir against the Mahdawīyyah. Due to Wazīr Khān's inefficient management of Gujarāt, he was called back to Agra and replaced by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Khān in 985/1577. Iʿtimād Khān Gujarātī, the one time chief minister of Sulṭān Muẓaffar was made commander of Pattan (Khān 1927, 131-140)

None of the leaders of the time were concerned with Islām, instead all of them were only interested in their own worldly benefit. The rulers also realised that Gujarāt would soon be captured. For their legitimacy, there was no need for them to get the support of the religious leaders such as Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir who would influence the thoughts and opinions of the masses.

Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir felt that it was best for him to go to Agra and present his case to Akbar. He would defeat Faiḍī, Abū al-Faḍl and Mubārak in debate and bring the Emperor back to the true and pristine religion.

4.8. The journey to Agra and martyrdom

The Shaikh began his preparations for his journey to Agra. He remained occupied in preparation for three days during which he did not go to his family. Once ready, he left for Agra without going to bid farewell to his family. This incident took place in 986/1578. Leaving Gujarāt he went to Malwa. At Sāringpūr, a famous town of the time he stayed at the house of his student, Shaikh Ḥājī al-Islām Behkāri. Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir spent three days as a guest at his house. The next stop en-route to Agra was a small town called Suhī.

By this time the Mahdawīyyah had heard the Shaikh's plans and purpose of going to Agra. They realised the danger that such a meeting with the emperor posed for their future and decided to retaliate. The Mahdawīyyah waited for a suitable opportunity when the Shaikh was alone. On 6 *Shawwāl* 986/1578 when Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was saying his *tahajjud* [pre-dawn] prayer he was killed. People around the Shaikh heard his assassin flee and pursued him but were unable to capture him.

According to ʿAbd al-Wahhāb in Sāringpūr Shaikh Ḥājī Muḥammad had a dream wherein his teacher Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir informed him that he has been martyred and instructed him to come to bath, shroud and bury his body. Ḥājī Muḥammad awoke from his dream very disturbed and soon after informing others of it people gathered. A party left in the direction of Suhī. After travelling for sometime they saw a group of students and other pious crying as they carried the body of the Shaikh (ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, n.d., 12).

Abū Ṣafar Nadwī is of the opinion that Abū al-Faḍl had a hand in the assassination of the Shaikh. When Abū al-Faḍl and his party at Agra heard that Shaikh

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Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was on his way to Agra for no other purpose than to defeat their beliefs, and bring the king back to the old religion, they became very uneasy. Until now all those who debated Abū al-Faḍl and Faiḍī did not have the strength of good character and firmness of faith to support their arguments. Besides this, the Shaikh's knowledge of Islam and his command of the Arabic language was far superior to all at the court of Akbar. Without exaggeration Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was, at the time, the best *ḥadīth* [Traditionalist] scholar of India. Abū al-Faḍl used the Mahdawīyyah and supported them to kill the Shaikh. It was well known that Mulla Mubārak was well disposed to the Mahdawīyyah and held Mahdawī beliefs himself. He had lived for many years in Aḥmadabād and due to his influence could very easily find people in that area to fulfil his sinister motives of killing the Shaikh. If he did not do this then his position and the position of his son Abū al-Faḍl was in jeopardy. He therefore arranged for some of the Mahdawīyyah to kill the Shaikh (Nadwī 1967, 35).

Shaikh Ḥājī Muḥammad and his party were extremely aggrieved at the loss of their teacher and religious leader. They took the Shaikh's body to Sāringpūr, where it was prepared for burial. The funeral prayer was attended by thousands of people since the news of the Shaikh's unnatural death had spread far and wide. The crowd at the *janazah ṣalāh* [funeral prayer] was so large that the prayer had to be repeated several times. Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was laid to rest in the tomb of Shaikh Behkāri (ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, n.d., 15).

When Emperor Akbar got news of the death of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir, he ordered that the Shaikh's body be transferred to Pattan. Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir's children complied and brought him to a place in Pattan where the Shaikh was buried.

The alpha-numerical value of the date of the Shaikh's death is *ahl ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* [belonging to the rightly-guided path]. The Shaikh died in 986/1578 at the age of 72 years.

4.9. Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir

Ḥāfiẓ Zain al-‘Ābidīn, the teacher of Niẓām al-Mulk Daccan narrates that he once went to Mālwā with Khān Dorān where he narrated to the scholars there what he had heard from his teacher ‘Alī al-Muttaqī who had seen a dream in which al-Muttaqī asked the Prophet Muḥammad who the *‘afḍal al-nās* [best of people] was. The reply was “you and then Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī.”

Similarly Shaikh ‘Umar Multānī informed al-Fattanī that his status was higher than that of the sky. Al-Fattanī makes mention of this in his *Majma‘ biḥār al-anwār*. He writes: “I thank Allāh for the good tiding” (‘Abd al-Wahhāb, n.d., 17).

Mawlānā Sayyid Muḥammad Deobandī (1991, 1:343) in his *‘Ulamā’-i-Hind ka shāndār māqī* has dedicated a few lines to discussing Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī. He states:

The Shaikh was born in Pattan, a village in Gujarāt. He was from the Bohra people. Allāh had blessed him with much knowledge. After acquiring knowledge he left for the *Ḥaramain* [the two holy sanctuaries i.e. Makkah and Madinah] He benefitted from the scholars and experts here especially ‘Alī al-Muttaqī in whose service the Shaikh remained and under whom he specialised. Filled with knowledge, good actions, and spiritual blessings he returned to his hometown where he devoted himself to the reformation of his community. It was in this effort that he was eventually martyred.

CHAPTER TWO: NOTES

¹ The details regarding the life of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Wahhāb are to be found in Abū Ṣafar Nadwī’s Urdu work entitled *Tadhkirah* (1967).

² The author of *Jāmi‘ al-qaṣaṣ*.

³ The author of *Bidāyah wa al-nihāyah*.

CHAPTER THREE

The literary works of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī as a reflection of his religious thought

1. Introduction

The theoretical assumption underlying the study that follows in this chapter is that the scholarship of a biographee is a window to his thought. Scholarly works produced by Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī are therefore the primary sources that inform this dissertation and this chapter is devoted to discussing these. The Shaikh's religious orientation becomes clearer in the context of other movements too. These will be discussed in subsequent chapters. The type of conclusions that can be drawn from Shaikh al-Fattanī's interaction with other currents of religious thought are supported by evidence from his biography and the historical milieu of the time. Any conclusions made about the nature of his religious thought here however, must be attested by his literary contribution. It will be shown therefore that al-Fattanī's works are an articulation of an Islām in balance between the extremes of the letter and the spirit.

This chapter begins with a bibliographical analysis of the corpus of works under review. What follows may only be described as a brief description of each of the six extant works of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī available to this student. A detailed appraisal of these works would require expertise in the field they cover in order to, amongst other things, compare them to other similar works.

At the end of this exercise an argument is made for those aspects of Shaikh al-Fattanī's thought that may be deduced from his writings. While the supporting evidence for some of the conclusions drawn here may appear to be tenuous to

an exacting scholar, it should be borne in mind that al-Fattani has left no single work which plainly embodies his thought.

2. Literary activities

Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattani was a distinguished author, as is remarked admirably by many of the authorities. He wrote on various subjects within the Islāmic sciences. His academic genius and masterly scholarship are however manifested chiefly in the field of Tradition studies. Here he produced works of exceptional quality which will be discussed shortly. His most voluminous work is in a field of study regarded as very difficult and intricate.

The author of *Risālah-i-manāqib* (1954), ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir has, after making mention of the early life and education of Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir, provided an exhaustive list of his works. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb introduces this list with a note where he mentions that this list is a record of “some” of the works of Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir that have become famous “these days” (1954, 2). ‘Abd al-Wahhāb died in 1109/1697 and it is possible that during his lifetime all the books in his list were extant.

The works of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattani listed in *Risālah-i-manāqib* (1954, 2) are:

1. *Majma biḥār al-anwār fī gharāib al-tanzīl wa laṭāif al-akḥbār*
2. *Maqāṣid jāmi‘ al-uṣūl.*
3. *Dhail majma‘ al-biḥār.*
4. *Takmilah majma‘ al-biḥār.*
5. *Ḥāshiyah maqāṣid al-uṣūl.*
6. *Ḥāshiyah ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī.*
7. *Ḥāshiyah ṣaḥiḥ al-Muslim.*
8. *Ḥāshiyah mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ.*
9. A compilation of forty *aḥādīth*.
10. *Iddat al-muta‘abbidīn.*

11. *Minhāj al-sālikīn*.
12. *Kitāb al-tawassul*.
13. *Mughnī al-labīb*.
14. *Tadhkirah al-mawḍuʿāt*.
15. *Qānūn al-duʿafāʾ*.
16. An Arabic treatise giving a brief biography of the Messenger of Allāh from his birth to his death; recording chronologically all the events which took place in every year of his life.
17. A treatise similar to the above but with different content written in the Persian language.
18. An abridged version of *Kitāb al-inqāl*. — ?
19. *Hāshiyah talwīḥ wa tawdīḥ*.
20. A treatise on the *ṣaḥābah* [Companions] in which the Shaikh has proved that none can reach the position of the *ṣaḥābah* and therefore nobody should give preference to anybody over the *ṣaḥābah*.
21. *Sharḥ al-ʿaqīdah*. This is a work written in the field of *ʿilm al-kalām* [theology].
22. *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyyah*.
23. *Risālah al-naharwālah* also known as *Risālah al-Makkīyyah*.
24. *Mukhtaṣar al-mustazhariyyah*.
25. *Naṣīḥah al-wulāt wa al-ruʿāt wa al-raʿīyyah*.
26. *Risālah imsāk al-maṭar*.
27. *Risālah aḥkām al-biʿr*.
28. *Nisāb al-bayān*.
29. *Nisāb al-mizān*.
30. *Kifāyah al-mufriṭīn: sharḥ al-Shāfiyah*.
31. *Khulāṣah al-fawā'id*. ?
32. *Dastūr al-ṣarf*.
33. *Risālah kuḥliyyah*. ?

Although the possibility exists that new manuscripts of al-Fattani's works could be discovered it would seem that all but the following works are lost:

1. *Majma' biḥār al-anwār.*
2. *Dhail majma' al-biḥār.*
3. *Takmilah majma' al-biḥār.*
4. The Arabic treatise giving a brief chronological biography of the Messenger of Allāh.
5. The treatise on the status of the *ṣaḥābah* [Companions].
6. *Kitāb al-tawassul.*
7. *Kifāyah al-mufriṭīn: sharḥ al-Shāfiyah.*
8. *Mughnī al-labīb* (sic).
9. *Tadhkirah al-mawḍu'āt.*
10. *Qānūn al-ḍu'afā'.*

3. Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahhāb's bibliography

Shaikh 'Abd al-Wahhāb has listed the *Dhail*, the *Takmilah*, the *sīrah* treatise and the treatise on the Companions as separate works. In the published version of *Majma' biḥār al-anwār*, these sections are included in the fifth volume as appendices.

It is possible that these works were published separately also. From the *Majma'* itself it is clear that these sections were certainly intended to be part of this work. Introducing the section on the *sīrah* [Prophetic biography], the author states: *wa linulḥiqu baḍa fawāidi al-siyari liyakūna dhā baṣīratin fī tārikhī waqāi al-akhbārī wa al-maghāzī ijmālan fa la yashtabihi alaiha haqāiquhā* [and we are appending some useful notes on *sīrah* so that the student can get a brief insight into the history of events and battles so that their realities do not confuse him] (al-Fattani 1994, 5:261). The inclusion of these sections into the work entitled *Majma' biḥār al-anwār fī gharāib al-tanzīl wa laṭāif al-akhbār* is therefore not the decision of any scribe but the intention of al-Fattani himself.

It is possible that these sections were published individually during 'Abd al-Wahhāb's lifetime. The treatises on the Prophetic biography and the status of the Companions could be understood and appreciated by readers without the

need to refer to the voluminous *Majmaʿ*. Such a publication would not entail the simple task of copying from the *Majmaʿ*. The system of citation employed in *Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār* where abbreviations are used to refer to the works quoted is continued into the sections found in the published work. These works, if published separately, would therefore have required an introduction where the abbreviations are explained.

Besides the treatises on the *sīrah* and the Companions there are other sections of the book as well which could have been regarded as independant works. The section on the science of Tradition study (1994, 5:225), for example, could easily have been regarded as a separate section by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb. Since he did not enumerate these other sections as separate works we have to assume that he was accurate in his bibliography of the published works of al-Fattānī. This however raises a further question as to whether the works published individually differed from the sections as they appear in the published and manuscript versions of *Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār*. Since these works are lost to us, it would seem that this question will remain unanswered.

It is therefore not entirely correct to list the treatises on *sīrah* and the status of the Companions as extant works since it is not possible to determine whether they are the same works published as an appendix to *Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār*. The *Dhail* and the *Takmilah* which ʿAbd al-Wahhāb refers to are without doubt the same as those included in the published work. The author wrote these once he had completed the work as he has indicated in his concluding paragraphs of the *Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār*. A treatment of the composition of the *Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār* will discuss this aspect in detail.

The works *Tadhkirah al-mawḍūʿāt* and *Qānūn al-ḍuʿafāʾ* are separate works although both works have been edited and published in a single volume. The works however complement each other and there is no doubt as to the usefulness of having them in a single volume.

One of the names mentioned in ʿAbd al-Wahhāb’s list is *Mughnī al-labīb*. Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir’s work in the field of *asmāʾ al-rijāl* [the names of the narrators of Prophetic Traditions] has been published in 1985 from Pakistan by Dār al-Nashar al-Kutub al-Islamīyyah. Here the full title of the book appears as *al-Mughnī fī ḍabṭ asmāʾ al-rijāl wa maʿrifah kuniy al-ruwāah wa alqābihim wa ansābihim*. The work *Mughnī al-labīb* is another famous work in the field of grammar by the well-know scholar ʿAbdullāh ibn Ḥishām al-Miṣrī al-Naḥwī al-Anṣārī (d. 761/1359). Ibn Hishām is the author of the acclaimed work *Shudhūr al-dhahab*.

The bibliography that ʿAbd al-Wahhāb has compiled contains works in several fields. These may be categorised as follows:

Qurʾānic Studies:

1. *Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār*.

Ḥadīth Studies:

1. *Majmaʿ biḥār al-anwār*.
2. *Maqāṣid jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*.
3. *Dhail majmaʿ al-biḥār*.
4. *Takmilah majmaʿ al-biḥār*.
5. *Ḥāshiyah maqāṣid al-uṣūl*.
6. *Ḥāshiyah ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*.
7. *Ḥāshiyah ṣaḥiḥ al-Muslim*.
8. *Ḥāshiyah mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ*.
9. A compilation of forty *aḥādīth*.
10. *Mughnī al-labīb* (sic).
12. *Tadhkirah al-mawḍūʿāt*.
13. *Qānūn al-ḍuʿafāʾ*

Islāmic Jurisprudence:

1. *Ḥāshiyah of Talwiḥ wa tawḍīḥ*.
2. *Risālah aḥkām al-biʿr*.

3. *Nisāb al-bayān*

Theology:

1. The treatise on the status of the *ṣaḥābah* [Companions].
2. *Sharḥ al-ʿaqīdah*.
3. *Risālah imsāk al-maṭar*

Ṣīrah [Prophetic Biography]:

1. The Shaikh's short biography of the life of the Prophet Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu ʿalaihi wasallam*.
2. A treatise in Persian also on the Prophetic *sīrah*.

Ṣūfism:

1. *Minhāj al-sālikīn*

Biography:

1. *Kitāb al-tawassul*
2. *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyyah*

Ethics:

1. *Naṣīḥah al-wulāt wa al-ruʿāt wa al-raʿīyyah*.

Logic:

1. *Niṣāb al-mizān*
2. *Khulāsah al-fawā'id*

Etymology:

1. *Kifāyah al-mufritīn; sharḥ al-shāfiyah*
2. *Dustūr al-ṣarf*

Unknown:

1. *Iddat al-mutaʿabbidīn*.
2. An abridged version of *Kitāb al-inqāl*.

3. *Risālah Kuḥliyyah*.

4. *Risālah al-naharwālah* also known as *Risālah al-Makkīyyah*.

5. *Mukhtaṣar al-mustaẓhariyyah*.

4. Published works

To date the following works of the Shaikh have been published:

1994. *Majma biḥār al-anwār fī gharāib al-tanzīl wa laṭāif al-akḥbār*. Madinah: Maktabah Dār al-Imān. The following appendices are included in this publication:

Dhail majma' al-biḥār

Takmilah majma' al-biḥār

The Arabic treatise giving a brief chronological biography of the Messenger of Allāh.

The treatise on the status of the *ṣaḥābah* [Companions].

1985. *al-Mughnī fī ḍabṭ asmā' al-rijāl wa ma'rifah kuniy al-ruwāah wa alqābihim*. Lahore: Dār al-Nashar al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah.

The following works have been published in a single volume:

1343/1924 *Tadhkirah al-mawḍu'āt*. Egypt.

1343/1924 *Qānūn al-ḍu'afā*. Egypt

The manuscript of *Kifāyah al-mufrīṭīn: sharḥ al-shāfiyyāh'* which is a commentary on the famous work of Ibn Ḥājib remains unedited.

The other manuscript that has survived the ravages of time is the work *Kitāb al-tawassu'*.

All these books represent the main scholastic contributions of al-Fattani available today. It is appropriate here to make a few observations regarding each of the works of al-Fattani. The scope of this study will not permit detailed analyses but it is hoped that these remarks can in some way provide the reader

with a general sketch of composition and contents of each of the above mentioned books.

Al-Fattani's *magnum opus* is the *Majma' biḥār al-anwār fī gharāib al-tanzīl wa laṭāif al-akhbār*. This work is written in a very specialised field within the general subject of Tradition studies. The importance and uniqueness of al-Fattani's contribution would therefore demand a more detailed appreciation.

5. *Majma' biḥār al-anwār fī gharāib al-tanzīl wa laṭāif al-akhbār*

This is a very popular and compendious dictionary of the *gharāib*, i.e. difficult and uncommon words in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. The work comprises an *aṣl al-kitāb* [main book], a *khātimah* [appendix] and a *takmilah* [supplement]. In the *aṣl al-kitāb* the author has collected almost all the *gharāib* of the Qur'ān, the *ṣiḥaḥ sittah* ["six most authentic"], and the *Mishkāt al-maṣābīḥ* and what yet remained has been covered by the *takmilah* (al-A'zamī 1994, 1: 39). The words have been arranged alphabetically according to their roots. This method of arrangement was first used by Ibn Duraid and Ibn Fāris who felt that al-Khalīl's methodology in his *Kitāb al-'ain* was not practical and was very cumbersome. They felt that the solution they proposed was a necessary departure from the *Khalīlī* school of lexicology and a method more practical and also easier to follow (al-Zubaidī 1994, 1:14). Al-Fattani arranged each word under its root and all its derivatives along with the relevant passages of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* and their interpretations were also mentioned. Although Ibn Athīr's *al-Nihāyah* was al-Fattani's main source, he has also utilised other works. The *khātimah* [appendix] has been devoted to the study of Traditions, i.e. the technique of *ḥadīth* literature, fabricators [*waḍḍā'ūn*] and fabricated Traditions abridged from his *tadhkirah*, correct reading [*ḍabt*] of the confused names of the narrators (abridged from his work *al-Mughnī* on the same subject), chronological events [*sīrah*] of the life of the Prophet from his birth to his death, and finally several famous narrators of the Tradition literature [*ruwāt al-ḥadīth*]. In short, the *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* may well be regarded as the

commentary of both the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, and a companion of *ḥadīth* studies.

5.1 Editions of the *Majma'*

This valuable compilation, which began during the lifetime of his teacher 'Alī al-Muttaqī (before 975/1567), took the author about seven years to complete. It was lithographed at the Newal Kishor Press, Lucknow, for the second time in 1314/1896. In the opinion of Nawwāb Ṣiddiq Ḥasan, by writing this work, which met with universal approval and recognition of the scholars, al-Fattānī placed the world of Islām under a deep debt of gratitude (Ḥasan n.d., 896).

Editions of the work were available during the lifetime of al-Fattānī in many cities. Copies of *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* copied during the lifetime of the Shaikh may be found in Lucknow, Hyderabad and Ahmadabad. The work became so popular amongst scholars that in time most libraries acquired a copy and it was used as a standard reference work by teachers and students alike. An edition of al-Fattānī's *Majma'* was prepared under the supervision of Shaikh 'Abd al-Haqq al-Dehlawī in 1019/1610. Mullah Kātib Jalbī has referred to this edition in his *Kashf al-zunūn*. For more than 200 years the hand written copies were prepared from the 1019/1610 edition.

With the advent of the press in India, Munshī Newal Kishor, a publisher of Islāmic works, saw the demand for *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* and decided to publish this work. The publisher searched for copies from several centres and spent a considerable sum of money to acquire these. Newal Kishor then commissioned Mawlānā Muḥammad Maẓhar to compare the various written copies and prepare a correct edition. At this stage the *ṣiḥāḥ* works as well as *Mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ* and its commentary had already been published in India. Mawlānā Muḥammad Maẓhar saw the need for this work to be the next important published work. From the endnote of this edition it would appear that Mawlānā Muḥammad Maẓhar regarded the *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* as an essential work. He spent all his efforts in comparing the editions and correcting

the original from which the work was to be published. To this end he referred to *al-Nihāyah* and *al-Qāmūs* and commentaries of the *ḥadīth* works.

After much research the *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* was published in 1283/1866 in Lucknow. Many more people benefited from the work. The same publisher reprinted for a second time in 1314/1896. A third and fourth editions were also printed until the publisher closed down. With the closure of the Newal Kishor press the publication of religious books came to an end. Eventually it became difficult to come across even a single printed copy of *Majma' biḥār al-anwār*.

ʿAbd al-Qādir Nūr Walī, a descendant of al-Fattanī, who is now resident in Saudi Arabia, decided to reprint the work of his famous forefather. Nūr Walī requested Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Nadwī that he should publish the work and appoint a reliable scholar to prepare the edition. Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Nadwī gathered the various editions and took these on loan from their owners. Besides the printed editions two other handwritten manuscript were also acquired. The first was the manuscript from the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library in Aḥmadabād. The second was the manuscript from the library at Pattan. Once Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan had acquired these manuscripts he commissioned Abū al-Faḍl ʿAbd al-Ḥafīẓ al-Balyāwī, a lecturer in Arabic literature at Nadwah al-ʿUlamāʾ, an Islāmic university in Lucknow in India, to compare the editions and prepare a corrected version. The project was headed by the reknowned *ḥadīth* expert Mawlānā Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aʿẓamī who checked the final draft of the work before it was sent to the publisher. The edition was published by ʿAbd al-Muʿīd Khān the proprietor of Dairah al-Maʿārif al-ʿUthmāniyyah. The new version is in its third edition (1994) and was published by Maktabah Dār al-Imān.

Al-Aʿẓamī noted that the edition from Pattan had many footnotes which were most likely those of the author himself. These footnotes have been retained and al-Aʿẓamī testifies to the usefulness of these notes in understanding the text (al-Aʿẓamī 1994, 1:17). Al-Aʿẓamī has also included his own notes which are indicated by the the use of the alphabeth *ḥāʾ* or the word *al-Aʿẓamī*.

5.2 The composition of *Majma' biḥār al-anwār*

Majma' biḥār al-anwār in five volumes is composed of:

1. A Prolegomena.
2. The Preface/ Foreword [*al-khuṭbah*] where the author details his system of references.
3. The main body of the work, with its distinctive style then follows. Here entries are found alphabetically.
4. The *khātimah* [conclusions]-which consists of several sub-chapters [*abwāb*].
5. The *takmilah* [appendix].
6. The *khātimah*- being the actual conclusion of the work- although a similar section had already been added after the main body of the work and before the *takmilah*.

5.3 Prolegomena

Al-Fattānī uses his prolegomena to explain the methodology that he has employed in his work.

The *gharīb* words, we are informed, are listed alphabetically. If a word is *gharīb* then it will be found under the corresponding letter. At times however the word is not *gharīb* but in the context in which it is used its meaning is not clear. In this case, says al-Fattānī, he has listed the word in the *ḥadīth* because of which the meaning is unclear.

5.4 The Preface/ Foreword [*al-khuṭbah*]

Here al-Fattānī draws the attention of the reader to the fact that in this work no mention of the biographies of the narrators of the Traditions have been made. The correct *dabṭ* [phonology] of the name of a narrator could also be obscure to a reader but this does not qualify this proper noun to be included in a list of the *gharīb* [obscure]. A clear distinction is then made between words that appear in the *matn* [body text] of a *ḥadīth* and the words of the *sanad* [chain of narrators]. Should a *ṭālib* [seeker/student] need elucidation of any of the names

of the *asmā' al-rijāl* [names of the men] then, al-Fattani advises, they should refer to his book *al-Mughnī fī dabṭ asmā' al-rijāl*.

It is thus established that *al-Mughnī* is an earlier work. Next al-Fattani moves towards an explanation of the abbreviations he has employed in his work.

5.5 The system of reference

In his work al-Fattani has referred to other works in the field of *ḥadīth* studies. In his foreword [*khuṭbah*] to *Majma' biḥār al-anwār*, al-Fattani mentions some of the works that are related to his study. The *ṣaḥīḥain*, *Mishkāt* and *Nihāyah* of Ibn Athīr are all mentioned in the *khuṭbah*. In the *muqaddimah* [introduction] a system of references are set up where the works referred to in the book are designated abbreviations. These abbreviations are called '*alāim al-kutub*' ["signs of the books"] and twenty such '*alāim*' are employed which refer to a total of seventeen books. Two books have two different abbreviations and the last abbreviation in the list is used to refer to the two works that precede it. The abbreviation system is as follows:

Abbreviation	Source
<i>Nūn</i> and <i>hā</i>	<i>Nihāyah ibn Athīr</i>
<i>Mīm</i> and <i>khā</i>	<i>al-Durr mukhtaṣar al-nihāyah</i>
<i>Qāf</i> and <i>sīn</i> or <i>qāf</i>	<i>Sharḥ al-Bukhārī li al-Qastalānī</i>
<i>Kāf</i>	<i>Sharḥ al-Bukhārī li al-Kirmānī</i>
<i>Mīm</i> and <i>qāf</i>	<i>Maqāṣid sharḥ al-Bukhārī</i>
<i>Nūn</i>	<i>Sharḥ al-Muslim li al-Nawawī</i>
<i>Alif</i> and <i>bā'</i> and <i>yā'</i>	<i>Sharḥ sharḥ al-Muslim li al-Nawawī</i>
<i>Ṭā'</i>	<i>Sharḥ al-Mishkāt li al-Ṭībī</i>
<i>Jīm</i>	<i>Sharḥ Jāmi' al-uṣūl</i>
<i>Ghain</i>	<i>Naẓīr 'ain al-gharībain</i>
<i>Mīm</i> and <i>fā</i>	<i>al-Mafātiḥ sharḥ al-maṣābiḥ</i>
<i>Zā'</i> and <i>rā'</i>	<i>Ḥāshiyah al-Bukhārī li al-Zarakshī</i>
<i>Tā'</i> and <i>wāw</i>	<i>Tawassuṭ sharḥ sunan Abū Dāwūd</i>

<i>Mīm and dāl</i>	<i>Madārik al-tanzīl</i>
<i>Qāf and ʿalif</i>	<i>Tafsīr al-Qaḍī al-Baiḍāwī</i>
<i>Shīn</i>	<i>Zubdah sharḥ al-shifāʾ</i>
<i>Shīn and mīm</i>	<i>Sharḥ al-shifāʾ li al-Shāmnī</i>
<i>Shīn and ʿalif</i>	<i>Zubdah sharḥ al-Shifāʾ and Sharḥ al-shifāʾ li al-Shāmnī</i>

Al-Fattani after listing these abbreviations and the works they refer to states that there are yet other books he used in his research. When quoting these works he has used full titles.

In the Pattan edition there is a footnote at this point that has been added by the author. He states that where he knows the name of the book then he mentions it in full. If he is unaware of the title of the work then he uses the abbreviation “*lughah*”. This, he explains, is because by the Grace of Allāh reliable works in *gharīb al-ḥadīth* have come into his possession but he does not know their titles. These are most likely fragments of other works on this subject, of which the complete works could not be traced by al-Fattani.

The concluding lines of the prolegomena are a brief description of the conclusion [*khātimah*] of the work.

Al-Fattani promises that in his *khātimah* [conclusion] he will discuss some of the more important principles that he laid down in his work *al-Mughnī*. Some of the terminology of the scholars of *ḥadīth* [*ahl al-ḥadīth*] will also be mentioned. The history of important persons will be given. Al-Fattani then says that, if Allāh makes it possible, he will mention other misunderstandings that have crept into historical data.

The main body of the work then follows where entries are found alphabetically.

5.6 The *aṣl al-kitāb*

It may be appropriate to make a few observations here on the method that al-Fattanī has employed in his entries.

Al-Fattanī made sure that in his work he did not leave out what is contained in *al-Nihāyah* except on rare occasions where he felt that the word was well known and does not need elaboration. He also added to his work whatever was useful in *Naẓīr ʿain al-gharībain* thus making his work more comprehensive than other works in the fields. What is common in the approach of al-Fattanī is his attention for such detail that is often missing in the works of others.

A salient feature of this work is that a person consulting other works in this genre may well come to know the literal meaning of a word but will find it difficult to understand the very word in the *ḥadīth* in which it appears. The *ḥadīth* would then have to be further explained with the help of other commentaries. Al-Fattanī saves the student this task and explains all facets of the word, especially its meaning in the context of the Tradition/s in which it appears. An example of this is his explanation of the Tradition that reads:

Woe to those who promise themselves [*mutalīn*].

In explaining the above Tradition Ibn Athīr suffices by giving his reader the meaning of *mutalīn* as “those who promise themselves”. Al-Fattanī however goes a step further and explains the reason why such persons earn the wrath of Allāh and their actions are nullified (al-Fattanī 1994, 1: 13).

At times the literal meaning of a word is well known and needs no further elucidation. Nevertheless al-Fattanī understands that in the text that contains the particular word there is a need for elaboration and therefore quotes examples from reliable sources. “And Allāh shall come to them” Ibn Athīr ignores this entry. Our author on the other hand explains it as “and Allāh shall appear before them” (al-Fattanī 1994, 1: 13).

Inter-linear calque is a technique often employed by al-Fattani to provide a detailed and comprehensive explanation of a word. By adding certain words into the text of the Tradition he is able to assist the readers understanding. An example of this is the word *illā*, which he adds to several *aḥādīth* to achieve this.

When comparing Ibn Athīr and al-Fattani we become aware of the fact that al-Fattani is far more accurate in his approach. The word *abhar*, an early entry, is treated very precisely by al-Fattani but Ibn Athīr's treatment is not only brief but also inaccurate in some respects (1994, 1:32).

Another salient feature of al-Fattani's work which makes it easily accessible is the fact that his individual entries are in the form in which they appear in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*. He makes no adjustment to the form of the word. *Ajādub* (1994, 1:44) and *ithmad* can both be found alphabetically where the researcher can most easily find their obscure meanings (1994, 1: 44).

Al-Fattani was an expert in his field. His expertise and depth of knowledge is not hidden from the researcher since whenever al-Fattani mentions a word he mentions other very relevant words that are derived from this entry. This is a feature not found in the works of Ibn Athīr or others. An example of this is that while explaining the word *bara* Ibn Athīr does not mention *istabra'a lidīnīhī*, while our author not only mentioned it but also followed this up by mention of other words derived from it such as *abra ila Allāh* and *fatabarra'akum yahud* etc (1994, 1:165-66).

The above characteristics of this work highlight a very important point. While this work is in the field of *gharīb al-ḥadīth* it is also a very useful book of *ḥadīth* commentary and an explanation of obscurities.

This may explain the comment of Shaikh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith al-Dehlawi who while writing about the author says: "he has written a book named *Majma' biḥār al-anwār* which is devoted to the *explanation of the six collections of*

ḥadīth.” This opinion is also echoed by ‘Allāmah al-Sayyid Ṣiddīq Ḥasan al-Qanūjī who while commenting on the book says: “In other words this book is like a collection of perfume in the *gharīb* of the Qur’ān and *ḥadīth*. We do not need another book in this field, it is as though it is a book of the *commentary of the six books*” (al-Fattanī 1994, 1: 23).

5.7 The *khātimah*:

The *khātimah al-kitāb* consists of the following chapters:

1. The Science of *ḥadīth* and its terminology
2. *Jarḥ* and *ta’dīl*
3. On narrating
4. Fabricators of *ḥadīth*
5. Identifying some fabricators and their works
6. Identifying some *aḥādīth* that have become common on the tongues of people but are incorrect “in the same manner as I have mentioned it in *al-Tadhkirah*”
7. Those leaders who have falsely claimed to be Companions
8. The spelling of some names of narrators according to the rules laid down in my work *al-Mughnī*
9. The conventions of writing
10. A brief history of the reason for the Abyssinian presence in Yemen and the attack of Abrahah on the blessed Ka’bah and his subjugation under the governance of Kisrā’
11. His (the Prophet’s) lineage
12. An account of his nursing
13. A chronological account of his life
14. Concerning the *ṣaḥābah* [Companions]
15. The *‘asharah mubashsharah* [ten given glad tidings]
16. Some *ṣaḥābah*, *tābiūn*, *taba’ tābiūn*, *muḥaddithūn*, *muṣannifīn*, famous jurists, Ḥanafī jurists, theologians and others.
17. An important note

? error?

