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Fulfilling the Mission: Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān, Women's Authority and Reinstilling Love for the Prophet

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Fulfilling the Mission: Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān, Women's Authority and Reinstilling Love for the Prophet

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An abstract of
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Abstract

Fulfilling the Mission: Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān, Women's Authority, and Reinstilling Love for the Prophet
By Summar Shoaib

Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International (MQI) is a Sufi transnational organization and movement run by Dr. Tāhir-ul-Qādrī, a man who is both a Sufi shaykh and an Islamic scholar with a doctorate in Islamic Law. My dissertation argues that despite the MQI being visibly dominated by men, it is female authority that 1) constructs the sense of community necessary to overcome barriers of distance in a transnational movement and 2) sustains the movement by organizing events on the ground and increasing membership through their network of family and friends. Women's authority is performed via the neo-khānqāh, or a Sufi environment that combines physical and virtual space to serve as a site to foster community for members of a transnational Sufi order. Despite the crucial role of women in the MQI, their authority cannot be constructed independently of the shaykh and his organization; the shaykh 's authority is constructed through the traditional means of transmission and lineage. However, women establish authority through a variety of means: through the *sohbat* of the shaykh, through their professional and educational backgrounds, and through their familial upbringing. These factors allow certain women in the MQI to serve as exemplars and function as authorities to other women. Using their authority, women argue against those who criticize the religious practices of the MQI and strive to bring other Muslims to the mission of reinstilling love for the prophet Muhammad.

Fulfilling the Mission: Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān, Women's Authority, and Reinstilling Love for

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Acknowledgments

When I struggled with the idea of ever finishing my PhD, I daydreamed about what I would write in my acknowledgements. Being given the opportunity to thank all those who have played a role in my academic and personal formation was something that motivated me, and I do not want to squander that opportunity by trying to be follow rules of convention in brevity. Love and gratitude feature heavily in my dissertation, and not just as reasons to celebrate the *mawlid*. I have many supporters in the form of professors, mentors, family and friends to whom I am indebted.

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At Emory, I was incredibly lucky to have a warm and supportive environment that fostered my academic development. Kenny Smith, Rebecca Makas, and Deeksha Sivakumar have been wonderful friends and colleagues who encouraged me through my many bouts of imposter's syndrome, read through drafts of my work, and supported me in countless

ways, whether by reading drafts of a paper, forming (and making me take part in) a dissertation writing group, or helping me rework a CV. I couldn't have asked for more thoughtful, generous and brilliant colleagues.

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At Emory, I was incredibly lucky to have a warm and supportive environment that fostered my academic development. Courses and meetings with Vincent Cornell, Devin Stewart, James Hoesterey and Velcheru Narayana Rao helped me think through the issues that would prove crucial to my dissertation. My committee members, James Hoesterey and Robert Rozehnal gave me detailed, thoughtful feedback that will continue to serve me well as I work on publishing the dissertation and advice for beyond the dissertation for which I am thankful.

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Scott Kugle was an encouraging, kind, and effective advisor, the kind that many envy and few are lucky to have. My project would not have been possible without him because the motivation and confidence I needed became possible under his direction. He gave me crucial guidance and encouragement especially as I struggled to handle the writing phase of the dissertation and pregnancy at the same time. Scott, I will always be grateful for your resolve to guide me to completion.

My family played a large role in my ability to pursue and complete my doctoral work. My mother-in-law, Shahida Yousuf, could write a manual on how to be a supportive Pakistani mother-in-law. After she moved to the U.S., our household ran like clockwork. She never waited to me to ask for help, instead, she cooked meals and made me to go to the library to get work done, offering to watch the little ones just so that I could get a chapter written. She also raised a son I am grateful to call my husband. Thank you, Mummy. My

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Note on Transliteration

For the following chapters, I will follow the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) transliteration system for Arabic. Working on a Sufi organization in a transnational framework, language is used purposefully to break out of a local or domestic context. Thus, although the organization is based in Pakistan, where *hadis* is more recognized than hadīth and *zikr* is more used than *dhikr*, the organization itself prefers the form of terms derived from Arabic. Therefore, I have been guided by the classical Arabic pronunciation of words where this differs from the Urdu. However, there are two main exceptions to this: the transliteration for South Asian names will follow the Urdu pronunciation: therefore, Tāhir-ul-Qādrī rather than Tahir al-Qadri, but ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, rather than ʿAbd al-Qādir Jilānī, since he is not South Asian. Also, I will use '-e' to indicate the *izafat* as in *sīrat-e-rasūl*, since this is the approach that the MQI takes. Personal names will be written in diacritics only in the first usage, and diacritic marks will show only vowels and not consonants with the exception of the ʿayn (represented by ʿ) and the glottal stop or hamza (represented by ʾ). All non-English words are italicized with the exception of words that are common to the English language, like Qurʾān, hadith, Sufi and jihad.

Introduction: Meeting Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān

Growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, I regularly attended *milād*, or the celebration of the birth of the prophet Muhammad.[1] My aunt hosted a *milād* every year, decorating her home with tiny strings of lights and colorful streamers, methodically assigning the recitation of naʿat, or hymns praising the prophet Muhammad, deciding the menu, and inviting so many of her friends and acquaintances that my knees would often touch another participant's on either side. At these *milāds*, women came dressed in their finest clothes, adorned themselves with fragrance, did *wudūʿ*, or ritual ablutions done before prayers or Qurʾān recitation, and recited *naʿat* and *nashīd*, poems praising Allah, in Urdu. The room where the *milād* was held would have a beautiful fragrance of incense and tiny roses misted with perfume were distributed to each attendee. The climax of the program would occur when women read *salāt-o-salām*, or praise and salutations upon the Prophet. Attendees observed particular decorum here, standing and folding their arms out of respect. It was at this point in the *milād* held by my aunt in 2002 that one woman refused to stand. After being prodded and censured for her refusal, she maintained that she attended the *milād* because "refusing an invitation would be poor *adab* [manners] but standing is a form of *shirk* [ascribing partners to Allah]." The woman had recently gravitated towards the teaching of Farhat Hashmi's Al-Huda, a conservative Wahhābī

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[1] *Milād* is celebrated on the 12th day of the Islamic calendar month of *Rabīʿ-ul-Awwal*; it is celebrated across the Muslim world with origins that date back to the Shīʿi Fatimids in the twelfth century. See Andrea L. Stanton, "Celebrating Muhammad's Birthday in the Middle East: Supporting or Complicating Muslim Identity Projects?" in *Identity Discourses and Communities in International Events, Festivals and Spectacles*, ed. Udo Merkel (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

Islamic movement in Pakistan targeting upper-class women in the hopes that the lower and middle classes follow in their footsteps. After the chaos that ensued with this incident, my family avoided attending *milād*. Contestations like this are not just a modern phenomenon or response to increasing exposure to Wahhābī movements. Contestation and debate are a part of the history of Sufism, as I will discuss in Chapter 3. During this *milād*, women entered the debate, claiming authority on both sides.

Having witnessed the open contestation of a Sufi practice in the U.S. by followers of a Wahhābī movement and leaving for college soon after, I did not attend *milād* for several years. Later, I returned to Atlanta for my doctoral studies and while eating at a local halal restaurant, I saw a flyer advertising a "Women's *Mawlid* Conference" in February 2011. Attending *milād* had become such a contentious issue in the local community that the public announcement of a women's *mawlid* conference surprised me. My curiosity led me to attend the conference and it was there that I was first introduced to *Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International* (MQI) and was exposed to ways in which women assert and perform authority in MQI.

My dissertation argues that despite the MQI being visibly dominated by men, it is female authority that 1) constructs the sense of community necessary to overcome barriers of distance in a transnational movement and 2) sustains the movement by organizing events and increasing membership through their network of family and friends. Despite the crucial role of women in the MQI, their authority cannot be constructed independently of the shaykh and his organization; the shaykh's authority is constructed through the traditional means of transmission and lineage. However, women

establish authority through a variety of means: through the *sohbat* of the shaykh, through their professional and educational backgrounds, and through their familial upbringing.

I make this argument in four steps: first, in order to understand the role and authority of women, we have to understand the authority of the shaykh. The MQI establishes the living sainthood of Tāhir-ul-Qādrī, its founder, through sacred biography, thus giving both power and authority to the leadership of the organization. Using literary and media analysis, I illustrate the ways in which Sufi tropes are employed to establish Qadri's sainthood in Chapter Two. Second, in Chapter Three, I provide a history of Islamic reform movements to give context to the need to establish orthodoxy in the present. The MQI creates a sense of relevance for its followers worldwide by transitioning from a focus on increasing local membership in Pakistan to emanating a global appeal. Both Qadri and MQI women establish authority and illustrate the orthodox nature of their theological claims through Qurʾan, hadīth and other means to counter the popular conception of Barelwī movements as South Asian corruptions of Islam. Tahir-ul-Qadri has also transformed his personal image to reflect identification with more universal images associated with Islamic ʿulemāʾ. I utilize visual research methods to analyze the way Qadri has adapted his appearance to suit his vision for the organization. Third, in Chapter Four, I show how the organization overcomes the physical distance that separates members in 90 countries that could prevent fostering a sense of identity, community and togetherness. The MQI and Tahir-ul-Qadri have become masters at utilizing the internet to create what I call a *neo-khānqāh*, or a Sufi environment that combines physical and virtual space to serve as a site to foster community for members of a transnational Sufi

order. Women's authority is performed in the neo-*khānqāh*, an arena that allows women to operate as "new religious intellectuals" and "connect with lay audiences."[2] In chapter four, I supplement interviews with a survey of MQI activity on the internet. Finally, MQI leadership recognizes and takes advantage of the role of women in society, particularly within the family structure, to bring more people to their movement. Women strengthen their role within the organization through a system in which women both serve as and follow female exemplars who help them navigate their spiritual and personal lives as they work towards the mission of the MQI. Women defend *mawlid* using the same scripturalist strategies as their adversaries but also use affective strategies, employing emotion in religious ritual to affect the heart and bring others to accept the validity of *mawlid* and Barelwī theology. Not only does the MQI recognize the importance of women in their ability to bring their children and other relatives to the same belief and practices, but interestingly, women often defend controversial practices by citing the piety of their mothers as proof in and of itself of the validity of such practices. Women strengthen their role within the organization through a system in which women both serve as and follow female exemplars who help them navigate their spiritual and personal lives as they work towards the mission of the MQI. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six where I illustrate the role of women in the MQI, I draw on a year and a half of ethnographic fieldwork with Minhājian women in the Dallas branch. Through the exemplar system that teaches them how to model appropriate comportment and the virtual space of the neo-*khānqāh* that

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[2] Hilary Kalmbach, "Introduction: Islamic Authority and the Study of Female Religious Leaders," in *Women, Leadership and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority*, eds. Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach (Boston: Brill, 2016), 5.

allows them to surpass limitations that exist in traditional spaces like the mosque, MQI women establish authority and contest adversaries who may argue against and critique their religious practices and belief system.

Meeting Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan

Literally meaning "The Way of the Qurʾān," MQI is a Sufi transnational organization founded by the charismatic Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri in Pakistan in 1980. Qadri[3] is most famous in the U.S. and Europe for issuing a book-length fatwa against terrorism; however, his efforts to boycott elections in Pakistan in 2013 and lead a major protest against the prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, in 2014 have resulted in a large following within Pakistan as well. In 2013, Qadri's political and academic endeavors have resulted in him being named by the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought amongst the top fifty of *The Muslim 500*, a list of the most influential Muslims in the world.[4]

At the Atlanta women's conference mentioned above, women conducted a *mawlid*[5] in which they performed devotional hymns praising the Prophet Muhammad and discussed their love for him. In response to attacks from conservative Muslims

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[3] As Akbar S. Ahmed has pointed out in *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity*, "In the cultural context of the subcontinent names of respected leaders are often preceded by titles" (xiv). Meaning no disrespect to the thousands of people who follow and revere Qadri, however, I am necessarily limited to having to occasionally refer to him as simply Qadri where necessary. See Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[4] "The Top 50: The Muslim 500," *The Muslim 500*, accessed November 15, 2013, http://themuslim500.com/2013-2/the-top-50

[5] Despite discursive flaws in the article with their understanding of orthodoxy and practiced Islam, Tapper and Tapper note: "As a general rule, the Arabic content of rituals seems to stand for 'orthodoxy;' and the more Arabic there is, the more acceptable is the ritual to the religious establishment." This is a strategy sometimes used by MQI members; here, MQI women in Atlanta advertised this as a *mawlid*, a term many South Asian women would be unfamiliar with, rather than a *milād*. See Nancy Tapper and Richard Tapper, "The Birth of the Prophet: Ritual and Gender in Turkish Islam," *Man* 22 (March 1987): 89.

condemning ritual practices such as *mawlid* and shrine devotion as *bidʿa*, or religious innovation, leaders from within the group defended the legitimacy of the practice as an expression of love for the Prophet. After the conference, I continued working with these women, fascinated by their dedication to the goal of bringing "everyone back[6] towards love for the Prophet Muhammad."

Female MQI members not only hold public *milād* for the community yearly, they also meet weekly for other devotional gatherings, where they study the Qurʾān and hadīth and discussed contemporary issues relevant for Muslim women. MQI gatherings appear primarily to direct women towards becoming authorities of religious practice and belief, guiding them to be in the company of those who are on the "right path" and teaching their followers how to respond to attacks from conservative Muslims such as followers of the Wahhābī or Salafi movements, who openly criticize the ritual activities of this Sufi community. Since no record exists of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday being celebrated in his lifetime, it is difficult for practitioners to deny the classification of *milād* as *bidʿa*, or innovation. However, while Salafi-Wahhābī movements often use the term *bidʿa* as blanket condemnation, it is worth noting that Sunni scholars often differentiate between *bidʿa hasana*, or "beneficial innovation," and *bidʿa sayi'a*, or "harmful innovation."[7] According to these classifications, *mawlid/milād* is considered beneficial by the hundreds of thousands of Muslims who take part in it every year, many who may even

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[6] This idea of a "return" to a sentiment originally in the community is represented by Minhaj ul Qurʾan's emphasis on the term "revival" or "revivalist" for Tahir-ul-Qadri.

[7] While Salafi-Wahhābī movements often use the term *bid`a* as blanket condemnation, it is worth noting that other Sunni scholars often differentiate between *bid`a hasana*, or "beneficial innovation," and *bid`a sayi`a*, or "harmful innovation." See Scott Alan Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law: Ahmad Zarruq, Sainthood, and Authority in Islam* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

contest its classification as a *bidᶜa* at all. I observed MQI women at *mawlid* conferences, at a public lecture by Qadri in 2013, and during *dars*, or study groups, and religious gatherings in Dallas arguing the orthodox nature and legitimacy of their practices.

My ethnographic fieldwork from December 2016 until April 2018 centered on activities at the Jameᶜ Hasan al-Basrī Center in Dallas, Texas, the most active branch of the MQI in the United States today. The center was inaugurated in 2014 by Qadri's son, Dr. Hassan Mohī-ud-Dīn Qādrī and was built primarily through the hard work and effort put in by the Mian family, a husband and wife team of doctors, and their three children. Dr. Syeda-Mayanaz Mian (known as Mayanaz) helps the center function and run smoothly and she is often seen doing everything from menial tasks like working in the kitchen to hosting the daughter of Tahir-ul-Qadri in her home. Her efforts do not go unnoticed, and other devoted MQI members often cite her dedication as a model to emulate. Riffat Qazi, another key figure amongst the women's group at the center, is the MQI Women's League President of the Dallas branch and leads the bi-weekly women's *dars* classes there. These two women are the primary leaders for the approximately thirty women that attend the center's events regularly. Both Riffat and Mayanaz serve as exemplars for women in the community for how women can best serve the organization and their families.

MQI Women as Exemplars

This dissertation is a study of orthodoxy, women's authority and female leaders in Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān as exemplars for the women they teach and with whom they interact. In her chapter "Exemplars and Rules," Caroline Humphrey claims that the Mongolian

concept of morality emphasizes cultivating the self through the discourse of exemplars over following rules.[8] Humphrey explicitly connects the idea of an exemplar with a teacher, someone who has "advanced and improved him- or herself in relation to some moral principle. In the case of religious people, behind the teacher there may lie a saint or god, to whose qualities the teacher also aspires."[9] Women who come to learn from MQI female leadership view their teachers as exemplary models insofar as they share the same ideas regarding the correct Islamic practice and creed. However, MQI teachers also constantly emphasize that they are true devotees of Tahir-ul-Qadri and his mission and all that they have been able to do is through his instruction. By modeling their own example and the influence that Qadri has played that MQI teachers hope that their students, like them, will become followers of Tahir-ul-Qadri and his teachings.

James Laidlaw also emphasizes that "people grasp and understand moral values…through their engagement with exemplars."[10] Rather than obeying a systematic code of rules or adhering to a Geertzian sense of "shared culture,"[11] people acquire and develop virtues by aligning themselves with one or more exemplars. The MQI embodies this principle, with attendees of the center engaging with exemplars at the local level through teachers and community leaders, while aspiring to the standards upheld by a greater exemplar, Tahir-ul-Qadri. As part of a group that emphasizes love and respect of the Prophet Muhammad as a necessary condition of faith and what constitutes the heart

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[8] Caroline Humphrey, "Exemplars and Rules: Aspects of the discourse of moralities in Mongolia," in *The Ethnography of Moralities*, ed. Signe Howell (London: Routledge, 1997) 42-43.

[9] Humphrey, 34-35.

[10] James Laidlaw, *The Subject of Virtue: An Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 87.

[11] Laidlaw, 87.

of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad is considered the ultimate exemplar for members of MQI. However, as was often explained to me, "electricity cannot be retrieved directly from the dam." The metaphor compares Allah to raw electricity; if accessed directly, it is so powerful that it could kill the seeker. Thus, Allah's message was ultimately relayed to the Prophet Muhammad, whose message is spread by Tahir-ul-Qadri to his followers to make it accessible. MQI followers can thus understand Allah's message and cultivate love for His messenger through the teachings of Tahir-ul-Qadri.

At Jameʕ Hasan al-Basrī, which serves as a mosque, school and community center all in one, women who function as key leaders in the MQI are the exemplars who can lead others to Qadri. Those who come to the center are primarily people who share the same ʕaqīda, or creed, as those who run the center. Although this is not usually stated discursively, Minhājians, as they sometimes call themselves, are followers of the Barelwī school of thought which, among other beliefs, emphasizes the ever-remaining presence of Prophet Muhammad through nūr-e-Muhammadī, or "Muhammadan light", and teachers and leaders in the MQI often speak of Ahmad Raza Khān, the founder of the Barelwī movement, in high esteem. The goal of the MQI leadership is thus to bring followers of the same Barelwī creed towards joining their movement; they often encourage the audience to take the next step of becoming a member of MQI, and thus, take on Tahir-ul-Qadri as their ultimate exemplar. Women encourage membership explicitly but also in small steps by distributing CDs of his lectures, referencing his name when teaching, presenting brief clips and videos featuring his talks at large gatherings, and encouraging the purchase of books written by Qadri. Other major events occur

around important days involving Qadri, such as the celebration of Founder's Day on February 19th, his birthday.

Female leaders are thus crucial to the functioning of the center and the expansion of the MQI in the U.S. Despite their key role at the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī center, female MQI leaders do not discursively claim the feminist label. Like the female mosque participants in Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*, Minhājian women are members of a movement that "is critically structured by, and serves to uphold, a discursive tradition that regards subordination to a transcendent will (and thus, in many instances, to male authority) as its coveted goal.[12] Male authority is established differently than women's authority in many Sufi traditions, and female Sufis often need male authority in the form of the shaykh as a prerequisite to establishing their own authority.[13] Minhājian women consistently attribute their knowledge to Qadri, who serves as the ultimate exemplar for the organization. They do not explicitly challenge patriarchal norms, beseeching women to gain the permission of their husbands to work towards the mission of the organization, and often emphasize the need for women to fulfill the rights of their husbands and children. However, these MQI leaders also enact feminist morals and principles in their own lives, exhibiting how a member can utilize her time fully for the good of the organization and illustrating the crucial role of women to "the mission." When I met Qadri in October 2013 to discuss my dissertation, I was given special permission to sit in on a

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[12] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 2-3.

[13] See Joyce B. Flueckiger, *In Amma's Healing Room* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 236; also see Kelly Pemberton, *Women Mystics and Sufi Shrines in India* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

meeting amongst members trying to develop their branch in Atlanta. Qadri specifically instructed women to hold meetings and "not cook biryānī [a meat and rice dish] because they need to be involved with the lecture."

By discouraging women from performing only menial tasks or from playing a token function, MQI leadership strategically utilizes the key role of women within the family and society to help develop and expand the organization's reach. They recognize that when a woman is devoted to the MQI mission, she may bring her family and members of her extended family and social network into the folds of the organization.

Women and Authority

Understanding the role of female leadership in the MQI is an exercise in understanding authority. Max Weber classifies authority in three different categories: legal, traditional and charismatic. Legal authority is based on a system of following, applying and making laws; traditional authority follows conventional attitudes and practices and finally, charismatic authority is based on "dynamism…[or] obedience, not to rules or tradition, but to a personal of imputed holiness, heroism or some extraordinary quality."[14] The charismatic authority of Tahir-ul-Qadri may be the force behind the success of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan; however, it is the traditional authority of women as mothers, wives, daughters and teachers that is the driving force on the ground. As a woman, my access was limited primarily to women in the MQI, except for occasional introductions to male leaders in the branch. On the surface, it may appear that men push

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[14] Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 23.

the organization forward; after all, Tahir-ul-Qadri is the organization's leader and his two sons, rather than his three daughters, are being groomed as his successors by taking on similar duties as their father, including giving lectures, meeting with followers, and purportedly in the process of writing several books. The young sons of Dr. Hassan Mohī-ud-Dīn Qādrī are also in the limelight, with Instagram accounts dedicated to documenting their whereabouts and activities. However, despite the wide variety of services offered to members at local branches, the MQI does not offer anything for men to the exclusion of women; on the contrary, there are women's *milād*s, women's *dars* groups, and even social events like mehndi nights held for women prior to Eid celebrations. In conversations at *dars* gatherings and in interviews, MQI women often expressed a concern with bringing their families, namely husbands, siblings, or grown children towards the same religious school of thought. These women are supported by one another in bringing men to the mission.

Minhājian women have authority with the women they teach, illustrating through exemplary behavior how to be a good wife and mother while also being completely devoted to the cause and the mission of the MQI. Not only do women have major roles within the organization, serving as members of the Supreme Council of the MQI and heading up operations in North America and Europe, they also are integral to the running of local branches and Minhāj centers.

During ethnographic fieldwork in Atlanta, Lucknow and Dallas, I discovered that women were crucial factors to the founding of branches there. Women are also important figureheads in the organization. Although women in the MQI may call Qadri during the

office hours he keeps for the community after Friday prayers, they do not have the same

access to Qadri as men in the organization; however, his daughters and daughters-in-law

regularly meet with community members and are revered by MQI women. Minhāj

leadership takes full advantage of the key position of women within the family structure

to bring entire families to the cause. When it comes to working for the mission, women

are not just active within their families, but even rally on the streets to support Qadri's

cause. In an article on Tahir-ul-Qadri's "Long March" between Lahore and Islamabad in

2013 protesting corruption by government officials, *The Express Tribune* reported that it

was the female supporters of Qadri that prevented him from getting arrested by standing

"…between the container [in which he stood] and the advancing police contingent, [with]

some of them even [chasing] the cops out of the area."[15] This was confirmed by Qadri's

security staff. The march was noted for its record-breaking number of female

participants.[16] The discourse of MQI women does not explicitly cite feminism, yet the

movement powerfully moves women to act in agentive ways. In *Handmaidens of the Lord*,

Elaine Lawless draws from ethnographic fieldwork in central Missouri with female

Pentecostal preachers who feel that they have been called by God to preach, a call that

obligates them to leave their husbands and children for much of the day in service of the

congregation, yet these women deny "any 'feminist' leanings."[17] yet in effect, often

occupy the position of preacher, "the single most authoritative position in the church and

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[15] *The Express Tribune*, January 16, 2013, https://tribune.com.pk/story/494650/qadris-angels-women-supporters-come-to-mqi-chiefs-rescue/
[16] *The Express Tribune*, January 16, 2013, https://tribune.com.pk/story/494650/qadris-angels-women-supporters-come-to-mqi-chiefs-rescue/
[17] Elaine Lawless, *Handmaidens of the Lord: Pentecostal Women Preachers and Traditional Religions* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), xix.

assume all of the power and responsibilities that that position implies." Much like female Pentecostal preachers, women in the MQI are key to the movement, engaging in recruitment, outreach and awareness efforts as much as and often even more than men; yet they do not claim authority in the same way as men. Despite their integral role in the MQI, the most active female members rarely take credit for their work and ability to employ traditional authority within the family and community as a benefit to the organization. Discursively, men and women both defer to the charismatic authority of Tahir-ul-Qadri and attribute their knowledge and abilities to him; however, MQI women often dilute their devotion for the shaykh outwardly, if only because the ability to express enthusiasm for the shaykh is gendered. Despite articulating feeling the same passion for and yearning to meet the shaykh as men, women have less access and express this devotion differently due to rules of adab and segregation.

Women in the MQI movement often use their authority to counter accusations of illegitimacy and debate the authenticity of their beliefs and practices. Although practices such as *milād/mawlid* and the commemoration of ʿurs, or death anniversaries of saints, which are commonplace for MQI members, are often met with criticism from other communities, Minhājians argue that their practices are indeed orthodox, appealing to universally accepted sources of Islamic knowledge like the Qurʾan and hadīth. In Robert Rozehnal's study of Chishtī Sābirīs in Pakistan, he finds that, much like Minhājians, Chishtī Sābirīs "…view Sufism as the essence of Islamic orthodoxy, an authentic discourse and practice firmly grounded in the dictates of normative law (*sharīʿa*) and prophetic

precedent (*sunna*)."[18] However, MQI members do not claim orthodoxy in their practices simply by appealing to *sharīʿa* or *sunna*. In her article "Women's *Mawlid* Performance in Sanaa and the Construction of 'Popular Islam,'" Marion Katz, drawing on the ideas of her interlocutors, argues for an idea of orthodoxy as simply "correct practice;" it is according to this understanding that women authenticate *milād*.[19]

At one gathering in Atlanta, for example, MQI members concluded an all-female *halaqa*, or religious gathering, by showing a short documentary that made explicit the political ties between the Wahhābī movement and the Saudi Arabian government, thus illustrating how practices being wiped out by the state had political rather than religious motives. At other times, women appeal to family histories, emphasizing the religious nature and intrinsic spiritual knowledge held by their mothers and grandmothers who taught them to observe *milād*. Finally, MQI members refer to verses in the Qurʾan that, among other concepts, enjoin believers to send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad. MQI women exercise authority by employing different strategies to challenge popular notions that argue against the validity of the religious practices they have engaged in since childhood, thus functioning as defacto intellectuals.

Much of the scholarship on Muslim female authority has focused on women scholars. In her book *American Muslim Women, Religious Authority and Activism*, Juliane Hammer emphasizes the transnational dynamics of Muslim American women's

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[18] Robert Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 12-13.

[19] Marion Holmes Katz, "Women's Mawlid Performances in Sanaa and the Construction of 'Popular Islam,'" *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40 (2008): 467-484.

intellectual production, but claims that more research is needed in order to understand the ways in which "American Muslim intellectuals are produced by and are producing Muslim thought."[20] Like much of the existing work on the MQI, Hammer's focus is on scholars or intellectuals, which warrants a discussion on who we consider to be the intellectuals of any given group.

Defining the Intellectual

Antonio Gramsci writes on the function of the intellectual in society and differentiates between traditional and organic intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals are, for example, "scholars and scientists, theorists, non-ecclesiastical philosophers, etc."[21] and others who "…represent a historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms."[22] Thus, individuals who fall into these categories, such as teachers and lawyers, have existed across different eras and will necessarily continue to exist in every era. An organic intellectual, on the other hand, "…participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought."[23] Therefore, while traditional intellectuals play roles required in every society, organic intellectuals work actively as influencers, struggling to transform thoughts and ideas.

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[20] Juliane Hammer, *American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More Than a Prayer* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 2012), 6.
[21] Antonio Gramsci, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, ed. David Forgacs (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 303.
[22] Gramsci, 302.
[23] Gramsci, 321.

Like Gramsci, Michel Foucault distinguishes between two types of intellectuals: the specific intellectual and the universal intellectual. The specific intellectual is like a "savant or expert," a person with specialized knowledge of a particular field or topic.[24] Giving the example of the atomic scientist after World War II, whose specialized knowledge was relevant to the well-being of mankind, Foucault clarifies that the specific intellectual can engage in universal discourse.[25] The universal intellectual, exemplified by writers, are those who fight for fairness and ideals that are applicable to all of mankind, such as justice and equality.[26] Foucault focuses on the political in his conceptualization of the universal intellectual as a "...person who utilises[sic] his knowledge, his competence and his relation to truth in the field of political struggles."[27] Foucault claims that with the intellectual, there is a "battle 'for truth', or at least 'around truth.'"[28] He understands truth to be "a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements."[29] Thus, Foucault's universal intellectual, who is concerned with truth as the construction and dissemination of statements, is similar to Gramsci's organic intellectual, who "makes coherent the principles and the problems raised by the masses."[30] MQI female exemplars are like Gramsci's organic intellectuals who participate and sustain a particular conception of the

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[24] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 128.
[25] Foucault, 128.
[26] Foucault, 128.
[27] Foucault, 128.
[28] Foucault, 132.
[29] Foucault, 133.
[30] Gramsci, 331.

world, and like Foucault's specific intellectuals with specialized knowledge of the Sufi path.

While Gramsci and Foucault distinguish between types of intellectuals, Julien Benda designates intellectuals, or "clerks," as he calls them, as a single "class of men […] whose activity essentially is not the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art of a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of non-material advantages […]" in *The Treason of the Intellectuals*.[31] As opposed to the "laymen," the original clerks that Benda refers to are indeed rare; men like Leonardo da Vinci, Goethe, Kant and Renan are defined as these clerks. This exceptional class of men was either detached from "the realism of the multitudes" or served as mere observers of it.[32] However, unlike these clerks of yesterday, what Benda sees as the "treason" of the clerks of today is a modern trend to act as the "stimulators" of the realism of the masses.[33] He not only "adopts political passions," he brings them into his activities, and using their doctrines, engages in "the game of political passions."[34]   Benda claims these clerks shun the universal and praise the particular, "praise attachment to the practical and denounce love of the spiritual."[35] More simply put, the clerks of today seek the possession of power and pursue concrete gains by getting involved in politics while eschewing the policies of the clerks of old, who engaged in discourse on "abstract principles."[36] While according to Benda's definition, MQI female leaders would not be considered intellectuals precisely

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[31] Julien Benda, *The Treason of the Intellectuals* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 43.
[32] Benda, 44.
[33] Benda, 45
[34] Benda, 45, 67, 78.
[35] Benda, 79, 103.
[36] Benda 44.

because they are women and because so much of what they do is behind the scenes, he might also classify Qadri as an intellectual of today because he is a male and because of his strategies. Qadri may also be criticized by Benda for the same reasons he is often criticized by some of his peers; Qadri does not simply talk about general or universal principles, he encourages active participation in politics to achieve the rights or goals that he promotes. Although Benda states clerks condemn love of the spiritual, Qadri encourages fostering love of the Prophet and God internally, which in turn, encourages practical action in the material world.

Primarily based on the work of Gramsci and Julien Benda, Edward Said lays out a brief discursive history of the term 'intellectual' in his book, *Representations of the Intellectual*. Said aligns himself more with Gramsci's vision of the intellectual and goes on to explicate his own definition of the intellectual. The intellectual is a representative, "…someone who visibly represents a standpoint of some kind, and someone who makes articulate representations to his or her public despite all sorts of barriers. [Said's] argument is that intellectuals are individuals with a vocation for the art of representing, whether that is talking, writing, teaching, appearing on television. And that vocation is important to the extent that it is publicly recognizable and involves both commitment and risk, boldness and vulnerability […]."[37]

Within the group of MQI women I have worked with over the past years, some are resources sought out by other women; others are considered experts in religious practice and ritual; some are considered model MQI members; others are admired for the favor

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[37] Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 12-13.

bestowed upon them by the shaykh. Many of them fulfill more than one of these roles.

Adhering to Said's definition of the intellectual, I argue here that primarily through the

acts of writing, teaching and speaking, MQI women fulfill the role of intellectual within

their public, representing their community and the organization within their family and

broader society, often at a level of certain risk to themselves. As evidenced in Ewing's

work, those who openly acknowledge engaging in practices such as shrine visitation and

pīr-murīdī, or the practice of taking on a shaykh, are subject to denigration and rigorous

debate against those in the community who associate the practices with tradition and

improper ritual as opposed to modernity and appropriate belief and practice.[38] MQI

women counter those who criticize their practices by engaging in debate over the

internet, which allows them to bypass traditional restrictions that exist in male-

dominated spaces like the mosque.

The MQI, Transnationalism and the "Cyber-Islamic Environment"

In his work, *Global Political Islam*, Peter Mandaville defines transnationalism as a

"…wider range of social formations and transactions which are structured across the

borders and spaces of nations, but which do not necessarily entail a primary role for

sovereign governments."[39] As a result of the rapid initial spread of Islam, Islamic

transnationalism has a history that dates back to the time of the second caliph, ʿUmar,

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[38] See especially the chapter "Everyday Arguments" in Katherine Pratt Ewing, *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).
[39] Peter Mandaville, *Global Political Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 276.

who reigned during the 7ᵗʰ century.[40] The history and development of Sufism, marked by the pursuit of knowledge and the expansion of networks, is likewise intertwined with transnationalism. The lives of well-known Sufi saints including ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī,[41] ʿAlī Hujwīrī, Muʿīn-ud-Dīn Chishtī and Farīd-ud-Dīn Masʿūd[42] were marked by travels throughout the continent in order to study, receive the guidance of other shaykhs or retreat to an ascetic lifestyle. As I will address later on, Tāhir ul Qadri, his forefathers, family members and many of his followers are no different in this regard; they often traveled and continue to travel to different countries or move to different cities to further education, study under a particular shaykh or be within close proximity to a community or center that is in line with their own particular creed or ʿaqīda.

It is vital to study the transnational dynamics of the MQI for several reasons. First, transnational networks like the MQI use modern media technology in new ways to create and sustain a community and engage with issues of authority. In a debate summarized by Hammer, scholars have articulated varying viewpoints on the effects of modernity on authority. On the one hand, Muhammad Qasim Zaman has claimed that "modern communication and information technologies or mass higher education have not necessarily curtailed the influence of the traditionally educated religious scholars; in fact, the ʿulema have often adapted their religio-political roles to changing times and challenges in ways that have made possible a new visibility for them in the public

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[40] Mandaville, 29, 276.

[41] Juan E. Campo, "Abd al-Qadir Jilani," *Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), 4.