The last "important note" is advises to the student of *ḥadīth*. Some of the etiquettes [*ādāb*] that the Shaikh instructs in gives the reader an indication of the type of atmosphere that prevailed at al-Fattānī's audience with his students.

Al-Fattānī then ends his epilogue with two paragraphs. In the first paragraph he states that his work was completed on the 12th night of *Rabīʿ al-awwal* [the third month of the Islamic calendar]. *Rabīʿ al-awwal* is a month of "happiness and joy" and also a "fountainhead of mercy and Divine light." It is a month in which we have been ordered to express our joy. We should not "roil" this month with the mention of death. By this al-Fattānī means that we should not in any way ~~celebrate the death~~ of the Prophet. This is unacceptable just as the commemoration of the death of Sayyidina Ḥussain³ is prohibited. He argues that if it is prohibited to commemorate the death of the pious then certainly this practice is unacceptable in the case of the Prophet Muḥammad. The Shaikh also says that the *mātam* ceremonies are not practised in any of the Muslim cities. *Rabīʿ al-awwal*, is then for the Shaikh a month of joy. Joy at the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad is to be expressed and although he also passed away in *Rabīʿ al-awwal* it does not warrant turning this month into a month of mourning.

The Shaikh cites the example of the commemorations held usually during the month of *Muḥarram* around the death of Sayyidina Ḥussain. The month of *Muḥarram* and the commemoration of the death of Ḥusain is an important event in the calendar of the Shīʿah. The Shaikh was well aware of the Shīʿah custom and therefore in passing made a reference to it. Just as the Shaikh was concerned about the Mahdawīyyah and their influence on the Sunnī Muslims, he also cautioned against the Shīʿah ways.

Considering that these are the concluding remarks of a lengthy work, the reader would certainly not expect the Shaikh to devote so many lines to the refutation of a custom that happened to be prevalent in the same month that he completed the writing of his book. Appealing to the "pure minded brothers from those who are trustworthy" that they make *duʿāʾ* [prayers], the responsible and educated

are also called upon to prohibit those who have tried to turn this month into a month of sorrow “even for a single moment.” They should correct these customs wherever they come across them. The writings of people in support of these customs should also be criticised and reformed. Those practising these customs are often stubborn and shortsighted, says the Shaikh. They are unable to distinguish “their earth from their sky” due to the evil company they keep and their distance from the respectable and good brothers. They have confused hearts and they lack intelligence. Those that have influenced them are enemies of knowledge.

At the end of this first paragraph, it would appear that the book has been concluded with the *ḥamd* [Praise of Allāh] and prayer of salutation [*ṣalāh and salām*] on the Prophet and others. The second paragraph indicates that the book has not in fact been concluded. Al-Fattanī tells his reader that he has not laid his pen yet. He very eloquently says: “and when I had taken a rest from the meanings of the book and leaned back like one who leans back on a cushion to rest, my determination was reawakened to add an appendix to the book” (1994, 1: 27).

5.8 The *takmilah*

The appendix that he promises does not follow immediately. Instead a *shajarah* [genealogy] of the Prophet appears. In the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh edition this *shajarah* is not to be found. Similarly the note on the Quraish and the names of the ‘Abbāsīd caliphs does not appear in the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh edition. They are however found in the Pattan edition and have thus been retained in the first printed edition and all subsequent printed editions.

The *khuṭbah* of the appendix (1994, 1: 32) contains a *ḥadīth* [Tradition] which the Shaikh says serves as an inspiration for him in his work. The Tradition is as follows: The Prophet *ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wassalam* said: “ May Allāh keep that person fresh and radiant who hears my saying, safeguards it and conveys it as he has heard it.”

5.9. The second *khātimah*

978/1570 is the date given in the author's conclusion for the completion of his work. The date of Al-Fattani's death is 986/1578. His *magnum-opus* was thus completed eight years before his death. Specifically he records that it was in the month of *Ṣafar* during the last quarter of a Saturday night. The exact date is not known. Al-Fattani rhymes the word *ṣafar* with a prayer for *ẓafar* [success/victory]. He also adds that his lexicon has been completed in a place called Fattan. He rhymes this word with the word *fitan* [mischief] in a prayer where he asks Allāh to safeguard *Fattan* from any sort of *fitan* [mischief] (al-Fattani 1994, 5:44).

6. *al-Mughnī fī ḍabṭ asmā' al-rijāl wa ma'rifah kuniy al-ruwāah wa alqābihim*

This is the first compilation of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattani written immediately after his return from Arabia, at Pattan in *Dhū al-qa'dah* 952/January 1546.

Al-Fattani's *al-Mughnī* falls into a genre that deals with the narrators of the Traditions known as *ʿilm al-rijāl* ["knowledge of the men"]. Compilers of works in this speciality have adopted one of five approaches:

1. There are those authors whose works deal with the reliable and controversial reporters. The works of Dārquṭnī, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Ibn Mākūlā, Ibn Nuṭṭah, al-Dhahabī and Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar belong to this category.
2. Compilations that attempt specifically to identify those reporters known by their agnomen and honorific titles have been produced by the likes of Ibn Jawzī and Abū Bakr al-Shīrāzī.
3. Authors such as Abū Sa'd al-Samʿānī, Ibn al-Athīr al-Jazarī and al-Suyūṭī have compiled works devoted to detailing the geneologies of the narrators.
4. Several significant works have been compiled of names and geneologies of narrators which are often confused because they

are similar or are difficult to pronounce. The books of al-Khaṭīb and ʿAbd al-Ghanī fall into this category.

5. A category of books has as their subject matter the detailed disparagement or authentication of the narrators of only those Traditions that appear in the *ṣiḥāḥ sittah*. Examples of such works are *al-Kāmil fī maʿrifah al-rijāl* of ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī and *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl* of Abū al-Ḥajjāj al-Muzzi. Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (in twelve volumes) has been abridged from al-Muzzi's above mentioned work.

Very few books written in the field of *ʿilm al-rijāl* are comprehensive enough to cover all five of the sub-genres listed above. A close study of al-Fattanī's *al-Mughnī* reveals that the scope of this work is such that it accomodates information about all these aspects.

6.1 Editions of *al-Mughnī*

Al-Fattanī's *al-Mughnī fī ḍabṭ asmāʾ al-rijāl wa maʿrifah kunīy al-ruwāah wa alqābihim* was first lithographed on the margins of Ibn Ḥajar's work *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb* out of Delhi in 1290/1873 and for the second time in 1308/1890.

To place al-Fattanī's work with the *Taqrīb* of Ibn Ḥajar was a service to the student since these works complement each other. *Taqrīb al-taqrīb* is Ibn Ḥajar's summary of his *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* and therefore of approximately the same length as al-Fattanī's work.

In 1985 *al-Mughnī* was once again published, this time as on its own, by Dār al-Nashar al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah in Lahore, Pakistan.

6.2 The composition of *al-Mughnī fī ḍabṭ asmāʾ al-rijāl wa maʿrifah kunīy al-ruwāah wa alqābihim*

This is an otherwise short but nonetheless comprehensive work designed to supply us correct readings [*ḍabṭ*] of such names of the narrators [*ruwāt*] of *ḥadīth*, their fathers, grandfathers and of their *kunyā* [agnomen] or *laqab*

[honorific titles] as are liable to misreading. All such confused names [*mushtabihāt*], the author arranges alphabetically. At the end of the discussion of the confused names under every alphabetical letter, he also gives the correct readings of all the confused *nisbas* that come under the letter concerned. This is not all, occasionally, short biographical notices of the *ruwāt* and the *ṭabaqāt* [classes] to which they belong have also been added. Names of prophets and relevant places that are likely to give rise to confusion have also not been left out. The last few pages have been devoted to the brief life-sketches of the Prophet, his four Caliphs, the Imāms of the four schools of Islāmic jurisprudence and the authors of the *kutub al-ṣittah*.

Al-Fattanī states in his introduction that it is the lack of interest amongst Indian students to devote themselves to the detailed study of the field of *ʿilm al-rijāl*, which has motivated him to write this book. He has undertaken, he says, to write a work which will comprise of the five sub fields of *ʿilm al-rijāl* but promises that although such a task would have required volumes to accomplish, he will for the sake of brevity leave out those discussions and details he feels are unnecessary.

The remarkable service rendered by this work is that al-Fattanī has given detailed and precise direction as far as the reading and pronunciation of the names in his entries. A further debt all students and scholars of *ḥadīth* owe al-Fattanī is that he has, for their convenience, compiled in *al-Mughnī* a specific chapter containing all those names which are often confused and difficult to identify. For example he advises that the name “Usaid” and all such similar names are, as a rule, always read with a *ḍammah* as the initial short vowel. The only exception being the name ‘Amr ibn “Asyad” al-Jāriyah.

While perusing the entires in *al-Mughnī* the reader often comes across proper nouns that are not the names of narrators and therefore not found in similar works of *ʿasmāʾ al-rijāl*. Entries such as “Abraha”-the name of the Yemenī king who attempted to destroy the Kaʿbah and ‘Āshūrāʾ-a name of a month, are two

such words included by al-Fattani because his non-Arab audience, amongst them his students, were likely to confuse their reading.

6.3 Sources for *al-Mughni* and al-Fattani's system of reference

Al-Fattani states in his introduction that he has relied on the works of al-Kirmānī, al-Zarkashī, Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb* and his *Muqaddimā* as well as the work *Asmā' al-maṣābīḥ wa al-mashārif*. Occasionally he found the need to refer to al-Nawawī, *al-Jāmi'* and *Ghunya al-labīb*.

Al-Fattani once again employs a system of reference with abbreviations referring to his sources. These he brings in the body text immediately after the relevant quotation. The following abbreviations have been used:

Abbreviation	Source
<i>Mīm and nūn</i>	<i>al-Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb</i>
<i>Mīm and qāf</i>	<i>Muqaddimah Ibn Ḥajar</i>
<i>Kāf</i>	<i>Sharḥ al-Bukhārī li al-Kirmānī</i>
<i>Nūn</i>	<i>Sharḥ al-Muslim li al-Nawawī</i>
<i>Ḡhain-nūn</i>	<i>Ghunya al-labīb sharḥ al-taqrīb</i>
<i>Jīm</i>	<i>Sharḥ jāmi' al-uṣūl</i>
<i>Zā' and rā'</i>	<i>Ḥāshiyah al-Bukhārī li al-Zarakshī</i>
<i>Mīm and sīn</i>	<i>Asmā' al-maṣābīḥ wa al-mashāriq</i>

This system of reference was carried through when he later wrote his *Majma'* where the following sources are once again used:

1. *Sharḥ al-Muslim li al-Nawawī*
2. *Ḥāshiyah al-Bukhārī li al-Zarakshī*
3. *Sharḥ al-Bukhārī li al-Kirmānī*
4. *Sharḥ jāmi' al-uṣūl*

6.4 The concluding paragraphs of *al-Mughnī*

As mentioned above, in the last few pages of this work al-Fattani has provided brief biographical notices of the Prophet Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu ‘alaihi wasallam*, the first four Caliph's, the *fuqahā'* [jurists] of the four famous schools of jurisprudence and some scholars of *ḥadīth*. The dates of death of these persons are mentioned.

After having provided the reader of his work with an essential tool for the correct reading of certain words, al-Fattani now provides other valuable and basic knowledge that no scholar should be ignorant of.

7. *Tadhkirah al-mawḍū‘āt*.

In this book the author makes a collection of *mawḍū'* [forged] and *ḍa‘if* [weak] *aḥādīth* from works on *al-mawḍū‘āt* written by his predecessors, viz., al-Suyuṭī's *Kitāb al-la‘ālī*, *Kitāb al-dhail* and *Kitāb al-wajīz*, al-Sakhāwī's *al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasanah*, al-Firūzābādī's *Mukhtaṣar kitāb al-mughnī li al-‘Irāqī*, al-Saghānī's *al-Mawḍū‘āt* and others.

These sources represent the chief works on the subject and are an indication of al-Fattani's breadth of research.

7.1 Editions of *Tadhkirah al-mawḍū‘āt*

The work was completed in *Dhū al-qā‘dah* 958/November 1551, as is evident from a MS. in the Bānkipūr Library⁵. This would mean that al-Fattani compiled this work five years after writing *al-Mughnī*.

The *Tadhkirah* was first published in Egypt in 1343/1924 along with the author's *Qānūn al-mawḍū‘āt*.

Both works have subsequently being reprinted in India but this edition does not indicate the date of publication.

7.2 The composition of *Tadhkirah al-mawḍūʿāt*

In this work the Traditions have been arranged according to their subject matter into as many as 226 *bāb* [chapters] beginning with al *Kitāb al-tawḥīd* and ending with the *bāb fī sālāt raḥmatihī wa shafāʿat al-Nabī*. Every Tradition is preceded by its *maʾkhadh* [source] and has been followed by Shaikh al-Fattanī's comments. The author's remarks are usually that the Tradition is either unfounded [*lā aṣla lahu*], baseless [*bāṭil*], or forged [*mawḍūʿ*]. He may also comment that one or other of the *ruwāt* [narrators] is *ḍaʿīf* [weak], *kadhḍhāb* [a liar] or *waḍḍāʿ* [a forgerer].

At times al-Fattanī cites the opinion of other critics, viz., Aḥmad ibn. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), al-Bukhārī (d. 256/869), al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915), al-Dāruṭṭnī (d. 385/995), Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965), Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200), al-Saghānī (d. 650/1252), al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1347), al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806/1403), Ibn Ḥajar al-Haithamī (d. 952/1545) and ʿAlī al-Muttaqī (d. 975/1567).

When citing the opinion of al-Muttaqī he uses the terms "*qāla shaikhunā*" [our Shaikh said].

In his introduction al-Fattanī claims that he will only classify a Tradition as fabricated or spurious when *ḥadīth* scholars have agreed on such a verdict. He will not rely on isolated verdicts of either the *mutashaddidīn* [proponents of stern view points], such as Ibn al-Jawzī who will classify as apocryphal even the most authentic Traditions or of the *mutasāhilīn* [lenient or careless scholars of *ḥadīth* criticism] who will authenticate spurious Traditions even (al-Fattanī 1924, 3). His sources in this work, he tells us, are all moderate reliable scholars such as:

1. Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā al-Firūzābādī, the author of *al-Mughnī fī ḥaml al-aṣfār*.
2. Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī, the author of *al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasanah*.
3. Al-Suyūṭī, the author of *al-Laʾālī al-masnuʿah*.
4. Al-Ṣaghānī, the author of *al-Mawḍūʿāt*

5. Shaikh Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī al-Qazawainī who has written a work entitled *Mawḍū‘āt al-maṣābiḥ*

Al-Fattani’s introduction to *Tadhkirah al-mawḍū‘āt* will be of interest to a scholar examining the usage of some of the technical terms by *ḥadīth* scholars. In his discussion on the status of a *munkar* [objectionable] Tradition, al-Fattani argues that a *munkar* Tradition may be elevated to the rank of a *ḥasan* [sound] Tradition “when narrated through other sources” (1924, 7). A *munkar* Tradition by definition is a *ḥadīth* reported by a single weak reporter (Ibn Ṣalāḥ 1981, 71-74). If the common definition of a *munkar* Tradition is to be applied to al-Fattani’s suggestion that a *munkar* Tradition may, under certain conditions, be accorded the rank of a *ḥasan* narration then, it may be necessary to carefully re-examine al-Fattani’s usage of the word *munkar* in this context.

A typical Tradition that comes under scrutiny from al-Fattani in his *Tadhkirah* (1924, 89) is one he lists in a chapter on the virtues of naming one's child with the name of the Prophet Muḥammad *ṣallallāhū ‘alaihi wasallam*:

The messenger of Allāh said: whosoever is blessed with three children and does not name one of them Muḥammad he has been ignorant [*faqad jahila*]

The same chapter (al-Fattani 1924, 89) contains another similar Tradition attributed to Makḥūl:

The Prophet said: whoever is blessed with a child and decides to name him Muḥammad *tabarrukan* [seeking blessings] then he and his child shall enter paradise.

8. *Qānūn al-ḍuʿafāʾ*

Qānūn al-ḍuʿafāʾ may be regarded as a supplement to the *Tadhkirah al-mawḍūʿāt*. It covers, in a short compass, the whole range of spurious and apocryphal *ruwāt* [authorities].

The *Qānūn al-ḍuʿafāʾ* has always been published together with *Tadhkirah al-Mawḍūʿāt* and was most probably prepared by the author parallel to his work on the fabricated Traditions. *عقبات؟!*

The entries are arranged alphabetically. Al-Fattani does not give any detailed information of the *ruwat* by way of biographical notice as has been done in the *Mizān al-ʾitidāl* or the *Lisān al-mizān*, but merely puts after every name the verdicts of the critics regarding him.

It may be argued that this work is very basic and meagre since it deals only with the forgers while other works deal with all types of narrators. Having a handy ready-reference of all the forgers is not however without its value and in fact can prove to be indispensable under certain circumstances. In some regards therefore al-Fattani has displayed an innovative and novel approach within the *asmāʾ al-rijāl* genre in this work.

9. *Kifāyah al-mufriṭīn: sharḥ al-shāfiyah*

ʿIlm al-ṣarf [morphology], as a branch of language studies, has never received much attention from Arabic linguists who have devoted many more works to the study of *naḥw* [syntax]. Perhaps the reason for the scarcity of special works on Arabic morphology is the fact that *ʿilm al-ṣarf* has always been treated as an integral part of *ilm al-naḥw*. *Kifāyah al-mufriṭīn* is one of the few works written in this field and yet this work remains relatively unknown.

9.1 The MS. of *Kifāyah al-mufriṭīn*

The only manuscript of this work of al-Fattānī that could be located by this researcher is MS. No. 178 in Pir Muḥammad Shāh Library, Aḥmadabād, India.

This book was completed by Shaikh al-Fattānī in 960/1552.

9.2. The source of *Kifāyāh al-mufriṭīn*

It is apparent from the title that this work is a *sharḥ* [commentary] of a work entitled *al-Shāfiyāh*. Al-Fattānī mentions in his introduction (n.d., 3) that this is the work of Ibn Ḥājib. Most of the classical works of Arabic grammar considered both syntax and morphology but tended to emphasise syntax. There were however books devoted exclusively to morphology, including Ibn Jinnī's *Munṣif*, a commentary on the work of the ninth century linguist Māzinī, Ibn 'Uṣfūr's *al-Mumtī'*, Ibn Ya'īsh's *Sharḥ al-Mulūkī*, a commentary on one of al-Jinnī's short works, *al-Mulūkī* and Ibn Ḥājib's *al-Shāfiyah* along with its commentaries. Al-Fattānī is therefore not the first scholar to write a commentary on Ibn Ḥājib's celebrated work.

9.3 The composition of *Kifāyah al-mufriṭīn*

In the introduction to this work al-Fattānī tells us that the sole object for writing this commentary is to provide a service to the reader of Arabic. Knowledge of morphology is *umm al-'ulūm al-'Arabīyyah* [the essence of the sciences of Arabic language] and the *'aṣāṣ al-'ulūm al-'adabīyyah* [the foundation of literary art]. He further warns that one who does not possess this knowledge "wonders in all the valleys without clear guidance" (al-Fattānī n.d., 2). Yet many have shown neglect to this field of study and have as a result not been able to distinguish the root words from their derivatives. Al-Fattānī next praises the contribution of Ibn Ḥājib to the field of Arabic morphology. He has "laid down the foundation and clarified many aspects" thus making each line of his work a "string of pearls" and "each paragraph a magnificent ocean" (n.d., 2).

In spite of the high regard he had for Ibn Ḥājib's work, al-Fattānī had to undertake this commentary because the great work of Ibn Ḥājib was rather too concise and demanded a great deal of explanation. Al-Fattānī states that he gave much consideration before embarking on this task since he has a busy schedule and lacks the expertise for this onerous responsibility. He prays for Divine help from His Bounty so that he is able to simplify this text (n.d., 4).

The methodology of the author in this book is not different from that applied by other scholars in the field. A notable exception is that al-Fattānī has at certain places in his commentary taken the liberty of introducing principles of syntax. While these have no direct relation to morphology, by doing this the reader is given a better comprehension of applied *‘ilm al-ṣarf*.

Another significant contribution of this book is al-Fattānī's discussions on the correct ways of writing and spelling Arabic words. This is a field Arab writers who wrote primarily for an Arab audience ignored. They never felt any need for such a study since it was taken for granted that anyone studying Arabic knew how to write and spell correctly. Al-Fattānī however, writing with the non-Arab scholar also in mind, knew that it was always difficult for non-Arabs no matter how well versed they may be in the language to master the art of Arabic writing.

It is interesting to note that while most, if not all, of the Arabic syntax and morphology writers have extensively utilised Qurānic examples to illustrate the rules they discuss, al-Fattānī has mainly used examples from usage common in Arabic speaking societies.

In this work al-Fattānī makes two references to some of the personal difficulties he was experiencing at the time. The first is a comment he makes in his introduction (al-Fattānī n.d., 2) where he states:

“I was hesitant to write this work because of the difficulties and the enemies who are constantly encroaching on my privacy.”

In his concluding remarks (n.d., 294) he writes:

“All praise is due to Allah who, despite the difficulties I have experienced at the hands of opportunists and the changing conditions, has made it possible for me to complete this work.”

As has been briefly alluded to in Chapter Two, al-Fattani was here referring to the Mahdawīyyah.

10. *Kitāb al-tawassul*.

Kitāb al-tawassul, as the name suggests, is a book that was written for or dedicated to someone else. Al-Fattani tells us that he wrote this book as a way of interceding to Allāh on behalf of his good Imām (*li ṣalāhi imām zamānī*).

Like al-Fattani's *al-Mughnī* this work is also concerned with the biographies of narrators of the Tradition materials. *Kitāb al-tawassul* is therefore the second extant work by this author in the field of *asmā' al-rijāl*.

10.1 Editions of *Kitāb al-tawassul*

This work may be found in the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library, Ahmadabād (MS. No. 333).

This researcher has found reference to a work attributed to Shaikh al-Fattani in the Bankipūr catalogue (vol.xii, no.730). The description of this work conforms with the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh MS. in my possession. According to the Bankipūr catalogue however the title of this work is *Asmā' al-rijāl*. While it is not possible to comment definitively on the Bankipūr MS., the likelihood exists that this work of al-Fattani has been variously entitled. This is supported by the fact that “*Kitāb al-tawassul*” is an unlikely name for a work in this field.

10.2 The composition of *Kitāb al-tawassul*

This biographical work on the *ruwāt al-ḥadīth* [narrators of Tradition] is divided into three *faṣl* [sections]. The first of these consisting of several *ʿanwāʿ* [subdivisions] has been devoted, in the main, to a short life-sketch of the Prophet Muḥammad *ṣallallāhu ʿalaihi wasallam*. The second, extending over only two folios, contains some accounts of other prophets. The third *faṣl* has been divided into two *nawʿ* [subsection] of which the first deals chiefly with the ten most eminent Companions of the Prophet, called *al-ʿashrah al-mubashsharah*. The second subsection, which forms the major part of the work, comprises of notices of other male and female Companions, their successors (*tābiʿūn*) and other Traditionists, all arranged alphabetically.

While giving notice of a great personality al-Fattanī traces their decent, mainly by dates of their birth and death, their *riḥlah* [journey in quest of knowledge] if any, the names of their teachers and at times their successors and students. As far as available he also gives his critical remarks with due respect to the position of the *rāwī* [narrator].

11. Conclusion

This brief overview of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī's works may allow us now to examine aspects of his religious thought that are reflected in them. As was mentioned earlier, al-Fattanī has left us no single work by which we may clearly know his religious thought and these observations are therefore understood from the nature of his scholarship rather than directly from ideas that he has expressed in his works.

11.1 Locating al-Fattanī's audience

In his biography of al-Fattanī, ʿAbd al-Wahhab stresses the fact that al-Fattanī had for most of his life taught at Pattan, his hometown. This may explain why he wrote in so many different branches of Islāmic studies. Al-Fattanī, the teacher, could have had his students and other learned readers in mind when he compiled his works and as such his works all seem to be in the service of the

scholar. Ranging from his most important contribution to Islāmic scholarship, the *Majma' biḥār al-anwār*, to the brief treatises on the history of Muḥammad ṣallallāhū 'alaihi wasallam, it would appear that all al-Fattani's works have been written with this purpose. He is often, as has been seen in the introductions to his works quoted above, concerned about what he regards as the neglect and scant attention that is paid to the particular field he is writing about. To generalise that al-Fattani has primarily a pedagogic aim and purpose in much of his works may not always hold true since at times it would appear that he has directed his scholarship to others of the learned class.

Amongst this orthodox class there was a tendency of delineating a specific body of knowledge as *ilm* ["significant knowledge"]. Hodgson (1974, 2:195) states that the orthodoxy regarded *ilm* as "the matter-of-fact historically documented data which in principle every individual could assimilate" and describes the range of their activities in the following words:

Knowledge could be extremely refined and detailed, as was the ḥadīth corpus and the criticism of it, which called for encyclopedic memory and for keen critical discriminations; it could even be extremely intricate, to the point of splitting hairs in academic niceties as often happened in the more hypothetical exercises in fiqh jurisprudence. It could even involve extensive logical sequences, assuming remotely abstract premises, as among those willing to accept kalām argumentation as being within the Sharī range; but such premises must be prose clear, the logic must proceed by unshaded alternatives of yes or no, and in any case (of course) the conclusions must be consistent with positions accepted by the community on grounds of soberly documented historical revelation.

Islāmic scholarship in 10th/16th-century Muslim India and the learned class al-Fattani has directed his work to, certainly reflect the categories mentioned above. In this respect al-Fattani displays typically the tendency of the orthodoxy who through their established institutions of learning and by a characteristic

method sustain the transfer of *ʿilm*. Educational institutes such as al-Fattanī's *Dār al-ʿulūm* (commonly called the *madrasah*) in Pattan had already an established history in the region. What is unique about the teachers and students of al-Fattanī is their understanding of religion which fostered, together with this adherence to orthodoxy, a definite emphasis on mysticism.

11.2 Continuity of a tradition

Al-Fattanī was clearly concerned with the passing on of Islāmic knowledge. This continuity of a particular understanding of the Qurʾān and *ḥadīth* was for him then achieved by teaching and learning. This was very unlike some *ʿulamāʾ* [scholars] who saw the continuity and the preservation of their position in the legitimacy afforded it by the bureaucracy of the state. In emphasising the institution of student and teacher as a method of preservation al-Fattanī comes very close to the ṣūfī idea that the seat of power is not the powerful institutions that were created but instead true authority is vested in powerful men who have a deep spirituality.

11.3 Transmission of a spiritual influence

Together with the meticulous transmission of Islāmic knowledge al-Fattanī has in several ways shown a deep veneration to the men through whom this learning has reached him. This idea is paralleled amongst the ṣūfīs where the teachings are revered because they are transmitted by the mouth of the masters. Al-Fattanī often mentions his teacher al-Muttaqī with great respect and affection when for example in his work *Tadhkirah al-mawḍūʿāt* he states "*qāla shaikhunā*" [our teacher said].

In the *Majmaʿ al-biḥār al-anwār* a section entitled "an important note" contains what may be described as a "contract" between the teacher and learner. It delineates the relationship that al-Fattanī envisages for the transmission of learning. In ṣūfism too, a pact [*baiʿah*] is entered into between candidate [*murīd*] and the master [*murshid/shaikh*].

Al-Fattanī's dedication of his *Kitāb al-tawassūl* to his spiritual master al-Muttaqī also reflects this spiritual bond he saw between himself and his teacher. This work has been called *Kitāb al-tawassul* because the author hopes to, through his book, petition God on behalf of his teacher al-Muttaqī.

It is not often that one can expect to find, in a book containing details of the narrators of the Traditions, mention of the previous Prophets or the Prophet Muḥammad. Yet in al-Fattanī's works such information is added and apart from alluding to the continuous link that the author sees in transmission of religious teachings there could also be another motive. For the ṣūfī the mere mention of pious men in the *ṭarīqah* [path] is a source of blessing since at the heart of *taṣawwuf* is the transmission of an esoteric doctrine from one master to another. In the estimation of al-Fattanī, and others in his time, esoteric learning was neither in competition with nor inseparable from exoteric knowledge. The methods and etiquettes of one may easily therefore flow over into the other.

Al-Fattanī's works are outstanding contributions to Muslim intellectual life because in their style and tenor they at once display the best of Islāmic orthodoxy and mysticism. In adopting this methodology he has proscribed any purely legalistic or entirely esoteric interpretation of the religion. The claim that mysticism is a rejection of intellectualism and rationalism therefore remains unsubstantiated in the case of al-Fattanī.

Al-Fattanī's particular method must not be seen necessarily as a reaction against a particular religious position that was impersonal and formal in nature. Instead this bent of mind is more likely to have existed as a result of the training that al-Fattanī received at the feet of his teachers at Pattan and abroad in the Arabian Peninsular. The accepted maxim, said to be the words of Imām Mālik, which would have informed the approach to Islām in scholarly circles of the time was: "He who practices ṣūfism without learning the sacred law corrupts his faith, while he who learns the sacred law without practicing ṣūfism corrupts himself. Only he who combines the two proves true."

CHAPTER THREE: NOTES

¹ Ms. No. 178 in Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library, Aḥmadabād, India.

² Ms. No. 333 in Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library, Aḥmadabād, India.

³ It is of significance that al-Fattānī has used the honorific title "*Sayyidina*" with respect to this member of the *ahl al-bait* [the Prophetic household]. This usage is in conformity with the belief of the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah* who do not subscribe to the *Imāmiyyah-Shī'ah* theory of Imāmat. The Shī'ah would therefore rather append the title "Imām" to read "Imām Ḥusain" or "Imām Ḥassan".

⁴ 1 Ṣafar 978=5 July 1570 approx.

⁵ Bankipūr, vol. v, part ii, p.33

CHAPTER FOUR

Identity of the Bohras of Gujarāt and beyond: The making of a society

1. Introduction

Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir is not only referred to by his contemporaries, Muslim scholars and historians alike as “al-Fattanī” but also as “al-Bohrī” and “al-Gujarātī”. The attribute al-Gujarātī is easier to understand since it describes the geographical area from which the Shaikh hails. In this chapter an attempt is made to understand the grouping that came to be known as Bohras and remain an identifiable unit today.

Al-Fattanī was not only a Bohra, he also spent all his energies at attempts to reform his community. The Bohras he lived with made up the majority of his followers. He taught their children in the seminary that he had served. The Shaikh was aware that the history that he shared with his community had been a powerful means of moulding the identity of his people. This study shows that at a critical time in the history of the Bohra people al-Fattanī had been able to steer the entire community in a direction he saw appropriate.

In this chapter an attempt will be made to determine the major factors that contribute to a sense of group identity amongst the Bohras.

It is noted that the perceptions of the community as a whole regarding their Islāmic origins contribute significantly to both their group identity and to their understanding of the “other”. The dominant shared convictions about their origins shape their identity.

Before attempting to determine the nature of al-Fattanī’s ethnicity, it would be appropriate to examine some of the theoretical considerations around the question of ethnicity.

1.1. Theoretical Perspective

The first question is one of how to conceptualise ethnicity in general. In the social sciences, the classic “primordialist” perspective on ethnicity has come under much challenge recently by what may be referred to as the “developmental” perspective. Whereas the “primordialist” perspective (Geertz 1963, 105-157; Isaacs 1975, 29-52) views ethnicity as a form of primordial attachment defined by and based on inherited and unalterable “given” attributes, such as shared ancestry and culture, the “developmental” perspective (Glazer and Moynihan 1963; Sarna 1978, 370-378) seeks to understand ethnicity more as an emergent phenomenon, a form of social organisation designed to achieve ends for a group of people and an adaptive response to external forces. De-emphasising the cultural component as a basis of ethnic formation, this view focuses on ethnicisation as being driven by the particular status and position of different groups within a particular society.

Viewing ethnicity more as a situationally driven and transformable phenomenon, the developmental perspective avoids some of the shortcomings of the primordialist perspective. However, in its focus on the interest- and situation-driven motivations for ethnic mobilisation, the developmental perspective fails sufficiently to take into account the salience of primordial factors in ethnic mobilisation and the definition of ethnic identity. That is, it cannot explain why interests are pursued through ethnic cohesion rather than by some other forms of solidarity (McKay 1982, 395-420).

The best way to think about ethnicity is therefore an approach which integrates the two perspectives. While ethnicity must be seen as a dynamic, emergent cultural construction arising in response to external conditions over time, ethnic identity must also not be understood simply as a “collective fiction,” but as a construction which “incorporates, adapts, and amplifies pre-existing communal solidarities, cultural attributes, and historical memories” (Conzen et al. 1992, 41). In other words, whatever the motivation for ethnic mobilisation, it must be recognised that a group’s rationale and basis for its identity can often be

primordial in nature, based on a belief in elements of shared or inherited culture¹.

Marger (1994, 13-17) lists a unique culture, sense of community, ethnocentrism and territoriality as the basic characteristics of ethnic groups. They display a unique set of cultural traits such as language and religion. In addition to a common set of cultural traits, ethnic groups display a sense of community among members. There is a consciousness of kind or an awareness of close association among members. Sociologist Milton Gordon (1964) suggests that the ethnic group serves above all as a social-psychological referent in creating a "sense of peoplehood." This sense of community or oneness derives from an understanding of a shared ancestry or heritage. Such common ancestry however need not be real. As long as people regard themselves as alike by virtue of their perceived heritage and as long as others in the community regard them as so, they constitute an ethnic group, whether such a common background is genuine or fictitious (Shibutani and Kwan 1965). Ethnic groups are social creations wherein ethnic differences are based on group perceptions.