[42] See Anna Suvorova, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The Eleventh to Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Routledge, 2004)

sphere."[43] However, Khaled Abou El Fadl has iterated the existence of a "crisis of authority" which emerged because "virtually *every* Muslim with a modest knowledge of the Qurʾan and the traditions of the Prophet was suddenly considered qualified to speak for the Islamic tradition [...]."[44] No matter where one falls in the scheme of this debate, it is clear that technology has given women in the MQI an unprecedented access and means to express authority. Studying the use of the internet by transnational networks like the MQI will allow us to examine the result of media technology on the "democratization of authority."[45]

In order to examine how authority intersects with the use of the internet, I employ the terminology of Islamic Studies scholar Gary Bunt and what he has called a "cyber-Islamic environment," an "umbrella term [that] acknowledges diversity among and within different zones in cyberspace that represent varied Muslim worldviews within the House of Islam, all of which present a reference point of identity with a conceptualization of Islam."[46] More specifically, I analyze the cyber-Islamic environment of the MQI, which spans social media networks on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, and includes the anchor website of the MQI. My dissertation incorporates the analysis of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan texts with internet fieldwork, in-person interviews and ethnography on the ground. This multi-faceted approach is necessary because of the various contexts MQI members

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[43] Muhammad Qasim Zaman, "Consensus and Religious Authority in Modern Islam: The Discourses of the 'Ulama." In *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, eds. Gudrun Kramer and Sabine Schmidtke (Boston: Brill, 2006), 176.

[44] Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (San Francisco: Harper, 2005), 38-39.

[45] Hammer, *American Muslim Women*, 101.

[46] Gary R. Bunt, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 1.

engage in; they read MQI publications, they attend events and prayers at the local MQI center and they go online to connect with the global MQI community and leadership.

MQI is a transnational network, and the internet is key to the building of this community. My fieldwork on the ground is focused on the religious practices of MQI women in the U.S., but these women engage with a virtual network of MQI members. As other ethnographers of social media have noted, "the issues that internet ethnography engages with can also become particularly relevant in relation to specific localities"[47] and thus, when studying online communities, it "might make sense to go to the countries and the people within the countries who are in some senses demonstrating the most advanced or sophisticated uses technology."[48] In his "netnography" approach, Robert Kozinets has emphasized the concept of community, claiming that online communities are not just virtual but often also meet in face-to-face interactions.[49] This likewise applies to MQI communities.

Some of the most dynamic forums for MQI members are on social media sites, primarily Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which have been dubbed "Web 2.0" technologies, "a term used to distinguish contemporary social media…from their immediate predecessors, the static Web pages and message forums that had been characterized [by] what was retroactively dubbed Web 1.0."[50] Since starting my work with the MQI in 2012, I have been able to witness certain interactions on social media that

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[47] J. Postill and S. Pink, "Social Media Ethnography: The Digital Researcher in a Messy Web*," Media International Australia* 145 (2012): 123.

[48] Robert Kozinets, *Netnography* (London: Sage, 2010): 17.

[49] Kozinets, 15.

[50] E. Gabriella Coleman, "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2010): 489.

serve as examples of women articulating authority on the internet. In one exchange I witnessed, women in the MQI were particularly upset at critics who claimed that Tahir-ul-Qadri prioritized his own safety over the safety of his followers during the Long March. The Long March, organized by Qadri and held in 2013, was held to protest the corrupt government in Pakistan. Qadri made headlines not only for the march, which proceeded from Lahore to Islamabad, but also because he took part in the march by sitting in a reinforced, bullet-proof shipping container. When critics claimed his followers were put at risk in the front lines of the march while Qadri was protected towards the back in a shipping container, MQI women on Facebook reacted by providing examples during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, claiming that the community of the Prophet never put him on the front lines of battle, thus claiming that the MQI is in accordance with prophetic tradition.

The group that I have worked with consists primarily of members of the Pakistani diaspora in the U.S. As cited by Coleman, Victoria Bernal's work on Eritrea has shown that diaspora and cyberspace communities are "homologous" because "in both cyberspace and the spaces of diaspora […] location is ambiguous, and to be made socially meaningful, it must be actively constructed."[51] However, virtual and diasporic communities are not necessarily socially homologous; the virtual communities I study tend to be comprised mostly of younger members of the MQI, although other factors such as level of education

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[51] Victoria Bernal, "Eritrea On-line: Diaspora, Cyberspace, and the Public Sphere," *American Ethnologist* 32:4 (Nov. 2005): 661.

and socio-economic levels are characteristics which will need further attention in my research.

My research focuses on the increasing role of women in MQI in endorsing and disseminating the ideas of the MQI through ritual practice and over the internet. With MQI branches all over the world, I am especially concerned with the role MQI women play in this transnational movement, both on a community scale through the practice of *mawlid* and other devotional activities, as well as a larger scale through the internet. The activity of women in an American branch of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan helps us to understand practices within the diaspora and transnational exchanges. This dissertation contributes to the ways in which we can understand the dynamics of female authority, transnational Islam, and digital religion. My fieldwork suggests that the religious practices and activities of women associated with Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan—including their participation on the internet--allow them to remain active within this Sufi organization and provide salient alternatives to more conservative Islamic women's movements, such as Farhat Hashmi's Al-Huda, that are a part of the dominant public religious discourse in Pakistan and amongst Pakistani diasporic communities in the United States.

Existing Literature on the MQI

Academic research on the MQI has been limited to institutional studies[52] or on the debate between ʿ*ulemā*ʾ.[53] Alix Philippon, a political scientist, has written about Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan as a socio-religious movement that has become political through the creation of Qadri's political party, Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), created in 1989, eight years after the founding of MQI. She has argued that the creation of PAT as a wing of the organization was a Sufi attempt at building an Islamic political modernity.[54] She evaluates the strategies employed by MQI in rallying the masses and their success and ability to do so as well as the MQI and PAT's placement within a larger Barelwī tradition of engagement with politics.[55] Although Philippon had the opportunity to attend an MQI spiritual tour in 2005, her work can be classified primarily as primarily as an institutional study.

M. Amer Morgahi, a religious studies scholar, has written two articles about the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan as a transnational movement affecting a specifically European Islam.[56]

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[52] See Alix Philippon, *Soufisme et politique au Pakistan: le movement barelwi à l'heure de la 'guerre contre le terrorisme.'* Paris: Karthala, 2011; Amer Morgahi, "Reliving the 'Classical Islam': Emergence and Working of the Minhajul Quran Movement in the UK," in *Sufism in Britain*, eds. Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel, 213-235. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

[53] See Ashok K. Behuria, "Sects Within Sect: The case of Deobandī-Barelvi Encounter in Pakistan," *Strategic Analysis* 31, no. 1 (2008): 57-80; Alix Philippon, "Sunnis Against Sunnis: The Politicization of Doctrinal Fractures in Pakistan," *The Muslim World* 101, no. 2 (2011): 347-368; Magnus Marsden, "Talking the Talk: Debating Debate in Northern Afghanistan," *Anthropology Today* 25, no. 2 (2009): 20-24; Simon Stjernholm, "Sufi Politics in Britain: the Sufi Muslim Council and the 'Silent Majority' of Muslims," *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 12, no. 3 (2010): 215-226.

[54] Alix Philippon, "Bridging Sufism and Islamism," *ISIM Review* 17 (2006): 17.

[55] See Alix Philippon, *Soufisme et politique au Pakistan: le movement barelwi à l'heure de la 'guerre contre le terrorisme.'* Paris: Karthala, 2011.; Alix Philippon, "When Sufi Tradition Reinvents Islamic Modernity: Minhaj ul Qurʾan, a Neo-Sufi Order in Pakistan," in *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation and Destiny*, eds. Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey, 111-122. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013;

[56] See M. Amer Morgahi, "Reliving the 'Classical Islam': Emergence and Working of the Minhajul Quran Movement in the UK," in Sufism in Britain, eds. Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); M. Amer Morgahi, "An Emerging European Islam: The Case of the Minhajul Qurʾan in the Netherlands," in *Producing Islamic Knowledge: Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe*, eds. Martin van Bruinessen and Stefano Allievi. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

Much like Philippon, Morgahi's work is an institutional study, evaluating the rhetoric and strategy of the MQI broadly as well as understanding the relationships between different wings of the organization, such as the Minhāj Women's League and the Minhāj Youth League. Morgahi states: "Behind the rhetoric of its independence, the Minhāj Women's League (MYL) only organizes programmes specifically for women. In addition, despite the presence of some competent women in the movement, the MQ[57] organizing body is still male-dominated."[58] However, when I asked Tahir-ul-Qadri about my project and referenced "Minhāj Women's League," he stated, "Rather than use Minhāj Women's League, you should say women's role in Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan to promote a moderate vision of Islam."[59] My ethnographic research with women in the MQI has revealed that while the organizing body of the MQI is predominately run by men, there are women in the organizing body and women still play a dominant role in organizing activity and increasing membership. Furthermore, as Morgahi has pointed out, the MQI is incredibly family-focused. "The MQ introduced the idea of 'being born within the MQ,' which means that MQ is a lifelong project that involves the whole family for its religious activism."[60] Despite acknowledging the crucial role of the family in promulgating the MQI movement, Morgahi relegates women to a secondary role within the organization.

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[57] Morgahi refers to the movement as MQ; I choose MQI because this is how the organization refers to itself.

[58] M. Amer Morgahi, "An Emerging European Islam: The Case of the Minhajul Qurʾan in the Netherlands," in *Producing Islamic Knowledge: Transmission and Dissemination in Western Europe*, eds. Martin van Bruinessen and Stefano Allievi. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 52.

[59] Audio-recorded meeting with Tahir-ul-Qadri.

[60] M. Amer Morgahi, "Reliving the 'Classical Islam:' Emergence and Working of the Minhajul Qurʾan Movement in the U.K.," in *Sufism in Britain*, eds. Ron Geaves and Theodore Gabriel (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 222.

Ron Geaves, a scholar of religion, situates the MQI as part of a Western Sufism, classifying it as one of many neo-revivalist movements[61] while Lene Kuhle, also a religious studies scholar, discusses the MQI briefly as one of many Muslim organizations in Denmark.[62] The MQI operates worldwide, yet scholars have primarily focused on the organization in discussions on European Islam. The internet has connected members of the MQI across Europe, North America and South Asia along with leaders of the movement in a way that is unprecedented. By conducting ethnographic research on both the internet and communities in the U.S., I hope to revise some of the conclusions made by the scholars cited above.

Outside of academic institutional studies, another genre of literature about the MQI is that written by his own network of followers.[63] These writings focus on the institution itself or on Tahir-ul-Qadri. Because Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan is an organization led by an indisputably charismatic man, scholars and followers who write about the MQI can easily overlook or ignore the crucial role of women within the movement. I hope to provide the first ethnography of the MQI movement that highlights the narratives of female members.

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[61] Ron Geaves, "Learning the Lessons from the Neo-Revivalist and WahhābīWahhābī Movements: The Counterattack of the New Sufi Movements in the U.K.," in *Sufism in the West*, eds. Jamal Malik and John Hinnells (New York: Routledge, 2006), 142-159.

[62] Lene Kuhle, "Mosques and Organizations," in *Islam in Denmark: The Challenge of Diversity*, eds. Jorgen S. Nielsen (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 81-94.

[63] See Muhammad Rafiq Habib, "A Critical Analysis of the Ideology of Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri with Special Reference to Islamic Revivalism," (PhD diss., University of Aberdeen, 2012).

Methodology and Challenges to Research

This dissertation is based primarily on ethnographic fieldwork conducted with the

MQI in Dallas from December 2016-April 2018. I first met with the MQI in 2012 and

attended events including study groups and conferences in Atlanta, so I occasionally draw

from this experience. However, my fieldwork during this time was sporadic. During my

time in Dallas, I lived within the community, took part in their bi-weekly study groups,

frequently attended special events, and scheduled interviews with the female leaders at

the center. However, my approach follows some previous scholars in this field by

combining fieldwork with text. As Rozehnal states, "…Sufi identity [is] textual and

contextual. It is envisioned and articulated in *texts*. At the same time, it is experienced

and expressed in ritual *contexts*." For the MQI, it is true that at least for shaykhs like

Tahir-ul-Qadri, Sufi identity is textual. The MQI claims that Qadri has written over a

thousand books, out of which 507 have been published and 493 are in the process of

publication.[64] The books that are available are primarily published in Urdu, with

significant numbers also published in English and Arabic. MQI members and admirers of

Qadri often publicize the vast number of books authored by Qadri to substantiate his

greatness as a scholar, despite being unable to verify their claim. Thus, the MQI articulates

Sufi identity for shaykhs, scholars and leaders through text. Although more devoted

members of the movement collect libraries of Qadri's works, many of Qadri's books are

not catered to a general or even well-educated population. During preliminary research,

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[64] "Islamic Library by Shaykh ul Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri," *Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International*, accessed September 7th, 2017, http://www.minhajbooks.com

I remember struggling with translating one of his hagiographies with a renowned professor, with an Urdu teacher, and later, even with my own mother. The Urdu used in this text was often infused with Arabic and Persian and included the use of unfamiliar and even archaic terminology for which more familiar substitutes were available, but purposefully not employed. Thus, when a majority of his followers would not be able to read these texts without some level of great difficulty, it is clear that these texts perform the particular function of presenting Qadri's prowess as a scholar. During gatherings held on topics such as controlling the *nafs* (ego), purification, or the conditions of God's accepting good deeds, more comprehensible and simpler manual-like texts by Qadri are available for purchase by those attending the *dars*. Members seek to live the ideas espoused in these texts in their daily and ritual lives.

During the course of my fieldwork and dissertation writing, I faced several challenges in conducting ethnography over the internet. Often, the sources I saved were moved, deleted or updated with new texts to replace them. The process of establishing Qadri as a living saint is constantly renegotiated and the texts that establish this are living texts which undergo change, revision, and renovation, making further research a necessity rather than just a possibility.

When researching a movement in which there is a charismatic figurehead, there is necessarily a community surrounding him or her that is characterized by intense and fierce devotion. Members of the movement were thus highly invested in portraying a positive image of the MQI and Tahir ul Qadri, which meant that any negative incidents experienced by former members were suppressed or at least not willingly or eagerly

discussed with me. In addition, it was difficult for me to verify information about Qadri in particular outside of his own assertions.

Additionally, my work was necessarily limited by the amount of time and access I had. As a woman, I had access primarily to women and girls. I was not privy to the conversations and dealings of men at the center, and I felt that pursuing that line of research would have diminished my standing with the women. I did get to witness practices held with men and women in conjunction, but I realize that my dissertation is not a reflection of the ritual lives of the MQI community as a whole. It takes time to establish rapport and trust with a community, and the longer I worked with the Dallas MQI branch, the more access I gained. This continued even up until the point of my defense, when I discovered aspects of Dr. Mayanaz's work and extent of involvement with the community that I had not been privy to before.

The sources for this dissertation are ethnographic fieldwork conducted with the MQI, internet sources and relevant MQI publications. The chapters of this dissertation will likewise provide an analysis of the MQI according to these different sources.

Structure of the Dissertation

The chapters are organized in a pyramid-structure paralleling the organization, starting Qadri, moving onto the organization itself, and ending with fieldwork on the activities of MQI women on the ground. This is the clearest way to convey the organization of the MQI, although its institutional structure is complex, consisting of various networks. What is clear is that Qadri is at the top of this structure. There is also a

Supreme Council that comprises key leadership of the organization, including Qadri's two sons, his daughter-in-law, Dr. Ghazala, as well as Dr. Mayanaz. The organization hereafter was quite confusing to me even after working on the MQI for several years. There are leaders in charge of different regions, like Europe, and different countries, for example, the U.K. There are multiple branches in each country and leaders within each branch with varying responsibilities, including posting on social media and fundraising. These leaders are given some advice and guidance about the sort of events to hold and what areas to work on from regional organizers and senior leadership like Qadri, but they primarily operate independently and are self-motivated, since they are not paid for their efforts. With a multitude of sub-groups like Minhaj Sisters and Mustafavi Students Movement, among many others, communication between them and the structure of the groups and the hierarchy of leadership after Qadri all remain complex.

Seen as "*Shaykh-ul-Islam*" and lovingly called "*Qibla Huzūr*" by his devotees, Qadri's personality is central to the MQI movement. Chapter 2 will address the role of the shaykh within his organization and will illustrate how the internet and other texts have been used to fulfill a particular goal: to position Tahir-ul-Qadri as a living saint to his followers. Starting with an overview of theories of sainthood, I analyze the hagiography of Farid-ud-Din Qadri, a text published by MQI on Tahir-ul-Qadri's father that, by focusing on the sanctity, holy character of, and miracles performed by Farid-ud-Din, position Tahir-ul-Qadri in a Sufi framework as a saint. I then examine Qadri's biography, as relayed through one of his lectures, and accounts of his personal habits, written by his daughter-in-law, Dr. Ghazāla Qādrī, for a comparative analysis. MQI members are united through

their dedication to Tahir-ul-Qadri, the mission of reinstilling love for the prophet Muhammad and by the vision of a moderate Islam.

Chapter 3, "Performing Transnationalism: The MQI and the History of Islamic Reform Movements in South Asia," will provide a history of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan within the context of the debate over Sufism in Pakistan. Why are followers of the MQI and Tahir-ul-Qadri himself met with criticism and how do they fit within a broader history of socio-religious critique? How does the MQI officially position itself to talk about practices like shrine devotion and *mawlid*? I start with a historical overview of other Islamic revival movements in South Asia, giving context to the birth of MQI in Pakistan. Movements like the Ahl-e-Hadīth and Deobandīs that have historically criticized Barelvi practices have contributed to a history and environment that is still relevant today. I then move into the debate over Sufism in Pakistan, starting with 1959, when the Ministry of Awqāf was created in Pakistan in order to decrease the influence of *pīrs* at Sufi shrines.[65] This chapter shows how the MQI has accommodated this critique by transforming to illustrate a shift from local to universal appeal. This shift has occurred on the organizational level, but it is most apparent through the visual transformation of Tahir-ul-Qadri.

Shifting from local to universal appeal has involved heavy usage of the internet. Moving from a historical context of the Sufi transnational organization and its founder, Chapter 4 delves into sociological analysis by addressing the innovative ways in which MQI members utilize the internet to maintain and expand their network and articulate their authority in interesting ways. In a transnational network where followers do not take

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[65] Ewing, 70.

a formal oath of initiation, the internet plays an important role in granting followers

sohbat, or an intimate form of company, with the shaykh. In his work on cyber-Sufism,

Robert Rozehnal reads Sufi webpages as religious texts and a second sacred space,

viewing these sites as "critical alternative sites for the negotiation and expression of a

distinctly American Muslim identity."[66] I conclude that MQI members are part of a *neo-*

khānqāh, which I theorize as a dual environment combining the physical space of the

mosques and branch centers occupied by members with the virtual space of the internet;

the neo-*khānqāh* allows devotees of a Sufi shaykh to transcend physical devotion to unite

in brotherhood and express devotion to their shaykh and organization. For MQI members,

the virtual and physical space are interlinked; the local branches allow them to conduct

important groundwork for the mission while virtually updating other Minhājians through

live feeds and photos of their events, encouraging and receiving feedback from one

another on the success of their efforts. The activities of the local branches are thus not

only facilitated by communication with members all over the world, but the virtual aspect

of the neo-*khānqāh* is observable even in the physical environment of the local branch.

In Dallas, video cameras roll and pan during important events like the *mawlid*, while the

Social Media/Communications Director takes photos of gatherings like the women's *dars*

to document and put online.

    While Facebook is primarily used to maintain branch pages and contact between

members in different locations, Twitter is used by Tahir-ul-Qadri to make brief statements

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[66] Robert Rozehnal, "Cyber Sufism: Lessons from the Landscape of American Digital Islam," (presentation, Wednesdays at the Center from Duke University, Durham, N.C., October 4, 2017.)

to his followers and Instagram is often used as a way for followers to be in the intimate

company of their shaykh by looking at pictures of him or his family. His pictures are posted

on Instagram where viewers can view them as acts of devotion and his lectures are

recorded for followers to listen to and view on YouTube. Members locally and

internationally use Whatsapp to communicate and keep in touch with one another, and

some MQI members, like famous young *naʿat-khwān* (*naʿat* reciter) Milad Raza Qadri,

has his own Snapchat followed by fans. Since first becoming aware of the MQI in 2011, I

have witnessed their website develop immensely, adding translations into Arabic, Urdu

and English and supplementing the site with a live feed of news relevant to Qadri and

events planned for the future. This extensive use of the internet allows people to connect

with other members across a transnational network while still maintaining traditional

close ties enabled through the establishment of local centers. The internet allows

members to circumnavigate traditional systems of *pīrī-murīdī*, or the relationship

between a shaykh (the *pīr*) and his disciple (*the murīd*), in which the *murīd* lived near the

pīr to learn from him daily.

Chapter 5, "Female Exemplars and Islamic Authority," maps the variety of ritual

practice that occurs in an American (Dallas) branch of a Sufi transnational organization

with MQI women. shows how women serve as key exemplars and exhibit authority in the

MQI. Comparatively, the role of women in the organization is not as publicized as male

figures at the forefront of the movement, like Qadri, his sons, and his grandsons, nor do

women hold as many leadership positions as men within the organizing body; however,

contrary to popular depictions of Muslim women as relegated to the domestic sphere,

women in the MQI play a key role in the movement, organizing community action, attracting more members to the organization, and helping raise funds. Women are active within the movement as well as within their families in rallying for the MQI cause and bringing their relatives towards this school of thought. Women's activism is duly promoted by male leadership through training sessions and conferences held specifically for women as well as through advice given to branch leadership by Qadri.

The extent of women's involvement is best exemplified by their leadership and participation in two gatherings: the *mawlid* and the meetings leading up to it, as well as *dars*, religious study groups held biweekly at the center. Female members of the MQI especially use *mawlid* as a means of performing authority and making their voices heard, quite literally, when they publicly recite *naʿat*, or poetry in praise of God and the Prophet Muhammad. At *dars* gatherings, women study Islamic ideals through the consideration of Qurʾan, hadīth and the lives of prophets and saints. The *dars* leader provides common examples from family and work to impart important lessons and women have a voice within the class by relating to their own lives. This chapter will discuss the role of *mawlid* and *dars* in giving a voice to women within the MQI.

Chapter 6 analyzes the dialogue and negotiations of MQI members with or imagined to be held with critics of their practices and beliefs. While some of this dialogue is actual, much of it is imagined or rhetorical, with women anticipating the arguments or criticism they believe adversaries hold to be true. MQI women defend Barelwī ideas at public events like the ladies' *mawlid* and in more intimate gatherings like the women's *dars*, sometimes guiding or asking one another how to best articulate the reasoning behind

practices like *naʿat* and *mawlid* that are often criticized by other Muslim communities as *bidʿa*, or innovation. Women defend these practices by interpreting orthodox sources like Qurʾan and hadīth and cite the cultivation of particular feelings and emotions, like love and reverence towards the Prophet, as further justification.

Chapter 7 will conclude the dissertation, addressing the implications of my work with MQI women on issues of women and authority, transnational Islam and the cyber-Islamic environment and discussing possible avenues for further exploration. This dissertation analyzes the role that women play in an outwardly male-dominated organization, surpassing traditional boundaries that exist in physical spaces of worship to exert authority.

Chapter 2: A Living Saint Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri and the MQI

With a membership supposedly spanning over 90 countries, Tahir-ul-Qadri is not just the founder of a global organization, he is considered saint-like to the thousands of people who follow him. Qadri is called "*Qibla Huzūr*" by his devotees, or the audience for and participants in his sainthood; *qibla* literally means "direction" and in the Islamic context, refers to Mecca, or the direction that Muslims face when they pray. He is also called "*Shaykh-ul-Islam*," or "Leader of Islam." Both titles indicate his role as a source of guidance and a compass in the lives of his followers. It is impossible to understand the phenomenon of the MQI and women's roles within it without understanding Qadri, his life and the centrality of his role. In this chapter, I analyze Tahir-ul-Qadri as a "living saint" through the lens of theories of sainthood, Sufi genealogy and hagiography. I will define the term "saint" and analyze the ways in which this term helps us to understand Qadri's role in the MQI. I will then look at how power has been understood by Michel Foucault, Talal Asad and Vincent Cornell to show how sainthood produces power. Because sainthood is created, in part, through hagiography, I will analyze the hagiography of Farīd-ud-Dīn Qādrī, Qadri's father, to look for signs that point to the sanctity of Tahir-ul-Qadri in a Sufi framework. Genealogy and relationships of *bayʿat*, or spiritual initiation, are ways in which a shaykh's abilities, knowledge, and spiritual power are asserted and assessed. Thus, analyzing his father's hagiography is key to uncovering notions of sainthood with regards to Qadri himself. Finally, I will look at three different genres of hagiographies of Tahir-ul-Qadri: one which is a video recording of Qadri delivering a lecture based on his life story; the second, a written hagiography based on that lecture written by an active

member of the MQI and approved by the organization, and the third, an intimate look at the daily routine and habits of Qadri as written by his daughter-in-law, Dr. Ghazāla Hassan Qādrī. These sources will not only provide readers with a basic sense of the sociological background of Tahir-ul-Qadri, but also include indications that he was chosen for an important and holy mission as believed by his followers, half of whom are women. Therefore, women play an important role in the establishment of Qadri's sainthood, whether through hagiographic recount-writing, the translation and dissemination of saintly biography or through the acceptance of his sainthood as a practical condition of membership in the MQI.

Saints, Dead or Alive

For the purpose of this dissertation, I have chosen to identify Tahir-ul-Qadri as a saint. This decision may be controversial because the MQI community that admires and follows Qadri does not explicitly call him a saint, and he is certainly not considered a saint by outsiders who deem him a false scholar. However, he fits the analytic category of a saint according to my definition of the term, which stems from the work of Robin Rinehart, a scholar of Hindu hagiography. She defines the term "saint" as "people whom the members of a particular religion deem to exemplify their highest ideals. The saint has achieved something that most ordinary people cannot; nonetheless, the saint's achievement of the religion's highest ideals makes him a worthy figure for imitation."[67]

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[67] Robin Rinehart, *One Lifetime, Many Lives: The Experience of Modern Hindu Hagiography* (Atlanta: The American Academy of Religion, 1999), 4.

Because sainthood can be contested within religious communities, a more accurate definition would classify saints as people whom the members of a *particular religious community* deem to exemplify their highest ideals. Tahir-ul-Qadri fits this refined definition of a saint: he is considered the highest exemplar for his community of devotees; they collect and read his books, watch him on Minhāj TV, hear his lectures religiously and try to live their life in such a way that models him as an exemplar.

When classifying Tahir-ul-Qadri as a living saint, it is important first to understand the history and implications behind the term. I will address here two main fallacies with the common perception of the term saint: its association as a Christian term and the idea that saints may only be classified as such after death. Cultural anthropologist and scholar Talal Asad critiques the influence of Western historical thought on understandings of religion and anthropology and calls for the need to understand the implications and assumptions underlying this history to study non-Western, non-Christian communities.[68] This need is apparent when analyzing the work of sociologist Bryan Turner, who identifies the saint as a "Christian term" that cannot be applied to the ideas of "marabout, Sufi, dervish or wali."[69] Part of the difference that Turner identifies between the concept of a Christian saint and Muslim one is that "Christian saints are dead saints [while] Muslim marabouts are recognized during their lifetime."[70] He also claims that while the concept of sainthood in Christianity is an orthodox one, he labels Islamic orthodoxy as having a "koranic [sic]

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[68] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
[69] Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1998), 61.
[70] Turner, *Weber and Islam*, 68.

core of monotheism," implying that the veneration of saints somehow violates monotheism, calling it "formally and practically heretical."[71]

In response to Turner's assertion that Christian saints are dead, Vincent Cornell points out that "even a Roman Catholic saint has to be recognized as holy in life before being canonized after death;" this is why "any serious investigation of sainthood …must be conducted among the living as much as among the deceased."[72] It is the official recognition process that cannot take place while a saint is alive because "…one could never be certain about his or her future activities."[73] Studying sainthood in process allows us to understand the qualities that result in the recognition of sainthood and the communities around which these saints are organized. In following the methods of historian Aviad Kleinberg, we must study the role of living saints in society and "… the social processes by which a community [comes] to recognize one of its members as a saint."[74] Kleinberg's work illustrates the importance of studying the communities which come to produce saints; however, as a historian working on the Middle Ages, he is limited in scope when it comes to studying the community surrounding the living saint. My work on Tahir-ul-Qadri and his community of devotees in Minhaj ul Qur'an during his lifetime is thus a major contribution to research on sainthood in process.

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[71] Turner, *Weber and Islam*, 62.
[72] Vincent Cornell, *The Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), xxix.
[73] Aviad Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 6.
[74] Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country*, ix.

Although Turner juxtaposes monotheism with sainthood in Islam, for MQI members and others who believe in the concept of the *wali* or *pīr*, sainthood is a fundamental truth and thus, orthodoxy and sainthood go hand in hand. In his "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," Asad states that anthropologists "…should begin, as Muslims do, from the concept of a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qurʾan and the hadīth." [75] Minhaj-ul-Qurʾan members root the discourse of the *walī*, or saint, in Qurʾan and hadīth.[76] Qadri's efforts to defend and advocate the beliefs and practices dear to MQI members are further proof of his sacred status to followers.

Qadri is an exemplar for his community of believers; his life is thus considered an instructional model for his devotees. Lectures about his life and hagiographies of his father serve as didactic paradigms of sainthood, displaying sainthood as both inherited and absorbed through example. As this study of hagiography will show, authors of the saintly biographies of Tahir-ul-Qadri and his father, Farid-ud-Din Qadri, illustrate the supremely supernatural primarily through Farīd -ud-Dīn. By doing so, the MQI establishes hereditary *baraka* from the father, Farid-ud-Din, to his son, Tahir, while using Tahir-ul-Qadri's life story to illustrate other characteristics indicative of saintliness, such as austerity, wisdom and faith.

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[75] Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam" (Washington, D.C.: Center of Contemporary Arab Studies, 1986), 14.

[76] For example, one of the most common verses cited is Q10:62, which states, "Behold! Verily on the friends of Allah there is no fear, nor shall they grieve."

Charisma and Authority

For the community that follows him and considers him their shaykh, Tahir-ul-Qadri holds authority because of his perceived closeness with God. Authority and intimacy with God are intrinsically connected in the Islamic tradition of sainthood. Vincent Cornell explains how the history of the Islamic term for saint, "*walī*," has been associated by different scholars with either the term *walāya* or *wilāya*, which have been defined by scholars interchangeably to mean authority or closeness.[77] Although there has been debate over which of the terms serves as the origin for the word *walī*, Cornell posits that the term connotes both authority *and* intimacy with God. Because the *walī* is a friend of God, he is given authority by those who see him as God's protégé; the *walī* is "both an intermediary and a patron for his clients."[78] The wali's position both as an authority and an intimate of God is explained by devotees of Qadri when describing him as a substation filtering electricity, or the power of God, to his followers, a metaphor I will address in more detail later.

Followers of Qadri cite different aspects of his personality as evidence of his authority, including his scholarly training, his vast knowledge, and his initiatic and genetic links to great Sufis. Most often, however, MQI members cite Qadri's charisma. Charisma and authority are connected in the study of sainthood, and academic discussions of charisma often start with the work of sociologist Max Weber. He defines charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men

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[77] V. Cornell, xvii-xix.
[78] V. Cornell, xx.

and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities."[79] It is through the expression of these powers or qualities that the charismatic leader (in this case, the saint) gains legitimate authority. Weber states that the charismatic leader attains or maintains authority "by proving his strength in life."[80] Weber differentiates between charismatic authority and concepts of traditional and rational authority; authority on rational grounds "[rests] on a belief in the "legality" of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority)" while authority on traditional grounds "[rests] on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority)."[81] In *On Charisma and Institution Building*, Weber theorizes that where charisma exists, institutions cannot exist, and where institutions are built, charismatic authority wanes into traditional or rational authority. This is because institutions are built to ensure permanency of some kind; thus, Weber stipulates that if charismatic authority is "to take on the character of a permanent relationship forming a stable community of disciples or a band of followers or a party organization or any sort of political or hierocratic organization, it is necessary for the character of charismatic authority to become radically changed. Indeed, in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating."[82] Therefore, as charismatic authority undergoes the process of

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[79] Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 48.
[80] Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 22.
[81] Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 46.
[82] Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 54.

routinization, the attraction of charisma decreases with the "supply of economic and political demands."[83] As Raymond Bradley points out in *Charisma and Social Structure*, if we adapt Weber's theory, "charisma [is] little more than a momentary expression of collective desire."[84] This calls into question the utility of Weber's classification of charismatic authority as a fleeting moment in time; however, many of Weber's assumptions regarding charismatic authority can be called into question when considering a personality like Qadri who does not easily fit into any one category.

Weber's understanding of charismatic authority as fleeting or transforming to rational or traditional authority once a saint takes on disciples is not useful for understanding Qadri as a shaykh, politician and as the leader of a transnational organization. If we understand legal authority as "the right of those elevated to authority under [normative] rules to issue commands" and traditional authority as "the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under [the sanctity of immemorial traditions]," neither is in sharp contrast, as Weber suggests, to the charismatic authority bestowed upon saints. When analyzing a living saint like Qadri, should one focus on Qadri's authority to issue commands as a political leader to his party, his authority under the tradition of Islamic scholarship, or his authority as a *pīr* to his *murīds*? Many of Weber's assumptions regarding pure charismatic authority simply do not apply to Qadri. Weber claims that the "administrative staff of a charismatic leader… [is] not technically trained," assuming this follows because the disciples are called "on the basis of [their] charismatic

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[83] Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 39.
[84] Raymond Trevor Bradley, *Charisma and Social Structure: A Study of Love and Power, Wholeness and Transformation* (New York: toExcel, 1987), 279.

qualifications."[85] Scholars must question what Weber considers technical training; indeed, those who are closest to Qadri spend significant amounts of time with him, observing his habits and listening to his lectures. In the Sufi context, *sohbat*, or staying in the company of a shaykh, is an integral form of training.[86]

Weber also argues that "charismatic authority is specifically irrational in the sense of being foreign to all rules."[87] However, charismatic authority is not immeasurable. Weber defines charisma as a quality that sets the leader apart from ordinary men on the basis of perceived extraordinary powers or abilities. Cornell shows that "the nature of miracles granted the great saints by God" is what most often set these saints apart from ordinary men, using anthologies of saintly biographies from the 13-15th centuries to classify the types of information, namely the types of miracles, mentioned most often.[88] Finally, Weber claims that pure charisma "constitutes a 'call' in the most emphatic sense of the word, a 'mission' or a 'spiritual duty;' as a result, "it repudiates any sort of involvement with the every-day routine world."[89] Qadri and his movement indeed have a sense of a spiritual call and followers often cite the mission as a driving force in their fervor. This mission does not result in repudiation of the routine world, but instead serves as a motivating factor to get involved with politics, human rights and welfare issues to incite change. Thus, far from the image of a hermetic saint, Qadri's spiritual passion also drives his desire to change the state of affairs in Pakistan and advocate for Islam and Muslims,

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[85] Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 39.
[86] One of the MQI leaders I worked with read Qadri's books and listened to his lectures, but she asserted that she learned the most in the company of Qadri and his family, regarding him "as a live model."
[87] Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 52.
[88] V. Cornell, 120.
[89] Weber, *On Charisma and Institutions*, 52-53.

whether through the MQI's special consultative status with the U.N. or through his renowned fatwa against terrorism.