These perceptions lead to ethnocentrism, the tendency to judge other groups by the standards and values of one's own. Sociologists and anthropologists have found this inclination to judge other groups by the standards of one's own and to view other groups as inferior or deficient to be a universal practice. In addition to fostering cohesiveness within one group, ethnocentrism however also serves as the basis of conflict between different groups. As Bonacich and Mondell have explained, "ethnicity is a communalistic form of social affiliation, depending, first, upon an assumption of a special bond among peoples of like origins, and second upon the obverse, a disdain for people of dissimilar origins" (Marger 1994,15).

The next characteristic listed by Marger (1994, 15) is that ethnic group membership is ordinarily *ascribed*. This means that one's ethnicity is a characteristic acquired at birth and not subject to basic change. Being born a member of an ethnic group, one does not leave it except in unusual

circumstances. Through the socialisation process, individuals come to learn their group membership early and effectively and to understand the differences between themselves and members of other groups. One accepts group identity as naturally as accepting one's gender. Hughes and Hughes have suggested that, "If it is easy to resign from the group, it is not truly an ethnic group" (1952, 165).

Another characteristic of ethnic groups is that they often occupy a distinct territory within the larger society. Most of multiethnic societies throughout history consisted of groups that were regionally concentrated. When ethnic groups occupy a definable territory, they also maintain or aspire to some degree of political autonomy. They are in a sense "nations within nations." In some societies, the political status of ethnic groups are recognised whereas in others it is not. In instances where an ethnic group is no longer territorially based, such as the Bohras living in multiethnic societies outside of India, they retain sentimental ties to their society of origin. Bohras living in Saudi Arabia who were originally from Pattan have retained their links with the birth-place of their ancestors.

Each of these characteristics is displayed in varying degrees by different ethnic groups in any society. An ethnic identity such as that of the Bohras is one conceived in terms of the characteristics outlined above. A population or social collectivity may be simply an ethnic category that has been assigned an identity by outsiders, but once that identity becomes subjective and that population sees itself in ethnic terms, perhaps in response to the identity outsiders assign to it, it becomes an ethnic group.

It has been shown above that at the foundation of ethnic attachments lies real or assumed common descent. Weber (1968, 389) shows that ethnic ties are blood ties. The fact of common descent is less important than belief in common descent. In this chapter it will be shown that in the case of the Bohras too what matters is not "*what is* but *what people perceive*" (Connor 1993, 377). The potential basis for this belief in common descent are multiple, varying from

physical resemblance to shared cultural practices to a shared historical experience of inter-group interaction. Any of these or a combination of them may be the basis or justification of common descent.

Prominent in the shared history of the Bohras is the perception that their Islām is *qadīm* [ancient] and that they are not the decendents of converts to the faith. Their history therefore demands that they show that even before the advent of Islām, there existed an established link between the Subcontinent and Arabia. It would therefore be proper to detail the shared history of the Bohras.

2. Islām in India

2.1. The relationship between Arabia and India: India in the Arab mind.

Centuries before the Turks established Islām as a political power in India, the Arab merchants had made settlements on, and established commercial relations with, the coastal towns and ports in South India and in the islands of the Indian Ocean (Husain 1968, 125). Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī (1975, 9) writes:

Arabia and India are two pilgrimage centres of two great nations of the world and both these centres are considered pure and sacred by their respective nations. Probably a few thousand years ago, the Aryans travelled from central Asia to Punjab and they thereafter scattered pursuing the courseways of the two major rivers Ganga and Jamna². However, the Arabs claim that their relationship with India does not extend over a few thousand years only but it goes back to well before their existence. India, they say, is the country of their forefather Ādam. Many *tafāsīr* [commentaries of the Qurʾān] and *aḥādīth* [Traditions] make mention of the fact that when Ādam was sent from *Jannah* [Paradise], he was sent to the *Jannah* of this earth which is referred to as *Hindustān Jannat nishān* [India, the token of Paradise].

2.2 Sarandip/Sahandalip (Sri Lanka)

Ādam first set foot in Sri Lanka the imprint of which is still visible today on a mountain in Sri Lanka³. According to the *tafsīr* of Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abū Ḥātim and Ḥākim, the name of the area of India where Ādam first set foot was called Dajnā. The commonly referred to name for the southern parts of India is Dakhnā or Dakhan. Various types of perfumes and spices used to be exported from the south of India to the Arab world and from there to the other parts of the world. As a result of this, the Arabs believe that these exports are all souvenirs of the gifts Ādam brought with him from *Jannah* [Paradise] (Surti 1998, 16).

Saylan, the name given to Ceylon by the Arab geographers, became the first Arab settlement in the Indian Ocean and denoted in Muslim literature only that part of the island in which lay Adam's Foot or Adam's Peak. Suyūṭī's *Dur al-manthūr*-a commentary on the Qur'ān-has it that Ādam, driven from Paradise dropped on the paradise-like soil called *Hindustān Jannat Nishān* (Husain 1968).

2.3. A common sacred place

There is an outstanding footprint on a boulder on one of the mountains of Sri Lanka. The most surprising thing is that this footprint is common ground for the beliefs of the Arab Muslims, the Buddhists and the Hindus in general. The Muslims believe it is the footprint of Ādam, whilst the Buddhists say it is the footprint of Shakiah Mūnī and the Hindus claim it is the footprint of Shiv. All three religious groups regard it as sacred (Surti 1988, 17).

2.4. The first Ḥājjī was an Indian

Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A'zamī⁴ writes: "Ādam *‘alaihi al-salām* [may peace be upon him] was the first human being and he was also the first *ḥājjī* [pilgrim] of the *baitullāh* [the house of Allāh]. From all the cities and countries of the world, Allāh *Ta'ālā* had honoured India as being the first country to send a person for *ḥajj*. The author of *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī* states that Ibn 'Umar is reported to have

said that Allāh divinely inspired Ādam whilst he was in India to go and perform *hajj* of *Baitullāh*. He accordingly set out and performed *hajj*” (Surti 1998, 22).

‘Allāmah Muḥib al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī writes in *al-Qurā’ lī qāṣidī um al-qurrā’* that the famous *tābi’ī* [Successor], ‘Atā’ ibn Abī Rabāh narrates that Ādam was made to descend in India and with him were four branches of Paradise from which people used to acquire fragrance. From there he went for the pilgrimage as well (Surti 1998, 22).

2.5. The name Hind (India)

Prior to the advent of the Muslims in India, the country itself had no proper name. Each of the provinces had its own name. Every princely state was known by its capital city. When the Persians captured one of the provinces of India, they named it Hindhu after the sea of Sindh⁵ which the Arabs used to call Mahrān.

In ancient Persian and Sanskrit languages, it was common to use the letters “s” and “h” in place of one another. There are many examples of this. Hence the word Sindh was changed over to Hind by the Persians. In contrast to the Persians, the Arabs who were well acquainted with not only Sindh but the entire country referred to Sindh as Sindh and the rest of the country as Hind. The name stuck and up to this present day it is referred to (in the Arab world) as Hind. The people hailing from Khaibar named it Hindu-stan which in Persian is pronounced as Hindustān (Nadwī 1975, 1).

2.6. The ancient relationship of the Arab world with Gujarāt

The province of Gujarāt is situated at such a strategic point that its western area is surrounded by the Arabian Sea. In front of it lies Oman. On its right is the Persian Gulf whilst on its left lies the Gulf of Eden. Beyond Eden lies Africa. Hence, a strategic location such as this would naturally create favourable trading partners as well. This is quite evident from the pages of history. Gujarāt enjoyed a very penetrating business relationship with the Arab world particularly with Yemen and Hadhramaut.

The trading conditions of the ancient Arabs can be determined partly by the Torah and chiefly by studying Greek and Hebraic history. The Arabs continued with this relationship from approximately two thousand years before Christainity. They were considered as a vital part of the chain linking the East to the West. Goods from India used to be exported by sea from the coastal regions of Gujarāt to the coast of Yemen and Hadhramaut and from there via the coastal roads of the Red Sea to the coast of Syria and finally to Europe over the sea of Rome. Alternatively, from Syria they would go to Alexandria in Egypt and then to Europe. This route remained in use right until the reign of Ptolemy, the Greek (Nadwī 1975, 181).

Mountstuart Elphinstone states that two centuries before the Christian era the trade between India and the ports of Saba⁶ was entirely in the hands of the Arabs (Husain 1968, 125). Drawing on the information of well-known Arab geographers, Tennent (1859, 1:607) says:

The Arabs who had been familiar with India before it was known to the Greeks and who had availed themselves of the monsoons long before Hippalus ventures to trust them, began in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Christian era to establish themselves as merchants at Cambay, Surat, Mangalore, Calicut, Kaulam and other Malabar ports whence they emigrated to Ceylon, the government of which was remarkable for its toleration of all religious sects and its hospitable reception of refugees.

Large volumes of commercial goods used to be exported by tradesmen from the southern parts of India and the surrounding islands to Yemen. Apart from this, gold, silver and carnelian⁷ used to be exported from Gujarāt in ancient times. In fact, up to this very day, carnelian is still being exported to other countries from Cambay [Kambāth] (in Gujarāt). It is quite probable that during the era of the Prophet ‘Ash‘iyā, the perfumes, gems, jewels, gold etc. that used to be seen transported from Eden, the port of Yemen and from Anatolia to Syria all

emanated from India - as is mentioned by Josephus, the historian, in his book *Budh matī Hind* on page 28. Soparah (in the district of Thana near Bombay), and Rorakh (next to Bharuch) were both major ports of trade from ancient times dating back to the times of Solomon. Ivory and other goods used to be exported from here to Palestine (Nadwī 1975, 185-6).

Arab settlements are known to have existed on the west Indian sea coast⁸. "Arab geographers and traders who came in the ninth and tenth centuries speak of these, self administered, ancient colonies with centuries of history behind them" (Misra 1963, 3).⁹

Presently, the oldest book dealing with the history of past nations is the Torah. Even a cursory study of these sources will reveal that just two generations after the Prophet Ibrāhīm, a business caravan passes by this road, picks up Yūsuf and takes him to Egypt. Greek historians have also made mention of this route.

In short, the Arabs remained in control of trade relationships with India from the Prophet Yūsuf's time up to the times of the European traveller Marco Polo (591 C.E.) and the Portuguese traveller Vasco Da Gama (852/1448). Argather Shidash, a Greek historian approximately two thousand years before 'Īsā' writes: "Cargo ships would set out from the coastal regions of Gujarāt and dock at Sabā in Yemen and from where they would proceed to Egypt" (Nadwī 1975, 186)¹⁰.

On the strength of the aforementioned historical narrations it may be deduced that the Arabs and Indians always enjoyed close trade relations. This is also evident from ancient as well as modern history.

2.7. The opinion of Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī

On the occasion of a graduation ceremony at the Jāmi'ah Husainiyyah in Rander (Husainiyyah University in Rander, Surat, Gujarāt), Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī delivered what was regarded by students of the history of India as, a rather contentious lecture on the topic of the history of Gujarāt and about *'ilm* [knowledge] and *taqwā* [Allāh-consciousness]. The address was later published

in the Urdu monthly *Ma‘ārif* which is published from Āzamgarh in September 1945. Twenty-five years later, in September 1970, Mawlānā Yusuf Binnorī reprinted the same lecture in his Urdu monthly *Bayyināt* published from Karachi. The following is a translation of an excerpt from the lecture:

This part of India known as Gujarāt and particularly this town of yours i.e. Rander (a town next to Surat), which was once famously known as “the door of the Ka‘bah”, was at one time before the rise of Bombay, the first stage of the journey for those travelling to the Kā‘bah. Not only from India but from far afield as Turkey, China, Afghanistan and Russia people used to go to Makkah and Madinah via this very port. This river before you i.e. the Tāpti and further afield near Bharuch, the Narmada river, both these rivers lead into the Arabian Sea. The visitors to Makkah and Madinah used these rivers those days to land onto the Arabian Peninsula. One of the greatest blessings of this place is that in those days any *faqīh* [jurist] or *muḥaddith* [Traditionist] that came from Ḥijāz, Syria or Egypt first spread his sheet of grace and talent at this very place and the very first assemblies of “*qālallāh*” and “*qalā al-rasūl*” [“Allāh says...” and “the Prophet says...”] used to congregate at this very place as well. There is only a patch of water separating Gujarāt and the Arabian Peninsula. Hence, any wave that rose on that end always came and struck this end and any storm that brewed on that end also found its way to the Indian side as well¹¹. This is one of the main reasons why Gujarāt was the first province in India to be honoured with the wealth of the knowledge of *ḥadīth* [Traditions]. Apart from this, the entire treasure of Asaf Khān, the last sovereign of the Gujarātī empire, was transported to Ḥijāz where it became a source of academic and spiritual nourishment. During the era of the kings of Gujarāt, the (produce of the) lush and verdant lands of Gujarāt were endowed for the lushness (benefit) of the barren lands (of Ḥijāz) (Nadwī 1970, 43).

2.8. The arrival of the *Ṣaḥābah* [Companions], *Tābiʿūn* [Successors] and *Tabaʿ tābiʿūn* [Followers] in Gujarāt and the Subcontinent.

The former Professor of *ḥadīth* of the Islāmīc University at Dhabel (Jāmiʿah Dhābel), Mawlānā ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Aʿzamī writes:

It is legendary that the very first relationship India enjoyed with Islām commenced from Sindh and in the year 94 A.H. Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Thaqafī traversed the deserts of Sindh and established a Muslim government in India. However, this fact also cannot be overlooked that the first place the Muslim's eyes fell on were the lush mountainous regions of Gujarāt. Gujarāt always remained their chief objective right until they conquered it. In fact it can be said that Gujarāt was the first province to be honoured with the blessed feet of those who succumbed to the unity of Allāh [*tawḥīd*] and Gujarāt was the first province in whose mountains, deserts, and jungles the chants of *Allāhū akbar* [Allāh is the Greatest] reverberated. In the year 15 A.H. an army under the leadership of a Companion Ḥakam ibn ʿĀs al-Thaqafī came to Gujarāt. Many of them lost their lives as well in this expedition and most probably many of the martyrs had witnessed the blessed face of the Prophet Muḥammad and benefitted from his instruction and companionship. These *Ṣaḥābah* are somewhere in the land of Gujarat but exactly where this hidden treasure lies, we have no idea (ʿAbd al-Jabbār 1978, 1:447).

2.9. The inception of Islām in India

One of the most well known historians of Arabic, Persian and Urdu history of our times, ʿAllāmah Qaḍī Aṭhar Mubarakpurī who was the director of the Shaikh al-Hind Academy-Deoband, writes in his Urdu work *Hind me Arab ki ḥukumaten* [*Arab Rule in India*]:

According to our research, the areas of Sandān i.e. Thana (near Bombay), Bharbhut, Bharūch, Rānder, Cochin and Gujarāt were the first areas to welcome Islām and the Muslims. The blessed feet of the *ṣaḥābah* and *tabiʿūn* [Companions and Successors] first landed on these fortunate areas. The inception of Islām in India is normally

considered to have appeared in the time of the conqueror of Sindh and India Muḥammad ibn Qāsim. Allow me, however, to inform you that in the year 15 A.H. during the Caliphate of ʿUmar, just three or four years after the demise of the Messenger of Allāh, a group of Muslims under the leadership of a *ṣaḥābī* [Companion] named Ḥakam ibn ʿAbū al-Ās landed in the cities of Thana (Thane), Bharbhut, Bharūch and Rānder etc. Their arrival and descent was the first impression of Islām in Gujarāt. Islām gained its luminous glory in the Indo-Pak subcontinent from this very lamp of spiritual guidance. Approximately 80 years before the victory of the *mujāhid*, Muḥammad ibn Qāsim over Sindh, the relationship and roots of the Muslims had already gained a strong footing in the south of the country i.e. in Gujarāt (Surti 1998, 29-30).

From amongst the earliest contacts between the Muslims and the Indians were those with the Gujarāt kingdom of the Maitrakas who ruled from Vallabhipura near modern day Bhavanagar (Misra 1963, 3).

2.10. King Bhoj and India

There is an incident which, although not firmly established from the narrations of the *ṣaḥābah* and *tābiʿūn* [Companions and Successors], is definitely mentioned by historians and often repeated in the exhortations of lecturers.

There are differences of opinion in historical accounts over the witnessing by king Bhoj of the miraculous splitting of the moon by Muḥammad and also over whether he had summoned one of the Prophet's Companions to India to convert him to Islām. There are also different views over the whereabouts of the graves of this *ṣaḥābī* [Companion] and the king who was responsible for calling him to India.

ʿAllāmah Qaḍī Aṭhar Mubarakpurī and the scholar who has been famed as the "Imām of *ḥadīth*" of our times Mawlānā Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-Aʿzamī were both asked by Mawlānā Kafletwī about this historical incident. Mawlānā Kafletwī

received replies from both these authorities and has recorded the gist of both the letters in his Gujarati work entitled *Akābirīn-i-Gujarat*. As a point of departure for his question, Kaflerwī refers both scholars to an article written on this subject by Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī.

In his reply ‘Allāmah Qaḍī Aṭhar Mubarakpurī says: “There are many unreliable narrations regarding certain kings of India who had converted to Islām upon witnessing the miraculous splitting of the moon by the Messenger of Allāh [peace be upon him]. The kings which have been made mention of in these narrations are:

1. Rājah Sāmri of Malabar (Kerala)
2. Rājah Bhoj of Dhārwar in the province of Karnataka situated near the province of Maharashtra
3. Rājah Bhoj of Bhojpur in the province of Bihār
4. Rājah Bhoj of Dhār in Madhyapradesh near Malwah and Ujain.

No mention of this has been made in any book of Arabic history nor is there any oral or written narration supporting this view. This incident is possible but we cannot establish its authenticity for the lack of historical evidence.” Mubarakpurī further states: “The incident Thānwī mentions of Rājah Bhoj cannot be historically established. Nonetheless there is a possibility this incident is authentic but as there was no system of recording any historical events in those days, the Arab historians were unable to come across any record of this incident.”

The Imām of *ḥadīth* in India, Mawlānā Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān al-A‘zamī replied: “I have received your abridgement and checked Thānwī’s article. Your abridgement was most correct. The incident of Rājah Bhoj is based mainly on hearsay. We have not come across any such incidents in any of the Arabic or Persian reliable accounts of history. Even in the detailed biographies of the Companions we were unable to come across any mention of a *ṣaḥābī* [Companion] coming to India at the request of Rājah Bhoj. There would not be any problem if you mention this incident in your writings provided you expose

the basis of this narration and specify the reason for mentioning this narration. I will try to glean more information on the names Thānwī has mentioned in his article and I will also try to determine where he (Thānwī) resided in Gorakhpur. Probably from there on I will be able to pursue the incomplete book he makes mention of in his article. May Allāh reward you tremendously.”

It is interesting to note that both the provinces of Karnataka and Madhyapradesh contain places by the name of Dhārwār. We do not reject this. However, another ancient city in Kutch, Kathiawar (Kathiawad) also had the same name of Dhārwār which was mentioned in Thānwī’s article. If none of the historians are aware of the place, it does not necessarily mean that the place does not exist.

According to ‘Abd al-Ḥai Kafletwī, Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī’s article contains at least three factors which convince the reader that Gujarāt was honoured with the burial on its lands of this king and the Companion who converted him. Firstly, Thānwī mentions that the king was named Shaikh ‘Abdullāh, he was a very pious saint and his grave is in Dhārwār (Gujarāt). The second convincing factor is that one of the descendants of Rājah Bhoj, Mawlānā Ḥasan Bastawī says: “I am one of the Rājah’s descendants.” He thereafter mentions the entire incident of the king’s conversion to Islām. In conclusion, Mawlānā Ḥasan Bastawī says that due to the Rajāh’s conversion to Islām, the people deposed him. His grave as well as the grave of the said Companion are situated at Dhārwār in Kathiawad, Gujarāt. The third factor is what Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī alludes to when he says: “I have a close colleague residing in the environs of Bhojpūr who informed me that according to the local villagers, the king converted to Islām. As a result he was deposed and he thereafter fled to Gujarat.”

By way of summation Kafletwī states:

We wish to bring to the notice of the reader that there were two aspects of the aforementioned incident. One dealt with the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad’s Companions and the subsequent conversion of Rājah Bhoj

to Islām. The second aspect deals with the location of their graves. As far as the first aspect is concerned, i.e. the reliability of the narrations citing the kings conversion to Islām etc, this humble servant totally accedes to the views of the two seniors expressed above. There is no room for dispute as far as this is concerned. However, as far as the second aspect is concerned, i.e. the location of the grave, we can claim, basing this claim on the convincing factors of Mawlānā Thānwī's article, that the most closely accurate record is that the city of Dhārwar in the district of Kathiawad in Gujarat was honoured with the graves of these two pious souls. This is our belief and Allāh knows best (Kafletwī n.d., 53).

2.11. The grave of a Companion in Gujarāt: the findings of Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thanwī

Mawlānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thanwī writes in the Urdu monthly *al-Nūr* (*Muḥarram* 1346, 23):

Eventually I requested my friend Sayyid Maqbūl Ḥusain to write out the text which was originally in Persian. The gist of it was that Rājah (king) Bhoj witnessed in India the miraculous splitting of the moon by the Messenger of Allāh. To verify this he despatched a few people to Arabia and upon acquiring this verification he accepted Islām. He was named ‘Abdullāh. He was a very pious and devout Muslim. His tomb is situated in Dhārwar (Kutch, Kathiawād, Gujarāt) (Kafletwī n.d., 53).

Mawlānā Thanwī further states:

I continued contemplating over this incident and I also persisted in enquiring from others but I was unable to gain any convincing proof. However, I came across a few timeworn sheets of paper in my host's house in Gorakhpur. These sheets were in a book form lying abandoned and cast aside in his house. As the first few pages of the book were missing, the name of the book was unavailable. The book which at that time comprised of pages 7 to 114 was printed on almond-coloured paper. Even the author could not be determined. On page 97, it reads: “Shaikh Umīd ‘Alī was a resident of

Kolawāmārī (district Āzamgarh). Whilst going through his books one day in his library, I came across a translation by Faiḍī of the diary of Rājah Bhoj. It was a translation of the original manuscript. One of the entries in his diary also made mention of the splitting of the moon into two. Apart from this, Mawlānā Ḥasan Raḍā Khān says: "I am a descendant of Rājah Bhoj. Rājah Bhoj was the king of a place called Dhār. One night, whilst sitting on the upper story of his house, he witnessed the moon splitting into two. He summoned his priests and consulted them over this matter. They informed him that this is a miracle of a person born in Arabia. The Rājah despatched a person to the Prophet requesting him to send someone to teach him his religion. The messenger of Allah sent a Companion who converted the Rājah to Islām and named the king ʿAbdullāh. Upon his submission to Islām, the people deposed him and appointed his brother as the king. The Companion also passed away at the same city (of Dhārwar). The tomb of King ʿAbdullāh is in the same vicinity as the tomb of the Companion (Kafletwī n.d., 62).

To this Kafletwī adds the following observations:

1. Rājah Bhoj was a very famous and mighty king of India. The ancient Urdu expression *Kahān Rājah Bhoj aur kahān gangwa teli* expresses the king's seniority as well as his majesty.
2. There is a similar incident recorded about the king of the coast of Malabar. He also witnessed the splitting of the moon. However, this is not the same king mentioned in the above incident.
3. Mawlānā Thanwī says: "A friend of mine who is a resident of the environs of Bhojpūr and who repeatedly visits Bhojpūr says that it is popularly accepted amongst the local villagers that the king converted to Islām and he was consequently deposed. He thereafter fled to Gujarāt" (Kafletwī n.d., 43)

In his *Tārīkh*, Farishtah (n.d., 1:73) has included a note on Rājah Bhoj and while he mentions that this king was known for his justice, his many wives and

held a fair every year at which artists from far and wide would be invited to perform, makes no mention of his Islām.

2.12. Islām in India during the Caliphate of ‘Umar (13/635-23/643)

It was against the background of the rapid expansion of Islām that the first contacts between Islām and India took place during the caliphate of ‘Umar. The rise of Islām did not, however, give rise to the connection with India but only added a new dimension to it. This is so because from time immemorial spices and other articles from India and southeast Asia had been in great demand in Egypt and southern Europe and this transit trade was mainly in the hands of Arabs who brought merchandise from the Indian ports to Yemen and southern Arabia.

Trade continued after the Arabs embraced Islām. It was during the caliphate of ‘Umar that the religious contact between these two peoples took place. Formal territorial conquests however took place much later during the time of the Ummayyad caliph Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik (86/705-96/715). It was then that the first major conflict between the Muslims of Arabia and the Indian subcontinent arose out of a dispute regarding Arab sailors who were operating in the Indian Ocean. They had sailed as far as Sri Lanka and when some of them died there the local ruler decided that it was appropriate that he send their widows and children back to Arabia with gifts and letters of goodwill addressed to Hajjāj¹² (661-714). Unfortunately the ship met with bad weather and was drawn close to the shores of Debul¹³ where it was attacked by pirates who plundered the gifts and took the Muslim women and children as captives. When news reached Hajjāj he protested to Dahar, the then ruler of Sindh, to release the prisoners and restore the booty. Dahar was evasive in his reply and this action enraged Hajjāj. He persuaded Walid, the Caliph at the time, to authorise punitive measures against Dahar. The initial expeditions that were sent against Dahar ended in failure but a later expedition sent under the capable leadership of Muḥammad ibn Qāsim was more successful. By the autumn of 93/711 they had defeated Dahar and the Muslim flag was hoisted on the soil of the Indian subcontinent.

As is evident from the above-mentioned statement of Mubarakpuri, these were not the first contacts of Islām in India. In 23/643 two campaigns were launched against India. The first, under Ḥakam ibn ‘Amr al-Taghlabi, advanced as far as the Indus and the second was directed against the coast of West India. These initial expeditions did not result in any substantial territorial conquest.

In 14/634 ‘Umar dispatched ‘Utbā’ ibn Ghazwān, a Companion, to Ubulla, modern day Basrah. While dispatching him ‘Umar advised that “Islām should occupy a place in the land of Hind.” In referring to *‘ard al-Hind* [the land of Hind] ‘Umar most probably had Ubulla in mind¹⁴ since at the time this region was known as Hind. Nevertheless the Arabs continued to advance towards India and reached the Indus Valley in 23/643 (al-Ṭabarī, 1893,1:2378-82).

The first naval expedition towards India was directed against Thāna, a sea port near Bombay. The Companion ‘Amr ibn Ās al-Thaqafi¹⁵ was the governor of Bahrain and ‘Umān at the time. He dispatched an expedition under the command of his brother Ḥakam ibn Abī al-Ās al-Thaqafi who was also a Companion of the Prophet (Ibn Ḥajar 1888,1:703-8; Dhahabī 1315 A.H.1:144). The landing of the forces on the coast of Gujarat heralded the advent of the *ṣaḥābah* in the south of India¹⁶. Other expeditions were also sent against Barwas or Broach and to the Gulf of Daybul (Debal). The expedition to Daybul was headed by ‘Uthmān al-Thaqafi’s brother known as Mughairah ibn al-Ās al-Thaqafi (al-Balādhurī 1866, 1: 81-2).

The Arab expeditions to India have been mentioned in some detail by al-Balādhurī in his *Fuṭūḥ al-buldān*. He does not however mention the specific date of these expeditions but it would appear from the context of his entries that these expeditions were undertaken immediately after ‘Uthmān al-Thaqafi had assumed the governorship¹⁷ of Bahrain and ‘Umān in 14/636 or 15/637. Abū Mikhnaḥ¹⁸ and al-Madāinī¹⁹ are quoted here as authorities for this view (al-Balādhurī 1866, 431-2).

The date of the expedition to India is contingent upon that of the appointment of Uthmān in Bahrain and 'Umān. It would therefore be necessary to determine the correct date of the appointment²⁰.

A statement of Ibn Sa'd contradicts the above reports. He states that until the foundation of Basrah was not laid, in 16/637 or 17/638²¹, 'Uthmān al-Thaqafī was not transferred from Ṭaif where he had been appointed as an *'āmil* [governor] by the Prophet in 9/690. When the need for a capable governor for the new city of Basra arose, the name of 'Uthmān was suggested to the caliph 'Umar. Since the Prophet Muḥammad had himself made the appointment, 'Umar was reluctant to transfer 'Uthmān. After sometime he had to yield to the popular demand and 'Uthmān was sent to Basrah after being replaced at Ṭaif by his brother Ḥakam ibn 'As al-Thaqafī (Ibn Sa'd 1915, 7:36).

Abū Mikhnaḥ's account is also erroneous because 'Alā' al-Hadramī who is said to have been replaced by 'Uthmān in Bahrain and 'Umān did not die in 14/635 or in the beginning of 15/636 as is asserted by Abū Mikhnaḥ. Al-Ṭabarī asserts that al-Hadramī was *'āmil* over Bahrain and Yamāmah in 16/637 and led a naval expedition against Persia in 17/638 and died in 21/641 (al-Ṭabarī 1893, 1:2545). It also does not seem probable that 'Utbā ibn Ghazwān was superceeded by 'Alā' as the governor of Basrah in 14/635 or 15/636 when the former was just accomplishing the preliminary tasks for the foundations of a military barracks there. Al-Ṭabarī, on the authority of al-Balādhurī places 'Uthmān in 14/15 in Bahrain while curiously enough 'Umān which was a base for Indian expeditions, was at the time in the control of another governor namely Hudhaifah ibn Miḥsān (al-Ṭabarī, 1893, 1:2389, 2426). Al-Ṭabarī maintains that 'Uthmān was the governor of Ṭaif in the year 16/637, a claim that collaborates Ibn Sa'd. What is also important to note is that with the exception of al-Baladhurī no other chronicler puts the provinces of Bahrain and 'Umān under one *'āmil* till 23/643. After 'Uthmān was appointed in Basrah in 17/638 Bahrain and Yamamah also came under his control. 'Umān, however still continued to be ruled by Hudhaifah ibn Miḥsān. The dispatch of a naval expedition under 'Uthmān till 17/638 is therefore highly unlikely.

According to al-Ṭabarī ʿUthmān al-Thaqafī assumed charge of Bahrain and the outlying areas of ʿUmān and Yamāmah in 23/643 (al-Ṭabarī 1893, 2:737). This date can be gleaned from al-Balādhurī by chronologically arranging the tenures of the offices of the governnors of Bahrain upto the year 23/643. In 20/640 Qudāmah ibn Maʿzūn al-Jumafī, who was the governor of Bahrain, was dismissed on the charge of drinking and was replaced by Abū Hurairah al-Dawsī. Abū Hurairah held this post for a considerable time during which he established a stable for the breeding of horses. This venture earned him 12000 dirhams. The caliph, ʿUmar viewed this accumulation of money as a misappropriation of the *bait al-māl* [public revenue] and consequently discharged Abū Hurairah. Al-Balādhurī further states that “ʿUmar then assigned ʿUthmān ibn Abī al-Ās al-Thaqafī as governor of Bahrain and ʿUmān who still held the post at the time of the death of ʿUmar” (al-Balādhurī 1866, 82). There is therefore no contradiction between al-Ṭabarī and al-Balādhurī regarding the appointment of ʿUthmān al-Thaqafī in 23/643 and it may be assumed that he undertook the expeditions to India immediately after he assumed charge of Bahrain and ʿUmān.

The expedition that was then undertaken against Thāna was a success. Muslims had thus reached India by land and sea during the caliphate of ʿUmar. This period synchronised with the golden age of the Companions. As yet the unity that had been brought about by the Prophet Muḥammad had not been disturbed by the factionalism of any Shiite or Khārijite nor by the partisan spirit of any Umayyad or Hashimite. The Companions stood firm behind Islām with the sole concern to deliver the message of Islām to mankind at large.

Of the Companions who participated in the Indian campaign the following names are known:

1. ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUtbān (al-Ṭabarī 1893, 1:2635; Ibn Ḥajar 1888, 2:817 seq.; Ibn al-Athīr n.d., 3:199).
2. Āsim ibn ʿAmr al-Tamīmī (Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 1336 A.H., 2:500; Ibn Ḥajar 1888, 2:614).

3. Ṣuḥār ibn al-ʿAbdī (Ibn Saʿd 1915, 7:1,61; Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 1336 A.H., 1:322; Ibn al-Athīr n.d., 2:11, Ibn Ḥajar 1888, 2:472).
4. Suhāil ibn ʿAdī (Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr 1336 A.H., 1:578, Ibn al-Athīr n.d., 3:22; Ibn Ḥajar 1888, 3:22).
5. Ḥakam ibn al-ʿĀs al-Thaqafī (al-Ṭabarī 1895, 2:80; Ibn al-Athīr n.d., 3:35; ʿAbd al-Barr 1336 A.H., 1:118; Ibn Ḥajar 1888, 1:707).

2.13. Ṣaḥābah [Companions] in India during the Caliphate of ʿUthmān (23/643-35/655)

Once the Muslims had been successful and the entire region from Mukrān to that part of Sindh which comprised the west of the Indus came under Muslim rule, the Arabs retired after the local people agreed to pay the usual tribute. It was however not long before the warlike hill tribes revolted, refused to be subdued and stopped paying the tribute.

Consequently the next caliph, ʿUthmān sent ʿUbaidullāh ibn Maʿmar al-Tamīmī who was also a Companion of the Prophet to subdue them. Although ʿUbaidullāh was faced with stiff opposition when he arrived in Makrān he managed to crush the rebellion and brought all the territory extending upto the Indus under his control as well (al-Ṭabarī 1893, 1:2829). From this time on Arab control over the region took a permanent footing. In 30/650 ʿUbaidullāh was transferred to Persia and ʿUmair ibn ʿUthmān was appointed in his place (al-Ṭabarī 1893, 1:2830).

The other Companion who is linked to the Indian campaigns during the caliphate of ʿUthmān is ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Samura ibn Ḥabīb ibn ʿAbd al-Shams ibn ʿAbd al-Manāf. He succeeded Rabīʿ ibn Ziyād al-Ḥārithī as the governor of Sijistān in 31/650 (Ibn Ḥajar 1325, 4:190). As the new governor of the region he possessed much enthusiasm and proceeded eastwards from Zaranj. Soon he brought the whole region right upto the frontiers of India under his subjection. He advanced along the waters of the Helmund and was soon confronted by the Indian forces near Rudbar, which lies on the frontier between modern day Afghanistan and Baluchistān (Elliot 1869, 1:416). After a triumph

here the Muslim forces moved on as far as Bust. The author of *Muʿjam al-buldān* mentions that not far from Bust lay a temple dedicated to the god Surya. In Arabic Surya was called Zūr and was valuable because it was made of gold and had two rubies as eyes. The mountain on which this temple was situated became known as Mount Zūr and was situated in the territory of Sindh (Yāqūt 1866 2:956). Ibn Samura is reported to have entered the temple, cut off a hand of the golden god and remove the rubies from the eyes. He then went to the ruler of the place and handed these over to him saying: "I only wanted to show you that it had no power whatsoever to harm or help" (al-Balādhurī 1866, 394).

After his successful penetration into Sindh, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān retired to Zaranj. He died in 50/670 in his residence in Basrah where the street, Sikkah Ibn Samurah, was named after him.

During the caliphate of ʿAlī (35/656-40/661) due to internal problems very little attention was paid to India. Although there was not much external outreach, when ʿAlī came to know that the people of Sistān (part of Sindh) had apposed the caliphate, he sent Nair ibn Dair to the border of India in 38/659. A large group of Islāmic scholars accompanied this group (Kaflerwī n.d., 79). Again in 39/660 an Islāmic army under the leadership of Hārith ibn Murrah came to India.

The Muslim attacks during the reign of ʿUthmān and his successors did not go without resistance. At first the powerful Rajputs proved too strong to be overcome by a naval expedition. With the fall of Sindh however the Muslims had the advantage of a contiguous land frontier with Gujarāt. The then powers in Gujarāt record the occurrence of Muslim invasions. Several of these rulers such as the Pratihara king Nagabhata, the Chalukya king of Lata in south Gujarāt, Avanijanasraya Pulakesiraja and the Gurjarā king Jayabhata IV resisted the and were able to halt the advance of the Muslim forces (Misra 1963, 4).

In the years that followed Muslims advanced as far south as Bharūch and Navsarī and far east as Ujjain. Historical records of the period indicate that between the years 106/724 and 120/738 they defeated the kings of Saindhavas, Kacchellas, Saurashtra, the Cahvatakas, the Mauryas and the Gurjaras (Majumdar 1954, 172-3; Majumdar 1960, 191). In 758 the Mansūr the Caliph sent a fleet to the Porbander coastal town of Barada and in 776 another Muslim expedition was sent against this town but because of an epidemic they suffered a setback (Elliot and Dawson 1867, 1:4; Nadwī 1935, 277).

2.14. Ṣaḥābah [Companions] in India during the Caliphate of Mu‘āwīyyah (41/661-60/681)

Iṣḥāq is of the opinion that the last Companion that came to India was Sinān ibn Salmah ibn al-Muhabbiq al-Hudhalī (8/629-53/673)²² (Iṣḥāq 1976, 17). The governor of Irāq, Ziyād, appointed him as commander of the Indian frontiers in 48/668. Sinān assumed the post and soon thereafter conquered Mukrān, founded several important cities and organised the revenue system. He thus proved himself a capable ruler and administrator. The reason why he was discharged is unknown. Rāshid ibn ‘Amr al-Judaidī of the Azd tribe replaced him. He however fell in action against the Meds and once more Sinān was recalled to the post. Once again Sinān displayed his leadership abilities by conquering the areas of Qayqān and Budh where he ruled for two years. He was killed at Quṣḍār, which is modern day Khozdar in Baluchistān in 53/673.

During the caliphate of Mu‘āwīyyah a senior *tābi‘ī* [Successor] by the name of Muallab ibn Abū Ṣufra al-Azdī (8/692-83/702) also visited India as a general under ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Samurah. He arrived in Sajistān in 43/663. He detached himself from the main army and with a small army picked mainly from his own tribe, the Azd, he penetrated into the inland of India. He marched as far as Kābul and captured the areas Lahore from where, in 44/664, he moved further as far as Bannū (al-Balādhurī 1866, 432).

From the above it is evident that already almost 80 years before the advent of Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Thaqafī there were contacts between India and Ḥijāz.

According to al-Balādhurī, long before Muḥammad ibn Qāsim came to India, 500 Arab Muslims came to Mahram and stayed there when it was ruled by King Dāhir. These were besides those who arrived there via the coast of Gujarat (Kafletwī n.d., 69).

Besides the Companions a large number of *tābiʿīn* [Successors] also came to India. The leader of these *tābiʿīn* was Ḥasan al-Baṣrī who lived in India and spent two-and-a-half years in different places in this country.

Some of the other Successors said to have come to India include:

1. Saʿīd ibn ʿĀmir Anṣārī
2. Saʿīd al-Qushairī
3. Ḥārith ibn Murrah ʿAbdī
4. ʿUmar ibn ʿAbdullāh al-Qarshī
5. ʿAbbad ibn Zīād ibn Abū Sufyān (he conquered the desert area of Katch and Kandhar)
6. Yazīd ibn Mufarraḡ al-Humaidī
7. Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Thaqafī (the conqueror of Sindh was also a *tābiʿī*)

Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Thaqafī came to India during the rule of Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik via Iran to Makran and Debul. Here he fought a battle with the king Dāhir. After his triumph he established Islāmic rule here. Later he met the forces of Dāhir again in the area of Katch. Here two of the generals and advisors of king Dāhir were Muslims. They were Muḥammad ibn ʿAlāī and Ḥārith ibn ʿAlāī (Kafletwī n.d., 68-79).

Mawlānā Ashraf Randerī, the rector of Dār al-ʿUlūm Rander, in his booklet *Gulshan-i-Gujarāt* [The Garden of Gujarāt], identifies the mausoleum of Faṭhullāh Jilānī, who had come to Surat from Arabia for *daʿwah* and *tablīgh* [propagation] of Islām. He is of the opinion that Jilānī is likely to have been a *tābiʿī* [Successor] (Kafletwī n.d., 79).

In 1918 the All India Mohammadan Educational Conference was held in Gujarāt. At the conference special mention was made of the coming of the *tābiʿīn* [Successors] and *tabaʿ tābiʿīn* [Followers] who came to Gujarāt. Kafletwī states that the last of the Successors to come to India was Khalaf ibn Khalifah (Kafletwī n.d. 82).

When Muḥammad ibn Qāsim came to India, he was accompanied by many prominent Successors and Followers. Amongst the Arab soldiers were many readers of the Qurʾān [*qurrāʾ*] on whom al-Hajjāj enjoined ‘to be busy reading it’ (*Chach nāmā*²³ 1900, 78). From this time on, with the influx of Arab, learned men settled in India whose labour and love for knowledge was responsible for the growth of the seats of Islāmic learning in the Arab colonies.

Reference to some of the outstanding personalities who carried with them the Islāmic sciences would be appropriate here.

Musāʾ ibn Yaʿqūb al-Thaqafī

He had accompanied Muḥammad ibn Qāsim to Sindh was appointed as *qāḍī* [judge] of Alor by the latter. Al-Thaqafī, who settled permanently in Sindh, was highly qualified in the Prophetic Traditions (Elliot 1869, 1:134, 202). His family at Uchh appears to have had a long reputation for learning and scholarship as is evident from the fact that as late as 613/1216, Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī al-Thaqafī, a descendant of his, “was a mine of learning and a soul of wisdom and there was no equal to him in knowledge, piety and eloquence” (Elliot 1869, 1:132).

Yazīd ibn Abū Kabsha al-Saksakī al-Dimashqī (d. 97/715)

When Sulaimān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (96/714-99/717) became the caliph he recalled Muḥammad ibn Qāsim from Sindh and appointed Yazīd ibn Abū Kabsha al-Saksakī al-Dimashqī in his place. Yazīd however did not live long and died on the eighteenth day of his arrival there. Yazīd was a *tābiʿī* and received many narrations from Abū al-Dardāʾ, Shuraḥbīl ibn Aws and Marwān ibn Ḥakam, the Companions of the Prophet. He has been categorised as *thiqah* [a

reliable authority] by the critics of the Traditions. His pupils include Abū Bishr, Ḥakam ibn ʿUtaibah, ʿAlī ibn al-Aqmar, Muʿāwīyah ibn Qurra al-Muzanī and Ibrāhīm al-Saksakī. *Aḥādīth* [Traditions] narrated on his authority occur in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, the *Kitāb al-Āthār* of Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Shaibānī and in the *Mustadrak* of Ḥākim al-Naisābūrī (Ibn Ḥajar 1920 A.H., 399).

Mufaḍḍal ibn Muhallab ibn Abū Ṣufrah (d.102/721)

In 101/721, during the caliphate of Yazīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (101/720-105/724) a serious uprising headed by Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab, who was the former governor of Khurāsān, took place in Irāq. Yazīd, in his anti-Umayyad campaign succeeded in gaining support from Basra and Kufah. He achieved remarkable success and was able to overthrow the rule of the caliph in the provinces of Fāris, Ahwāz, Kirmān and Qandābīl (in Sindh). In order to suppress the uprising the caliph despatched an army under the command of his brother Maslamah ibn ʿAbd al-Malik. After an intense battle Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab and his sons were slain. The surviving members of his family fled by boat to Qandābīl, a northwestern province of Sindh. The governor here who in fact was appointed by Yazīd ibn Muhallab proved to be treacherous when the caliph's agent Hilāl ibn Tamīmī came in pursuit of the survivors. Despite this the brave sons of Muhallab did not surrender themselves and fell fighting to the end.

Amongst the sons of Muhallab who had fell in battle at Qandābīl was Mufaḍḍal ibn Muhallab ibn Abū Ṣufrah. He was a narrator of *ḥadīth* and as a *tābiʿ* narrated Traditions on the authority of Nuʿmān ibn Bashīr, the Prophets Companion. Amongst those that narrated Traditions on the authority of Mufaḍḍal were his son Ḥājib, Thābit al-Bunānī (d.127) and Jarīr ibn Ḥāzim. Ibn Ḥibbān and other critics have regarded Mufaḍḍal as *ṣadūq* [reliable] (Ibn Ḥajar 1920 A.H., 362).

Abū Mūsāʾ Isrāʾīl ibn Mūsāʾ al-Baṣrī Nazīl al-Hind (d. circ 155/771)

He came to India from Basrah as a trader. He became known as Nazīl al-Hind [resident of India]. He was an accomplished *muḥaddīth* [Traditionist] and one of the celebrated pupils of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110). He also narrated on the

authority of Abū Hāzim al-Ashja'ī (d. 115). His rank as a Traditionist may be gauged from the fact that such master Traditionists such as Sufyān al-Thawrī (d.161), Sufyān ibn 'Uyaina (d.198) and Yaḥya ibn Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān (d.198) were amongst his pupils. Ibn Ḥajar writes in his *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb* that Abū Mūsā' died in 160 A.H. (Ibn Ḥajar 1920 A.H., 362).

‘Amr ibn Muslim al-Bāhili (d. 123/740)

‘Amr was a brother of Qutaiba ibn Muslim al-Bāhili, the famous conqueror of Transoxania (al-Balādhurī 1866, 400). He came to Sindh as a governor of the caliph ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (99/717-101/19). Al-Balādhurī reports that ‘Amr ibn Muslim conducted several successful raids into India (al-Balādhurī 1866, 400). It was during his tenure of office that many kings including Jaisinha, the son of Dahar, accepted Islām in response to an appeal made to them by the caliph (Elliot 1869, 1:440).

Despite leading the hazardous life of a soldier ‘Amr cultivated to a certain extent the science of Tradition. He is accredited to have narrated Traditions on the authority of Ya‘lā' ibn ‘Ubaid and Abū al-Ṭāhir is said to have narrated from ‘Amr (Ibn Ḥajar 1325 A.H., 8:105)

Rabī' ibn Ṣabīḥ al-Sa'dī al-Baṣrī (d. 160/776)

In his *Kashf al-ẓunūn*, Ḥājī Khalīfah states that Rabī' was a Traditionist and one of the early authors of *aḥadīth* (Ḥājī Khalīfah, 1842, 3:28). He came to India in 160/776 along with a naval squadron under ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Shihāb al-Misma'ī which attacked Barbad²⁴ during the caliphate of al-Mahdī (158/775-169/785). Although the Arabs were successful in taking the flourishing port of Barbad, a plague broke out and many lost their lives. Rabī' was one of the many victims (Kafletwī n.d., 85-6).

Rabī' was a native of Basrah and disciple of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728). He also studied under other leading Traditionists of his age such as Ḥamīd al-Ṭawīl (d.142/759), Thābit al-Bunānī (d.127/744), Mujāhid ibn Jabar (d.103/721) and others. He was regarded as an authority amongst his contemporaries. The

famous ‘Abdullāh ibn Mubārak (d.181/797), Sufyān al-Thawrī, Wakī (d.197/812), Abū Dāwūd al-Tayālīsī (d.203/818) and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Mahdī (d.198/813) were amongst his pupils transmitting *aḥādīth* on his authority. He is regarded as one of the pioneers of collecting and codifying *aḥādīth* during the second century A.H (Ḥājī Khalīfah, 1842, 3:80-1).

2.15. The accounts of Arab travellers and geographers

A number of Arab travellers and geographers visited India during the tenth century. Sindh was the *Inde Arabaise* and they were in a position to closely observe the political situation of their co-religionists who lived under the rule of indigenous rulers in the adjoining territories.

The earliest Muslim traveller is the merchant Sulaimān who when he came to India in 237/851, found the ruler of Jurz unfriendly to the Muslims while the ruler of the Balhara who ruled further south was much more friendly (Nadwī 1935, 277).

At the end of the ninth century an Arab captain by the name of Buzurg ibn Shahryar made frequent trips to the west coast. On one such trips he met a new Muslim who had converted from Hinduism. This is probably the earliest record of a voluntary Indian convert. The convert who was a shipmaster in one of the ships and was a prosperous trader had performed the *ḥajj* (Nadwī 1935, 278).

These earlier travellers were followed by others in the fourth/tenth century. Mas‘ūdī, the Arab Herodotus, who visited at the beginning of the fourth/tenth century travelled to Cambay and other towns in Gujarāt and echoes the words of his predecessors regarding the friendship afforded to the Arabs and the prowess of the Balhara kings: “In no other Indian ruler’s land are the Arabs and Muslims treated so well as in his. They have their *Jāmi‘* mosques in his land and are happy in all ways” (Nadwī 1935, 280).

Mas'ūdī also pays tribute to the contemporary Hindu ruler Balhara of Anhilwara Pattan who had given his Muslim subjects peace and security (Mas'ūdī 1367 A.H., 1:170)

In 340/951 Abū Ishāq al-Istakhri reached the shores of India and he noted about the territories of Balhara which extended southwards from Cambay: "It is a land of infidels but there are Musalmans in cities and none but Muslamans rule over them. There are *Jama'* masjids in them" (Elliot and Dawson 1867, 1:27).

Muḥammad Awfi, the author of *Jāmi' al-ḥikāyāt*,²⁵ went from Sindh to Cambay in about 526/1227. "The Muslim residents of the town", he writes, "are pious and orthodox. They maintain a large mosque with an *imām* and *khaṭīb*, appointed for the purpose. Siddharāj Jaya-Sinha, the Rāja of Gujarāt, who has his seat at Naharwālā (Anhilwārā Pattan) is fair and just in his dealings with them. Once he went from his capital Naharwala to Cambay in order to redress certain Muslim grievances which had been brought to his notice" (Elliot and Dawson 2:161-163)

2.16. Trade links between Arabia and Gujarāt

The esteem the Arab traders held for trade links with the Indians and the type of commodities they exported from India to the Arabian peninsula can be gauged from the following incident of Caliph 'Umar who was elected caliph in 13/635 quoted in *al-Akḥbār al-tiwāl*, p. 326. 'Umar once enquired of an Arab traveller his opinion over India. The traveller summed it up in three short but eloquent sentences. He said: "Her (India's) seas are brimming with pearls, her mountains are scattered with rubies and her trees are abounding in fragrances." From this it may be deduced that during the sixth century, the Arabs used to import pearls, rubies and perfumes from India (Kafletwī n.d., 85).

Apart from this, an Arab traveller explains why the ships of Sayrāf (Seraglio) in those days avoided crossing over the Red Sea to Egypt and why they normally

turned back from Jeddah and returned to India (the coast line of Gujarāt) without venturing to Egypt and other areas. He says:

Instead of going to Egypt, the ships of Sayrāf would return from Jeddah straight to India because its seas are brimming with pearls and *ambar* (ambergris perfume), its mountains are laden with rubies and gold, its animal's (elephant's) mouths are filled with ivory, it produces ebony, cane, aloeswood, camphor, cloves, nutmeg, sandalwood and other fragrant substances, among its birds it has the parrot and the peacock, and its waste matter contains musk and *ziyād* (fragrant-smelling sweat of a species of animal) (Nadwi 1975, 50).

More extensive than the Arab conquests of India and Gujarāt were the peaceful contacts that took place. Arab sailors and traders plied their trade along the coast and soon after the rise of Islām we find colonies of Muslim Arabs at a number of ports such as Kambhāyath (Cambay), Chual and Honawar. Muslims reached Sri Lanka even earlier. During the reign of Hajjāj as governor of Iraq many of his political enemies and opponents sought refuge on the southern coast of the subcontinent. According to Ikrām, the Nawayat community on the Konkan coast of Bombay and in the Tinnevely district of Madras are descendants of these Muslims. Others settled along the Bay of Bengal and are said to have arrived in the area in the eight century (Ikram 1964, 20).

The largest coastal settlements are in Malabar where to date Muslims form the majority of the population. As a result of the Arab settlements a local ruler in the area embraced Islām as a result of which the situation of the Muslims was greatly improved (Ikram 1964, 21). Contiguous to the Malabar coast, Islām came to Gujarāt before territorial conquests. Traces of dwellings found in Sopara would indicate that Arabs had settled in Gujarāt before the rise of Islām and the birth of its Prophet. Arabs have remained in Gujarāt since the time of Agatharcides (B.C.E. 177-100) (Husain 1968, 132).

Trading communities continued to flourish along the west coast in the tenth century and inscriptions indicate that Arab Persian traders had settlements both in the coastal regions and the hinterland. An Arab family, al-Bammī of Cambay has left several records of their wealth and piety. The earliest Muslim inscription in the whole of northern India, records the construction of a mosque in Cambay by Saʿīd ibn Abū Sharīf ibn ʿAlī ibn Shapur al-Bammī in *Muḥarram* 615/April 1218. From the same region is an epitaph indicating the grave of a member of the Bammī family. Another epitaph indicates the resting place of a Persian trader (Misra 1988, 5).

In the capital Pattan an inscription records the death of possibly a Persian merchant who died in *Muḥarram* 681/May 1282. An inscription from Junagadh commemorates the construction of a mosque by an Arab shipmaster who in the inscription is described as “the benevolent chief, the great benefactor, prince of the chieftains and shipmasters, the prop of the pilgrims to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah” (Misra 1988, 5). The fact that it was necessary to construct a mosque indicates that there was a sizeable Muslim population in the inland town of Junagadh at the time.

One of the most interesting of the early inscriptions is the one found at Cambay which marks the resting place of one Zain al-Dīn, *Sulṭān al-muḥaqqiqīn*. The mystical inclinations of the person indicated by the sobriquet is supported by the rest of the inscription which consists of an entire *ghazal* and two *rubāʿīs* of an excellent quality. The composition of these lines by a colonialist of Cambay suggests the presence of a vigorous literary trend amongst them (Misra 1988, 6).

Other inscriptions dating from the 7/13th century give an interesting perspective on the social divisions and the communal organisation of these immigrant traders. An inscription found at a mosque in Somnath Pattan that dates from the Rajput period (662/1264), for example, states that the property is a *waqf* [trust] to be administered by the following *jamāts*: the *Nakhuyaorika* [the owners or commanders of ships and the sailors], the *ghamchikars* [oil-men]

together with their *khatīb* [leader of the prayer] and the *Chunakars* [limeworkers or masons].

Commenting on the Somnath Pattan mosque inscription Misra (1988, 7) states:

It is apparent from the inscription that by the thirteenth century, the Muslim community had grown out of its original limit of a trading one. It contained not only wealthy traders and particularly shippers and sea-faring men but also indigenously employed groups like oil-men, masons and possibly a heterogeneous group of people with miscellaneous occupations. They were then, as now, organized in *Jamāts* with a headman; the headman, the *khatīb* of the *ghanchi* community was an important functionary. Since a number of these men hailed from Iraq and Persia, there appears to have been a fairly (sic) group of Shi'as among them, though this cannot be positively stated.

2.17. The ports of Gujarāt

There was a time when India was the trading capital of the world and the main centre of commercial traffic in India were the ports of Gujarāt. Goods used to be despatched to other parts of the Subcontinent from these ports which were also points of entry and exit for goods exported to and imported from other parts of the world (Mubārakpuri 1986, 331).

The author of the book *Tārīkh-i-Gujarāt*, whilst describing the ancient bonds between Arabia and India, writes at the termination of his article that both countries enjoyed trade links with each other which began two thousand years before ʿĪsā²⁶ [peace be upon him]. In other words right from the era of Dāwūd²⁷ [peace be upon him] through the time of Yūsuf²⁸ [peace be upon him], ʿĪsā [peace be upon him] and continuously until the era of the Messenger of Allāh, Muḥammad [peace be upon him]. The author explicitly mentions Gujarāt and especially the coastal regions of Gujarāt as the one time trading capital of the world. He says: "Trading caravans used to set out from Gujarāt by sea as well as land to Makkah, Europe and other Arab countries" (Nadwī 1967, 180-88).

Some historians whilst outlining the trade links with India, explicitly mention Gujarāt or the coastal region of Gujarāt in brackets right at the beginning of their article next to the word India. This is done to draw the attention of the reader particularly towards Gujarāt whenever he comes across the word India in that particular book.

Mubārakpurī mentions that Gujarāt became the trading capital of the world. The famous Arab historian and sailor, Abū ‘Abdullāh Sairafī named this area “the land of gold and silver.” In fact, he wrote a book on the history of Gujarāt called *Bilād al-dhahab* [The Cities of Gold] (Mubārakpurī 1986, 335).

2.17.1. The Port of Surat

The port of Surat was a strategic and important port of the Indo-pak Subcontinent. Most of the commercial goods exported to foreign countries were despatched via Surat. On the other hand, imported goods bound for other provinces of the Subcontinent used to go inland through Surat as well. As a consequence, Surat enjoyed a special status on the sub-continent. On the whole, the port of Surat had trading ties at one time with 84 to 90 ports of India and the rest of the world. Traders came on business to Mahasagar (the sea of Surat) from approximately 84 ports throughout the world. They set sail from the Arab world, Asia, Europe, Africa and other lands. The Tapti River near Surat used to be crammed with various types of colourful and beautiful sailing vessels from all the corners of the globe. The author of *Tawārīkh-i-Nawsārī* has enumerated the 84 ports of the world which enjoyed trade links with Surat. The names of these ports are mentioned below.

When just one port of Gujarāt had trade links with 84 ports of the world²⁹, it may be concluded that the other international ports of the province such as Bharūch (Broach), Kambhat (Cambay), Ghokah (Gogha), Soparah, Thāna, Chaimūr and others were equally popular. As a whole, on account of its various ports, Gujarāt was in contact with many countries of the world.

2.18. The various influences on 16th century Gujarātī society

The action, reaction and interaction of the society of Gujarāt to the myriad of ethnic and linguistic influences that have impacted on this region of the continent demands a very much more detailed study. While the interaction with alien societies was more prominent in the coastal regions, Gujarātī society is no different from any other, in that the influences that impacted on it are discernible.

The hinterland and coastal regions became the new home of settlers who came from the inland such as the Aryans and those that came by sea such as the Persians, Arabs and Africans. Historically therefore the region provided the motive of shelter, trade or conquest to the migration.

2.18.1. The coastal society

The long coastline with its several anchorages and its proximity to the commercial and cultural locations of East Africa and South-East Asia meant that Gujarāt had long been exposed to the movements of people and the commercial contacts they brought. Foreigners were also attracted to the region because of the high remuneration offered by the Sultāns. Although they came from different cultural and religious backgrounds they mixed well with the local society of Gujarāt. Ravichander (1989, 162) has identified this ability of Gujarātī society to assimilate and accomodate foreigners as the principal reason why Gujarāt has been labelled as "*Mleccha* country".

By the end of the fifteenth century Gujarātī merchants, had settled at various parts of the world. Their outgoing nature accelerated the process of adapting themselves to various creeds and cultures. Gujarātī navigators found on the East African coast led the Portuguese pioneers led by Vasco da Gama, the "Admiral" of the Indian Ocean to the Western coast of India towards the end of the fifteenth century (Mathew 1985, 16). The close contact between the Gujarātī society and foreigners settled on the coastal regions of Gujarāt is evidenced by the growth and development of the settlements of the Habshis and the Portuguese.

Together with the above mentioned factors instrumental in shaping the society at Gujarāt, political vicissitudes which were often linked to the situation of power at Delhi, played an important part. The Rājputs who had occupied the coastal regions and who later relocated to the hinterland are an example of this. In their case the stability of their tribal structures was also challenged.

The Rājputs, a tribal community, were generally known as *Kolis* and chiefly interested in warfare (Manjhu 1970, 24; Zamān 1965, 21; Watson 1983, 12). When the Sultāns of Gujarāt began their conquests the Rājputs rose against them. Their revolts were suppressed and a compromise was reached. By this agreement one fourth [*banth*] of the land [*zamīn-i-imkāna*] would be left with the Rājput chieftains to cultivate and defend their kingdoms [*maḥal*]. The remaining portion of their land, known as *talpad*, was annexed to the royal territories. The chieftains were also expected to pay a sum in proportion to their lands as a present [*salāmī*] to the crown. The landed aristocracy [*zamīndārs*] amongst them who were able to render support to the military by way of men and armaments, were required to do so instead of paying the *salāmī*. The Rājput chiefs and leaders therefore supported the Sultans against the advances of the Mughals. The Mughal conquest of the region however meant that this allegiance was dissolved and a new relationship was forged with different implications.

Under the Mughals, Rajput chieftains were awarded *mansabs* and were thus absorbed into the Mughal governing class. Further they were granted *jagirs*, in addition to their own hereditary lands. They were obliged to render military services, and send a tribute [*peshkash*] to the Mughal ruler. In return they were guaranteed the protection of the Mughal emperor. Accompanying this however was an uncertainty of the post that they held. If they fell into disfavour with the ruler he could easily interfere in matters of land ownership or succession to the chieftaincy and sometimes even overthrow the chief. This resulted in added instability and served to disorientate the chieftains.

The urban areas of the Gujarāt coastline had a predominance of merchants, brokers, craftsmen and financiers. The dominant merchants in all the trade matters in the society were the *vanias* (Barbosa 1967, 1:110-111). The *vanias* were of two types. Those which were meat-eaters and the Jains³⁰ who did not eat flesh. Apart from this the merchants were made up of Hindus, Jains, Muslim-Gujarātis, Persians and Turks. The variety of merchants is due to the contact that Gujarāt had with the other continents.

The Jains were considerate to humanity and animals. Their belief system demanded that they do not kill any living being. In Gujarāt they even constructed a hospital or *pinjrapole* for animals and birds. Trade, instead of any other profession, was therefore well suited to their religious belief system. Initially they would serve as distributors of goods that were imported either by themselves or others. With time they became the agents of foreign trading companies. They lent monies to the Europeans and invested in speculative ventures such as insuring goods in transit on both land and sea. While this merchantile class held the strings of power they very seldomly took part in politics. At the same time the ruler could not ignore the opinions and interests of the merchants.

Muslims merchants, whether locals or foreigners, were involved in trade in all the major centres of trade in the region. Besides the Bohras referred to previously in this study, the other Muslim traders were the Mamluks, Persians, Turks, Abyssinians and Arabs.

The merchants in Gujarāt organised themselves on the basis of a trade guild similar to the ones operative in the Middle Ages in Europe. The guild, called a *mahajan*, played a pivotal role in managing the economic interests of the city and was able to rule the city traders and organise the economic life of the merchants. Ravichander (1989, 170), is of the opinion that this organisation wielded a significant influence in the Gujarāti society. Describing the position of power of such a guild, he writes:

Actually the *mahajans* were in general the legislative and executive council of the town. This democratic organisation was manned by a few prominent commercial interests. The *mahajans* were an agency which had rich men who ruled the tradesmen. They exercised and perpetuated their control over the individual and community. Since all their decisions were supposed to be taken in the interests of the public everybody was expected to obey them (Ravichander 1987, 170).

The guild had the authority to fix and enforce the trading holidays, to collect and use the common funds in their coffers and to act as representatives of all traders in any matter which concerned commerce. They would even fix wages, the prices of articles and the rate of production. They saw such measures as a means of stabilising the economy and as a preventative against monopoly and unfair competition. The function of the *mahajan* which made it very powerful and important was the duty it assumed of settling disputes.

On account of the capital that they accumulated many merchants became very influential. Often the rulers needed their help in their endeavours. Malik Gopi, one of the richest merchants of his time assumes the position in history of a "king maker". It was chiefly by his influence that Muẓaffar Shāh II was placed on the throne. The Sulṭān was always indebt to Malik Gopi and used to take his suggestions into account. Khwajā Safar, came to Gujarāt as a trader, became a noble, rose to the high rank of commander-in-chief in Gujarāt and was responsible for organising a stiff resistance against the Portuguese.

In Gujarātī society mercantile interests were able to erode class distinctions to a verifiable extent. The Brahmins where involved in trade which was the occupation of *vaīsyas*, a lower class. On account of the status that accompanied wealth and the changed perceptions brought about by trade, slaves and people of low origin held high posts in the political administration.

While trade and commerce constituted the life blood of the Gujarātī society, the region also boasted several centres of production with their specialist artisans and craftsmen. These craftsmen produced necessary items for local consumption and export. Since Gujarāt was an important centre of textile production the foremost of these artisans were the weavers. Called *darjirs*, the weavers produced the famous *Patolas*. These multi-coloured wraps were a display of precision in the way the colours and pattern were placed. There was also no “wrong side”-both sides could be used. Another famous product was the *Baftas*. Here the beauty lay in the unique way by which the fabric was dyed and bleached by the famed craftsmen. Quoting from Diogo do Cuoto’s 18th century work, *Decadas da Asia*, Ravichander (1989, 172) says that the craftsmen of Pattan and Broach were compared to those in Milan and Florence. Much sought after indigo which was produced at Sarkhej, was taken from there to important towns like Cambay (Kambayath), Broach (Barūch) and Surat. The most popular crafts in Gujarāt were those of the *rangrez* [dyer] and the *chipagar* [calicoprinter]. *Bandhani* [tie-dying] was another very important craft.

Gujarāt was also famous for its silk weaving industry. The weavers of Surat, Cambay (Kambayath) and Aḥmadabād were famous for their skill of weaving gold threads into silk to produce most exquisite fabrics. The satin fabrics produced in Gujarāt fetched a high market price both locally and at other markets. Another craft unique to Gujarāt, called *fulkari* and *shishadar* involved the insertion of tiny pieces of glass into the embroidery of the fabric. The area of Katch was famous for its applique work.

Skills at these various crafts were passed down from generation to generation, with certain families becoming associated with particular skills.

Ship making was a flourishing occupation due to the active sea trade from the Gujarātī coast. Shipbuilders called *suttars* made ships by using the European system of building. Surat, being the busiest port, was the most important centre for these craftsmen.

The urban areas were attractive to the craftsmen and artisans on account of a number of factors. Craftsmen involved in a similar occupation would practice their vocation in a particular area of the town. They favoured the urban areas because of the better water transportation facilities. Here they received cash payment at a better rate than in the villages where they were often paid in kind. This prompted a number of people to leave the villages and settle in the populated coastal regions. The social structure of both the villages and urban areas underwent significant change as a result.

The craftsmen were organised into what was called the *panch*. The *panch* was similar to the craftsguild which existed in medieval Europe. Members were grouped according to their occupation. The main function of these guilds was to provide equal opportunities to its members. The guilds controlled the quality of products and regulated the number of apprentices and labourers employed. It also purchased the raw materials and supplied these to the respective craftsmen. It organised the technique of the crafts and the process of production of these small-scale industries. They also controlled the forms of tools which were to be used by the craftsmen.