Despite Weber's mischaracterizations surrounding charismatic authority, Tahir-ul-Qadri fits his understanding of a charismatic leader in multiple ways. The followers of Qadri believe him to be an exemplar, a man who is exceptional among men. The acceptance of Qadri as a person endowed with exceptional or even supernatural qualities will be evident later in the chapter when I analyze his hagiographies. Qadri has demonstrated exceptionality in his lifetime to the satisfaction of his devotees through various mediums, including his inferred ability to foretell the future, and ascetic-like qualities such as the power to survive on very little food or sleep.

In my first experience with participant observation with Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan members, I attended a *mawlid* recitation at the home of the founder of the Atlanta branch. She implored the women attending to donate anything they could spare to help bring *Qibla Huzūr*, or Tahir-ul-Qadri, to Atlanta to come speak to them. She narrated that every time they asked him to visit, he would say "We will see," but that this time, he responded, "InshāAllah," giving her the impression that he would be visiting soon. Having heard this, her daughter began crying uncontrollably at the thought of being in his presence soon. This incident indicates an understanding of Tahir-ul-Qadri as one who has insight into future events. When Qadri eventually did visit Atlanta a year later, he stayed at the home of this devotee, who later confided that he "hardly slept and ate very little," usually not even finishing his food. Devotees would then partake of his leftovers, now infused with *baraka*. These narratives are illustrative of the type of power sainthood wields; thus, in

order to understand sainthood, we must understand charisma, authority, as well as power.

Religious Power

Qadri wields both power and authority in his capacity as a shaykh or a living saint, his status as leader of a transnational organization and his role as the leader of a political party. In this section, I will be discussing the relationship of sainthood with power through the works of Michel Foucault, Talal Asad and Vincent Cornell. Because Asad and Cornell are influenced by Foucault, I will start with what Foucault's work, *Power/Knowledge*, says about the nature of power. Foucault states that "in any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and function of a discourse."[90] With regards to the concept of saints, power is consolidated through the circulation of multiple discourses establishing one's sainthood, including discourse on the saint's knowledge and power to perform miracles as coming directly from God.

Power has often been discussed as "negative;" however, Foucault clarifies that power is not always oppressive, but rather, it also "traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression."[91] Thus, power is pervasive and should be

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[90] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 93.

[91] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 119.

"analysed[sic] as something which circulates."[92] As a discourse of power, sainthood produces authority, knowledge and miracles. It also produces truth and discipline. Foucault states that each society has "regimes of truth," or "… types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true."[93] The MQI works actively to construct and maintain sainthood as a regime of truth, which is key to how followers understand and make sense of the world.

Asad's *Genealogies of Religion* addresses the ways in which power contributes to an understanding of religion, following in the footsteps of Foucault. Asad criticizes Weber, whose definition of power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance" contradicts Foucault's understanding of power.[94] Asad points out that this definition obscures "the conditions within which obedient wills are created."[95] Creating an obedient will requires "a particular program of disciplinary practices."[96] Disciplinary practices for MQI members entail recommended programs of prayer, fasting, *dhikr*, and maintenance of a constant state of *wudūʿ* in order to cultivate a virtuous self. Asad criticizes Geertz, who defines religion as " (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting

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[92] Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 98.
[93] Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) 73.
[94] Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, 15.
[95] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 125.
[96] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 134.

moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[97] Instead, Asad associates disciplinary practices with power, pointing out that "… it is not mere symbols that implant … dispositions, but power--ranging all the way from laws …and other sanctions … to the disciplinary activities of social institutions and of human bodies."[98] Thus, for Asad, religious power is truth because "power … works to produce truthful discourses and make subjects respond to authority."[99] MQI members view Qadri as their shaykh and as a living saint; this creates a power structure that results in truth regimes for his followers. That Qadri has been endowed with knowledge and blessed with special abilities is a truth for MQI members, and fully believing this is what makes them respond to Qadri's authority and dedicate their lives to fulfill the mission that he has outlined for the organization and his vision for society.

Vincent Cornell relates power to both knowledge and authority in his socio-historical analysis of the system of sainthood in Morocco from the introduction of Islam through the 16th century. Illustrating Foucault's influence, who asserted that power cannot be established without the circulation of a discourse, Cornell claims that "sainthood is a matter of discourse" because it cannot be established without recognition of some sort and requires negotiation.[100] The knowledge of saints is derived directly from God, and

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[97] Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90.
[98] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 35.
[99] Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, 83.
[100] V. Cornell, 63.

this is what gives them both power and authority in the eyes of their followers.[101] The

chapter "Qualifying the Ineffable" proves the strong link between power and knowledge,

using the data from hagiographical anthologies of the Almohad era (1146-1214 CE).

Cornell finds that "the most frequent miracles performed by the subjects of the

anthologies have to do with what might be termed 'epistemological capital,' [including]

…the ability to read thoughts… foretelling the future (*firāsa*) and uncovering hidden

secrets (*basīra*)."[102] Thus, at least with regards to Moroccan saints between the 13th and

15th centuries, knowledge was indeed power.

　　As indicated in the anecdote of him seeming to know that a visit to Atlanta would

materialize, Tahir-ul-Qadri is considered to possess *firāsa* at minimum. Furthermore,

Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan members often state that Qadri has been blessed with the ability to

read thoughts or otherwise know that which has not been made known explicitly.

However, it appears that in this post-modern age, ʿ*ilm*, or epistemological powers, means

more to devotees of Tahir-ul-Qadri than mere ʿ*amal*, or action, miracles.[103] As Cornell

asserts, for the saint, "to control knowledge was to possess the essence of power

itself."[104] For Qadri, Minhaj-ul-Qurʾan is the primary vehicle through which knowledge is

controlled, that is, produced and distributed; over 500 of Qadri's books have been

published through the MQI and the organization effectively records and distributes

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[101] V. Cornell, 76.
[102] V. Cornell, 115.
[103] This is also apparent in hagiographies of Tahir-ul-Qadri's father, where miracles involving his ability to see Khidr and receive guidance from the Prophet Muhammad directly are central to the text.
[104] V. Cornell, 275.

Qadri's lectures, appearances and interviews over television, radio and the internet.[105]

Although these displays of scholarly Islamic knowledge are more widely appreciated by both scholars and Qadri's followers alike, the hagiographies of Qadri's father and the lectures and writings that narrate his life story recount miracles and illustrate *ʿilm-e-ladunī*, or intuitive knowledge, valued by his devotees. Qadri is thus best typified in the Islamic tradition of sainthood as a *sālih*, or "a morally upstanding and socially constructive individual who performs visible acts of piety and works for the betterment (*islāh*) of himself and his fellow believers."[106] Qadri's sacred biographies illustrate his performance of piety and the actions he undertakes to work for the *ʾumma,* or the global community of Muslims.

The Importance of Sacred Biography for the MQI

Sufi hagiography emphasizes both genealogy as well as initiatic lineage to demonstrate ability and competence. Although the MQI does not specifically call this a *silsila*, or a chain of transmission, Qadri's scholarly lineage is detailed in the form of nine published collections of *isnād*, or chains of transmission to narrate hadīth, and *ijāzāt*, or certificates from scholar to student granting permission to transmit Islamic knowledge. Connections to key scholars or Muslim saints, such as Ahmad Razā Khān Barelwī, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, ʾIbn al-ʿArabī, and ʾIbn Hajar and the number of *shuyūkh* between Qadri

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[105] "Islamic Library by Shaykh ul Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri," *Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International*, accessed September 7th, 2017, http://www.minhajbooks.com.
[106] V. Cornell, 6.

and that figure are particularly emphasized on the MQI website.[107] During a brief meeting

with Qadri on August 17, 2018, he detailed the history of his religious training:

> At age 11, I studied from my father. My father started my religious studies. He was a big scholar; he studied in Lucknow, Delhi and Hyderabad Deccan. After that, in 1963, he took me to Medina. In that year, there was a school- Madrasa ʿUlūm ash-Sharīʿa or the School of Islamic Sciences- I studied there. It is now inside the space where Masjid an-Nabāwī (The Prophet's Mosque) is. Gūmbad-e-Khizra (The Green Dome) was right in front of it then. He admitted me there, and I studied there. Then there were other scholars of Medina [I studied with]: Maulana Ziauddīn al-Madanī, I also did some studies and read some books with him. In respected Mecca, Shaykh ʿAlāwī bin Abbās Al Mālikī- he was a great 53imām of hadīths of his time, so for about 6 months, in the courtyard of the Haram-e-Ka'aba, I studied hadīths and some initial things with him. In 1963, I studied in the Madrasa ʿUlūm ash-Sharīʿa in Medina and [I studied] in Mecca. Before the age of 11 when I went to Medina, because it was necessary for me to understand some Arabic to study there, I studied [Arabic] with my father. After returning [to Pakistan], my father continued teaching me until my studies were complete. [...] He was a doctor by profession, but every day, after coming home from work he would teach me for 3, 4 or 5 hours.

Qadri lists his qualifications primarily around the sanctity of the places in which he

has studied, for example, emphasizing the proximity of his school in Medina to The

Prophet's Mosque and studying in the courtyard surrounding the Kaʿaba. The educational

institutions from which he reports receiving his foundational training at a young age are

relayed in terms of their spatial sanctity. Thus, by establishing that, in a sense, Qadri

learned under the shade of the prophet Muhammad and the first "House of Allah," Qadri

establishes his own authority.

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[107] "A Profile of Shaykh ul Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, https://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/8718/A-Profile-of-Shaykh-ul-Islam-Dr-Muhammad-Tahir-ul-Qadri.html#3

His father is listed amongst the many scholars to whom Qadri is connected, and his father's status is established not only through his connections with other Islamic scholars, but also through his life story. One of the ways in which Tahir-ul-Qadri's saintly status is demonstrated is through the establishment of his father's, and thus, his genealogy as sacred, In Farid-ud-Din Qadri's sacred biography, his initiatic lineage is detailed in chapter two, "Hazrat Farid-ud-Din Qadri and Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri's *Ijāzāt* and *Asānīd*," a chapter that explicitly connects father and son.[108]

Sacred genealogy is often evidenced in Sufism through sacred biography. Although scholars of Islamic Studies have utilized biography extensively as historical evidence, as Vincent Cornell has pointed out, hagiography, or sacred biography, has not received the same amount of attention or respect, perhaps because "…the canons of Western rationalism have led contemporary Islamicists and social scientists to doubt whether the saints described in sacred biography are actual historical personages."[109] Hagiography is a valid and valuable source of information, especially when taking the approach of philosopher Frithjof Schuon. Schuon recognizes that the "'exaggerations and platitudes' of hagiographies render them 'practically unreadable for anyone who is looking for a concrete and lifelike picture of the saints;'" however, hagiography is meant to '…perfect truthfulness in deeds and thought, which is a way of realizing a certain unity for the sake of the One and Only.'"[110]

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[108] Interestingly, Qadrī's father is sometimes titled Doctor and other times, Hazrat. The former indicates professional authority while the latter refers to charismatic authority.

[109] V. Cornell, xl.

[110] Schuon, *Islam and the Perennial Philosophy*, **quoted in** Vincent Cornell, *The Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), xlii-xliii.

Furthermore, as Cornell states, "Schuon and his followers have reminded us that it is necessary to view the Moroccan saint as both the recipient and the transmitter of a long-standing mystical tradition."[111] That is, one must consider those to whom this tradition is being transmitted when reading such hagiographical texts. Cornell emphasizes the need for historians of sainthood to "[remain] true to our subjects' cultural space and time."[112] Although the hagiographies that Cornell looks at may be considered premodern, followers of Sufi shaykhs today also produce hagiographical texts that tell us something about the subject as a recipient of mystical tradition and a transmitter; they allow readers to understand the path set out in the hagiography to achieve perfection in one's thoughts and actions.

The MQI has published hagiographical works on Farid-ud-Din Qadri, the father of Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri who was born in 1918 and died in 1974. As mentioned earlier, this type of hagiography can be valuable for many reasons: first, it shows that Farīd -ud-Dīn Qadri is seen as both a recipient and a transmitter of sacred, mystical tradition. In the context of understanding Minhāj ul Qurʾan, this is particularly important because of the central role of Tahir-ul-Qadri in the lives of his devotees and members of the organization. Likewise, anyone who may have transmitted sacred tradition to Tahir-ul-Qadri would likewise be considered important. Furthermore, as Tahir-ul-Qadri's father, Farid-ud-Din Qadri is intimately connected to the history of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan through a chain of

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[111] V. Cornell, xliii.
[112] V. Cornell, xliii.

transmission that connects him to its leader.[113] As Bruce Lawrence points out in his article on South Asian saintly biography, "…the shaykh as a shaykh reshapes the way in which his followers think about all antecedent- and also all subsequent- saints."[114] This is particularly true when hereditary *baraka* is involved; although Qadri is associated with several other shaykhs through *asānīd* and *ijāzāt*, Farid-ud-Din Qadri is the only shaykh through whom we can establish hereditary *baraka*, as the father of Qadri.

This chapter will show the ways in which a Neo-Sufi transnational organization/movement has attempted to create a history through Hayden White's concept of emplotment. In his book *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Hayden White defines emplotment as "…the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind."[115] Bringing together analysis of Farid-ud-Din Qadri's hagiography with White's theories of emplotment and fictions of factual representation, I will look at how Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan has established a sacred genealogy of Tahir-ul-Qadri; in particular, the hagiography of Farid-ud-Din Qadri, Tahir-ul-Qadri's father, in MUQ publications and recited at his ʿurs illustrates how the concept of emplotment is crucial to the construction of a history of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan and Tahir-ul-Qadri. Religious biography is always inherently political; therefore, examining a variety of biographies says something about a particular moment in history and gives context. I will also present and analyze other biographical sources on

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[113] Farīd-ud-Dīn Qādrī is of course not Qādrī's only *shaykh*, but the only one through whom we can establish hereditary *baraka*.

[114] Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Chishtīya of Sultanate India: A Case Study of Biographical Complexities in South Asian Islam," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion- Thematic Studies* 68 (3-4) (1981): 53-54.

[115] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 7.

Qadri, namely a biography written by a longtime MQI member and approved by the organization, as well as a paper giving insight into Qadri's daily routine and habits as conveyed by his daughter in law and key MQI figurehead, Dr. Ghazāla Qādrī, known as Baji Ghazala to women in the movement. The hagiography of Farid-ud-Din Qadri and biographical sources produced by Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan on Tahir-ul-Qadri together serve the purpose of the emplotment of Qadri's religious legitimization.

Sacred Genealogy- Hagiographies of Farid-ud-Din Qadri

Despite Tahir-ul-Qadri's importance as the shaykh and original founder of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, a genetic line of *baraka* and the piety of his father, Farid-ud-Din Qadri is crucial to establishing the authority and sainthood of his son. The MQI holds an ʿ*urs*, or annual commemoration of death, in "Farīd-e-Millat's" name every year and two books have been published by MQI on Farid-ud-Din Qadri as a great Sufi of his time: a *safarnāma*, or a book on his travels, and a hagiography of titled *Tazkira Farīd-e-Millat* (*Memoir of an Incomparable Man of the Nation*). The latter is divided into thirteen chapters and prefaced with an introduction and three *manqabāt,* or devotional poems. The chapters address topics including Farid-ud-Din Qadri's genealogy, information on scholars who trained both him and Tahir-ul-Qadri, his profession as a medical doctor, his relationship to the prophet Muhammad and Abd al-Qadir al-Jīlani, and his role as head of the family and influence on Tahir-ul-Qadri.

Tazkira Farīd-e-Millat is over three hundred pages long and written in a highly specialized form of Urdu that is heavily inundated with Sufi technical terminology. It often

utilizes difficult words or phrases from Arabic and Persian when a simpler Urdu alternative could have been substituted to facilitate reading for an audience of varied educational backgrounds. This raises the question: who is the audience of such a text? In an organization where speeches, lectures, *mawlid*s and other events are always recorded and distributed across the world to the transnational body of members, followers are more likely to learn about Farid-ud-Din Qadri by watching, listening or sitting in on an ʿurs rather than through reading this lengthy text. Therefore, this section will focus on two mediums in which Farīd-ud-Dīn's sacred biography is retold: through the the hagiography of Farid-ud-Din recited by Tahir-ul-Qadri at the former's ʿurs and chapter one, ""Farid-ud-Din Qadri: His Forefathers and Descendants and a Short Biography" in the textual hagiography *Tazkira Farīd-e-Millat*. I specifically choose this chapter because, as a condensed version of his life story, it most closely represents the connection between this biography and Hayden White's theory of emplotment. It is worth noting that there is obviously overlap between the recited and textual hagiographies.

The first chapter of the textual hagiography starts with Tahir-ul-Qadri narrating an incident in which his son, Hasan Muhī-ud-Dīn, who was seven years old at the time, lists all the ways in which he is better than his father. Tahir-ul-Qadri responds saying, "Son! There is one way in which you will never be able to win this competition of greatness." When Hasan probes further, Tahir-ul-Qadri replies, "I am greater than you because your father can never be like my father, never! In every respect, my father was worthy of awe and imitation. His character, his appearance, his knowledge, his piety, his intelligence and

wisdom; in any of these areas, your father could not even compare to my father."[116] This narrative sets the stage for the rest of the text and illustrates the superiority of Farid-ud-Din Qadri to an audience of Tahir-ul-Qadri's followers. This is a common feature in Sufi biography; Lawrence points out that "during his own lifetime any saint would claim that his *pīr*-whether living or dead- is greater than he is, and that all spiritual authority accruing to him comes from the beneficence of his master."[117] Thus, this is a rhetorical strategy that creates and performs the superiority of the speaker. Qadri's powerful narrative in which he tells his son how his father, at any cost, could never be greater than Qadri's father is also highlighted in the hagiography recounted by Tahir-ul-Qadri at the annual *ʿurs* conducted in his father's honor. In a performance on June 2, 1988 at Jamia Masjid Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan in Lahore.[118] Qadri emphasized his utter subordinate status to the saints and forefathers "who earned the wealth, did the hard work [...] while we clasp our hands and live off of their earnings." He goes on further to talk about life as a competition which they have won, and we have lost.