The increasing trade made demands on the production of the craftsmen which led to a need for financiers and brokers. Called *schroffs*, these financiers issued what were known as *hundis*. *Hundis* could either be used as letters of credit or as a means of short term capital. Pearson in his *Merchants and Rulers in Gujarat* points out that *schroffs* lent out money on longer terms to the princes, nobles and officials (1976, 21). Although few in number, they wielded significant power in sixteenth century Gujarāt.

The President of the Council of artisans also dealt with financial affairs. Popularly known as the *nagar seth* he was also called the *shahbandar* or *nagar brahman*. The *nagar seth* kept the public accounts [*daftars*]. He was often in a position to lend money to the various princes and traders. The *shahbandar* also had the important task of determining the weights and measures and was influential in judicial matters.

Pearson (1976, 61) has identified several officials, such as the governors, who held official positions in Gujarātī society at the time. Officials in most of the cities were nobles appointed by the rulers. They were selected from those at Sulṭān's court. Once selected they became nobles. A noble could be selected because of his ability to win favour with the Sulṭān. He could also become a noble on account of his complete overlordship of an area under the Sulṭān. The nobility in Gujarāt consisted of Turks, Abyssinians, Persians, Mamluks, Arabs, local Gujarātī Muslims and Hindus. A few of the nobles were Christians.

The *qāḍīs* served as the judicial officers under the head *Qāḍī*. A head *qāḍī* appointed in all cities dealt with the more serious cases. The *qāḍīs* were assisted by *muftīs* with matters of a more religious nature and cases concerning property and inheritance. Criminal cases were attended to by the *subedārs*, *fauzdārs*, *shiqdārs* and *kotwāls*. The *subedārs* were the military officers in charge of the various provinces. *Fauzdārs* served under the *subedārs* and were responsible for the law and order in a part of the province. The *shiqdārs* were initially military officials but later became revenue collectors. *Kotwāls* were responsible for deciding criminal cases. Revenue cases were dealt with by the *diwāns*, *ālāmgīrs* and *āmils*. The *diwāns* were next to the governor in position and collected revenues. *Āmils* were executive officials.

A distinguishing feature of the urban areas of Gujarāt at the time was that they were surrounded by walls. Khwajā Safar, the Governor of Surat, built a fort around the city despite the fact that the Portuguese Viceroys did not like it. The Sulṭān did not intervene in the matter in spite of the fact that the Portuguese Viceroy regarded this as a hostile act. On the instructions of Sulṭān Bahadur, a city wall was built around Broach (Barūch) in 1528. The predominantly Hindu city of Gogha also had a walled administration. Its Hindu ruler paid tributes to the Sulṭāns. The walled city of Bassein had both Hindu and Muslim inhabitants. Ravichander (1989, 175) describes Bassein as follows: "The fort is built in an irregular decagon form, the circuit of wall covers one and a half mile and in each corner is a four-sided bastion." During the Portuguese

occupation the walled cities were governed by *fidalgos* or *cavalleiros*. Chamapaner (Champanir), Aḥmadabād and Daman were the most important walled cities in sixteenth century Gujarat. Sulṭān Maḥmūd Begra was responsible for the construction of the walls surrounding the cities of Champaner and Aḥmadabād. Most cities had walled administrations. "The reason for this could be the influx of people from various nations. Cities that were not yet conquered by the foreigners had forts or walls built around them in order to prevent the onslaught of the foreigners and cities which were already occupied by foreigners were protected by walls to prevent further onslaughts by other foreigners" (Ravichander 1989, 176).

2.18.2. The rural areas

Rural Gujarāt consisted of people involved in agriculture, the collection of revenue and the administration of justice. The rural population was headed by the *patel*. The responsibility of the *patel* was to look after the general welfare of the village and maintain the peace. He was usually a wealthy person in his own right with significant landholding. The central government would consult him in all matters concerning his village. He protected the interests of the farmers and was even responsible for safeguarding the boundaries of the village. All local disputes were referred to him and his decisions were binding. The local villages looked after all his needs and he was given land free of rent. He also served a cultural function in that he took a prominent part in all village ceremonies and would be tasked with initiating proposals. Second only to the *patel* was the position of the religious leader in the village who often served as the teacher and physician as well.

With agriculture as the chief occupation tradesmen such as the *suttar* (carpenter) and *luhar* (blacksmith) were important since they contributed by their manufacture of agricultural implements. They also built carts and houses for the villagers. In return for their services they received an allotment of land for which they were required to pay only one-fourth of the ordinary rent (Thoori 1935, 169). The barber [*hajam*] played several roles and often served as the bone-setter and surgeon. His wife was usually the mid-wife in the village.

The *hajām* also served as the drummer on festive occasions where he also provided the amusement. The village potter (*kumbhar*) was a designer of earthen pots. He sometimes also transported water for the villagers for which he was remunerated. During marriage functions the *kumbhar* and his wife were rewarded well for the additional services they rendered. The sweeper [*dedh*] and the sewage remover [*bhangī*] also contributed to the functioning of the village. Although needed occasionally, the *mochī* [cobbler], tanner [*chamar*], tailor [*darjī*], washermen [*dhobī*], and the watchman [*rakheval*], were all important in serving the needs of the villagers. The professions were hereditary.

Also hereditary was membership to the *jati* [local] *panchayat*. The *panchayat* was in charge of the social, economic and to some extent the religious well being of the villagers. Through the *panchayat* the economic policy of the village was enforced. This body was responsible for stipulating the wages of the people and it also safeguarded the proper distribution of work by eradicating unfair competition. It stipulated the minimum wage and maximum production thus keeping the prices and demand steady. The *panchayats* also fixed the holidays, working hours and were even involved in contracting marriages and settling divorces.

2.19. Conclusion

The interaction between the two very ancient land masses of the Arabian Peninsular and the Indian Subcontinent is the topic for a research all in itself. What is relevant to this study is the contacts that the Subcontinent enjoyed with the Muslim world while its people and their beliefs were yet in its formative stages. Here the concern is to describe and identify the particular Muslim community which is a product of such an interaction and to which Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī al-Gujarātī al-Bohrī belongs. Locating al-Fattānī within the context of this affiliation will serve to set the place of his life endeavours, preoccupations and influences on his time and society.

3. The Bohra Peoples

3. 1 The Semantic aspect

Concerning the linguistic origin of the word Bohra, there exists some material in the writing of the scholars, especially of the historians of the Indo-Pak sub-continent like Abū Ṣafar Nadwī, Muḥammad Siddiqī and Mīr Nūrullāh Shustarī. These definitions essentially complement each other, except in the variant wording of some, and in the language origin of others.

There appears some agreement in terms of the definition: The Bohras are a race classification based upon a certain profession; not a genealogical gradation based upon a certain race, culture or ethnic categorisation.

The word Bohra (also spelled *Bohora* or *Vohra*) is generally believed to be derived from the Gujarātī word *vohorvu* or Hindī *vyavhār*, meaning “to trade.” The Indian Gujarātīs were inclined to business, and this fact had sometimes caused Hindus, Jains and Muslims of other trading communities to identify themselves as Bohras. They also listed themselves on the official Indian National Census forms as Bohras.

Abū Ṣafar Nadwī³¹, a professor in the graduate department of the Gujarāt University, wrote his *‘Iqd al-jawāhīr fī aḥwāl al-Bawāhīr* [The Jewelled Collar in the History of the Bohra] (1936) which more or less concentrated on the history of the Dawūdī Bohras of Gujarāt³². In it, he writes that the term Bohra is used for those Muslim communities of Gujarāt who are engaged in trade and commerce (Nadwī 1936, 25). It seems that the word is derived from the word Sanskrit word *vyavhār*, which means “commercial transaction.” In other words, those involved in *vyavhārī* [commercial transactions] were called Vohras or Bohras.

Although the term *Vohra* is used as a surname in some Hindu communities, it merely shows the origin of the term from the same Sanskrit root-word, and denotes a person or family who is involved in trade or business.

Mir Nūrullāh Shustarī (d.1019) is quoted in the landmark work *Sibḥa al-marjān fi āthār Hindustān*³³ (al-Bilgrāmī 1980, 109) that this community was called Bohra because they earned their livelihood from trade, which is called *vavhār* in Hindī.

Mir Nūrullāh Shustarī's contemporary, Muḥammad Siddiqī has also defined the word Bohra as: "*Huwa mushtaq min al-bahratah wa hiya al-istī'māl fi al-bay' wa al-shirā' fi al-tijārah wa al-kasab.*" He explains that the word Bohra is derived from *bahratah* which is a term used in explanation for those involved in buying and selling (Nadwī 1936, 104).

A similar definition of the word Bohra is to be found in *Mirāt-i-Aḥmadī* [The Mirror of Aḥmad], a well-known book on the province of Gujarat in India.

There is another group of scholars who have suggested that this word is derived from *buh-i-rah*, a Sanskrit word meaning the same as the Arabic *ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* [The Straight Path]. It refers to the people who follow the straight path and indulge in honest dealings in their commercial activities. Another conjecture is that it is derived from the word *bohre* meaning a long line of camels or a caravan or group of people who used to transport their merchandise on camel back. Here again, the indication is as before, that the community was one of traders. Nadwī has also recorded the opinion of some that this word originates from the word *bahraj*, which means far sighted, since these traders under question were men possessed of far sightedness (Nadwī 1936, 104).

In the Arabic lexicon, *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīt*, the word Bohra is defined as *Bohrā qabilah* [a tribe] which is further explained as: "*wa al bohrah bi al-ḡamm bi al-nawāhī al-Madīnah wa bī al-Yamāmah* [and the Bohra who lived in the periphery of Madinah and Yamamah] (al-Firozābādī 1983, 1:379).

Along the same lines, in the *Sawah*, the term Bohrah is explained as: *Bohra qabilatuhū az qafāhah* [Bohra is the name of a tribe from Qafāhah] (Nadwī 1936,104).

Mawlānā Qaḍī Sulaimān Mansūrpurī writes in his book *Raḥmah li al-‘alāmīn* where he discusses of the tribe of *Bahrā* that thirteen *ṣaḥābah* [Companions] from the tribe of Bahrā in Yemen came as a delegation to the Prophet Muḥammad in Madinah. This delegation came and seated their camels in front of the house of Miqdād ibn Aswad who was also a member of the Bahrā tribe in Madinah. Thereafter he narrates their hospitality towards this delegation and a lengthy story of how the Messenger of Allāh honoured and welcomed them (Manṣūrpurī 1965, 1:201).

Approximately sixty to seventy miles from Makkah lies a small town named Bahrā which is still populated to this present day. According to an ancient map of Saudi Arabia, which was in the possession of Mawlānā Muḥammad Mia and which he used as a source of reference, it would appear that Bahrā is a name of a town. Apart from this, the author also makes mention of a locality called “Buwairah” situated between Madinah and Taimā (Mia 1970, 2:141).

This second group of definition suggests a tribal affiliation to certain clans of the Arabian Peninsula. History bears testimony to the fact that there is every possibility that a Bohra tribe came from Ḥijāz. The Bohra family trees of the Narmawalā, Kākiwalā, Kamkoriwalā and Waliullāh families living in Aḥmadabād and some documents in their possession show that they came from Ṭāif and Madinah. This is borne out by the fact that when Mas‘ūdī, a well known Arab topographer visited Barūch (Broach) and Kambhāyath (Cambay) in 303/915, and when he reached Chaimūr, a port close to Barūch, he witnessed that a colony of about 10 000 local Muslims who had just arrived from Baghdad and Basrah, and who were known as *Baysarah*, had settled down in this strategic port town.

Mas'ūdī then explains the meaning of the word *Baysara*, saying that these people were born in India. In the *al-Qāmūs*, *baysarah* is defined as: “*wa al-bawāsiru wa al-bayāsirah jilun bi al-sind yasta'jiruhum al-nawākhidhah li muhārabah al-'aduw wa al-wāhid baysariyyu.*” [*Bawāsirah* is a community in Sindh, whom the Indian navy fleet would hire as mercenaries to fight their enemies on the oceans, and its singular is *Baysar*] (al-Firozābādī 1983, 1:372). According to this definition, *Baysara* would connote a people highly skilled in navigation, and ruthless in the art of sea warfare. It is also largely possible that it could also mean those influential businessmen who used to bring goods from Arabia on a large scale for sale to India, were called *Baysarah*. By excessive usage the word *Baysara* became Bohra. The meaning of the word was then reversed, and it came to be used to refer to those people who originally came from Arabia, and took up permanent residence in India. In particular, their progeny were referred to as *Bayāsirah*.

A similar phenomenon has occurred in the case of some Muslims in Burma and in the Burmese language. The word *kala* which come from the word *kola*, means one who has arrived after swimming; in other words, those who have come from abroad are called *kala*. Today the word *kala* or *kola* is used only for Indians who have settled in Burma; particularly Muslims of Indian origin. It is in the same way, that due to excessive use, the word *Baysara* became somewhat modified or distorted into Bohra according to the different nuances of the language in the different regions of India. The ‘s’ and ‘h’ are often interchanged in the Gujarātī language according to different regions. For example, *paysa* becomes *payha* [money] *sasra* [in-laws] becomes *hahra* and *dosa* [elderly] becomes *doha*. Likewise, *Baysara* might have become *Bayhara*, and then Bohra for easier pronunciation.

There exists another theory that the word Bohra could very well have its origins in the Gujarātī language itself with some Persian mixture. *Besara*, the Gujarātī word, is composed of the word *be* which means “two” and *sar* means “head.” A man who has two heads, in other words, a person of Arab origin, but Indian descent. This is like the words Anglo-Indian or the *Muwallidūn* of Iran. This

theory would then change the nature of the above definitions, in that it would not only suggest a people indulging in trade, it would also indicate the regions and geographical locations from which these traders emanated. This definition would make the task of historians much more easier in identifying the true origin and cradle of these Bohras.

To amalgamate all these theories, these various definitions suggest four things:

1. That the term Bohra refers to one of Arab decent or connected with Arabia;
2. That such a person has taken to trade as his profession;
3. That the term is used for traders who came from Madina, Yamāmah, Ṭaif or belonging to the Qafā'ah tribe of Arabia;
4. That this term is used to identify a Muslim trader generally, and very sparingly used for a Hindu trader.

3.1.1. Historical evidence in support of the popular semantic definition

Historically, the idea of the Bohras coming from Arabia, settling down in India and taking up trade as their profession is very much supported by the eminent Arab historians. Al-Balādhurī, mentions that Sindh was conquered because a ship of Arab traders was looted in India, the revenge of which led to Arab Muslim conquests and invasions deep into the heart of India (al-Balādhurī 1866, 1: 136). Historically it can be shown that Arab traders came to India in the first century after *Hijrah* [Prophetic migration from Makkah to Madinah].

Sulaimān Baṣrī and Abū Zaid Sirānī who visited India in the middle of the third century have recorded in their *Safar nāma* [travel logs and ledgers] that a large number of Arab traders were present in India in Kambhāyath (Cambay, present day Kambath), Barūch (Broach), Chaimūr, Ghandar, Thāna, Sopara and other areas. When al-Mas'ūdī came to India in the beginning of the fourth century, he spoke of presence of what he estimated to be 10 000 Muslims in one area of Gujarāt alone. The historical accounts of Ibn Ḥawqal, Astakhri and Bishārī all support the report of a sizeable Muslim population in Gujarāt (Kafletwī n.d., 99).

Along with the traders, Arab *dā'īs* and *muballighīn* [missionaries] also came to Gujarāt. In Pattan, there exists the grave of Nūr al-Dīn Sodāgar (d.487/1094), an Arab missionary who worked in that area, converted a large populace to Islām and largely impressed them with his piety and benign preaching. Muslims and Hindus alike, who were influenced by his righteousness and piety, address him as *Satguru* [true Guru or spiritual guide], and revere him. The Ismā'īlī Shī'ah claim that he was an Ismā'īlī *Dā'ī* [spiritual mentor], while Ibn Ḥawqal, Astakhri and Bishārī who visited Pattan, suggest that he was a Sunnī saint. Sodāgar's mausoleum is looked after by the Sunnī Muslims. Notwithstanding this small conflict, the Dāwūdī Bohra still consider him as their *Dā'ī* [Spiritual mentor] and also visit his grave in large numbers.

Following the Arab conquests, the Arab traders poured into Gujarāt through the sea route as well as by land. It is possible that Shaikh Nūr al-Dīn came to Gujarāt via Multan and Sindh, alongwith the influx of the other traders and soldiers.

These traders, scholars, historians and preachers came to Gujarāt long before the turn of the seventh century of the *Hijrah*. Muslim Bohras continued their thriving trade between India and Arabia, and their cultural crusade until the Portuguese stopped them by snatching control of the trade routes.

From a number of internal evidences, we can infer that the Muslim Bohra traders came to Gujarāt in the first century of Islām. According to Nadwī, this is an absolute certainty and historically, there exists no doubts in its veracity. Many of these historical facts, and other supporting evidences are available and are recorded in the *Tuḥfah al-mujāhidīn* (Nadwī 1936, 77).

3.2. The Islām of the Bohras

Before proceeding with this section, it may be expedient to first describe the characteristics of the Bohras. According to Nadwī, the Bohras have the features resembling to or exactly the same as those of the Arabs. The facial expressions

of their womenfolk, their colour and gait are all reminders that they have their origin in Ḥijāz, Yemen, Egypt, Iraq and other places.

The question is often posed as to whether the Bohras are converts to Islām from Hinduism or were they originally Muslims? This debate has already been alluded to in the previous section, and indications were found to prove both contentions. Here, the matter is pursued in a bit more depth.

Āzād Bilgrāmī states his view as follows: *wa al-ʿaṣl anna aslāf al-Bawāhir jadidūn Islāmuhum* (Bilgrāmī 1980, 44)- that the Bohras were new Muslims converted from Hinduism.

To assess the veracity of Bilgrāmī's conclusions, it may be appropriate to identify the prominent Bohra families living in India and trace their roots. For the purpose of this short study, the following distinguished families whose names emerge often in the research will be taken:

1. The Kankoriwālā family;
2. The Narmāwālā family; and the
3. The Waliūllāh family.

What follows is a brief examination of the origin of these three prominent families, their occupations in general, their geographical locations and contribution towards society as a whole.

The Kankoriwālā Family:

Abū Ṣafar Nadwī has evidence as he has recorded in his *ʿIqd al-jawāhir* (1936) that Āzād Bilgrāmī's point of view is not correct. There was a great scholar amongst the Sunnī-Bohras of Aḥmadabād called Muḥammad Ṣiddiq Wāʿiẓ (d.1041/1641) who is the author of a *tafsīr* [commentary] of the Qurʾān and another book called *Tanbih al-juhhāl* [Warning to the Ignorant]. Both works are well known. His brother Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ was also a great scholar who wrote the well-known work *Ṣidqullāh* [The Truth of Allāh], the hand written copy of which is deposited in the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library in Aḥmadabād. Shaikh Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ writes in the introduction of his book that one Shaikh

Aḥmad Quraishī came from Madinah, Arabia, to Kambhāyath³⁴ (Cambay) and settled down there.

History records that he had a son named Ya‘qūb, who was still residing there in 1041/1631 when the book was written. In the margin of this book, the entire family genealogy is reproduced which goes back to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, the first caliph of Islām and from him to ‘Adnān, the fourth generation ancestral grandfather who links up to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad

The Narmāwālā Family

At present, the Kankoriwālā family resident in Aḥmadabād are descendants from Shaikh Aḥmad Quraishī. Likewise, the Narmāwālā family of the Sunnī Bohras living in Aḥmadabād and Surat originally came from Ṭāif and their complete genealogy is available detailing their origin from Shaikh Muḥammad Ṣālih’s above-mentioned work. These Bohras initially came for business purposes only, and later settled down in Surat, a district of the province of Gujarāt in India. Some of them later moved to Aḥmadabād where better business opportunities presented themselves, and where greater patronage from the sultāns of Aḥmadabād was to be found.

There have been many great ‘*ulamā*’ in the Bohra Narmawalā family from the time of Mullāh ‘Abd al-Shakūr. At that time, the outstanding ‘*ulamā*’ were appreciated for their knowledge and wisdom, and were accorded the highest possible respect, honour and co-operation from the rulers. According to this custom, Mullah ‘Abd al-Shakūr was given one hundred *vinghars* (1.75 *vingha*³⁵ = 1 acre) of land by his patrons: the rulers Shāh ‘Ālam, and Muḥammad Shāh. Further to this, in the time of the ruler Fārukh Siyar, the Narmāwālā family were granted a courtesy exemption from paying taxes in Aḥmadabād, Surat, Baroda (called Barod at that time), Barūch (called Bahrāich), and Cambay (Kambhāyath). Not forgetting these favours, the Narmāwālā family have still got all these historical documents intact.

Hājī ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Narmāwālā, one of the leading scions of the Narmāwālā family living in India, who was interviewed by Nadwī, said that up to about thirty years ago members of his family still resided in Ṭaif (Nadwī 1936, 65).

The Waliullāh Family

Similarly, the well-known Bohra Waliallāh family of Aḥmadabād originates from Jeddah and Madinah. Their forefathers were great ‘*ulamā*’ of their time. Mawlānā Nūr al-Dīn, Mawlānā ‘Imād al-Dīn and Mawlānā Waliullāh were well known both in Ḥijaz and India for their knowledge, scholarship and piety. Along with their trade, they continued teaching and imparting religious knowledge in their schools and *madāris* [religious schools] which they had established there.

Mawlānā ‘Imād al-Dīn died in 1155 A.H., and his grave and mausoleum is situated near Telia Mill.

About Shaikh ‘Imād al-Dīn, it is said that he possessed a very large personal library, and he used to teach in the *madrasah* which was situated within the mosque. This mosque is in existence till today. Every Wednesday lectures on the *Mathnawī* of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rumī were delivered by Shaikh Waliullāh and Shaikh ‘Imād al-Dīn. In recent years, Mawlawī Kawkab Mia continued this tradition. During the Marāṭha period, Shaikh ‘Imād al-Dīn moved to the area close to the Kalupūr gate and stayed in a house attached to a nearby mosque. ‘Abd al-Qādir Waliullāh, the scion of Mawlānā ‘Imād al-Dīn had recently renovated this mosque and it was renamed as Waliullāh Masjid (Panch Pati, Kalupūr). There also exist a few graves of the Waliullāh family close to the Kalupūr gate.

Mawlawī Kawkab Mia, another great ‘*ālim*’ [religious scholar] of the above Bohra family gives his own genealogy as follows:

1. Kawkab Mia -the son of;
2. Shams al-Dīn (Hājī Mia)-the son of;

3. Muḥammad Mia-the son of;
4. Muḥammad ‘Uthmān-the son of;
5. Muḥammad Qāsim-the son of;
6. Muḥammad Yaḥyā-the son of;
7. Muḥammad Amīn-the son of;
8. Muḥammad ‘Ārif Farūqī-the son of;
9. Muḥammad Yaḥyā.

This last mentioned name, Muḥammad Yaḥyā was a learned scholar who has left behind some of his works. Both Mawlānā Yaḥyā and his son Mawlānā Qāsim are buried in Kālupur in Moti Makerī Masjid. Since all these scholars were busy in teaching throughout their lifetime, they were called *akhund* or *akhundjī*. *Akhund*, a Persian word meaning “great teacher”. In Visnagar (North Gujarāt), there lives a famous family named Akhunji whose relatives are still found in Saudi Arabia.

Mawlānā Kawkab Mia’s grandfather Mawlānā Muḥammad Mia was one of the great ‘*ulamā*’ [scholars] of Ahmadabad well known for his knowledge and piety. The *qāḍī* [Judge] of Ahmadabad always consulted Mawlānā Muḥammad Mia before issuing any *fatwā* [juristic verdict] or effecting any legal order. On Wednesday and Friday afternoons, Mawlānā Muḥammad Mia would give lengthy exhortations based on the *Mu‘āllim al-tanzīl*, a famous commentary of the Qur’ān. This tradition and legacy is continued till today by the scholars of the city. There was a large *madrasah* [school] in the compound of the Qaḍī ‘Alī Masjid which has recently been closed down. All these families are known as Bohras, and they claim to be Fārūqī [descendants of ‘Umar al-Khaṭṭāb, the second caliph of Islām] from Ḥijāz.

The *madrasah* of Shaikh Waliullāh and his library are no more in existence, although some of his books have been donated to the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library with a written note that it is from the Waliāllāh family. Some of these works are rare and very valuable. The last name in the Waliullāh family is that of Nūr al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad who is a contemporary of the famous ruler of

Gujarāt Maḥmūd Begra. *Begra* means “the possessor of two castles.” According to Abū Ṣafar Nadwī, it is likely that he was the first person to arrive from Arabia to the province of Gujarāt (1936, 54). There are some rare remnants of the Waliullāh family still preserved in the Pīr Muḥammad Shāh Library, one of which is the large inscription of the *āyah al-kursī*⁶⁶ [The Throne Verse]. Within the letters of this verse is contained the entire Qurān in very small writing.

Other Families

Another group of Arab Muslim traders came from Kufah near Baghdad to Rander during the Caliphate of Saffah (d.132/749) and settled in Rander. In this caravan, ‘Abd al-Ghanī Muḥtasib and Shaikh Asā’ al-Dīn came from Makkah and settled in Pattan. They and their progenies are known as Bohras till today. Likewise, many such families today flourish in India, who came from Hījāz and other Arab countries and settled in Surat, Barūch, Kambhāyath and are known as Bohras.

It is said that by the end of the fourth century *Hijrah*, the Ismailite Arabs were already controlling Sindh. When Maḥmūd Ghaznawī attacked Sindh, a large number of them migrated from Sindh to Gujarāt (Nadwī 1936, 59).

There is another evidence, which suggests that even Arab traders came from Arabia to India in 565/1169 when Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Ayyūbī conquered Egypt. After this conquest, the Ismā‘īlī-Fāṭimī influence came to an end, and instead, the Shāfi‘ī school of thought gained currency there. It was during this time that a large number of Ismā‘īlīs migrated to Yemen, and then came to Gujarāt, wherein they settled in round about 946/1539. When the Zaidī Shī‘ah gained control of Yemen some time after this migration to India, the Dāwūdīyyah Shī‘ah sect changed their centre of *da‘wah* [propagation and missionary activities] from Yemen to Gujarāt.

To the Bohras all these historical facts point to the same thesis that they are Muslims from early times who came from outside India.

Muḥammad Amin Madanī corroborates the above contention. He says in the footnotes of *Ṣibḥa al-marjān*: “*al-Bohra alladhi yadullu ‘alaihi tawārikh inna aṣl al-bohra Islāmuhum qadīmun*, - which states that the Bohras were already Muslims when they landed on the shores of India. Amīn Madanī further states: *Wa lamma inqaradat dawlatuhum min Miṣr fi qarn al-sādīs, hājara aksarahum wa sakana al-Yaman. Thumma minhu raḥala ilā al Hind wa tawaṭṭanu fiḥi*, [When their rule came to an end in Egypt in the sixth century, most of these people came to Yemen and then migrated from there to India where they settled] (Bilgrāmī 1980, 83).

After eventually settling in Gujarāt, the Bohras engaged in *da‘wah* activities and converted some of the Indian Hindus to Islām. Some of them came from the Rājput, Brahmins, Collie etc. Some of them still call themselves Bohras. Although very rarely, some of the Bohras have their surnames like Khān which points to their Afghānī descent.

Most of the Bohras are however descendants of Arab clans whose presence in Gujarāt dates back to the first century of Islām. Current Bohra family names may be traced to their Arabian origins.³⁷

3.3. A Short History of the Bohras

In the ancient Gujarātī book *Ras mala*, which was written by the Bhats of Gujarāt,³⁸ it is recorded that in the time of Aḥmad Shāh I, Brahmins and Mahājans (also called Vayshira or Banyas) were converted to Islām. It is maintained that the same Brahmins and Banyas, because of their involvement in trade and business, are called Bohras. These new Muslims had started their trade [*vavhār*] with Arabia and were therefore called *vavhārī* (tradesmen). Through excessive use the word *vavhārī*, it was corrupted into Bohra (Nadwī 1936, 65).

This account of *Ras Mala*, although corresponding to a certain degree with our previous accepted definition, does not however seem to be accurate, since it gives the impression that the Bohras did not exist before the time of Aḥmad

Shāh I. Conclusive historical evidence exists to prove that the Bohras did exist in Gujarat before Aḥmad Shāh I. It is documented in *Malfūzāt Mahmūd Irjī* that a great saintly personality, Shaikh Aḥmad Kattū -who presently lies buried in Aḥmadabād- reached Sarkhej near Aḥmadabād during the reign of Muẓaffar Shāh, the father of Aḥmad Shāh. *He had stayed in the house of a Bohra Muslim during his sojourn there* (Nadwī 1936, 65).

Another more ancient source is also to be found in this regard. Even long before the period of Shaikh Aḥmad Kattū, Ibn Battutah (1325-1354), the famous historian and topographer, had visited India and had made his assessment of the situation. He documents his visit to Gandār during the Tughlaq period. Those who came to welcome him included, apart from the king himself, *the son of the leader of the Bohras* (Ibn Battutah 1985, 130). All this shows that the Bohras were present at this time and were living as a highly organized community. They had one leader and were a people known to be highly disciplined, so much so that they followed the instructions of their *sardār* [leader] assiduously in everything.

Another historical evidence that is available comes from a scholar called Qāḍī Nurullāh Shustarī (d.1019/1610). He writes in his book *Majālis al-mu'min*, that a scholar called Mullah 'Alī came to India, and through his *da'wah* and *tablīgh* [invitation to the faith and propagation], converted a large number of people to Islām. The author writes that from this time onwards, the Bohras spread in India, though they were already present at the time. Mullah 'Alī lies buried in Cambay in Gujarāt.

Abū Zafar Nadwī is of the opinion that both these reports seem to be correct, because the Bohras had come to India as early as 700/1301, as is mentioned in *Majālis saifiyyah* and some other authoritative works of the Bohras. The ancient Hindu literature like *Kumal par chaitr* which was written in 544/1150, records that a large number of Bohras lived in Pattan and Viramgam at the time. This supports the evidence of *Majālis sayfiyyah*. It is possible that some preacher might have come called Mullāh 'Alī from Arabia. The *Dā'īs* of Yemen then also

started coming to Gujarat, and the first of them was Mawlā'ī Aḥmad accompanied by ʿAbdullāh and Mawlā'ī Nūruddīn. Thus, there was a concerted effort from all fronts constantly on the Bohras, and this accounts for their being so religiously minded upto today (Nadwī 1936, 74).

However, a Hindu Parsī writer, Behramjī Malbārī, the author of *Gujarat and Gujarati* is of a totally different opinion. He opines that the Bohras were originally Hindus, and that this fact accounts for the prevalence of Hindu social practices and customs within them. The Marwarīs who live in Rajastān also have Bohras amongst them and are called Hindu Bohras today.³⁹ It is just possible that before their conversion to Islām, the local Bohras were Hindus, but when they converted to Islām, a degree of Hindu social customs still remained amongst the ignorant masses who were not too well acquainted with the stance and guidance of Islām in these matters.

Thomas Arnold writes in his *Preaching of Islam* (1979, 278) that the Bohras, formerly Hindus, accepted Islām between 400-700/1100-1300 and he is of the opinion that in Patan, there were a large number of Muslim preachers who were treated well by the local kings.

Historical sources cited above suggest that many Shīʿah preachers had settled in Anhilwārah, Pattan and the Hindu rulers treated them with the same respect they accorded the Sunnī preachers- not knowing the difference between the two. This is the reason why scholars like Thomas Arnold are of the opinion that Islām must have spread there for many generations. These internal evidences point to the fact that Islām must have spread there along time ago.

Mawlānā ʿAbd al-Ḥai Kafletwī quotes the historical account of Malabar, where Shaikh Muḥammad Amīn Madanī writes: "History bears testimony to the fact that the Bohra nation of Gujarāt were Muslims of ancient times" (Kafletwī n.d., 87). Similarly, the travelogue of the last traveller to travel through the port of Surat, Mawlānā Shāh Rafīʿ al-Dīn Murādābādī contains the entry: "This Bohra nation presently resides in Gujarāt, Bharūch, Aḥmadabād, Pattan etc. A large

number of them are occupied in trade, craftsmanship and other professions in the port of “Bāb al-Makkah”, i.e. Surat, and also in Jeddah and *Ḥaramain* [Makkah Mukarramah and Madinah Munawarah]” (Kafletwī n.d., 88).

The author of *Bohra qawm* [The Bohra Nation] writes: “The residents of Rander claim that during the reign of Caliph Saffāh ‘Abbāsī around 132/749 the Mumin tribe of Kufah came to the port of Rander on business. They eventually settled down in Rander. This is the reason that people of Rander consider themselves as descendants of Arabs” (Kafletwī n.d., 54).

The ancient Arab historian, Abū Raihān al-Birūnī writes: “The historians used to refer to Rander as the ‘bride’ of all the cities of India” (Kafletwī n.d., 54).

Trade links with Rander (and the Arabs) stretch back to the era of the Prophet ‘Īsā. Apart from this, other ancient historians like Ibn al-Hawqal, al-Baghdādī, al-Istakhri, al-Bashārī, al-Muqaddisī and other travellers have repeatedly made mention in their writings of the culture and way of life of the thousands of Muslims (living in Gujarāt). All these travellers and historians were from the era prior to the conquest of Gujarāt. The aforementioned points bear testimony to the fact that Arab tradesmen (of the Bohra tribe) most definitely appeared in Gujarāt around the first century of Islām.