Qadri's hagiography of his father highlights Farīd-ud-Dīn's ability to access al-Khidr, the man with a "certain knowledge" who leads Moses on a quest to learn about "sound judgment."[119] As Hugh Halman states in his book, *Where the Two Seas Meet*, "al-Khidr is typically presented as a model for the shaykh in his role as spiritual guide or

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[116] Muhammad Umar Hayat Al-Hussaini, *Tazkira Farīd-e-Millat* (Lahore: Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān Printing, 2009) 19.
[117] Lawrence 54.
[118] Islam Pakistan, "Hayat e Farid e Millat Urs Mubarak Hazrat Dr Farid ud Din Qadri," YouTube video, 1:17:25, Posted on May 18, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn-3p5DFQ2A
[119] Q18:65-66.

murshid in many Sufi hagiographies.[120] At the ʿurs, Qadri said that the older women of his

family would tell him that from the age of about nine or ten, his father used to walk three

miles to the Chenab River and sit for hours fulfilling *wazāʾif,*[121] or recitations of words or

prayers for a certain number of times to solve problems, read different chapters of the

Qurʾan, and follow the ways his elders had instructed him in order to meet al-Khidr.[122]

The textual hagiography contains more details regarding Farīd-ud-Dīn's encounters with

al-Khidr. For example, the text states that an elder woman of his family claimed it was

specifically chapter 73, Surah Muzammil, of the Qurʾan that Farid-ud-Din would read in

order to access al-Khidr.[123] The text cites an August 27th, 1989, letter in which Dr. Ehsān

Quraishī Sābrī, a retired principal of Government College Technical Institute Sialkot and

close friend of Farīd-ud-Dīn, verifies his gift of being able to meet with al-Khidr.[124] Sabri

writes:

> Farid-ud-Din could both see and speak to Khizr;[125]; one day, they were by
> the Chenab River when Farid-ud-Din said, "Master Khizr is about to emerge
> and I need to meet with him for just three minutes so go away and come
> back after ten or fifteen minutes." Sabri pleaded with his hands clasped
> and even fell at his feet, begging Farid-ud-Din to allow him to see Khizr as
> well, but Farid-ud-Din could not be swayed. He replied, "You are not fit for
> this visitation." With a long face, Sabri started heading for the fields. My
> pace became slower. When I turned and looked, there was a piece of wood
> twice the height of a person that was sitting along the edge of the river. An
> elderly man with a white beard emerged from the river. There was not
> even a hint of water on his white clothes. He met with Dr. Farid-ud-Din
> Qadri from behind the piece of wood. They met for three or four minutes,
> and then he went back into the river. The piece of wood disappeared into

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[120] Hugh Talat Halman, *Where the Two Seas Meet: The Qurʾanic Story of Al-Khidr and Moses in Sufi Commentaries as a Model of Spiritual Guidance* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2013) 195.
[121] I choose to maintain the Urdu pronunciation of the word here.
[122] "Hayat e Farid e Millat"
[123] Al-Hussaini 29-30.
[124] Al-Hussaini 29-30.
[125] Urdu pronunciation of al-Khidr.

thin air. […] This *muʿjiza* (prophetic miracle) was Khizr's, but the *karāmat* (saintly miracle) was Dr. Farid-ud-Din Qadri's. Anyhow, from so far away I did see just a glimpse of Khizr, when he was emerging from the river. Through the graces of Sultān Bāhū, Farid-ud-Din Qadri was able to perform this *karāmat* that in consciousness he would be able to see Khizr at the bank of the Chenab River.[126]

Sabri's narrative is significant for many reasons. First, Farīd-ud-Dīn's abilities are associated with a local Sufi saint of the Punjab, Sultān Bahū. Like Farīd-ud-Dīn, Sultan Bahu was also born in Jhang; in a feature on Farid-ud-Din in the monthly MQI magazine *Dukhtarān-e-Islam* (*Daughters of Islam*), Ifra Kauser makes the connection explicit, stating "…the dwellers of this city have been recognised [sic] for their courage and strong belief."[127] Sultan Bahu studied with Habibullah Khan and Sayyid ʿAbd-ur-Rahmān of the Qādirī order.[128] Farīd-ud-Dīn, too, was associated with the Qādirī order, studying with Muhammad Sardār Ahmad Qādrī, amongst other shaykhs.[129] Farid-ud-Din is connected to not only local saints, but also a universal Sufi figure in al-Khidr, or Khizr as he is called in South Asia. The connection between al-Khidr and water in this narrative is representative of the Qurʾanic narrative in which Moses first meets al-Khidr where the two seas meet. It is also significant because the narrative takes place in the Indian subcontinent, where al-Khidr is associated with the Indus River, of which the Chenab is a tributary.[130] Furthermore, this narrative also emulates the Qurʾanic narrative by

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[126] Al-Hussaini 30.

[127] Ifra Kauser LLB, "Dr Farid-ud-Din Al-Qadri," *Dukhtarān-e-Islām*, September 2011, 56.

[128] Sultan Bahu, *Death Before Dying: The Sufi Poems of Sultan Bahu* trans. Jamal J. Elias (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 13.

[129] Kauser, 54.

[130] M. Longworth Dames, "Khwadja Khidr," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Berman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2014. Reference. Emory University, 18 January 2014 http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/khwadja-khidr-SIM_4126.

mirroring Farid-ud-Din's relationship to Sabri with aspects of al-Khidr's relationship to Moses. Farīd-ud-Dīn, like al-Khidr, recognizes that Sabri is unfit the same way that al-Khidr recognized Moses' lacked ʿilm-e-ladunī, or knowledge given to one directly by God.

The ability to "see" al-Khidr as well as the Prophet Muhammad are often indications of one's saintly status. Indeed, in his work with hagiographical anthologies of premodern Morocco, Cornell combines visions of the Prophet with visions of al-Khidr in evaluating this as a type of miracle that appeared in the entries.[131] Farid-ud-Din was able to do both, according to his son:

> My father was sitting in Masjid an-Nabawī on the 25th night of Ramadan sleeping when he saw the Prophet in his dream saying, "Farīd-ud-Dīn! Wake up! Tonight is the Night of Power." In his dream, he saw that the clock read 12:50 and woke up. When he went to tell another man who was sleeping the good news, he awoke and said, 'Yes it will be at 12:50, right?' My father asked him how he knew, and he said, 'You are the Prophet's guest here. He told you, passed by me while I was asleep and told me as well.' This shows that the Prophet can bless you in your dreams and in your state of consciousness.[132]

The ability to receive guidance in this way from the Prophet Muhammad or al-Khidr is an "epistemological miracle that figures prominently in Sufi theoretical treatises."[133]

Qadri also says much about the piety of his paternal grandmother, or Farīd-ud-Dīn's mother. Although Farīd-ud-Dīn's father was a derwish, or somebody who followed the Sufi path, he was not particularly fond of secular education; this meant that Farid-ud-Din did not have the funds needed to pursue an education. His mother, however, gave

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[131] V. Cornell, 115.
[132] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."
[133] V. Cornell, 115.

him her jewelry and said, "My son, I do not have any money like your father, but I have this jewelry. Go sell this in the market, take you the money you get from it and return after you've obtained your education."[134] Tahir-ul-Qadri goes on to mention an incident in which, while digging to create a mazār (shrine) for Farīd-ud-Dīn, the gravediggers hit upon the grave of his mother. Immediately, a strong fragrance was emitted, and the gravediggers showed Tahir-ul-Qadri that even after 55 years, her body was intact.[135] The idea that saints or those with saintly characteristics have bodies incapable of being decomposed by the earth is another common feature in Sufi hagiography.[136] By narrating an explicitly saintly narrative about his grandmother who favored secular education alongside gaining mystical knowledge, Qadri grounds his own approach of seeking worldly and religious awareness in the tradition of those who have been favored by God.

At the ʿurs, Tahir-ul-Qadri then goes on to delineate the various institutions and countries in which Farid-ud-Din studied to gain understanding of the Sufi path, stating that Farid-ud-Din was "…skilled in ʿilm-e-ladunī, but his strength was deenī ʿilm (religious knowledge). He always kept time aside for his prayers and even in the hospital [where he worked as a medical doctor], he kept three hours aside to teach people."[137] Qadri mentions that his father studied in the cities of Sialkot, Lucknow and Hyderabad and New Delhi within the Indian subcontinent, and traveled to study in Baghdad, Damascus and

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[134] "Hayat e Farid e Millat"

[135] Al-Hussaini 32, "Hayat e Farid e Millat."

[136] Ahmad al-Fāsī corroborates the idea (which appears elsewhere, including in a history of the Maghrib) that Mawlay Idris al-Azhar's body was found fully intact more than six hundred years after burial. See Scott Kugle, *Sufis and Saints' Bodies* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 57, 64, 66.

[137] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."

Madinah.[138] He managed to do all this as the father of three sons.[139] As Bruce Lawrence mentions in his article on the Chishtīya of Sultanate India, one of the features most commonly found among the traits of Indo-Muslim Sufi shaykhs were that he would be "married, and the father of sons."[140] Furthermore, Cornell finds that 18.4% of the subjects of the notices he worked with traveled abroad to seek "an advanced education beyond their home region."[141]

In speaking about Farid-ud-Din's time in Syria, Tahir-ul-Qadri details one of the miracles associated with him:

> In Damascus, at the Umayyad Mosque, there is a shrine dedicated to John the Baptist. This was in 1962, or 1965. My father said that after every prayer, he would go there for *hāzirī* [presence of/possession by a saint's spirit]. He remembered at dhuhr prayer that the Prophet Muhammad had a saying that in Syria, there are always forty ʿ*abdāl* [saints] living there and no era is without forty saints. So he made a prayer to God saying, "Allah, today I am in your Syria, where forty of your saints live, so allow me a meeting with just one of them." When he came back to pray at ʿ*Asr*, he had not even finished his prayer when someone from behind him said[142], "*Assalāmu ʿalaikum* Doctor. Is your name Farīd-ud-Dīn?" It was a man of only 30 or 32 years of age with a black beard, *nūr* [light] on his face and wearing Arab garments. He said, "Are you from Pakistan?" My father replied, "How do you know me?" And the young man replied, "Don't you recognize me Doctor? I am the prayer that you asked for and I am your prayer that has been answered." After trading lessons and discussing secrets,[143] Farid-ud-Dinasked, "When can I meet you again?" to which the young man replied, "When you arrive in Madinah, one day after the *tarāwīh* prayers in Ramadan, I will meet you there." And sure enough,

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[138] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."
[139] Al-Hussaini, 27.
[140] Lawrence, 52.
[141] V. Cornell, 106.
[142] Here, while relaying the conversation between the saint and Farīd ud-Dīn, Tahir-ul-Qadri speaks in Arabic, pausing after every sentence or two to translate into Urdu. This further displays the knowledge possessed by his father (as well as himself) by illustrating his ability to converse in Arabic.
[143] In this context, these are obviously divine "secrets" known only by those intimately familiar with mystical knowledge.

when my father was in Madinah reading his last two *nafl* prayers, he turned around and saw the same saint.[144]

It is clear from Sufi and academic discourse on Sufi saints that the ability to perform miracles is crucial to the qualification of sainthood, and this type of supernatural occurrence is no surprise. As Cornell shows in *Realm of the Saint*, it is precisely this kind of paranormal phenomena that were most often mentioned as the qualifying miracle in over half of all the notices he examined.[145]

Tahir-ul-Qadri also relays his father's ability to perform healing miracles. Once, when Farid-ud-Din was amongst a group of men who had performed hajj and were now in Riyadh, the brother of the king stopped them and asked, "Are any of you doctors?" When Farid-ud-Din replied in the affirmative, the king's brother explained that he was passing the last few days of his life, battling an illness that doctors in London and the United States had been unable to cure. His father "… boiled some things in water, told the king's brother to soak himself in it, trade the water out for freshly boiled water, and he would soon be fine."[146] As he predicted, the king's brother was cured and presented Farid-ud-Din with a passport that listed him and his descendants as permanent guests of the state.[147] [148] Like the other strategies mentioned earlier, Qadri clearly employs rhetorical strategies historically utilized in Sufi hagiography. The idea of a Sufi shaykh or

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[144] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."
[145] V. Cornell, 112-113.
[146] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."
[147] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."
[148] Qadri goes on to say that the passport has been lost although he saw it with his own eyes.

saint impressing a king or government official is a common theme.[149] This is also significant because thus narrative illustrates Farīd-ud-Dīn's ability to cure illness, a miracle often associated with saints.[150]

Farīd-ud-Dīn's life is presented as a series of miraculous events proving his saintly and pious nature. Therefore, it is no surprise that even the events leading to his death are miraculous in their own right. According to Tahir-ul-Qadri, his father had three heart attacks, each one on one of the most holy days of the Islamic calendar: one on the 27th night of Ramadan, one on the first day of Eid, and one on the third day of Eid--each time while he was praying--with the last heart attack being fatal.[151]

Hagiographies of Farid-ud-Din Qadri conform to an established model of sacred biography. As I have tried to show in this chapter, the smaller stories that make up the larger narrative of Farīd-ud-Dīn's miraculous life follow themes that are common in Sufi hagiography, including the Sufi defeating or outwitting a king, possessing healing powers, the ability to see al-Khidr and the prophet Muhammad, and coming from a lineage known for its piety.[152]

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[149] For example, David Edwards' translates a hagiography on Najm ad-Dīn, an Afghan *wali*, in which a king tries to "suppress" the saint, but from the Sufi point of view, a king's authority ultimately has to give way to a saint's authority." See David Edwards, "A Miracle of an Afghan Friend of God: the Mulla of Hadda" in *Tales of God's Friends: Islamic Hagiography in Translation*, ed. John Renard (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 114.

[150] V. Cornell, 115; also see Schimmel, 208.

[151] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."

[152] Robert Rozehnal confirms this phenomenon among Chishti networks in his book *Islamic Sufism Unbound*, stating that "…the hagiographical accounts [of the three Sufi shaykhs highlighted in his book…] each conform to the traditional model of Indo-Muslim sainthood established in pre-modern Sufi biographical literature." See Robert Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 16.

When considering orders like Minhāj-ul Qurʾan who actively write, publish and disseminate their own histories, it is especially important to consider also theories of emplotment. Hayden White's theory of emplotment is particularly relevant when considering histories, and in this case, the history of a saint or hagiography. White states:

> …a given historian is forced to emplot the whole set of stories making up his narrative in one comprehensive or archetypal story form. […] The important point is that every history, even the most 'synchronic' or 'structural' of them will be emplotted in some way.[153]

In the case of Farid-ud-Din Qadri's hagiography, it appears the author(s) have employed the mode of emplotment in making the smaller stories fit within the larger narrative, allowing Farid-ud-Din to feature as the hero of the narrative. In explaining emplotment, White states that "…the facts do not speak for themselves, but [the historian] speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity is- in its representation- a purely discursive one."[154] Whether we examine written and published hagiographies of Farid-ud-Din Qadri, which comprise of chapters written by different members of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, the recitation of his life story at the ʿurs, or biographies written about Tahir-ul-Qadri, the authors all have something at stake. Proving the sacred genealogy of Farid-ud-Din in turn establishes the hereditary *baraka* of Tahir-ul-Qadri; attesting that God chose Farid-ud-Din to be a saint would authenticate Tahir-ul-Qadri as a living saint through his bloodline; showing Farīd-ud-Dīn's dedication to

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[153] Hayden White, *Metahistory*, 7.

[154] Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 125.

his son's religious education allows the authors to illustrate the sanctity of Tahir-ul-Qadri mission.

It is perhaps the hope of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan followers that by actively participating in annual death commemorations, publishing hagiographies and creating media presentations, God will allow people all over the world to know of Farīd-ud-Dīn's gifts, one of which was the legacy he left behind in the form of his son. Biographies produced by Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan on Tahir-ul-Qadri likewise emphasize the strong connection that he had with his father and the role of his father in his spiritual upbringing.

Sacred Biographies of Tahir-ul-Qadri

Although academic scholars such as Alix Philippon and M. Amer Morgahi have given brief accounts about Qadri in their work on Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan and his political activities and persona are often covered or criticized by Pakistani media and journalists, most of what has been produced about the life of Tahir-ul-Qadri has been produced by his own organization, individual members or followers of Qadri, and Qadri himself. The MQI emplots his sacred status in different forms of sacred biography: textual sacred biography, oral discourse in the form of a lecture, media presentations, and recount-writing, a text that recalls Qadri's daily routine, habits and personality to give followers a look at how even the mundane, like the organization of his bedroom, reflects sacred qualities like cleanliness and perfection. The only textual biography of Qadri produced by the MQI is published on their website and written by an active member of the organization and teacher at Minhāj College, Mariam Khalid. This biography is about 12

pages long and is based on a speech delivered by Qadri on October 13th, 2001 during an occasion that coincided approximately with the 21st anniversary of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan. However, she concludes the text with her own summary of its significance. I will examine both the text and the speech, but most of this section will be based on Qadri's own words.