4 Conclusion

The history of Islām in Gujarāt is the history of centuries of varied influences on a coastal region. The identity of the Sunnī Bohras has been shaped in reaction to this fact. A shared common religious and class history are the most significant elements in moulding the identity of the Sunnī Bohras. Even as Misra points out when the community changes from a trading community to a agrarian one, they retain their name in recognition of their commercial roots. For an understanding of the biographee, who shares these conceptions with his community this study was essential. Religion in theory and praxis is characterised

by its dynamic nature. The Sunnī community in Gujarāt were no different in this regard.

The Sunnī Islām from the centres of Islām in Arabia soon competed with the Shī'ah Islām of Yemen. While the influence of *Hijaz* [Arabian Peninsular] on the inland as a result of the land route between India and this area resulted in a stronger Sunnī influence on areas in the region; the situation in the coastal regions such as Gujarāt was quite different.

Scholars such as Misra (1963) have located the identity of the Bohras only in terms of their religious affiliations. The above study has shown that a class and cultural identity transcends even religious differences. Religious identity however remains the next most important cause of identification. This immediately begs the question of the relationship between religion and ethnic identity.

Two important related issues are involved here. First, how is religion, as a basis of identity, related to ethnic identity, and second, how does religion support ethnic identity and cohesion? Regarding the first issue, although religion has long been recognized for its close relationship to ethnic identity, the exact nature of the intersection between the two has not always been clear. It appears that religion can interact with ethnicity in one of two ways: either as identical to or precedent to ethnic identity, or as ancillary to ethnic identity (Williams 1988, 12-13).

The next chapter hopes to look at this phenomenon more closely in the context of the Islām of the Bohras. Before doing so however a note must be included on the relationship between cultural identity and personal identity since this is relevant in a work focussed on a single individual.

Personal identity is often implied in ethnic claims as being an instance of broader and enduring ethnic identity and is therefore stable and given. This notion is now being questioned (Du Toit 1997, 85). Often personal identity is

understood as a particular instance of an identity that is group based and enjoys relative stability over time. Martin (1993, 1) highlights this phenomenon: "As a tool for describing political clashes, identity connotes homogeneity and permanence. In the process, the polysemy of identity is erased and the complexity of the relationships needed in order to define the concept of identity is deluded."

Where ethnicity is found in a highly politicised context and holds the potential for conflict, there arises the need to "simultaneously acknowledge the social nature of personal identity and thoroughly problematise the factual/given and authoritative nature thereof" (Du Toit 1997, 85). It is essential to steer clear from the extremes of, on the one hand, taking cultural claims as factual assertions of identity capable of grounding imperatives and on the other hand of taking them as mere oppressive fantasies that have to be eradicated in the name of equality and democracy. This would also imply an approach that neither permits the idea that cultures are fully bounded wholes wholly inaccessible to the outsider nor to the notion that cultures are transparent to the objective, evaluating eye of the western intellectual. The contexts of cultural claims must be taken seriously without absolutising them. This may be achieved by reading them as narratives. "We would also do well to relativise the very concept of a 'cultural claim' or ethnic identity" (Du Toit 1997, 85). Claims made in the name of ethnicity, especially in the modern state, only become conscious of themselves in the context of pluralism and multiculturalism. Gujarāt in the 16th century fulfilled this requirement. Had the Bohra or other ethnic or kinship groups lived in greater isolation then they could have 'ruled themselves' and what is regarded as 'cultural' today would have seemed to them to be 'natural' or factual or even cosmic.

Du Toit (1997, 85) holds that a reading of personal identity as narrative, dialogical, performative and negotiated or interrelated, sheds light on the way in which a group and especially ethnic identities are to be understood. The narrative performative model of identity also provides the basis for an evaluation of the cultural claims made in multi-cultural communities.

CHAPTER FOUR: NOTES

¹ In fact, cultural interests or primordial sentiments themselves can become an important motivation for ethnicisation, and these cultural interests can interact in complex ways with other types of interests, whether economic or political, to constitute the motivations and definitions for ethnic formation and mobilisation.

² The two longest rivers in India. One flows westward whilst the other eastward.

³ The Arab geographers like Ibn Khudābeh, Ṭabarī, Idrīsī, Qazwīnī and Ibn Baṭṭūṭā confirm the story of Adam's Foot at Sarandīb and describe it reverentially as a site of Muslim pilgrimage (Husain 1953, 217)

⁴ At this point Surtī quotes from al-Aʿzamī's *Aʿyān al-ḥujjāj* (1:22). This work by al-Aʿzamī is a unique work. It provides the reader with a historical account of the *ḥajj* pilgrimage in the light of the growth and development of the Tradition sciences. Al-Aʿzamī details how the pilgrimage served as a forum for the exchange and transfer of knowledge through the Muslim world. Latter day critics and scholars have applauded the display of genius in the compilation of this work.

⁵ The following works have discussed in some detail the different readings of this term: Elliot, *The History of India*, London, 1869, 2:417; Raverty, *Notes on Afghanistan*, London, 1888, 568; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, 1893, 2707; al-Balādhurī *Kitāb futūḥ al-buldān*, Leiden, 1866, 396-402; Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History*, Bombay, 1939, 175. Hodivala is however not correct when he states that the term occurs in the Arab chronicles since 43 A.H. since we find it in al-Ṭabarī (1:2707) as early as the year 23/643-44.

⁶ This is the area of south-west Arabia comprising of Yemen and Hadaralmawt.

⁷ A reddish-yellow translucent quartz which is valued as a gemstone.

⁸ For details see *Bombay Gazetteer*, vol.9, part II1, fn. 1; Majumdar R.C.1954. *History and Culture of the Indian People: The Classical Age* 2:451-2 and 627-8; Majumdar M.R. 1960. *Chronology of Gujarat*. 65.

⁹ cf. Elliot and Dawson 1:24-27; M.I. Dar. 1960. *Literary and Cultural Activities in Gujarat*. 15-22; Tirmidhi D.M. 1947 "Arabic Studies in Gujarat" *al-Urwah* 1:1.

¹⁰ cf. Kafletwī pp.50-1.

¹¹ In other words, any benefit or harm appearing on the coastline of Arabia had an effect on the people residing on the coast of Gujarāt.

¹² Hajjāj was the powerful ruler of the Umayyads who was governor of the eastern provinces.

¹³ Debul is an inland port near modern day Karachi.

¹⁴ This is evident from his response to the invasion when he wrote in a characteristic Arab fashion: " Oh Brother of Shaqīf! You have placed the worm in the wood but I swear by Allāh that if our men had been killed I would have taken an equal number from your tribe" (al-Balādhurī n.d. 2:176-7)

¹⁵ ʿUthmān al-Thaqafī accompanied a delegation from Ṭaif that waited upon the Prophet in Ramaḍān 9/December 630. The youngest of the delegation, he embraced Islām secretly at night before his companions had done so. When the entire delegation embraced the faith he made his Islām public. Although young his fervour in the cause of Islām was applauded by Abū Bakr. The Prophet appointed him as *ʿāmil* [governor] over Ṭaif. When during the initial period of the caliphate of Abū Bakr apostasy became a problem amongst some outlining tribes, ʿUthmān al-Thaqafī played an instrumental role in preventing his tribe, the Thaqīf from apostasy. He held the governorship of various provinces with success and died in 51/671 or 55/674 at Basrah where he had settled. At Basrah the celebrated Ḥasan al-Baṣrī learnt *ḥadīth* [Traditions] from ʿUthmān al-Thaqafī. Of the twenty-nine *aḥādīth* [Traditions] narrated by ʿUthmān al-Thaqafī three have been recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* while the rest appear in the *sunan* works. For details on the life and achievements of this Companion cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk* ed. De Goeje (Leiden) 1879, 1:1688 seq.; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣābah fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥābah*, Biblio Indica 1888, 1:1098 seq.; al-Tabrizī, *al-Ikmāl fī asmāʾ al-rijāl* lithographed with *Mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ* ed. Delhi n.d., 606.

¹⁶ In his *Nuḥḥa al-khawāṭir* (1350), ‘Abd al-Hai Nadwī has brought a chapter heading: *al-ṭabaqah al-‘ulā’ fī man qaṣada al-Hind fī qarn al-awwal* [the first group who made for Hind from the first generation of Muslims].

¹⁷ 15/637 is the popular date which is generally quoted in connection with the early Arab invasion of India. This is in fact the date when ‘Uthmān al-Thaqafi assumed his post as governor of Bahrain and ‘Umān.

¹⁸ Lūt ibn Yahyā better known as Abū Mikhnaf was an *akḥbārī* [historian]. He died before 170/786 (al-Dhahabī 1325 A.H. 2:360; Ibn Ḥajar n.d.4:492).

¹⁹ ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdullāh ibn Abū Saif called al-Madāinī was a pupil of Abū Mikhnaf. He died at the age of 93 in 224/838 or 225/839 at the age of 93 years (Ibn Ḥajar 4:492; al-Dhahabī 1325 A.H., 2:236).

²⁰ ‘Allāmah Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī in his *‘Arabo kī jahāzrānī* has also expressed his doubt that the appointment of ‘Uthmān took place in 15/636. (Nadwī 1935, 59).

²¹ cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islām*, 1:673.

²² Born in 8/629, Sinān ibn Salma ibn al-Muhabbiq al-Hudhalī was blessed by the Prophet Muḥammad himself who conferred the name Sinān on him. He was therefore a *bona fide ṣaḥābī* [Companion] because the Prophet had seen him in infancy. Ibn Ḥajar recognises him as a junior Companion and includes his name into the *qism al-thānī* [second section] of his *Iṣābah* (2:322-23). The Traditions that are transmitted by Sinān directly from the Prophet are *marāsīl* narrations. *Aḥādīth* narrated by him may be found in the *ṣaḥīḥain* and in the *sunan* works of Abū Dawūd, Ibn Mājah and al-Nasā’ī.

²³ The Arabic original of the *Chach nāmā* together with the name of its author has been lost. Ishāq is of the opinion that as an authority this book is “highly doubtful”. He therefore asserts that in the light of this “the depreciatory remarks of Dr. RC Majumdar (*vide Journal of Indian History*, Madras vol.x, Part 1 art. “The Arab Invasion of India”, reprinted Madras, 1931, pp.28-29) and for that matter that of the historian Elliot (*vide History of India*, vol.i, pp. 415-16) regarding the powers of the Arabs and their Caliph, do not bear any scrutiny since they are based on the *Cach nāmā*” (Ishāq 1976, 13-4). This work has been translated into English by Mirzā Kalich Beg Fredun Beg and published from Karāchi in 1900.

²⁴ Nadwī has identified Barbad as the present day Bhārbhut near Broach in Gujarāt (Nadwī 1935, 18).

²⁵ Awfī lived in the reign of Sultān Ilutmish and dedicated his work to his minister, Nizām al-Mulk Junaidī. This is a well compiled book carefully classified into chapters and sections according to its contents. A list of contents of the book with a valuable introduction was published on behalf of the Gibb Memorial Fund Series by M.Nizām al-Dīn in 1929.

²⁶ Jesus

²⁷ David

²⁸ Joseph

²⁹ The 84 ports which enjoyed trade links with the ancient port city of Surat are listed as follows:

#	Port	#	Port	#	Port	#	Port
1	Adhodha	22	Crimina	43	Jhangbar	64	Netal
2	Alipor	23	Damman	44	Joānā	65	Pondicherry
3	Alpaaie	24	Denmark	45	Karachi	66	Porbandar
4	Armenia	25	Dewn	46	Long Horn	67	Portugal
5	Australia	26	Dhowarkan	47	Maahi	68	Rangūn
6	Balasakar	27	Egypt	48	MachliPatam	69	Ratnagiri
7	Bandās	28	England	49	Madagascar	70	Rome
8	Bantam	29	France	50	Madinah	71	Sachin
9	Basrah	30	Gandewi	51	Madras	72	Sandali
10	Betevia	31	Georgia	52	Mahim	73	Sandarūn
11	Bhāgwā	32	Germany	53	Makkah	74	Sokotra
12	Bharuch	33	Ghoggha	54	Mandwi	75	Somalia
13	Bhavnagar	34	Ghorni	55	Mangrol	76	Spain
14	Billi Mora	35	Goa	56	Mayotte	77	Sudan
15	Calcutta	36	Greece	57	Mohila	78	Talicherry
16	Calicut	37	Holland	58	Mokkhaa	79	Teenwali
17	Cameroon	38	Hurmuz	59	Mol Pakkās	80	Tenjor
18	Cape	39	Iran	60	Mozambique	81	Valsad

19	China	40	Istanbul	61	Mumbai	82	Vasai
20	Cochin	41	Jaypaan	62	Muscat	83	Venice
21	Colombo	42	Jeddah	63	Navsari	84	Verawar

³⁰ European writers of this period have incorrectly referred to the latter group as Brahmins. The term *vania* was used not only to include the members of the *jati* called *vaisyas* by *varna*, but also Jains and even people belonging to other religions, but following the same profession and trade. The Hindu traders were the *vaisyas* by *varna* and were known as *vanias*.

³¹ In his Introduction to the *A short history of Gujarāt*, Mawlānā Ayūb Surti writes the following about Abū Zafar Nadwī:

"It would be rather unethical not to at least briefly mention in this booklet our benefactor in whose images (of writings) we were lucky enough to view our splendid past and he is Hadhrat Maulana Sayyid Abu Zafar Nadwi *Rahmatullahi alayh*. He is the nephew of Hadhrat Maulana Sayyid Sulayman Nadwi and a student of Allamah Shibli Numani *Rahmatullahi alayhima*. Valuing the capabilities of Maulana Abu Zafar Saheb, the then minister of education in India, Hadhrat Maulana Abul Kalaam Azad handed him the responsibility of compiling the cultural history of Gujarat and also of rewriting the actual history of this province. Maulana continued studying and researching the history of Gujarat from different angles until the very end of his life in a place called Widhya Sabha in Ahmadabad. His entire life was spent behind the history of India and the history of Gujarat. Even in his non-academic and social conversations he used to narrate some story or the other of the history of Gujarat. Maulana wrote many books on the history of Gujarat and he also published many translations and booklets on this subject. Apart from this, he contributed many priceless and philosophical articles on various topics to famous magazines and books such as Nadeem, Burhaan and Ma'arif etc. However, he was an expert on the history of Gujarat. In fact in all probability, besides Qadhi Mubarakpuri, there would be no other writer on the history of Gujarat as ingenious and discerning as he was. He (Maulana Abu Zafar Saheb) was born in 1890 and passed away in 1985. For over fifty years his pen of history continued its travel. His books were compiled with intensive research

and in-depth study. On the termination of each compilation he felt that his work is complete and the responsibility of printing and publishing now lies with the others. This is why many of his draft manuscripts haven't come out into print as yet. There is a possibility that his draft manuscripts also contain, as we would expect, of his historical tastes, various topics on the history of Gujarat as well. May Allah Taa'la forgive Maulana and grant him a tremendous reward. Aameen"(Surti 1998, 25-6). N.B. This short biography has been quoted without any alterations.

³² Notwithstanding what would appear to be a very favourable account and assessment of the Dāwūdī Bohras, Abū Ṣafar Nadwī still earns the praises of Surti. This is especially surprising when it is noted later in this chapter that for Surti the Bohra is necessarily a Sunnī Bohra to the exclusion of all others.

³³ Faḍl al-Raḥmān Nadwī of the Institute of Islāmīc Studies at Aligarh has edited the three available manuscripts of the said classical work of Bilgrāmī (d.1199/1785).

³⁴ Cambay lies 2 km from Aḥmadabād on the Gujarāt coast.

³⁵ In Hindi it is called *bigah*, while in Gujarātī it is called *vingha*.

³⁶ This verse of the Qur'ān is normally believed to contain maximum protection from any evil, riot or insecurity in general

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FURTHEST TRIBE	NEAREST TRIBE	ARABIC SURNAME	CURRENT SURNAME
Adnāniyyah	Banī Daram	Bassah	Bassa
Adnāniyyah	Hawāzin	Ādiyah	Adia
Adnāniyyah	ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib	Sālih	Saleh
Adnāniyyah	Zaghbah	Mādhi	Maji
Adnāniyyah	Qais ibn Amalān	Mansūr	Mansūr
Adnāniyyah	Quraish	Ghanī	Gani
Adnāniyyah	Quraish	Dhabbah	Dabba
Adnāniyyah	Sulaim	Bahtah	Batha
Qahtāniyyah	Banī Sabā	Kahlān	Kahlan
Qahtāniyyah	Mazjaʿ	Murād	Morad

Qahtāniyyah	Kuhail	Mughrah	Mogra
Qahtāniyyah	Tay	Lubnā	Lubna
Qahtāniyyah	Shanū‘āh	Badā’	Bada
Qahtāniyyah	al-Hajadū	Batan	Batan
Qahtāniyyah	Qudha‘ah	Ātiyah	Atia
Qahtāniyyah	al-Sakūn	A‘jam	Ajam
Qahtāniyyah	al-Nakhā’	Adā	Adā
Qahtāniyyah	Lakham	Sadar	Sadar/Sader
Tāniyyah	Āl al-Aliyyāt	Aswād	Asvat
Tāniyyah	al-Sadān	Ābid	Abid
Tāniyyah	al-Shanādikhah	Misrī	Misri
Tāniyyah	al-Fadāghah	Gharīb	Gareeb
Kahlān	Tai	Shamjī	Simjī
Anazah	al-Zabn’	Surmah	Surmah
Bisūriyyah	al-Furāt	Banā	Bana
Banū Ḥassān	Banū Khālīd	Shakūr	Shakūr
Banū Juhaīm	Abū Mūsā’	Sakran	Sakrani
Bisūriyyah	Banū Khālīd	Shabāt	Sabat
.....	Banū Tamīm	Tili	Tili
Bin Khuzaymah	Adhlu Waldaish	Qārah	Qara/Kara
Salbah	al-Huzaim	Bayyāt	Bhayat
Anazah	al-Dawām	Ma’nī	Mani
al-Fawāirah	al-Muaidīn	Mashlā	Misla
al-Khazail	al-Shilāl	Bābul	Bulbul
Bisūriyyah	al-Jabūr/ Khabūr	Harīf	Harif
In Iraq	al-Qaṭṭān	Dīwān	Divan/ Diwan
In Iraq	al-Mukhādhrah	Durwesh	Dervesh
Jabūr	al-Ajal	‘Ulūw	Allo
.....	al-Ḥasan	Muqādim	Mukadem
Jarbā	al-Sadīd	Saydād	Sidāt/Sidat

Banī Sālim	Wuld al-Alā	Jamlā	Jumla
Fayāḍah	al-Sarāhinah	Mutārah	Motara
.....	Banū Shāhar	Lahsah	Lahsa
Banū ʿUmar	al-Khadhrān	Amalah	Amla
Harab	Banū Sālim	Maimūn	Maimūn
In Iraq	al-Salīb	Mālij	Malji
Sādāt	al-Sharīfah	Aidrus	Edros
Qais	al-Karwaih	Alān	Allan
Dulaim	Abū Khalīfah	Dawlah	Dola
Zafīr	al-Samdah	Māʿlīm	Mālim/Malam
.....	Ajlūn	Maumniyyah	Mamaniyat
.....	al-Aqīdāt	Jamāl	Jamal
Bisūriyyah	Amirah	Jabbār	Jabbar
In Iraq	Jasāt	Jasat

The above table is supplied by the courtesy of Dār al-ʿUlūm ʿArabīyyah Islāmīyah, Holcombe, Bury, U.K.

³⁸ The Bhats preserved the history of their people by documenting it in the form of songs.

³⁹ He is of this opinion simply because the Dawūdī and some other Bohras still have some Hindu customs which persists amongst them.

CHAPTER FIVE

The religious identity of the Bohras: Sunnī Islām of Shaikh al-Fattanī and other contesting belief patterns in his community

1. Introduction

A historical account of the spread of Islām in India and specifically in Gujarāt, the home of the Sunnī Bohras has been undertaken in the previous chapter. It has been shown that in the recorded history of the Bohras themselves, the contacts between the Indian subcontinent and Arabia date back to ancient times. While these were essentially commercial exchanges, they resulted in an accompanying exchange of beliefs and exchanges between different faith communities. The particular brands of Islām which were imported to the Gujarāt coast during the formative period of Islām will be discussed here. Yemen served as a centre from which Muslim preachers of a particular persuasion came to Gujarāt as missionaries via the sea-routes. There was also the movement of other saints and scholars from the hinterland. They often represented competing interpretations of Islām.

By the 16th century, the various sects and groups within Islām were already clearly defined. This was due to the reform efforts carried out by scholars. Pattan, the home-town of al-Fattanī, was the centre of the reform movement headed by Mullā Ja'far. His reform activity resulted in the Sunnī Bohras adopting a religious identity that was distinct from that of the Dāwūdī and other types of Bohras. This process also meant that the foundations of Sunnī Islām and the essential constituents of the beliefs of the *ahl al-sunnah* [the people of the Prophetic Tradition] were re-articulated in a polemical context. The Qur'ān and the *sunnah* [Prophetic Tradition] become the textual sources on which the beliefs and the justification for practice rests. This is supported by a prescribed hermeneutic which

specifies that these sources are to be interpreted in conformity with the established opinions of the Prophet Muḥammad's Companions, Successors and Followers. In Sunnī Islām the textuality of the Qur'ān is never questioned. The Companions all share a lofty status as authorities for knowledge. In both these issues the Shiite Muslims differ.

The *sanad* [chain of narrators] transmitting a Prophetic Tradition, the saying of a Companion or the interpretation of meaning is given pivotal importance. A strong *sanad* is required to entrench a practice or accept a particular interpretation. The corpus of beliefs and practices established as a result of this process is called the *sharī'ah* [the path].

While the *sharī'ah* provides the legalistic framework within which the believer acts, it is essentially juristic, prescriptive and literal in its emphasis. Since the inception of Islām it has always been supported by an esoteric and metaphorical narrative of the faith called *taṣawwuf* [mysticism]. Still supported by the Qur'ān and the *sunnah*, the Sufi relies on an additional source of knowledge called *kashf* [illumination]. Through a process of *tadhkiyah* [cleansing] by association with the pious and regarding some other saintly person as a *shaikh* [preceptor] and guide the *sālik* [one treading the path to God] is able to enjoy closeness to Allāh.

In a milieu of spiritualism and spirituality Indian Islām expressed itself in terms not dissimilar from those of other faith communities. Early in Islām there developed however two dominant trends of thought. At the two extremes there were those who favoured the more rigid and literal interpretations of the sources and those who preferred the mystical. In 16th century Gujarāt, al-Fattanī and the other students of his *shaikh* al-Muttaqī, were able to strike a balance between these two opposing tendencies. This dissertation has attempted to show how this was achieved and emphasises the use of the Prophetic Tradition as a moderating influence and a yardstick which determined belief and practice for al-Fattanī.

In later years the *tajdīd* [reform] movements in India were inspired not only by a literalist puritanical interpretation of the sources but were also ever conscious of the need for *taṣawwuf*. Founders of the Dār al-ʿulūm at Deoband and the Maẓāhir al-ʿulūm in Saharanpūr shared these values and were both scholars and *ṣūfīs*. Modern scholarship on the *ʿulamāʾ* [scholars] and *pīrs* [saints] have at times misread the nature of orthodoxy in India. It may therefore be appropriate to consider the role of the *ʿulamāʾ* in 16th century Gujarāt and India in general during any discussion of the nature of religious belief and practice at the time. While it is appropriate to consider the role of the *ʿulamāʾ* in a certain articulation of the faith the main concern in this chapter will be to describe the nature of the religious belief of the Bohra community as a continuation of preliminary observations regarding their identity.

Gujarātī Islām grew in a multi-cultural and multi-religious environment. Gujarāt of the 16th century was home to the Hindus, Jains, Christians and Muslims. Within each of these faith communities there were a multitude of nationalities, tribes and castes. Each of these communities were minorities. Islām in India even at the height of Mughal rule was a minority religion. As a minority the Sunnī Bohras of Shaikh al-Fattani were able to co-exists and the brand of Islām which has evolved out of their history permits them to do so even today.

This did not mean that they were in no way critical of the state. The political stance of the community at any particular period is very difficult to determine. Al-Fattani petitions the ruler of the day on a religious issue. The community also take political steps to alleviate a business impediment. Politics is therefore important as long as it concerns these two functions of the community. Otherwise this trading community can be perceived to be apolitical and apathetical too.

1.1 Theoretical considerations in the description of the religion of the Bohras

The approach here is largely descriptive and attempts to record the beliefs of the communities described. The comparisons made in this chapter of the conceptions

or practices of the Bohras are distinctions and differences made by the community themselves. The research presented here is therefore limited in its scope since it is based on the religious sources of the communities and is not a record of objective observations and studies. The findings presented here is therefore influenced by the nature of available resources on this subject. It was therefore necessary to point out clearly some of these sources when dealing with the Dawūdī Bohras. Needless to state that the literary sources pertaining directly to this research are few. Despite this it was necessary to aim at objectivity even in this descriptive account of religious belief.

To those who have pioneered the phenomenological approach to the study of religion, objectivity requires firstly that the scholar suspend judgement as to the truth of the phenomenon under observation. The second requirement is that the scholar should attempt to understand and report the believer's own account of the religious experience. This study has attempted to satisfy both these requirements by retelling the nature of faith as is described in the source books relied upon by the various religious groupings of the Bohras. Concerned with the interpretation of historical data, Kristensen (1954, 27) states:

Let us never forget that there exists no other religious reality than the faith of the believer. If we really want to understand religion, we must refer exclusively to the believer's testimony. What we believe, from our point of view, about the nature or value of other religions, is a reliable testimony to our own faith, or to our own understanding of religious faith; but if our opinion about another religion differs from the opinion and evaluation of the believers, then we are no longer talking about their religion. We have turned aside from historical reality, and are concerned only with ourselves.

In his study of the Bengali Muslims of Bradford, Barton (1986) has identified a number of interesting problems in relation to such a study. For example, a criticism to the approach adopted here would certainly be that the data for the study of religions belief should not be confined to the sacred texts and historical formularies, but should necessarily also include the actual beliefs and practices of contemporary believers. Scholars such as S H Nasr (1966, 15) argue against such criticism and hold that there is very little or no value in the exposition of what Islām means to its adherents. Nasr defines religion as "that which binds man to the truth". He further draws a distinction between what is absolutely real and what is relatively real. The phenomenological study of religion, conducted in the realm of the empirical, belongs to the latter category and therefore can have little to do with the "Absolute" or the "Real", which is the beginning and end of religion. In respect of Islām this is to be found in the Qur'ān. While Kristensen holds that "there exists no other religious reality than the faith of the believer", according to Nasr a Muslim may consider faith as a reality only in a narrow, relative sense. The aim of introducing this debate, which is not peculiar to the study of Islām, is not to resolve the issue but rather to emphasise that this is one of the theoretical issues to be considered in relation to the observations made in this chapter.

Of equal importance is the debate that the functionalist Clifford Geertz introduces in his study of religious development in Morocco and Indonesia (1971). Geertz states (1971, 1):

The problem is not one of constructing definitions of religion. We had had quite enough of those; their very number is a symptom of our malaise. It is a matter of discovering just what sorts of beliefs and practices support what sorts of faith under what sorts of conditions. Our problem, and it grows worse by the day, is not to define religion but to find it.

The study undertaken in this chapter as it attempts to describe the religious beliefs of the Bohras is aptly likened by Geertz to that of a minaturist " painting on lilliputian canvases with what we take to be delicate strokes. We hope to find in the little what eludes us in the large, to stumble upon general truths while sorting through special cases" (Geertz 1971, 4). The aim of the systematic study of religion in his opinion is not just to describe ideas, acts and institutions, but rather to determine how and in what way particular ideas, acts and institutions sustain, fail to sustain or inhibit religious faith. Faith for Geertz is sustained in this world by symbolic forms and social arrangements which need to be understood in the first instance. The information gathered and presented in this chapter about the religious belief system of the Bohras is to be viewed in light of these very pertinent remarks.

2. The Bohra communities in Gujarāt

The foundation of the Bohra communities in Gujarāt is a unique occurrence in Indian history. Nowhere else in India did these communities come into being in any sizable dimensions; nowhere else was the penetration of Islām as peaceful or as impeccable and imperceptible as the rise of these communities. Also, none other have developed a business outlook, which is distinct in these Muslim communities. Their only competitor in this respect is the Gujarātī community of the Memons.

There are six principal Bohra communities in Gujarāt.¹

1. The Sunnī Bohras, who are like any other followers of the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*²;
2. The Dāwūdī-Bohras, who are followers of Dāwūd ibn ʿAjab Shāh (d.1589) and who have links with the Yeminite Ismāʿīlis;
3. The Sulaimānī-Bohras, who are the followers of Sulaimān ibn Ḥasan;
4. The ʿAlwī-Bohras;
5. The Atbā-i-Malik Wakīl group of Bohras; and
6. The Nizārī and Khojah Bohras.

2.1. The Sunnī Bohra community

Looking at the history of the Bohras, it is interesting to note that the Sunnī Vohras/Bohras of Gujarāt had close links with the Dāwūdī or Shī'ah Bohras.

The name Bohra (*Vohra*) can be said to stand, not for any single community, but for several whose broad similarity is that they are mainly trading communities. Undoubtedly, a number of other Muslim communities also exists, but their special character, for instance, of being recruited from a particular Hindu caste or community, has given them an individuality. Such, for instance, are the Girasias, Maleks and other Rajput and other semi-Rajput communities. The word Bohra, however, embraces a more general category of primarily merchant communities, which were as has been discussed above, descendants of the early adherents to Islām. During the reigns of the sultans of Gujarāt these communities became even more noticed in the broader Muslim community of the region at the time.

Of the Bohras, the one distinct community is the Shī'ah Ismā'īlī community of the Dāwūdī Bohras and its offshoots which have also formed into distinct communities.

Another distinct and manifest grouping is the Sunnī Bohra group of communities, which is again not one single community, but is formed of a number of distinct regional units, which are separate from each other. The tendency of the people to marry in small local units and again to keep marriage connections, localised and intimate has further led to the splintering of this broad mass into different units. Broadly, therefore it is possible to distinguish several regional sections or independent communities:

1. Pattanī Bohras;
2. Kadiwal Bohras;
3. Charotar Bohras;
4. Surti Sunnī Bohras.

In his study of the Bengali Muslims of Bradford, Barton (1986) has identified a number of interesting problems in relation to such a study. For example, a criticism to the approach adopted here would certainly be that the data for the study of religious belief should not be confined to the sacred texts and historical formularies, but should necessarily also include the actual beliefs and practices of contemporary believers. Scholars such as S H Nasr (1966, 15) argue against such criticism and hold that there is very little or no value in the exposition of what Islām means to its adherents. Nasr defines religion as "that which binds man to the truth". He further draws a distinction between what is absolutely real and what is relatively real. The phenomenological study of religion, conducted in the realm of the empirical, belongs to the latter category and therefore can have little to do with the "Absolute" or the "Real", which is the beginning and end of religion. In respect of Islām this is to be found in the Qurʾān. While Kristensen holds that "there exists no other religious reality than the faith of the believer", according to Nasr a Muslim may consider faith as a reality only in a narrow, relative sense. The aim of introducing this debate, which is not peculiar to the study of Islām, is not to resolve the issue but rather to emphasise that this is one of the theoretical issues to be considered in relation to the observations made in this chapter.

Of equal importance is the debate that the functionalist Clifford Geertz introduces in his study of religious development in Morocco and Indonesia (1971). Geertz states (1971, 1):

The problem is not one of constructing definitions of religion. We had had quite enough of those; their very number is a symptom of our malaise. It is a matter of discovering just what sorts of beliefs and practices support what sorts of faith under what sorts of conditions. Our problem, and it grows worse by the day, is not to define religion but to find it.

The study undertaken in this chapter as it attempts to describe the religious beliefs of the Bohras is aptly likened by Geertz to that of a minaturist " painting on lilliputian canvases with what we take to be delicate strokes. We hope to find in the little what eludes us in the large, to stumble upon general truths while sorting through special cases" (Geertz 1971, 4). The aim of the systematic study of religion in his opinion is not just to describe ideas, acts and institutions, but rather to determine how and in what way particular ideas acts and institutions sustain, fail to sustain or inhibit religious faith. Faith for Geertz is sustained in this world by symbolic forms and social arrangements which need to be understood in the first instance. The information gathered and presented in this chapter about the religious belief system of the Bohras is to be viewed in light of these very pertinent remarks.

2. The Bohra communities in Gujarāt

The foundation of the Bohra communities in Gujarāt is a unique occurrence in Indian history. Nowhere else in India did these communities come into being in any sizable dimensions; nowhere else was the penetration of Islām as peaceful or as impeccable and imperceptible as the rise of these communities. Also, none other have developed a business outlook, which is distinct in these Muslim communities. Their only competitor in this respect is the Gujarātī community of the Memons.

There are six principal Bohra communities in Gujarāt.¹

1. The Sunnī Bohras, who are like any other followers of the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*²;
2. The Dāwūdī-Bohras, who are followers of Dāwūd ibn ʿAjab Shāh (d.1589) and who have links with the Yeminite Ismāʿīlis;
3. The Sulaimānī-Bohras, who are the followers of Sulaimān ibn Ḥasan;
4. The ʿAlwī-Bohras;
5. The Atbā-i-Malik Wakīl group of Bohras; and

before marriage is a story of the past. Instead, in some cases, a religious sermon is arranged a day or two prior to the marriage. Women have given up beating their breasts and wailing in chorus on the occasion of death. The practice of celebrating pregnancy has almost disappeared. The influence of Pīrzadas has diminished to a large extent, and instead, the preaching of the Molvi's [religious guides] and teachers imparting religious lessons in religious institutes and actively engaged in social, religious and welfare work, have created a healthy effect on the customs and manners of this village community. About 80% of the Bohra women now do not use the traditional Sārī, bodice, and petty coat; the 20% using the same are of old stock. Instead, they put on Muslim dress of *Kurtā* or shirt, *ʿljār* or trouser, *sarval/ornni* or scarf. Massive and heavy ornaments have been replaced by simple and light ones. In giving names to their children, Muslim names like Yaʿqūb, Khurshid, Aḥmad etc. are selected for boys, instead of names like Akuji, Bajibhai or Kalidas. Similarly, female names like Raji or Mulkah are yielding place to names like Mohammadi Begum, Zohra, Fatimah, Zainub, Aminah, Jamilah etc. Preparations of sumptuous dishes like 'Pakvan', 'Kansar', and rice and pulse and clarified butter are now rarely served (Misra 1985, 124).

Several other indications of the influence of Islāmisation and also the rationalising process to keep pace with the changing economy may be noted. Costly community dinners are becoming increasingly obsolete and ostentatious spending on ceremonious occasions like marriages, and circumcision is frowned upon. The

accent on simplicity is marked; and these value changes are percolating and stewing into the villages.

Simultaneously, the *Jamā'at* awareness and the in-group consciousness is also becoming more pronounced, especially in the middle sections of the cultivating and trading community. This is reflected in the control of marriages by *Jamā'at* organizations, which require prior notice and permission even when permitting extra-communal alliances.

Another notable feature is the shift towards Urdu from Gujarātī, especially amongst the scholars and in learning institutions. Half a century back, virtually the whole of the community spoke Gujarātī at home; in recent years, Urdu has found a place as a spoken language even in homes. It has not however displaced Gujarātī, but certainly it has gained greatly and is spoken by more people now and with a greater sense of pride and purity.

The majority of Sunnī Bohras of all regions are today cultivators, but an increasing proportion is once more taking to trade for its livelihood. A number of families have migrated to South and East Africa, sharing a characteristic of the parallel Hindu caste of the Patidars. These families, called *Safāris* in South Gujarāt, have supported a number of charitable and educational institutions in their native places.

The Sunnī Bohras presently constitute the majority of the Bohras today present in India and in other places of the world in which a significant Muslim population has settled.

The belief pattern of the Sunnī Bohras still bear the impact of the influence of Shaikh Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Fattanī who was a Sunnī Bohra scholar and preacher. His efforts at shifting the emphasis of his people's religious ideologies from the influence of Dāwūdī Bohra Shī'ism to the Sunnī position may be seen till today

where the Sunni Bohras of Gujarāt and beyond follow the mainstream Islām based upon the unadulterated teachings of the Qurān and Sunnah and other primary sources of Islāmic law. The community is today free of doctrines and practices such as *taqīyyah* [dissimulation in speech and actions], *Imāmah* [peculiar concept of Caliphate thought to be an extension of Prophethood], *ṣab al-ṣaḥābah* [vilification and undermining of the Prophetic Companions], *mutʿah* [temporary marriage], *tāziyah* [mourning and lamenting the martyrdom of Ḥusain ibn ʿAlī] and other characteristics of the Shīʿah communities.

2.2. The Dāwūdī Bohras

The Muslim community of the Dāwūdī Bohras traces its ancestry to early conversions to Ismāʿīlī Shīʿism during the reign of the Fāṭimid caliph -Imām al-Muntansir (r. 427-487/1036-1094). When schisms occurred in the Ismāʿīlī *daʿwah* [mission] in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Egypt, the Ismāʿīlis in India followed the Fāṭimid Ṭayyibī *daʿwah* of Yemen. The Eastern Ismāʿīlis or the Nizārī division in the Ismāʿīlī faith (which bifurcated into two branches) is represented in Gujarāt by the Khojas. The Western Ismāʿīlis or Mastaʿālis to which the Bohra community belong to are the second grouping that came about as a result of the split within the main faith. This community split a number of times to form the Jaʿfarī Bohras, Dāwūdī Bohras, Sulaimānī Bohras, ʿAlīyah Bohras and other lesser-known groups.

2.2.1 The principal sources for the study of the Dāwūdī Bohras

Principle texts that are relevant to the study of the Dāwūdī Bohras have been identified by Titus (1979, 99). The *Ṣaḥīfah al-ṣalāh* a work both in Arabic and Gujarātī is regarded as an important work in Dāwūdī Bohra circles. Two other works which enjoy similar status are the *Dāʾim al-Islām* and the *al-Ḥaqāiq* which both set forth the rites and doctrines of shīʿah Islām and give an account of the Bohra *dāʾīs* [missionaries] and their sayings.

It would be difficult to detail the beliefs of the Ismā'īlī creed here. It is however necessary to allude to the basic features of its socio-religious organizations together with the ideational framework which they subsume. This is important in order to show the differences which al-Fattānī was so sensitive to that he decided to reform his community and actively attempted to rid them of any beliefs which resembled those of the Ismā'īlī. An attempt is therefore made to very briefly discuss the most fundamental of these beliefs. Particularly crucial in this assessment are the position of the *dā'ī' al-muṭlaq* and the doctrine of *naṣṣ* by which succession is determined.

2.2.2. The *bāṭinī* theosophy and the position of the *dā'ī' al-muṭlaq*

One of the distinctive features of the Ismā'īlī doctrines, is the highly developed theosophical framework which underlines its administrative system. This framework is patterned in a highly symbolic and mystic system of notations, grades and cycles. This is what is called the *bāṭinī* or the esoteric facet of the Ismā'īlī faith as distinct from the *ẓāhirī* or the exoteric one. It is the *bāṭinī* [esoteric] which is treated as secret, to be revealed only to those who qualify for it, that is believed to unravel the true meaning of external ritualism and observance. The sophistication with which this inner and secret knowledge has been developed in Ismā'īlism has made it often referred to as the *Bāṭinī* faith.

This theosophy is reflected in the religious hierarchy implicit in the Ismā'īlī framework, known as the *ḥudūd al-dīn* [outer limit of the faith], which again is part of the larger cosmogony. The highest position in this framework is accorded to the *Nāṭiq* or the Prophet: he propounds the exoteric nature of the faith. He appoints an *Asas*, and he then unravels the esoteric significance. The *Asas* is also the *Waṣī* or the executor and the successor of the *nāṭiq* [the 'speaker']. It was in this relation that 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib stood by the side of the Prophet Muḥammad.

After the death of the *Asas*, the *Imām* takes his place. During his lifetime, he appoints the *Hujjat* who succeeds him as *Imām*. This line lasts till the next *Nāṭiq*, when the cycle starts over once again.

The *Hujjats* are of two kinds:

1. *Hujjat al-aʿzam* who is the son and the heir apparent of the *Imām*; and
2. Twelve *Nihāris* and twelve *Laili Hujjats*; the *Niharis* are placed in charge of the continents of the earth, while the *Lailis* are always in attendance to the *Imām*. They are responsible for the *bāṭinī* aspect of the mission and remain concealed.

Next in rank comes the *Dāʿī* [Summoner], or the one who calls and summons people to the mission. These are of four kinds:

1. *Dāʿī al-balāgh* [Summoner of the Preaching]
2. *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq* [Absolute Summoner]
3. *Dāʿī al-maḥdūd* [Licentiate Summoner]
4. *Dāʿī al-mukāsir* [Executor Summoner].

Sayyidinā Ṭāhir Saif al-Dīn has defined the word *Dāʿī* as “One who invited people to the right path of God by modesty, preaching the philosophy and the virtues of Islām” (Zahid 1954, 210).

In the age of *satr* [concealment], when the *Imām* with the 24 *Hujjats* and the *Dāʿī al-balāgh* went into concealment, the *Dāʿī al-muṭlaq's* [Absolute Summoner]

position has become the highest in the visible world. It is now, moreover, a purely socio-religious status. This change began with the fall of the Faṭimid Dynasty where gradually, political power had been divested from the position of the *Dā'ī al-muṭlaq* leaving a persecuted and harried community. The position of the *Dā'ī al-muṭlaq* as the supreme functionary of this order has to be seen in the perspective of Ismā'īlī theology as a whole and the Musta'li belief system in particular. At the age of puberty, every Dāwūdī Bohra pronounces the traditional oath of allegiance which requires the initiate to adhere to the Sharī'ah and accept the leadership of the *Imām* and the *Dā'ī*. This oath is renewed each year on the 18 of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah* (the day known as *Id ghadīr al-khum*).

The Bohras follow the Fāṭimid School of jurisprudence which recognises seven pillars of Islām, as against the customary five which the Sunnī's believe in. These are as follows:

1. *Walāyah* [Love and devotion] for Allāh, the Prophets, the *Imām* and the *Dā'ī*
2. *Ṭahārah* [Purity & cleanliness]
3. *Ṣalāh* [Prayers]
4. *Ṣakāh* [Religious dues or poor-alms]
5. *Ṣawm* [fasting]
6. *Ḥajj* [Pilgrimage to Makkah]
7. *Jihād* [holy war].

The office held by Dr. Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn originated in Yemen in 532/1138, soon after the heir to the Fatimid Caliphate, the twenty first *Imām* al-Ṭayyib, chose seclusion. The Ismā'īlī community believes that since then, the *Imāmate* has continued in seclusion in the progeny of al-Ṭayyib, and that prior preparations had been made by his predecessors to ensure that the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī

mission would continue on behalf of the Imām in seclusion through the *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq* [Absolute Summoner]. The *Dā'ī* thus represents the secluded Imām and operates with the Imām's authority. He carries out virtually all the Imām's religious and juridical functions and sustains the social structure of the community of believers.

As the official head of the community, the *Dā'ī al-muṭlaq* claims the unquestioned obedience of his followers. The much discussed covenant which is administered to every adult Bohra on the occasion of *īd al-ghadīr* is a pledge in which he affirms his loyalty to the Imām and his vicegerents and where he swears to refrain from any act would prejudice his interests. An absolute embargo, social and religious, coupled with exemplary penalties is placed on him who violates this oath. It has also been claimed that by virtue of his position, the *Dā'ī* shares some of the attributes of the Imām, and he is 'like sinless,' and always acts according to the inspiration he receives (Zahid 1954, 252).

The extent to which the *Dā'ī al-muṭlaq* is empowered to control his followers in their social and religious life has been, and continues to be a bitter controversy between the orthodox and the progressive sections of the community. The progressives would like to see a greater participation of the community in the ordering of the missionary affairs. The *Sayyidinā* has with equal firmness, reaffirmed his responsibility to those above him and the inadmissibility of his rendering account to his followers, or their elected or appointed leaders in matters that has been left to his individual judgement.

As for the obligation of the followers to obey *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq*, this is divided into two kinds:

1. Obedience in matters of an entirely religious nature
2. Partly religious, partly secular matters

As far as the first category is concerned, obedience to him is imperative. In the second category too, only the religious aspect is obligatory to follow. If the secular order is against reason, it may not be obeyed.

As mentioned above, the religious hierarchy of the Dāwūdī Bohras is essentially Fāṭimid and is headed by the *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq* who is appointed by his predecessor in office. The *Dā'ī* appoints two others to the subsidiary ranks of *ma'dhūn* [licentiate] and *mukāsīr* [executor]. These positions are followed by the rank of *Shaikh* and *Mullāh*, both of which are held by hundreds of Bohras. An *Ālīm* (usually a graduate of the order's institution of higher learning, like the *al-Jāmi'yyah al-sayfiyyah*) who leads the local congregation in religious, social and communal affairs, is sent to each town where a sizable Dāwūdī Bohra population exists. Such towns normally have a Mosque and an adjoining assembly hall where socio-religious functions are held. The local organisations which manage these properties and administer the social and religious activities of the local Bohras report directly to the central administration of the *Dā'ī* which is based in Bombay, called *al-Da'wah al-Hādiyyah*.

The *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq's* power over his followers is expressed through his *Āmils*, his representatives in all the important centers where there are Bohras. No religious or civil ceremonies are valid without their express permission. Only those whom he authorises can lead the prayers, and he can deny use of the community properties to those who incur their displeasure or who are excommunicated by them.

2.2.3 The doctrine of *naṣṣ*

Under Shī'ah law, it is illegal for the people to select the Imām, he must be unmistakably nominated and singled out by his predecessor. This is called *naṣṣ* in Arabic, which means something which is crystal clear. Whenever a split occurred in the Shī'ah community, it was on the basis of *naṣṣ* and it was on the same basis that the Shī'ahs split into various groups in India.

It was by the close of the Fāṭimid age that Ismā'īlism reached India on the coast of Gujarāt. This was half a century after the reign of Mustanṣir Billāh (487-1094 /427-1036) when the schism between the two wings had already started (Misra 1985,20). Al-ʿAmr, the last of the Imāms whom the Musta'li recognised, was killed by a Nizārī in 524/1130. He prophesised the anarchy which was to follow him, and placed his child, the first Imām of the *Satr*, as the next Imām who was based in Yemen. His name was Ṭayyab, and his father was consequently killed when he was a child. His guardians wanted to steal his post, so four *Dā'īs* took him into hiding, and it was from this time that the myth of *Satr* commenced. The "hidden Imām" is a cardinal principle and tenet of most of the Ismā'īlī Bohras.

For six years after his concealment, the work of the *Dā'ī* was carried on by the Malikah. It was she who nominated the first *Dā'ī* after the concealment: Sayyidinā Zu'eb ibn Mūsā, and on her death on 5 May 1133, the new line of *Dā'īs* commenced. From the first to the present *Dā'ī*, there have been 52 incumbents to this office. Of these, the first 24 were Yemenī, the first Indian *Dā'ī* was Sayyidinā Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn who assumed office in 946/1539. Sayyidinā Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn proceeded to Yemen and shifted his headquarters there, but then his successor Sayyidinā Jalāl came again to India, and he was the first to die there. From this

time, the Ismā'īlīs had become a permanent feature in Gujarāt. Three people were overwhelmingly responsible for the conversion of people to Ismā'īlism:

1. Mawlāi Aḥmad (d. 560/1164) in Pattan
2. ʿAbdullāh (d. 565/1168) in Deccan
3. Mawlāi Fakhr al-Dīn (d. 575/1178) in Galiakot.

2.2.4. The Sunnī Reformers

The reform efforts of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir detailed in this work are though certainly the most organised and intensive not the only ones that have been documented. Al-Fattanī is preceeded by other Sunnī scholars who shared his concern for the preservation of the Sunnī sysytem of belief. Their efforts are documented by Dawūdī Bohra historians and Sunnī Bohra historians alike.

When in 836/1432, Mawlāi Ādam ibn Sulaimān passed away, he was succeeded by his son Ḥasanbhai. The Dāʿī of that time was ʿAlī Shams al-Dīn in Aḥmadabād. One of his students which arrived in his school was a certain Jaʿfar from Pattan.

2.2.4.1. Mullah Jaʿfar al-Fattanī and his influence on the Bohras

It is said that the Sunnī Bohras were at one time Ismāʿīlī Shīʿahs. At times Sunnī Bohras are also called *Jaʿfariyyah* Bohras, a name which the present day *Ahl al-sunnah* resent and outrightly reject. It was rather the legacy of Mullah Jaʿfar al-Fattanī that made the Sunnī Bohras puritans and they were greatly influenced by the writings of this great Shaikh. At this stage, it will be in the fitness of things to examine some details of the life of Mullah Jaʿfar al-Fattanī.

Mullah Ja'far was born in Pattan. His father's name was Khwājah. He acquired his early education in Naharwālah (Pattan). After completing his primary education, he was sent for higher education to Aḥmadabad which had then emerged as a centre of Islāmic learning, where he studied under the patronage of Mullah Hasan ibn Ādam, better known as *wālī-i-Hind* [The Protector of India]. After satisfactorily completing his education there, Mullah Ja'far then went to Barūch from where he went to Yemen by sea. Dāwūdī Bohra sources state that after studying for a short period in Aḥmadabad Ja'far requested his teacher to permit him to proceed for further studies but was refused on the grounds that he was not qualified enough. In spite of not being given this permission Ja'far disregarded his orders and left Gujarāt and appeared before the Sayyidinā in Yemen.

In Yemen, Mullah Ja'far met a famous *dā'ī* of his time by the name of 'Alī ibn 'Abdullāh. Mullah Ja'far studied under him for three years and then sought permission from him to return to India.

In order to account for Ja'far's change of heart Dāwūdī Bohra sources explain that at the time Ja'far did not have any permission to lead any prayers or to solemnise any marriage or to attend any functions before obtaining permission from 'Alī Shams al-Dīn in Aḥmadabād. When he landed in Gujarāt, he led the congregation in prayers in Dev, Barūch, Kambayath and in many other places without the required authorisation. When Sayyidinā 'Alī Shams al-Dīn finally summoned him for a disciplinary hearing, he could not provide a satisfactory answer. It was after this, they claim, that he launched his campaign of anti-Ismā'īlism and pro-Sunnism from Pattan (Nadwī 1936, 73).

From Yemen Ja'far first came to Barūch and then moved to Kambayath. From here he moved further to Aḥmadabād. After spending some time in Aḥmadabād there, he finally came to Pattan. In Aḥmadabād, he had a difference with Mullah Ḥasan

ibn Ādam, his former teacher. Mullah Ḥasan complained about him to his *Dā'ī*-Shams al-Dīn 'Alī, who in turn wrote to Mullah Ḥasan to leave Mullah Ja'far alone. In Pattan Mullah Ja'far soon came into conflict with the D'wūdī leader there Mullāh Rājah ibn Dāwūd, who later succeeded Mullah Ḥasan. This conflict situation forced Rājah ibn Dāwūd to migrate to Morbi in Katiawar, which is now called Saurashtra in 841/1437.

The entire Muslim population of India then became ardent followers of Mullah Ja'far. He went from there to Visnagar and Varnagar, Parantij, Mehsana, Morasa, Aḥmadnagar (present day Himatnagar), Kari and Ahmadabad. Everywhere he preached the *'aqā'id* [theology] of the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamā'ah*, and not of the Isma'īlī Shī'ahs, though he was schooled in the latter thought. He was received as spiritual leader and was accorded a rousing welcome in Aḥmadabād. He paid a visit to the court of the founder of the city, Shāh Aḥmad. The king as well as his ministers respected him and allowed him to propagate his beliefs in Aḥmadabād.

Ultimately, Mullah Ja'far was killed on his visit to Champaner while he was preaching Islām. He lies buried in this city. All those who converted from the Shī'ah Ismā'īlī to the Sunnī Bohras are known as the *Barī Jamā'at* [Big congregation] while the Dāwūdī Bohras who did not convert are called the *Choti Jamā'at* [Small congregation].

After his death, and during the lifetime Mullah Ja'far already, his deputies and preachers had infiltrated Sūrat, Barūch, Kambayath, Pattan and Nadiad where all the Muslim inhabitants most readily accepted the Sunnī ideology. Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī was appointed to preach the Sunnī ideology in Pattan. In spite of the differences between the Sunnī and the Shī'ī Bohras, both the communities continued their business relations and social intercourse as usual and in harmony with each other. It was only much later that a Shī'ah leader, Ja'far Shīrāzī, stopped all social interaction between the two groups. As a result of this, intermarriages came to an end between the two parties. In Pattan, al-Fattanī

advised his followers to do the same. It was from this time onwards that the Sunnī Bohras considered the Shī'ah Bohras as quite a different and altogether distinctive community. Today, Sunnī Bohras are never referred to as Ja'fariyyah and the majority do not even remember the name of Mullah Ja'far.

Dāwūdī Bohra reports record with regret the great popularity achieved by him in North and South Gujarāt. At that time, Mullah Rājah ibn Dāwūd was the Walī of Pattan, who had succeeded the earlier Ḥasanbhai. He reported this state of affairs to ʿAlī Shams al-Dīn who in turn relayed the message to Yemen.

Ja'far achieved a remarkable success in his task. Surrounding villages, towns and cities appear to have surrendered to him with a readiness that seems surprising. By the close of the reign of Aḥmad Shāh, he reached Aḥmadabad, where the heir apparent, Maḥmūd Shāh, was deputised for the Sulṭān. The heir apparent, Maḥmūd Shāh was also won over by Ja'far and with the royal machinery at his back, he continued his missionary work with redoubled puissance and rigour. The religious policy of the sulṭāns of Gujarāt favoured this movement. With Aḥmad Shāh in whose reign Ja'far began his movement, begins a period of what Dāwūdī Bohras have termed "religious bigotry, if not religious fanaticism" (Zahid 1954, 180). Aḥmad Shāh was the first to introduce *jizyah* [taxes] in Gujarāt.

Thus also began the first active spell of persecution which the Ismā'īlī community suffered in India, Maulai Ḥasan had to go into hiding, mosques were closed due to lack of attendance, and harassment of the faithful mounted in intensity.

This harassment continued for a full two years until Ja'far's assassination near Champanir on July 5, 1441. It was evident that one of the sorely inflicted victims of the persecution carried out this killing.

It is a pity that we know so little of Ja'far, and that too, from the narrations of those to whom he had done great injury. He appears to have been a man of considerable intellectual acumen and spiritual powers. From available sources, it is not clear why he should have acted against the teachings of his educators and no details are available as to the reason for his change of heart. His reasoning behind, for instance, leading the prayers despite the restriction on him remain unknown. Obviously, sheer perversity alone could not have been responsible for this, nor could personal ambition have taken this course. As it is, Ja'far and his activities mark a milestone in the history of the Bohra community. Schisms had erupted within the Ismā'īlīs, but it was all within the fold, and not on fundamental issues. However, with Ja'far, a major change was made, and the major part of the community succeeded to adopt the *Sunni* faith and they came to be known as the *Jamā'at-i-kalan* [greater community].

Nearly a century later, another figure arose who completed the work begun by Ja'far earlier. Sayyid Aḥmad Ja'far al-Shīrāzī arrived in Gujarāt from Sindh, and established himself in favour of Sulṭān Maḥmūd Shāh Begrā and his successor Muẓaffar Shāh. Till then, inter-marriages between the two wings had been frequent and the social unit had been decisively split by this religious cleavage. This was the task achieved by this religious and purist Sayyid. He persuaded his fellow Sunnis to sever all links with their Ismā'īlī brethren. The two groups became completely separated and went in different directions after this.

Meanwhile, persecution of the Ismā'īlī Bohras continued. In 1518, their *Walī*, Mullah Rājah Jamāl al-Dīn was executed by the orders of Sulṭān Muẓaffar. This was partly due to his fame. This Sulṭān, also known as "the Clement" by the Gujarātī chroniclers, was noted for his piety and partiality of his faith, an iconoclasm which was exhibited on several occasions too.

These early Sunnī Bohra missionaries continued to appear until the last days of the sultanate of Gujarāt neared its end. As can be easily perceived, these days were not happy ones for the Ismā'īlī Bohras. The Shī'ah doctrine of dissimulation [*taqīyyah*] was invoked for safety sake. Till the end of the sultanate of Gujarāt, *ṣalāh* [congregation prayer] was not performed openly in mosques. Only in the time of Sayyidinā Dāwūd ibn 'Ajab Shāh, when the Mughal rule had been firmly founded in Gujarāt, did the Ismā'īlī Bohras feel secure enough to give up their concealment of identity and other religious rites and emerge into the open.

2.2.5. The First Indian *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq*

The early Indian Shī'ah of the eleventh century comprised a single group of Ismā'īlī Bohras owing allegiance to the *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq* [Head of the sect] in Yemen. As mentioned above, the *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq* operates as the sole representative of the secluded Ismā'īlī Imām, and as such, has had a great influence on the history, faith, and practices of the Dāwūdī Bohras.

It was in this hard-pressed age that the first Indian became a *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq*. Sayyidinā Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn of Sidhpore had been selected by the *Walī* of Aḥmadabād for this post for he was trained at the headquarters in Yemen under Muḥammad ibn 'Iz al-Dīn ibn 'Idrīs (d. 1539). In Yemen, he had distinguished himself as a devoted student and he was known for his gentleness and piety.

Sayyidinā Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn stayed in his native town, Sidhpore, for five years where he built a tank and a Mosque. Friction appears to have developed between them and other Bohra communities which led to rupture of trade and other relations with the outside world. Sayyidinā Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn promptly established his own shops and the suffering of his people was alleviated. This is the first instance of the involvement of the *dā'ī* with trade activities within the Ismā'īlī Bohra community. Obviously it marks the beginning, since this time there has been a growing emphasis on trade and commerce.

After this, Sayyidinā Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn left for Yemen, where the Ismā'īlīs were also feeling the strain of persecution. The Ottoman persecution in fact was much more severe than the Indian, and Sayyidinā Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn was hard-pressed by the authorities. Here he died on 4 July 1567 / 16 *Dhū al-Qa'dah* 974.

The Turkish persecution in Yemen made it impossible for Sayyidinā Yūsuf Najm al-Dīn's successor, Sayyidinā Jalāl ibn Ḥasan to stay there any longer. He therefore shifted headquarters to Aḥmadabād. However, his was a short tenure of about half a year before he died on 20 October 1567 / 16 *Rabī' al-Thānī* 975.

He was succeeded by Dāwūd ibn 'Ajabshāh. During his tenure, the influence of the Sunnī sect under the leadership of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī al-Bohrī, registered a sharp increase and influence. The Sayyidinā is reported to have been discomforted by him in debates, especially when he was questioned about the practice of observing the *Īd* festival according to a predetermined calendar, rather than by the sight of the moon.

By this time, the Mughal rule had come to Gujarāt, and the *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq*, no doubt encouraged by Akbar's liberalism, thought of going to Agra to place the grievances of his community before the emperor. This was felt by him to be an urgent matter, since Akbar's governor of Aḥmadabād, did not share the liberal views of his master. In addition to this, some internal trouble appeared to have also flared up, and this spurred him to reach the capital even faster.

Before he left, he appointed Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh as his deputy. He first went to Kapadwanj on 22 December 1573 and from there he went to Agra immediately after Akbar's conquest of Gujarāt in late 1573. In the capital, he was well received by the emperor, and Akbar issued an order to Khān-i-A'zam 'Azīz Koka to see that no complaints of oppression reached him again. Thus, it was only after this that the Ismā'īlī's started conducting their religious lives in the open.

The *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq* spent his remaining years in Kapadwanj and other towns, restoring practices which had become unfamiliar in the long period of concealment and reestablishing communal organisation. After a career of 22 years, Dāwūd ibn 'Ajabshāh died on 15 March 1589. His death was an occasion of a further split in the community- this time on an issue of succession.

Dāwūd ibn 'Ajabshāh was succeeded by Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh. Four years later, the grandson of the first Indian *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq*, Sulaimān ibn Ḥasan of Yemen, questioned his nomination and produced documents substantiating his own claim to the office. The result was a split of the community, the majority upheld Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh, while the minority accepted Sulaimān ibn Ḥasan, they are called the

Sulaimānīs. Dāwūdī Bohras are named after their twenty-seventh *Dā'ī*, Dāwūd ibn Qutubshāh (d. 1612).

At this time, Shāhzādah Murād was the governor at Aḥmadabād with another prominent Mughal noble, Ṣādiq Muḥammad Khān as his tutor. During the first stage of the dispute, the Moghuls remained out of the picture. Sulaimān sent Jābir back to Gujarāt, and with the support of Zohrabai, Sayyidinā Yūsuf's daughter and Sulaimān's aunt, his claim began to find some popular support.

At this stage, Ibrāhīm the son of the late Dāwūd ibn 'Ajabshāh filed a claim against his own late father and laid it upon the shoulders of the *Dā'ī al-Muṭṭlaq*, Dāwūd ibn Qutubshāh. He took the claim to the court of the governor of Aḥmadabād, and asserted that 1 080 000 rupees was due to him in inheritance from his father, - or more likely - his legitimate due of the party which he represented from the estates of the late Dāwūd ibn Qutubshāh.

This complaint brought in the Mughuls in what had been as yet an internal problem. Several prominent Ismā'īlīs, including the *Dā'ī al-Muṭṭlaq* himself was imprisoned on this charge while the case was being investigated. The incarceration of the *Dā'ī al-Muṭṭlaq* caused havoc among the Bohras, but Ṣādiq Muḥammad Khān was favorable and sympathetic to them, and release from prison was not long in coming. The Ismā'īlīs argued that since office was not hereditary amongst them and the *Dā'ī al-Muṭṭlaq* did not even own properties on his name, but held it in trust for the people, this claim of Ibrāhīm was false and fraudulent.

Relations between the two groups rapidly grew worse and it even reached blows in which a person was injured. Şādiq Muḥammad Khān threatened to punish Ibrāhīm for his temerity by having his nose cut off, unless he acknowledged Sayyidinā Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh. He agreed at first, but later demurred stating that he would do so only if his preceptor, Shaikh Sulaimān, preceded him. Letters were then produced by Ibrāhīm which gave testimony to the fact that his claim was valid. At this development, Sayyidinā Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh anticipating trouble went into hiding.

Until now, Shaikh Sulaimān had been in Yemen where he had not only little success, but also a taste of prison in which he was languishing in for some time. Managing to escape, he arrived at Aḥmadabād on 21 December 1596. At this, Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAjabshāh, emboldened, preferred to again press his suit, but instead they were imprisoned, but later released.

Upon release, Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAjabshāh and Shaikh Sulaimān decided to carry out their suit to the Emperor himself, who was at that time in Lahore. The matter of succession now became of secondary importance, and the case now took on a personal note. Deeply alarmed at this move, Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh sent some of his chief advisors from hiding to counteract the move of his adversaries.

Akbar received the complaints, but demanded that Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh be present in person to receive the complaints; a demand to which his advisors were reluctant to accede to. This exasperated Akbar, and he sent Kamāl Khān to bring Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh to him, even if it meant by force. Finally, through the prompting of Saif al-Dīn, Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh was convinced that obscurity at

this stage was futile, and that he should reveal himself and proceed to the presence of the emperor, which he did.

At this time, there occurred an incident which totally changed the course of history. Shaikh Sulaimān suddenly contracted stomach pains and died on 12 May 1599. Sulaimānī authorities flatly assert that this was due to him being poisoned. This left the onerous burden of fighting the case flatly on the shoulders of Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAjabshāh. It is said that at the tribunal, Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAjabshāh could not reply to any of the questions and the judge dismissed his case. Finally relieved, Dāwūd ibn Quṭubshāh left for Aḥmadabād after a stay in the north of nearly 15 months. He passed away on 13 August 1612.

2.2.6. The Dāwūdī Bohra community today

The Dāwūdī Bohra community has largely been molded into its present form by the two *Dāʿīs* who have led the community in the twentieth century:

1. The fifty-first *Dāʿī*, the celebrated Dr. Sayyidinā Ṭāhir Saif al-Dīn (1915-1965), who was an accomplished scholar, a prolific writer and poet, a capable organiser and a man of vision. During his period of fifty years in office, he revitalised the community, fostered strong faith, modernised the mission's organisation, promoted welfare and education in the community, and guided it through the tumultuous period of world wars and independence of nations.
2. The second is their present *Dāʿī*, Dr. Sayyidinā Muḥammad Burḥān al-Dīn who has continued his predecessor's endeavors with particular emphasis on strengthening the community's Islāmic practices and on the promotion of its Fāṭimid heritage.

Presently, Dr. Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn (b. 1333/1915), is head of the Dāwūdī Bohra community, and fifty-second occupant of the office of *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq* [Absolute Summoner].

The present *Dā'ī* resides in Bombay, the headquarters of the mission having been transferred to India from Yemen in 1539. Like his predecessors, he is greatly revered by his followers.

Dr. Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn received his religious and administrative training during the leadership of his renowned father and predecessor, Ṭāhir Saif al-Dīn (1915-1965) and succeeded him in 1965. He has led his community into an era of fresh vibrancy and renewed religious zeal by devoting his efforts to the preservation of their Fāṭimid Ismā'īlī heritage. He has ushered in a spiritual reawakening by requiring his followers to adhere closely to Qur'ānic injunctions in their everyday lives. He has emphasised adherence to Islāmic business ethics that include the prohibition of interest and institutionalised interest-free loan schemes to cater for the community's borrowing needs.

Dr. Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn has also strengthened the age-old Shī'ī practice of lamenting the martyrdom of Imām al-Ḥusain [*ta'ziyah* and *rauzaḥ khānī*]; in the annual gatherings during the first ten days of *Muḥarram*. This active indulgence has become the major spiritual expression of the community, with thousands of Bohras attending the sermons of the *Dā'ī* which are relayed live to Bohra centers all over the world. Dr. Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn has also promoted the blending of secular and religious studies by initiating Islāmic oriented schools, which attempt to provide an integrated education in an Islāmic atmosphere. Finally, he has undertaken the restoration of Fāṭimid relics and promoted Fāṭimid architecture and design in the construction of a large number of Mosques, mausoleums, and other public buildings all over the world. The most important of such works has been the monumental restoration in 1980 of the *al-Jāmi' al-anwar*, the huge mosque built by the Fāṭimid Caliph-Imām al-Ḥakīm (996-1021).

Dr. Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn is in addition, an accomplished scholar. He personally supervises the curriculum of the Arabic academy *al-Jām'yyah al-sayfiyyah* where his followers receive religious training. He is the author of several books on Ismā'īlī religious thought and has composed thousands of verses in Arabic on supplication and in praise of the Prophet, Imāms and *Dā'īs*. He has received honorary doctorates from al-Azhar University (1966) and from 'Alīgarh Muslim University (1966). He has frequently visited Dāwūdī Bohra centers all over the world to personally imbibe Islāmic values in his followers, a practice he has continued even at an advanced age.