In a recorded lecture titled "The Journey of the Life of the Leader of the Revolution, Professor Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri," Qadri says that he was responding to a request to speak about his life history.[155] Notably, Qadri speaks to the crowd in Urdu on the importance of sacred biography. He says, "This is a good event. There are a lot of things that do not make it on record. Those who are incredibly close to you, [like] friends, loved ones, companions, they may know more, but for the workers who are devoted to the movement, these things become a basis for motivation."[156] This illustrates the type of story that the MQI and Qadri emplot when they recount sacred history; these narratives build Qadri as an archetypal hero and saint.

Qadri's narration of his life story, much like the story of his father, is marked by accounts of miracles and good omens. When recollecting the occasion of the first meeting he held 21 years ago, he recalls that "By the glory of God, there were 40 scholars in attendance at that meeting." Because the number 40 has so much significance in the Islamic tradition, Qadri's mention of the number of scholars serves as a sign for the

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[155] Marifat-e-Mustafa, "Biography of Allama Dr. Mohammad Tahir-ul-Qadri," Filmed [October 13, 2001], Youtube video 3:01:33. Posted [November 9, 2017], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQjIWqpCNxo
[156] He maintains this theme throughout the lecture, emphasizing that discussing the struggles or difficulties in life he may have faced in life can serve as motivation, encouragement, and an incentive to continue to work towards the mission.

audience.[157] Despite a life story that eventually demonstrates God's special favor upon him, Qadri still prefaces this story with humility and self-abasement, stating, "What is the story of my life? … To tell the truth, my entire life story is marked with embarrassment, incompetency, remorse and regret. I have not yet deserved the privilege of being born; as for the countless blessings God has given me, who knows when I will be worthy of deserving those?"

Qadri mentions that he cannot possibly cover every angle of his life in one sitting and that he does not even wish to, because many miracles and gifts that have been bestowed upon him are a "trust" granted by God. *Sirr*, or the idea of secrets between man and God that most others cannot understand, is further elucidated when Qadri says that this information, when in the wrong hands (specifically the hands of those who are against him), can be twisted in such a way to create misunderstanding. He also uses orthodox Islamic canon to legitimize this idea by citing the story of the prophet Yūsuf (Joseph) in the Qurʾan, who has a vision or a dream of the sun, the moon, and eleven stars prostrating to him. When he relays this dream to his father Yāqūb (Jacob), Yaqub immediately tells him not to tell his brothers of the dream, otherwise they will plot against him.[158] Qadri considers all of the difficulties that Yusuf goes through in the Qurʾan and attributes this to him telling his brothers the secret, although the Qurʾan never explicitly states that

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[157] To list just a few examples of the significance of the number 40: In South Asia, it is common to have a particular commemoration called a "*chālīswān*" on the 40th day after one's passing; the Prophet Muhammad was 40 when he received the first revelation; there is an entire genre in hadīthhadīth commentary called *arbaʿīnīyyāt*, which are commentaries upon collections of 40 hadīth; ahādith spanning topics form drinking alcohol to the creation of mankind to passing in front of a person in prayer, all of which mention 40 days as relevant periods of times. It is also mentioned later in his written biography that 40 people were with Qadri during the beginning of the membership process of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān.

[158] Qurʾan 12:4-6.

Yusuf failed to heed his father's warning. Thus, when Qadri speaks about his life story, he openly states he will avoid revealing these kinds of secrets, but instead, will focus on the topic of struggles in life.

Qadri prefaces his own life story again by focusing on the piety of his father. He first says that any struggles or difficulties he had to face in life were after the death of his father in 1974; thus, from Qadri's birth on February 19th, 1951 until his father's passing on November 2nd, 1974, the blessing of Farid-ud-Din Qadri's presence protected him from any major problems. Qadri and his father were both born in Jhang, Pakistan, a city that is also the birthplace of the famous Sufi mystic, Sultan Bahu (1631-1691).[159]

Qadri attributes his habit of praying *tahajjud*, or the optional prayer in the middle of the night, to his father, who established this habit within him from the time he was a mere primary school student. He developed an affinity for Sufism through his father, who he says stayed awake through the night weeping during prayers. Starting his religious studies in 1962 at the age of 11 with his father, Qadri also read detailed sacred biographies in Urdu of saints like Sultan Bahu and Shāh Walīullah Dehlavī and studied Arabic. Although these habits and his religious upbringing were one aspect of his life, he emphasizes that he also pursued (and excelled) at secular education. He attended Sacred Heart School and played football. He devoted his time to school and sports as well as worship and religion through the *dars-e-nizāmī* religious studies course taught to him by his father. To illustrate this duality, Qadri emphasizes that he went to English school and wore "a shirt, tie, [and] knickers" in the summer, and in the winter, wore a "coat and suit,"

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[159] Suvorova, 54.

adopting this clothing for school but dressing in traditional shalwar kameez at home. Even into adulthood, Qadri has used dress as a medium to express and represent identity, an issue addressed later in chapter three.

In addition to explaining his life as characterized by a sense of duality between "East and West", Qadri also describes his life as being exemplified by a sense of hard-work and a lack of rest. He walked three to four miles from his home to the Chenab River, where he would go to pray obligatory and supplementary prayers and conduct *dhikr*, attempting to bring friends and acquaintances toward the same path.[160] He later traveled 160 miles by bus every day to attend the Government College of Faisalabad for two years. This effort mirrored his father's efforts, who traveled over sixty miles daily for work, yet after coming home, still took out time to give his eldest son religious instruction.[161] Qadri would leave at three in the morning after praying *tahajjud* and get on the bus, where he would pray *fajr*, or pre-dawn, prayers. When he returned home, he would often study until 11 at night. Qadri specifies the rigor of his schedule in order to show how his "body was made to be used to hard work" from a young age through "education, upbringing, religious exercise, effort, travel, and hard work."

Around this time, Qadri recounts that he begins to attain a sense that he should leave this world, a feeling that he claims must have been "genetically transferred or inherited" from his ancestors. In an account that serves as both a transition from his youth

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[160] When I questioned Qadri on why both him and his father used to go to the Chenab, he said it was to maintain spiritual seclusion, retreat and meditation, which would not be possible in a crowded area. However, the Chenab is also associated closely with the Sufi mystic Sultan Bahu.

[161] In the speech, Qadri refers to his father's travel primarily in kilometers, stating that his father traveled 100 kilometers daily. This may be the reason for the incorrect statement in the written biography that says his father traveled 100 miles.

into adulthood as well as a foretelling climax, Qadri relates an incident in which he wanted to become an ascetic. He tells his father about these feelings of wanting to abandon civilization, live in the jungle and die there alone. Sobbing and telling his father of these feelings, he cried, "I've become alienated from this world. Forgive me and forget me! Forget that I was ever born!" In a premonition of his son's destined greatness, Farid-ud-Din Qadri answered, "I prayed for you as I held onto the cloth covering the Kaʿaba, how can I forget you? My son, I prayed for you for a particular reason and I received glad tidings of you!" When Qadri still did not acquiesce, his father then reminded him of his own vision while he was in the city of Medina. "Remember when we were called by the Prophet himself to visit him [perform *umrah*, or optional pilgrimage] in 1963? You had a vision as you slept in front of the Prophet's holy grave of him giving you a jug of milk with a bowl covering the top and he told you to distribute the milk amongst the people of his *umma* (community).[162] Now you are wanting to run away and live in the jungle; are you disobeying the command of the Prophet? You were given this milk to distribute amongst the *umma*, so how will you obey that order?" Here, Qadri relays another important theme in his life and work: that of being involved in what may be considered worldly affairs while maintaining a close connection to God. His father tells him that his solution of abandoning the world "…is not the way of men." Men should be as mentioned in a Qurʾanic verse which Qadri cites in Arabic: "Men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the

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[162] Milk represents knowledge according to a famous Islamic tradition. In a hadīth from Sahih Bukhari, (Book 62, hadīth 31), the prophet Muhammad said, "While I was sleeping, I saw myself drinking (i.e. milk), and I was so contented that I saw the milk flowing through my nails. Then I gave (the milk) to `Umar." They (i.e. the companions of the Prophet) asked, "What do you interpret it?" He said, "Knowledge."

remembrance of Allah."[163] His father instructs him, "Those who are of Allah, real men, they stay in the world; they do work, business, remain occupied with their professions and they still never neglect their duty to Allah. Seek Allah by remaining in society. It is easy to find Allah when you run away from the world; that is cowardice. Instead, struggle against the army of the *nafs* (self), the devil, worldly goods, wealth and material gain." This is not only a theme that Qadri emphasizes in his own life, but also serves as a direct response to his adversaries who criticize his involvement in politics despite his role as a religious figure.

Tales of Qadri's academic achievements are also marked by accounts of miracles. Although his father wants him to become a doctor, Qadri did not feel that this choice of profession would be best for the *umma*. Despite being amongst the top two students chosen to enter medical college out of 570 students, Farid-ud-Din sees a vision that Qadri's prayer to enter a different profession would be accepted over his. Thus, the medical college could only accept one student and because the two had the same grades, they accepted the other student since he was older. Qadri receives a merit-based scholarship for his master's based on the high scores he received on private exams he took for his undergraduate studies. Using this scholarship and what little help he accepts from home, Qadri funds his studies in law, often going without eating lunch or dinner or riding his bicycle instead of taking the bus to save money to buy books so that he would not have to trouble his parents, who were also responsible for the school fees of his two younger brothers.

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[163] Q24:37.

Tales of Qadri's academic success are interspersed with accounts of his dedication to the faith. He recalls often walking barefoot to Dāta Darbār, the shrine of the Sufi mystic ʿAli al-Hujwīrī, also known as Dāta Ganj Bakhsh, after *tahajjud* prayers where he would engage in *murāqaba*, or meditation, not sleeping for two or three days at a time.

After finishing his masters in Islamic Sciences, Qadri claims that as a result of his record-breaking scores at the university, he received a scholarship to get his doctorate from Harvard University "in Islamic Studies or some other religious studies subject." His father refuses to give permission and because Qadri had to be at the university by February 15, 1974, he begins to press his father for an affirmative response. After much prodding, Farid-ud-Din tells his son that he would be able to get his PhD in Pakistan, but if he were to attend Harvard, Qadri would not be able to attend his father's funeral. Proof of another miracle, his father did indeed die on November 2nd, 1974. He later obtained his PhD in Islamic Law in 1986 from Punjab University.[164]

Not only does his father foretell his own death, he also foresees that Qadri would face many difficulties after his passing. However, Farid-ud-Din feels truly at peace with this fact after hearing Qadri give a grand speech on the occasion of Yaum-e-Difāʿ, or Defense Day, at Islamia High School in Jhang on September 6th, 1974. He is nominated to speak by the principal, Taqī-ud-Dīn Anjum, and despite the presence and scheduled talks of many important political figures of the time, the crowd disperses, exhilarated by

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[164] Interestingly, although the fact that he obtained a doctoral degree is mentioned in all of the biographical sources I consulted on Qādrī, the year was always left out. This information was finally found on Qādrī's LinkedIn page, making him among the minority of Sufi pīrs to have one. See Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, *User Profile*, LinkedIn, viewed Aug. 27, 2018 < https://pk.linkedin.com/in/tahirulqadri>

Qadri's speech and assuming this was the climactic end of the program. This, Qadri's first speech in front of a large crowd, led those who knew the family to congratulate the family and Qadri himself. As Qadri recounts, Farīd-ud-Dīn, with tears in his eyes, says to God, "I have fulfilled the responsibility you have given to me and today, I have seen my Tahir's future. I have succeeded [at this task] and I do not wish to be separated from You any longer. Now raise me up, I no longer have no purpose in this world." Afterwards, Farid-ud-Din makes Qadri promise that he himself would lead the prayer at his funeral. Qadri's life history and the sacred biographies of Farid-ud-Din Qadri establish Farid-ud-Din as a man of holy repute on the Sufi path possessing a special relationship with God and his saints; these narrations also establish Tahir-ul-Qadri as his rightful successor.

According to Qadri, Farid-ud-Din Qadri has a heart attack while prostrating in prayer on the 27th night of Ramadan.[165] Within the next few weeks, he has three different heart attacks and passed away 19 days later. Qadri's difficulties start after the death of his father; his mother had already passed away in 1968 and he is left as the head of the family. He resigns from his lectureship position in law at Government College Isakhel in 1974 when they refuse to transfer him to Jhang unless he paid a bribe. Qadri took a loan from a friend to fund his younger brother Javaid's engineering studies. His younger sister takes over the household duties after his mother had passed, and after Qadri gets her married, he marries his paternal uncle's daughter in 1976 so that someone could take

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[165] Again, this in itself is a sign of his father's sanctity. It was said to be *Lailat-ul-Qadr*, or the Night of Power, during which Allah rewards tenfold and forgives tenfold. Furthermore, that the beginning of Farīd ud-Dīn's demise came during a state of prostration in prayer is an indication of his holy status in the eyes of God.

care of the household responsibilities. At that time, he works on an apprenticeship after his law degree for which he receives no salary. This is around the time Qadri says his heart trouble began and he attributes the heart trouble to living off loans.

His younger brother Javaid, who was dedicated to the mission of his brother and often said he was ready to give his life for him, starts having sudden health problems after passing his engineering exams. Despite Qadri's efforts to give him the best medical care he could afford, his kidneys began to fail and hemorrhage. During this time, Javaid would put Qadri's photo on his chest, kiss it and press it to his eyes. Relatives would ask, "Why do you do this? Why are you losing heart?" Javaid replies, "I am not losing heart, I just feel horribly about leaving Bhai Jān [dear Older Brother]: he has chosen a big mission. He will have a lot of enemies and will have to face a lot of battles. In this day and age, who would give their life for anyone else? Bhai Jān is fragile; when he faces a revolution, how will he face it? Who will stand by him? This is why I am crying: because he will have to face everything by himself."

Qadri starts having problems with his blood pressure after Javaid's death in 1976 and took his meager meals alone with the door closed so that his family would not know how little he was eating. Javaid's dedication to the mission renewed Qadri's own commitment, and he made the decision to move to Lahore in April 1978 since Jhang was not a suitable city to spread the "message of revolution" to the country.[166] As he sought a new career, Qadri purposefully looked for jobs where he could "pursue the mission of

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[166] Qādrī and his followers often refer to his activities and their mission as bringing about "*inqilāb*," or revolution. Their mission, which they state is making people love Allah and the prophet Muhammad again, is called *mustafavī inqilab*, or a Muhammadan revolution.

helping the nation. [… He] did not want to do anything where he could not work on the 'revolution.'" He got a lectureship position in the field of law at Punjab University Law College in Lahore, where he and his family lived in the Law College hostels and his salary was only 900 rupees a month. With a wife and two children to support, this meant that the family survived on very little.

Qadri recounts tales during that stage of his life that exemplify his integrity. For example, sometimes the family did not have enough money to buy sufficient milk for his two young children. Rather than ask for loans, Qadri would allow his children to cry in order to get them used to eating and drinking less over time. The kitchen staff at the hostel also notice the dire situation of Qadri's family; there were days, according to Qadri, that they had enough flour to make flatbread, but not to pay the gas bill, so there was no working stove over which to cook the bread. When the staff suggests to his wife that they could cook the bread in the hostel kitchen, Qadri immediately explains to her that the money for the gas did not belong to them, so eating food that had been prepared with this gas would be sinful. In another account, Qadri begins to save any extra money for the birth of his son, Hussain. However, after realizing that he was keeping money that was not immediately needed, him and his wife agree to distribute it amongst the poor and leave the rest up to God. The day comes when his wife goes into labor and the hospital required advance payment. Qadri makes arrangements to pay them before their dismissal without knowing how he would come up with the sum. Miraculously, different relatives who come to see the baby gave small sums of money as gifts for the newborn and the

total sum of those gifts were 900 rupees, the exact amount they owed the hospital. He

also pays back any loans he had taken during the more difficult times in life two-fold.

Despite simplicity and humble living at home, Qadri was touring the country to

spread the revolutionary message of the mission. He began to develop heart problems

and went to America for medical treatment, where doctors told him he had three to six

months to live.[167] His first wish upon hearing such news was to fulfill his desire to go on

umrah. Although he faced many difficulties with obtaining a visa, he was finally able to go

in 1983, 20 years after he had last gone on umrah with his parents. During his pilgrimage,

he did not pray for good health; instead, he told God that he had no desire to live unless

he had a job or function to fulfill in this world. If he lived through this trial, Qadri vowed

he would not spend one breath towards work or business and would devote his life only

to God. After *umrah*, Qadri's heart miraculously starts improving;[168] he resigns from the

university to fully devote himself to the cause, later agreeing to work only part-time until

1988 or 1989, when he resigns after having lectured for the university for a total of twelve

years.

Qadri goes on to mention miraculous ways that God made the expansion of the

MQI and the purchase of plots for the MQI mission possible, while also accounting for the

ways that God provided for his own family. Among the ways that Qadri was able to

support his family were the sale of his family home in Samarabad to buy a smaller home;

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[167] When I had the chance to briefly interview him, Qādrī stated that the trip, his stay and accommodations were all taken care of by friends in the U.S.