He spends many hours each day in attending to the needs of the Dāwūdī Bohras, who seek his advice on all aspects of life, even on mundane matters such as the choice of name for a newborn. His charitable endeavors, promotion of institutes and trusts for educational and economic welfare, support of projects on environmental issues and renovation activities have earned him international recognition, including the highest civilian honors of Egypt (1976) and Jordan (1981).

Pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints is also an important part of the devotional life of Bohras, the facilitation of which, rest houses and assisting organizations have been set up. The martyrdom of Ḥusain is commemorated annually during the first ten days of *Muḥarram* [First month of the Lunar Islāmic Calendar], the month in which it is held that he was brutally martyred.

Dāwūdī Bohras use an Arabicized form of Gujarātī, called *lisān al-Da'wah*, which is permeated with Arabic words and written in Arabic script. Another distinctive feature is their use of a Fāṭimid lunar calendar which fixes the number of days in each month, rather than depending on the sighting of the moon.

There is a strong religious learning tradition amongst the Dāwūdī Bohras, their *Dā'īs* usually being prolific writers and orators. The Dāwūdī Bohras number about a million and reside in India, Pakistan, the Middle East, East Africa since the 18th century, and the West Africa since the 1950's.

Overall, Bohra history has yet to be written, and it can be written satisfactorily only when the required libraries are catalogued and open. Even then, it may prove to be a task which may leave a historian unsatisfied. The material is mainly one-sided and thereby leaves the problem stated, but not answered. Except for the Sulaimānī's, none of the dissident sects appear to have any sizable literature, and much has completely disappeared. Nevertheless, a clear exposition of this material would not only add a new dimension to regional or communal history, but would enhance our knowledge of India as a whole.

2.3. The Sulaimānī Bohras

The Sulaimānī *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq*, who is the leader of the supreme missionary, transferred his head-quarters from Yemen to India in 1539 (Ali 1988, 131). Administration of the community is authoritarian. At the apex is, the *Dā'ī al-Muṭlaq*, who is the uncontested leader and administrator of the community. Under him serve the *ma'dhūn* [the Authorised] and a *mukāsīr* ["one standing the test"], whose offices are a remnant of the old Ismā'īlī hierarchy. Next come eighteen *Mashāikh* trained at *Sayfī dars*, the Bohra seminary at Sūrat. Next come *Āmils*, or agents, appointed in towns with a significant Bohra population in order to lead congregational prayers and perform marriages and other services. At the bottom of this hierarchy, are the *Mullahs* who work as teachers at the Sulaimānī Bohra schools.

The seat of the Sulaimānī *Duʿāt* is at Baroda in Gujarāt and Muḥammad Burhān al-Dīn is the present *Dāʿī al-Muṭṭlaq* who is representative of the alive and concealed [*ghāib*] Imām. A covenanted oath of loyalty to the *Imām* of secrecy is administered to every Bohra convert.

This particular Bohra community lives in an exclusive part of the city and has its own mosques and congregation halls. The Bohras do not mix with other people and only marry amongst themselves. Their women do not observe *purdah* [veiling]. The cosmogony and esoteric interpretations of the Sulaimānīs is derived from the Fāṭimid Ismāʿīlī literature. The Bohra calendar is always two days ahead of the common Muslim calendar. The Bohras follow the *Ithnā ashʿariyyah* in certain ritual matters, such as the formula of the *adhān* [call to prayers] and the celebration of the *ʿId al-ghādir*, commemorating the alleged nomination of ʿAlī to the caliphate by Muḥammad.

Many Hindu heritages and practices still survive amongst this type of Bohras. For example, in their marriage and other customs, in the laws of inheritance which deprive a women of her share in property, in their calendar, in giving and taking interest on loans and in beginning their fiscal year like the Hindus on the Hindu lamp-festival (*dipāvalī*).

The Sulaimānī Bohra community is well disciplined, closely knit, enterprising, prosperous, quiet and tidy. Their social welfare enterprise takes care of the poor among them. Though influenced by Hinduism, like other Shīʿahs, they will not eat from the hands of Hindus or other non-Muslims. If a Hindu washes their clothes, they ritually sprinkle water on them to purify them before use.

The primary belief of this class of Bohras is entrenched in the doctrine of the Imāmate.

2.4. The 'Alwī Bohras

The Alwī Bohras has a *Sayyidinā* [Religious head] who is based in Baroda, Gujarāt. He appoints a *Ma'dhūn* [Successor] next to him in the hierarchy. The present one being his own son in charged to look after the religious, social and economic affairs of the community. The influence of the 'Alwī Sayyidinā over the community members is relatively weaker in comparison to that of the Dāwūdī Bohra leader. Those who believe in the authority of the Sayyidinā take his permission for all the social, economic and other affairs of the community which affect them in their daily living. The reformists amongst the 'Alwīs, who have a relatively strong influence, do not accept the Sayyidinā's authority over their economic and social affairs, though they accept his religious authority. The reformists enlisted the help of the Maharajah of Gaikwad who approached Indira Gandhi with the cause of the reformists. Thereafter, the Sayyidinā changed his earlier attitude towards the 'Alwī reformists and has become more liberal. He does not socially boycott or excommunicate dissidents who have formed a parallel machinery which looks after the religious, social, economic, and civic problems of the 'Alwī Bohras. Owing to the people's support and political backing received by the reformists, the Sayyidiā is forced to tolerate their active presence and allow them to attend the same mosque along with the other 'Alwīs.

Of late, the 'Alwī reformists have more or less taken over the reigns from their Sayyidinā and this has undermined his authority. However, for certain religious rituals and social affairs, the majority of the 'Alwī Bohras takes the Sayyidinā's permission. These include marital separation, divorce, marriage ceremonies, burial, 'iddat [ritual seclusion], *zakāt* [poor-due], pilgrimage to Makkah and Karbalā [the burial place of Ḥusain]. Except on important Islāmic festivals followers say their prayers at home (Ali 1988, 131-53).

2.5. The Atbā-i-Malak Wakīl Bohras

The Wakīl group of Bohras has a small number of members. This Shī'ah sect consists of mostly major and influential businessmen who reside mainly in Bombay and Nagpūr. The head priest, whose place of origin is Kapadvanj, South Gujarāt, lives in Nagpūr. The majority of his followers are from Sūrat. They were originally Dāwūdī Bohras who broke away in the 40's from mainstream Dāwūdism. Since the Wakīl group were businessmen, the members of this group continued to maintain their social and economic ties with their Dāwūdī Bohra kins.

The Wakīl community seems to be the most tightly controlled Shī'ī community. All of them accept the decision of their community head in matters relating to charity, naming of a child, choice of school, engagement, marriage choice, marriage and other ceremonies, divorce, remarriage, burial, *'iddat*, purchase and sale of property, going abroad, and giving *zakāh*. Even the choice of books, newspapers, and other reading matter depends on the decision of the Wakīl head. None of the members however, believe in payment for non-fasting, sacrificing cattle and sheep on the festival of *īd al-aḍḥā*, or visiting Karbalā and going for pilgrimage [*Hajj*].

The *Mālik*, the title of the religious head of the community, exercises complete spiritual and temporal control over his members. He is regarded as the *Imām* possessing divine powers to guide all aspects of the life of his members. The *Mālik's* permission is essential for every aspect of the life of his followers from birth to death. He encourages endogamy, irrespective of class background, though he cannot force the members. It is reported his own daughter-in-law is from a lower middle-class background. The community members have to attend his religious discourses and festivals regularly, and they have to send a letter of obedience to the *Mālik*. If a community member violates the social norms laid out by the religious head, his name is first read out in the gathering. If he still does not correct his behavior, he is barred from attending any of their religious or social

gatherings. If this still does not help, he is excommunicated by all the members of the following and is constantly harassed by them.

The Wakīl Bohras do not observe the fast of the month of *Ramaḍān*. They prefer to say their daily prayers at home and do not attend the sermons on the festivals of *īd al-aḡḡā* and *fiṭrah* like other common mainstream Muslims. Rather, they have their own five days of *īd* and they observe the 1st of March to be their new year. They have their own calendar. Their observances and rituals are held in their own halls on the first day of every month. They recite a litany in place of the customary *ṣalāh* prayers, which is normally performed by all Muslims. Drinking and smoking is strictly prohibited amongst them. They have their own distinct dress for men and women and every age group has its own social activities. There is a distinct segregation between men and women and a lot of efforts are made amongst member of the following to understand each other better and engender feelings of unity and brotherhood.

The members of the Wakīl Bohra community have interaction with their own following members and have little social contact with other Bohras, non-Bohras and non-Muslims.

Their religious hierarchy is determined by the different roles and levels of authority of each. After the rank of the *Mālik*, comes the *Mashriq* who can be either a man or a woman. Next comes the *Murabbī*. The religious priesthood is able to maintain its influence and control over the members who generally remain untouched by any other influences, which may weaken the present tightly knit community.

The Wakīl community, as a rule, does not participate in any political activities and election campaigns. They mostly vote for the ruling party. The religious head also discourages active political participation, as he fears that this might put his influential position in jeopardy. As far as legal matters were concerned, they would

resort to their *Mālik* and accept his decision as binding and fair, and would not approach any court of law. In India, they are not represented on the Muslim Personal Law board like other Shī'ah groups (Ali 1988, 154-168).

2.6. The Nizārī and Khojah Bohras

The split between the Nizārī (Eastern, i.e. Khojah) and the Musta'li (Western, i.e. Ismā'īlī Bohra) group took place at the end of the reign of the eighth Fāṭimid ruler- al-Mustanṣir Billāh (427/1035–487/1094). In 1092 C.E. al-Alamūt was captured by Ḥasan ibn Sabbah and thereupon the Nizārī line was established. The Mongols in 654/1256 destroyed this stronghold.

During and after the establishment of this centre, Nizārī missionaries came into Sindh and Gujarāt and laid the foundation of the Nizārī and allied communities in India. In Gujarāt, they made a notable contribution.

Commenting on the historical sources available for the study of the Khojah Bohras, Misra notes: "It may be noted that in this section, original sources for this study are virtually non-existent. What are available, are *shajarahs* [genealogies], traditions, and the brief and tantalising data vouchsafed by the *Gnans*, or their *Pirs* [spiritual mentors]. It is therefore difficult to be certain especially regarding dates; and the plentifulness of miracles ascribed to the *Pirs* strains the credence of the scientific student" (Misra 1985, 54).

The line of Nizārī Dā'īs who came to Gujarāt in the reign of Siddhrāj Jayashingha (r. 1094-1143) starts with Nūr Satgur. He is also regarded to be the forbear of this line according to Satpanthi literature and he initiated missionary activity in Gujarāt. This genealogy is difficult, and different versions are found.³

According to the *Pirana Panth*, Nūr Satgur⁴ is reported to have come to Gujarāt on 1 April 826. In *Nūr al-mubīn*, it is stated that he was sent by Caliph Muṣṭansir

Billāh himself in 426/1069 to work for the Nizār in India. It is however difficult to understand why Muṣṭansir Billāh should have sent him [Nūr Satgur] to propagate for a partisan schism which was not in existence then. Rather, this explains Nūr Satgur's arrival in Gujarāt long before the Nizārīs themselves after they had established power in Alamūt. Moreover, had he arrived then, he would not have had contact with Jayashingha for he came to the throne in 1094, a full year after the foundation of Alamūt. In view of these facts, Nūr Satgur's figure is one which is more legendary than real, at least in determinable historical terms. In *Nur al-mubīn*, the year of his death is given as 487/1094, the year in which Jayashingha came to the throne.

Pir Shams as depicted in Khojah and Satpanthi literature is said to have been born in Sabswar, a town south of Heart. He is said to have a lifespan of 115 years; another version provides him with an unbearably long life of nearly two centuries. His mausoleum is in Multān. His life is openly known through the various miracles performed by him. About the only concrete thing known of him is that he lived between the second half of the 12th century and the first half of the 13th.

Amongst the miracles ascribed to him are the following:

- 1) Crossing a river in a paper boat
- 2) He made horns grow on the head of Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn
- 3) He brought a dead boy back to life
- 4) He painlessly stripped his skin off his body
- 5) He brought the sun down to cook a piece of meat for him

Pir Ṣadr al-Dīn (689/1290) is the founder of the Khojah community in India. It is said that he made a deep study of Hindu literature for the purpose of his missionary activity. He visited Iran and when he returned to India established the first prayer facility at Kotdi. In Gujarāt, his new faith was accepted by the Lohanas. To convince them, he renamed his faith as *Satpanth*- a more Hinduish name.

Ḥasan Kabīr al-Dīn, at whom the line of Pīrs begins, had 18 sons, of which the youngest- Imām Shāh- became the most famous in Gujarāt. He was the founder of the Imāmī Shī'ah sect which was accepted by a number of the agrarian and pastoral communities of Gujarāt, Khandesh and Western Madhya Pradesh. His teachings gave rise to a new Hindu community, the Matia Canbis and he tried to give his faith a Hindi form. He established his seat in Pirana. His date of birth is given to be 17 May 1452 according to the *Tawārīkh-i-pīr* and he died on 25 November 1513.

Many miracles are also attributed to him. From amongst these are:

- 1) He claimed that the Mosque pulpit prayed on his behalf; hence, there was no need for him to pray
- 2) He cooked cat's meat, then caused it to raise and run away from the plate
- 3) He made the waters of a river bifurcate, he then crossed through it harmlessly
- 4) He quelled the drought at Girmatha which had straitened them for two years by one short prayer
- 5) He shot an arrow, and it landed on the place where his masoleum stands today
- 6) When he shot the arrow, a tiger and its mate who were standing there, respectfully gave way to him
- 7) He exported and returned a group of Hindu pilgrims in one night to Kashi and back to their home town

In the *Manazil al-aqṭāb*, Nūr Muḥamad Shāh is said to be responsible for separating his followers from the main Ismā'īlī stock. He is also regarded as the last Imām of the Satpanthis. When Jalāl al-Dīn succeeded him, this seems to be an occasion of mutual dissension amongst them. This dissension progressed and the system of the *Kakas* was evolved out of it. It is round about this time when Aurangzeb heard of this sect and summoned its head to the capital in order to

question him of his devious beliefs and practices. Shāhī Mirān was unwilling to go, but after proceeding to Aḥmadabād, he suddenly fell ill and died, most probably by self-poisoning. At this, all their Hindu followers revolted and left the Nizārī way of belief.

Another notable Nizari *Pīr* was Pīr Mashā'ikh II. He was born in Kadi on 15 April 1650, and his father passed away when he was only nine years old. He was deprived of early education due to his financial position, however, later in life he devoted a lot of his time to studies and consequently wrote thirteen famous books aimed at educating his followers and eliminating ignorance amongst them. It took him twelve years to complete these. They are as under:

- 1) *Nūrnāmā*- A biographical sketch of all the Prophet of God;
- 2) *Mu'ārījānam*- On the superiority of Islām and on other matters of the faith
- 3) *Ghazawāt*- Detailing the difficulties experienced by the the Prophet Muḥammad in the early portion of Islām
- 4) *Girdiyah*- An account of the Prophet, his family and descendants
- 5) *Mu'azzizat*- Details of all miracles performed by the Nizārī Pīrs
- 6) *Wisalanāmā*- The last sickness of the Holy Prophet and accounts surrounding it
- 7) *Khulafa-i-Rashidīn*- A perspective on the first four caliphs of Islām
- 8) *Maqtūlnāmāh I*- The life of Ḥassan and Ḥusain
- 9) *Maqtūlnāmāh II*- The last days of Imām Ḥusain and notes on the twelve *ithnā 'asharī* Imams
- 10) *Imān I*- Conditions of faith and observances; duties to the Pīr
- 11) *Imān II*- Directives regarding proper conduct of life
- 12) *Ibādāt I*- Religious duties on all occasions
- 13) *Ibādāt II*- Dealing with the obligations of Islām like prayers, fast and ablution

After his death a number of Pīr Mashā'ikh's followers shifted their allegiance from the Pīr to his descendants. This schism has its roots around the question of the faith of Pīr Mashā'ikh himself: Was he a shī'ah or a sunnī? From his writings, it is clear that Pīr Mashā'ikh was against the type of half-Hindu Muslim converts made by Imām Shāh and his descendants. His effort was to remove the vestiges of such disbelief amongst his followers. He had also completely given up the Ismā'īlī faith of his forbears.

It is difficult to decide Pīr Mashā'ikh's affiliations. In his books, he gives unmistakable evidence of his being a sunnī, especially in books which have been published by those who have seceded from the main stock. Further, his chain of *Pīrs* is traced to Khwājah Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī, which militates against him being anything but a sunnī. Finally, his partiality for Emperor Aurangzeb against the Shī'ah sultāns of the Deccan indicates his predisposition.

This is however explained by his Shī'ah followers as a *taqiyyah* [concealment of the truth] against the religious policy of Aurangzeb. Further, his descendants and the majority of his followers have been Shī'ahs and this would have hardly been possible had he been a Sunnī. Nevertheless, the doubt still persists and there is every possibility that his followers were unaware of him being a Sunnī (Misra 1985 54-65).

3. Conclusion

From amongst all the above mentioned Bohra communities and others not mentioned, only two today are recognised as principal Bohra communities: These are the Sunnī and the Dāwūdī Bohras. The overwhelming majority of Bohras are Sunnīs, and the same sagacious spirit which drove Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī to convert his community to the true brand of Islām is today being relentlessly continued by his successors. Moreover, Sunnī Bohras have emigrated from India to various African, European and Western countries including South

Africa, Malawi, United Kingdom, Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia, Grenada, Barbados, Canada and Australia. Wherever they go, they first implant the flag of their identity, and establish the creed of the *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* with the same vivacity and vigour as inherited and demonstrated by their forefathers in India. Indeed the soul of Shaikh al-Fattani permeates every religious activity which takes place by the Sunnī Bohras all over the world.

The foregoing pages serve only to describe the religion of the Bohra community and does no more than this. It is clear from such a description that the Sunnī Islām preached by al-Fattani differed with that of other Bohra communities in several respects. There would appear to be levels in the religious system of the Bohras with beliefs, values and ritual practice at each of these levels having some measure of distinctiveness.

The first level that may be identified are those beliefs and practices traditionally belonging to formal or scriptural Islām. Since they are derived from the Islāmic religious texts they command the awe that is usually attached to sacred precepts. In this instance, like Muslims elsewhere the Bohra Muslims acknowledge them to be paramount and their observance is supposed to be on a higher plane than that of the beliefs and rituals at lower levels. These beliefs and practices are essentially ideals enjoined on all Muslims. Correspondence between them and actual religious behaviour is however another more open question. The second level are beliefs and practices which are of a limited nature. They do not have support from Islāmic sources and do very often in fact oppose these. They are regarded, by Muslims who hold them, as much a part of their religious system as the values and beliefs of the first level. What is worthy of note here is that these beliefs are pre-supposed by actual religious behaviour. There is therefore a greater correspondence at this level between beliefs and values and actual religious behaviour than in the first level. The third level in the religious system of the Bohras can be identified as those practices and beliefs that may be labelled practical religion. Here the beliefs and practices are strongly antithetical to the beliefs and values prevalent at the other

two levels and are regarded as such by the Muslims. It is for this reason that many of these rituals are observed out of the public space as has been observed above in the case of certain Bohra communities.

CHAPTER FIVE: NOTES

¹ There are also some minor and unimportant sub-sects of the Bohras, for example, the ʿAliyyah, Nagoshia and Hibtiyyah.

² ʿAzīz Aḥmad seems to have been mistaken in identifying the Sunnī Bohras to be a small minority of Sunnī Bohras called Jaʿfarīs. As a matter of fact the Sunnī Bohras constitute the majority of the Bohras and are certainly not called or known as Jaʿfarīs. Although at one time they had Shīʿah connections and were remotely linked to the Jaʿfariyyah sect. The other mistake that ʿAzīz Aḥmad has made is to state that all the Sunnī Bohra are *agriculturists*. The reality is that the majority of Sunnī Bohra happen to be traders and businessmen. There are members of this community around Surat and its environs who were at one stage agriculturists although many of them have now taken to trade. The Sunnī Bohras who have migrated to South Africa, Mauritius, Reunion, the United Kingdom and other parts of the world are all traders.

³ According to the *Mirʿāt-i-Aḥmadī*, it is as follows:

- 1) Sayyid Ismāʿīl
- 2) Sayyid Nur al-Dīn Muḥammad
- 3) Sayyid Ismāʿīl
- 4) Sayyid Maṣṣūr
- 5) Sayyid Ghālib
- 6) Sayyid ʿAbd al-Majīd
- 7) Sayyid Jamāl Mustanṣir Billāh
- 8) Sayyid Aḥmad Hādī
- 9) Sayyid Hāshim
- 10) Sayyid Muḥammad
- 11) Sayyid Muḥibb al-Dīn
- 12) Sayyid Khālīd

-
- 13) Sayyid ʿAbd al-Muʿmin
 - 14) Sayyid Islām al-Dīn
 - 15) Sayyid Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Salib;
 - 16) Sayyid Shams al-Dīn.

The official Khojah history of Imāms as given in the *Nūr al-mubīn* on the basis of the *Gulzar-i-shams* is as follows:

- 1) Sayyid Ismāʿīl
- 2) Sayyid Nur al-Dīn Maḥmūd
- 3) Sayyid Jamāl Mustanṣir Billāh
- 4) Sayyid Ismāʿīl
- 5) Sayyid Manṣūr
- 6) Sayyid Ghalib al-Dīn
- 7) Sayyid Mustanṣir Billāh
- 8) Sayyid Aḥmad Hādī
- 9) Sayyid Hāshim Shāh
- 10) Sayyid Muḥammad Shāh
- 11) Sayyid Maḥmūd Shāh
- 12) Sayyid Muḥibb al-Dīn
- 13) Sayyid Khālīd al-Dīn
- 14) Sayyid ʿAbd al-Muʿmin
- 15) Sayyid Islām al-Dīn
- 16) Sayyid Ṣalīḥ al-Dīn
- 17) Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Salib
- 18) Shams al-Dīn.

As given in the *Tawarikh-i-Pir* by Pirzadah Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn Dargahwala, most probably on the basis of the 19th century Persian work *Manzil al-aqtab*:

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- 1) Sayyid Ismā'īl
 - 2) Sayyid Nur al-Dīn Muḥammad or Nūr Satgur
 - 3) Sayyi Ismā'īl Raza
 - 4) Sayyid Maṣṣūr Muḥammad
 - 5) Sayyid Ghālib
 - 6) Sayyid ʿAbd al-Majīd
 - 7) Sayyid Muṣṭafāʾ
 - 8) Sayyid Aḥmad Hādī
 - 9) Sayyid Hāshim
 - 10) Sayyid Muḥammad;
 - 11) Sayyid Maḥmūd
 - 12) Sayyid Khālīd
 - 13) Sayyid Muʾmin
 - 14) Sayyid Islām al-Dīn
 - 15) Sayyid Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Salīb
 - 16) Sayyid Shams al-Dīn

In *Khojah Vrattant*, the author traces this line under the heading “Genealogy of Pīrs”, as distinct from the line of Shāhs. Here the line of Imāms has been traced as follows:

- 1) Pīr Nabī Muḥammad Muṣṭafāʾ
- 2) Pīr Imām Ḥusain
- 3) Pīr Qāsim Shāh
- 4) Pīr Aḥmad ʿAlī
- 5) Pīr Satgur Nūr
- 6) Pīr Imām al-Dīn
- 7) Pīr Muḥammad Maṣṣūr
- 8) Pīr Ghālib al-Dīn
- 9) Pīr ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz

-
- 10)Pīr Muṣṭanṣir Bīllāh
 - 11)Pīr Aḥmad Hādī
 - 12)Pīr Qāsīm Shāh
 - 13)Pīr Maṣṣūr Muḥammad
 - 14)Pīr ‘Abd al-Mu’min
 - 15)Pīr Muḥib al-Dīn
 - 16)Pīr Khāliq al-Dīn
 - 17)Pīr ‘Abd al-Mu’min
 - 18)Pīr Islām al-Dīn
 - 19)Pīr Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn
 - 20)Pīr Shams al-Dīn

From Pīr Shams onwards, the line is fairly clear and there exists less difference of opinion. It is as follows:

- 1) Sayyid Shams al-Dīn
- 2) Sayyid Naṣīr al-Dīn
- 3) Sayyid Shahāb al-Dīn
- 4) Sayyid Ṣadr al-Dīn
- 5) Sayyid Ḥasan Kabīr al-Dīn
- 6) Sayyid Imām al-Dīn

From Ḥasan Kabīr al-Dīn also begins the line of *Pirs* as follows:

- 1) Sayyid Ḥasan Kabīr al-Dīn
- 2) Sayyid Raḥmatullāh
- 3) Sayyid Mashā’ikh [The Elder]
- 4) Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan
- 5) Sayyid Zain al-Dīn

-
- 6) Sayyid Şadr al-Dīn
 - 7) Sayyid Muḥammad Faḍīl
 - 8) Sayyid Pīr Mashā'ikh

⁴ Arnold (1979, 278) states that his name was Nūr al-Dīn but he was generally known by the Hindu name he had adopted, Nūr Satagar. Nūr Satagar reached India during the rule of the Hindu king Siddha Raj (r. 1094-1143). "He adopted the Hindu name but told the Muhammadans that his real name was Sayyid Sa'adat; he is said to have converted the Kanbis, Kharwas and Koris, low castes of Gujarāt" (Arnold 1979, 278).

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

1. Introduction

This thesis argues that it is possible for a scholar to be both orthodox and a mystic. The life of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī is evidence of this. There is a notion that exists and is perpetuated in much of academic writing regarding the orthodox '*ulamā*' in India. They are regarded by researchers such as Murray Titus (1979), as theologians concerned exclusively with the exoteric. Worst still they are labeled the '*ulamā* *al-sū*' [evil theologians] and by citing examples they are situated in the context of the imperial court as the state '*ulamā*' who have made position and power the necessary fruits of their careers. These '*ulamā*' are then compared to another group representative of Muslim religious life-the *sūfīs*. In contradistinction authors on the subject portray these sincere believers as the genuine upholders of Islāmic beliefs, piety and practice. This generalisation is detrimental to a comprehensive understanding of Muslim religious and social life.

The position of the '*ulamā*' should be revisited. This challenge is substantiated by examining manifestations of orthodoxy and mysticism in a single '*ālim*' [scholar]. The life of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattānī, a paradigm for this phenomenon, was therefore sketched briefly in Chapter Two. That the life of al-Fattānī is typical of other men of learning in his context becomes quite evident. The Shaikh's early education, training, his *riḥlah* [journey in search of knowledge] and devotion to the task of teaching and writing are all typical categories used by biographers to describe such scholars. Al-Fattānī is therefore a good enough subject and in no ways the exception.

In a study of al-Fattani's works in Chapter Three, it was shown that the Shaikh displays tendencies in his works that are typical of the orthodox scholars. The fact that his works fit into established genres of Islāmic scholarship and that there is a common "canon" of works that he refers to all point to his orthodox position. In describing each of his works it was also shown how these works manifest that the author had a mystical bent of mind.

In Chapter Four an attempt was made to examine the identity of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattani. To understand the religious persuasion of the Shaikh it was argued that it is necessary to examine the elements that constituted the identity of his people- the Bohras. It was shown that their occupation as merchants and a history that emphasised their ancient link to the faith of Islām were the chief factors that shaped their group identity. As part of this community al-Fattani was able to reform his people and steer their beliefs in an appropriate direction. The identity of the Bohras cannot only be understood in terms of their religious affiliation. It is shown that cultural identity is a most powerful element of group and individual identity. Religion interacts with ethnic identity either as identical to or precedent to ethnic identity, or as ancillary to ethnic identity.

The religious identity of the Bohras was explored in Chapter Five where after examining the various religious groupings of the Bohras it was shown that the two principal communities amongst them i.e. the Sunnī Bohras and the Dawūdī Bohras, differ substantially in their belief systems. Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir was opposed to the Dawūdī Bohra beliefs and like his predecessor Mullah Ja'far exerted himself to reform his people and rid them of any beliefs opposed to those of sunnī Islām.

2. Between orthodoxy and mysticism

In Chapter One (p. 6) some basic principles, as identified by Oglu (1988, 245-250), that distinguished orthodox Islām from şūfism were discussed. It may be appropriate, in these concluding remarks to make some further observations in the light of what is known of al-Fattani's life.

In all the points of conflict between orthodoxy and şūfism Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattani followed the path that had been taken by the orthodox *‘ulamā’*. The fact that Shaikh al-Fattani was able at once to be both a şūfī and hold onto orthodox Islām meant that the *taşawwuf* that he subscribed to and the *silsilah* [order] in which he was initiated demanded adherence to the *sharī‘ah* as a necessary requirement of taking to the *ṭarīqah* [mystical path]. Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattani was able to close the breach between the religious law [*sharī‘ah*] and the mystical doctrines [*ṭarīqah*]. Mystical experience, in his view, should be in complete accord with religious doctrine. Failing to do so religion will be tainted with heresy and personal fallacy.

Al-Fattani was concerned with carrying the demands of religion through in the whole of life. *Sharī‘ah* should not only form part of how the individual rules his life but also form the rules of life which are the basis for the Muslim community, the Muslim *ummah*. The opposition that he offered to the *shī‘ah* groupings amongst the Bohra and the fight against the Mahdawīyyah stem from the concern and persistence that the *sharī‘ah* was binding on all Muslims. As such the Muslim community has a collective responsibility towards the *sharī‘ah*. Yet al-Fattani lived in an age of Islām in which the popularity of mysticism had led to the establishment of the systems of *taşawwuf* in every part of the Islāmic world. Like many parts of the Muslim world, Gujarāt was conducive to the flourishing şūfī brotherhoods whose message had reached the individual believer. Initiated into the şūfī *ṭarīqahs* himself al-Fattani also advocated that an intimate relationship should exist between God and His servants and the *ḥadīth* studies that he was so

much devoted to provided ample support for this idea. He was effective as leader because he wholeheartedly committed himself to the collective and individual concerns of his people. He was devoted to training *'ulamā'*, spreading the tenets of Islām and defending the faith against all attacks.

As far as the vexing question of *waḥdah al-wujūd* was concerned, al-Fattanī at no stage denies this doctrine which had been for ages an article of faith and the goal of the spiritual journey for innumerable mystics and philosophers. As an orthodox scholar what was important for al-Fattanī is that whatever stage or station may be attained by a traveller of spirit, he has to follow the rules of the *sharī'ah* to the end of his life's journey. The practical wisdom of the *sharī'ah* in the way it guards and enhances the faith and moral values of the believer and links his spirit to the Divine essence demands that it can never be suspended or superseded by the elevation of the spirit. What is significant is that in the case of al-Fattanī, those opposed to this position or to the *'ulamā'* could never brush it away as the enmity of the uninitiated.

Though there may have been division on the question of *waḥdah al-wujūd*, the scholars are unanimous in condemning the doctrine of *ḥulūl* or the incarnation of God or any of his powers in the world as a whole or a part of it. There is no reason to believe that al-Fattanī's view would have been any different.

In the *taṣawwuf* propounded by al-Fattanī the esoteric and the exoteric complemented each other. Mystic experience is not however an independent source of knowing the reality. It is not self-validating and as such its revelations have to be validated with reference to the Prophetic revelation [*wahī*]. Since the Qur'ān recognises no experience as self authenticating besides the *wahī* of the Prophet and makes no mention of the unitive experience there was no other authority to change the Prophetic vision of reality.

3. Shaikh al-Fattani's relevance to understanding the Sunnī Bohra *‘ulamā’* of South Africa

In the South African context a major grouping of Muslim theologians, the Jamiatul Ulama Transvaal was established in 1923 by members of the Sunnī Bohra community. It is interesting to note that like their predecessor Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir al-Fattanī, these *‘ulamā’* also prescribe to both orthodox beliefs and ṣūfī teachings. Belonging to the Deobandī school of thought they are distinguished from the Barelvis because of their rejection of what they consider to be a degenerated ṣūfism practiced by the latter.

The synthesis between *sharī‘ah* and *ṭarīqah* is articulated in their interpretation of Islāmic doctrines. Anchored in the tradition of assimilative practice the Sunnī Bohra *‘ulamā’* in South Africa have through their theological grouping provided an identity to the orthodox/mystic trends brought in from their ancestral villages and towns in Gujarāt. Its impact in maintaining this tradition is significant in terms of defining *taṣawwuf* within the parameters of *sharī‘ah*. This holistic approach has manifested itself in the proliferation of *makātīb* [Muslim schools] and *dār al-‘ulūms* whose antecedents are clearly *sharī‘ah-cum-taṣawwuf*. The support enjoyed by the *‘ulamā’* in its constituency reflects its endeavours to act as a conduit for these parallel manifestations of Islām. Its vigorous campaign to stem the tide of what it considers deviant interpretation of Islāmic doctrines is representative of Shaikh Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir's uncompromising efforts to root out erroneous beliefs promoted by pseudo-mystical movements. The reformatory vision of the Sunnī Bohra *‘ulamā’* to challenge practices and rituals which stem from *ghulū* [exaggeration] and misdirected zeal draw a striking similarity to Shaikh al-Fattani's opposition to similar movements of his time.

The *‘ulamā’* continue to shape and influence a substantial segment of the Muslim *ummah* through an approach to the *sharī‘ah* that embraces a spiritual dimension.

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