[168] He notes that the doctors were not wrong; six months after the doctors gave their prognosis, Qadri was prostrating in prayer during Ramadan when he was unable to get up, but his heart improved after this point.

he sold a family-owned concrete business, and he was also given deferred payments for lectures he delivered on television in the United Arab Emirates. Despite these avenues available to him, Qadri emphasizes throughout his speech the disparity between the success of his organization and the modest, meager situation at home. He relays an account that illustrates the difference between the public perception of Qadri as someone who must be, in his words, "rolling in money," and the inadequate resources available to his family: both sons were enrolled in Aitchison College in Lahore, one of the most prestigious and elite schools in Pakistan. One day when their fees were not paid on time, a teacher reproached one of the sons, asking "Isn't your father Tahir-ul-Qadri, the head of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan? [He is] such a famous man and you have not paid fees?" At this point, Qadri took them out of the school and quietly enrolled them elsewhere. Qadri clearly states, "Taking *nazrāna* [gift given to someone noble or a pious offering] is a sin for me." He stresses that even drinking a cup of tea from the funds of the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan is out of the question.[169]

Throughout Qadri's speech, he emphasizes themes of *dīn* and *dunya* (or working towards religious and worldly good), hard work, and the dichotomy between being spiritually rich yet materially poor. He often cites poetry, verses of the Qurʾan in Arabic, idioms in local dialects, and even lyrics from popular songs to convey his message to a diverse crowd. He speaks in a familiar tone, addressing the crowd as beta, or "my child." While narrating a life story fraught with miraculous accounts and incredible

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[169] In my fieldwork with MQI members, they also emphasize witnessing meetings between members of Tahir-ul-Qadri's family and his followers, when the family refused gifts from the public other than flowers.

circumstances, Qadri supports the veracity of his story by citing members of the community or names of famous members of the public who remember or were present at certain events.

Khalid's biography, published on the MQI website, is based on this three-hour lecture by Qadri; however, this biography is in English and begins and ends the biography with her own introduction and conclusion. She prefaces Qadri's life story with a listing of the line of shaykhs under whom Farid-ud-Din Qadri allegedly studied and from whom he took *bayʿat*, or an oath of allegiance, as well as the different cities he traveled to in order to further his knowledge of Islam. These qualifications further validate the authenticity of Tahir-ul-Qadri as a scholar and a Sufi. Khalid also ends the way that Qadri begins his narrative: by commenting on the value of biography. As she states, Qadri's "…biography portrays a valuable picture of the journey of learning and spiritual training. … These events … serve as a gift of motivation and courage for us if only we seek to realise[sic] the wisdom and beauty that lay[sic] behind them."[170] Thus, like the sacred biography of Farid-ud-Din Qadri, the history that Qadri narrates of his own life and Mariam Khalid's writing, too, reflect emplotment. This is done in the same mode as Farid-ud-Din Qadri's hagiography, by allowing these small narratives to fit within a larger story that establishes Qadri as the hero or saint, in this case.

Life histories and hagiographies are published by the MQI because the organization recognizes that members and devotees often wish to learn about Qadri's life

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[170] Mariam Khalid, "Biography of Shaykh ul Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, last modified December 20, 2007. https://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/3003/Biography-of-Shaykh-ul-Islam-Dr-Muhammad-Tahir-ul-Qadri.html

in order to emulate him. This desire trickles down to even the most mundane details of his life, as recount narratives of a day in Qadri's life, his habits and daily schedule illustrate.

A Day in the Life of Tahir-ul-Qadri

In a recount narrative written by his daughter-in-law, Dr. Ghāzala Hassan Qādrī reports on the routine habits and mannerisms of Tahir-ul-Qadri, which add further texture to his life story as told by Qadri himself. Like Khalid and Qadri, her work emphasizes the reasons why one would seek to gain "intimate insights" into the life of Qadri. Baji Ghazala states that "those who consider Islam to be the pivotal axis in their life have begun to adopt religious and spiritual leaders, within the Islam[sic] community, as their role models hoping that a personal and spiritual link with a pious person will not only give them access to Islamic learning and knowledge but enable them to become better Muslims and ultimately better human beings."[171] Although she associates this commentary with the necessity of "attach[ing] oneself to a shaykh," she asserts her main goal in writing such an essay is simply to share "a collection of personal observations."[172]

In the essay, Baji Ghazala highlights different themes present in Qadri character by relating anecdotes she is privy to as his daughter-in-law. She emphasizes that he shuns food and sleep, prioritizes prayer and work, and that he is adept at balancing tradition with modernity. In his biographical lecture, Qadri himself relates accounts of eating and

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[171] Dr. Ghazala Hassan Qadri, "A Day in the Life of Shaykh-ul-Islam," Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri's Facebook page, posted on March 12, 2011. https://www.facebook.com/notes/dr-muhammad-tahir-ul-qadri/a-day-in-the-life-of-shaykh-ul-islam/195900350430587/
[172] Qadri, "A Day in the Life of Shaykh-ul-Islam."

sleeping very little; concentrating on worship, his studies, and later the mission of MQI; and wearing Western clothing and playing sports while adopting *shalwār kamīz*, traditional South Asian clothing and engaging in religious studies at home. However, there are other aspects to his character on which Baji Ghazala sheds light. His adept ability to multitask and his traits of being organized and a perfectionist. The author illustrates this by detailing his eating habits; despite eating very little and not prioritizing meals, when Qadri does sit down to eat a light breakfast or lunch, he does this often while taking calls from MQI followers. When he is done with his breakfast, he will still tidy up by "[noticing] if a wardrobe drawer is not shut properly [or straightening] a picture frame hanging on the wall" while taking calls.[173] Qadri is shown to be both a perfectionist and organized in a description of his morning routine:

> He will ensure that the bed sheets are completely tucked into the sides of the bed without any folds, the pillows are shaken and no longer have any dents within them and finally the quilt cover is straitened[sic] and each corner is placed symmetrical to the other corner. His prayer mat will always be completely in pristine condition pointing in the correct direction. I have never seen his toothbrush being left on the side of the sink and his toothpaste will always have its lid on, squeezed from the bottom upwards![174]

Baji Ghazala is self-reflexive about her choice in narrating such tedious details of his life, stating that she does this to show that "this trait pervades through every ambit of […] his work and life."[175] Thus, readers understand that a man this particular about the details of his living space would certainly be meticulous about his speech and actions.

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[173] Qadri, "A Day in the Life of Shaykh-ul-Islam."
[174] Qadri, "A Day in the Life of Shaykh-ul-Islam."
[175] Qadri, "A Day in the Life of Shaykh-ul-Islam."

The author also recounts stories that illustrate Qadri's "*husn-e-akhlāq*," or the beauty of his manners. For example, she narrates the way he puts people at ease, whether they are anxious followers meeting him for the first time or devoted members nervous about potentially angering Qadri, whether by spilling tea on his cloak or misplacing his jacket. Despite the utmost care with which Qādrī treats his environment, clothing and other possessions, he is compassionate and forgiving of others and "…never imposes such rigorous standards on others."[176] These acts also illustrate the typical behavior of average men, contrasting this with the care, precision and attention with which Qadri works. This account of Qadri serves as not only a deeply personal insight into the habits, character and mannerisms of a man considered by many to be their shaykh, but also as a guide or manual for those very people who wish to emulate his actions and mindset.

Qadri's role as an exemplar and a key figure for the Muslim *umma* is illustrated and emplotted through his father's hagiography. While narrating this variable oral discourse of his father's life story, towards the end of the ʿurs, Tahir-ul-Qadri recounts an incident in which his father tells him, "Throughout my life, I only asked God for one thing that was from this world and that was your birth. Yet that too was for religion. I wanted a boy who would work in the name of this religion. Otherwise I never asked for anything that was related to this world."[177] This narrative explicitly connects the sanctity of Farid-ud-Din

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[176] Qadri, "A Day in the Life of Shaykh-ul-Islam."
[177] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."

(often called *Qibla Wālid*, or "father of Qibla") to Tahir-ul-Qadri (*Qibla Huzūr*), the primary

purpose of the performance of the story.

Another story narrated by Tahir-ul-Qadri at the ʿurs that tells of the saintliness of

Farid-ud-Din describes a man, Mian Sālih Muhammad, who was incredibly pious, had

visions of the Prophet while awake, and died at age 110; that is, this man also had

characteristics of sainthood. When Farid-ud-Din would pass him in the alley, he would

stand with his back to the wall and wait until his passed. When asked by Qadri about why

he would do this, he replied:

> Right now, you do not know the gifts God has bestowed upon your father.
> We see him in the company of such saints, but God has placed a curtain on
> the gifts of your father. [178] Some saints are known all over and there is a
> lot of talk about them, but God does not want that to be exposed about
> your father just yet. Whenever He wants, He will let that happen.[179]

This narrative is used to explain why Farid-ud-Din is not well-known or recognized

outside of the MQI community, despite hagiographies that show him to be a man

of great wisdom, a saint whose life was characterized by the performance and

influence of miracles, and a figure who dedicated his life to the pursuit of mystical

knowledge. He is not widely known to the community outside of the MQI, but his

piety is established through his saintly biography and he gives Tahir-ul-Qadri

authority both through transmission as well as through hereditary lineage.

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[178] I believe "we" here refers to friends of God or those blessed with mystical knowledge.
[179] "Hayat e Farid e Millat."

Conclusion

Followers of Tahir-ul-Qadri commemorate the *ʿurs* of Farid-ud-Din Qadri, read his hagiography, listen to and read Tahir-ul-Qadri's telling of his life story, and read accounts about Qadri's habits and character as narrated by his family to understand more about their shaykh and live their lives according to the ideals he embodies. In an interview held in Dallas on July 27, 2017, Dr. Mayanaz recalls her journey in discovering Qadri:

> [My husband and I] were making a *nīyyah* (intention), a supplication that if there is someone like a *walī* …that we are learning [about] from our ancestors, our parents, the people who talk about the stories of *walīs*, the *awlīya* and saints. Where [are] the *awlīya* of this century? Are they all out in the forest, or the jungle? Are we never going to be able to get hold of or see someone? We had this supplication for a long time. …and [in] 2007 … someone said, "Why don't you listen to QTV? There's a scholar who comes on and his lectures are very good. So, the very first lecture we ever heard from *Shaykh-ul-Islam* was on *tahārat*, on purification. That was Allah *taʾāla's* (the Highest) plan.

Women recognize Qadri as part of the tradition of saints they were taught through stories from hagiographies recounted by their mothers.The role that Baji Ghazala plays as a privileged insider provides insight into women's authority as "contributors to communal memory."[180] Similar to the role that ʿĀʾisha played as "an esteemed authority for the preservation of [the Muslim community's] past," Baji Ghazala assumes a subordinate role as a relative; yet, this subordinate role also gives her access and knowledge that is valuable for the whole movement, including men, who depend on her to provide an insider's view of Qadri's attributes and mannerisms.[181] This is similar to ʿĀʾisha, whose

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[180] Denise A. Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past: The Legacy of ʿA ʿisha Bint Abi Bakr* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 54.
[181] Spellberg, 10.

"unique proximity to the Prophet and reliable memory made her an unavoidable point of reference for the male companions of the Prophet."[182] The recount-writing as well as the English hagiography of Tahir-ul-Qadri are written by women. That two of the three hagiographies analyzed in this chapter are written by women is significant; in pre-modern times, Sufi hagiographic accounts were almost always produced by men.[183] Therefore, the MQI is both traditional and modern; despite the deep continuity the MQI maintains in terms of sainthood and hagiography, the organization also parts from convention in certain ways. The role that women play in the establishment and maintenance of Qadri's sainthood signals a break in tradition that the MQI is bringing to Sufi movements.

These accounts fulfill the task of emplotting smaller narratives to fit within the larger narrative of establishing Tahir-ul-Qadri as a living saint, and establishing sainthood is integral to the establishment of power. Qadri's power is established through his connection with God, and his followers mention this explicitly. Adversaries commonly criticize the *pīr-murīd* relationship esteemed by Sufi practitioners like MQI members, questioning why not seek God directly rather than through another source? One woman explained this to me by comparing it to the process by which we get electricity:

> Suppose you need light because your house is dark. Now, you might say it is dark in this room or this house, but someone who cares about Allah and His *Rasūl* [the Prophet Muhammad], he would say there is darkness inside me or inside my heart! But these are two different people. A person who [needs light in their] house, they might say, 'I need electricity,' because they are living in a village without electricity. If he asks someone, they would say 'You need you go to a dam where the electricity is made.' [...] He goes to the dam and the person who works

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[182] Spellberg, 53.

[183] One exception is Princess Jahan Ara's hagiographies of Muʿin-ud-Dīn Chishti and Mulla Shah. See Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India: Volume Two* (New Delhi, India: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2009), 481.

there would say, 'Are you a fool? You've come all the way here from a village?' If you want electricity and you go to where they supply the electricity, meaning where it is made, that's foolish! You need to go to a substation, where we send the electricity and get it from there, in the city. The city folk would then say 'You're a fool! Go to your village where it is filtered.' Thus, in this case, if you go to the direct source, it will make your home explode.

God's power is literally explosive and too intense to be accessed directly; Qadri's own power comes from his ability to handle God's power and disseminate it across his group of followers. As established by Foucault, power cannot exist without the circulation of a discourse, and with regards to the power of sainthood, multiple discourses. This chapter examined hagiographies as a means through which sainthood is determined, analyzing how this discourse functions to establish power. Although these hagiographies establish Qadri as a saint, certain questions around the establishment of Qadri's power remain unanswered. Known primarily among the wider population for his involvement in politics, Qadri's political party, the PAT, has almost double the following online than that of the MQI. How do hagiographies contribute to or affect Qadri's authority as a politician? During fieldwork, I heard women reference accounts of former MQI members who left the organization as Qadri's political involvement increased.[184] There is the sense then that for some, the discourses that create Qadri's power as a shaykh are at odds with the discourses that create his power as a politician.

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[184] MQI members simply referenced the fact that some former members left as a result of Qadri's involvement in politics as an example of their lack of full trust in their shaykh and therefore, a sign of weak imān or faith. However, I never met these former members personally and was not given any names.

Characterized by tales of the miraculous and astonishing, hagiographies have historically been viewed with skepticism as a source of truth. Although we must consider the positioning of those who narrate such histories, scholars must also view these narratives as truth for those who actively engage with them. The details of Farid-ud-Din Qadri's life as told by his son, Tahir-ul-Qadri, fit within the mold of Sufi discourse, theoretical treatises, and hagiography. Telling and re-telling his hagiography in this way by using media, at yearly commemorations in the form of ʿurs, and in published texts serve a particular purpose within the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan organization.

The sacred biographies analyzed in this chapter outline disciplinary practices that create the obedient wills referenced by Asad in his understanding of power. By narrating the habits, schedules and ascetic-like tendencies of Farid-ud-Din Qadri and Tahir-ul-Qadri, including fasting, praying and meditating for long periods of time and sleeping and eating very little, the MQI advocates practices that create obedient wills and the conditions for power to circulate, allowing members to respond to authority. Analyzing these texts illustrates the ways in which power circulates through the discourse of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan and the modes through which the authority of Tahir-ul-Qadri is established. His sacred biographies produce "regimes of truth," and the discourse of sainthood allows MQI members to allot value to what they see as true or false. Regimes of truth, like all regimes, are debated and transformed through contestation. The next chapter documents this contestation through the history of Islamic reform movements in South Asia.

Chapter 3: Performing Transnationalism: MQI and the History of Islamic Reform Movements in South Asia

In Chapter 2, I addressed the ways in which sainthood binds the MQI together as a devotional community; however, the MQI is not only a Sufi community that continues to uphold tradition around medieval patterns of sainthood and religious authority. Its focus on "returning to" love for the prophet Muhammad also indicates its status as an Islamic reform movement, highlighting its modernity and politicization. Women see reinstilling love for the Prophet as the ultimate mission for the organization as a reform movement while engaging in practices that exhibit and cultivate this love as a devotional community.

Despite its relatively recent founding in 1980, the MQI did not emerge from a vacuum or advocate entirely new ideas. Rather, Tahir-ul-Qadri's organization emerged out of a very particular social and historical South Asian context, which is best understood through an explication of the debate over Sufism in Pakistan. Political scientist Alix Philippon has described the MQI as a neo-Sufi movement, but this designation does not come without its own problems.[185] This chapter will first flesh out the contours of the term "neo-Sufism," and then, because the MQI supports and exists primarily to advocate Islamic reform, I will present here a brief historical overview of other Islamic revival and reform movements within South Asia. Movements like the Ahl-e-Hadīth and the

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[185] See See Alix Philippon, *Soufisme et politique au Pakistan: Le movement barelwi à l'heure de la <<guerre contre le terrorisme>>*, (Paris: Karthala, 2011); Alix Philippon, "When Sufi Tradition Reinvents Islamic Modernity: The Minhāj-ul Qurʾān, a Neo-Sufi Order in Pakistan," in *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*, ed. Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012).

Deobandīs have historically criticized Barelwī practices, which contribute to an environment still relevant today and give context to the birth of the MQI in Pakistan. I will then move into the debate over Sufism in Pakistan in more modern times, starting with 1959, when the Ministry of Awqāf was created in Pakistan in order to decrease the influence of *pīrs* at Sufi shrines.[186] This contentious environment has influenced the presentation of Tahir-ul-Qadri and the MQI as global or universal forces rather than constricting their impact to a local, Pakistani influence. Moving forward, the chapter will situate these historical debates and socio-religious criticism within contemporary critiques of Tahir-ul-Qadri and the MQI, looking at how the MQI officially positions itself to address criticism and talk about practices like shrine devotion and *mawlid*. This chapter argues that the MQI is situated within a particular context of South Asian Islamic reform movements that have shifted from their roots as primarily devotional communities to simultaneously serving as political movements. Part of this politicization in the case of the MQI is an effort to transform from a local to a transnational movement, arguing that issues of corruption in Pakistan are an issue of concern for the entire *umma*. In order to reflect this global relevance, one strategy employed by the organization is through changes in attire performed by Qadri. More simply put, this chapter fleshes out the history of movements like the MQI, addressing in particular the practices and ideas that have resulted in controversy and debate. I then illustrate how Qadri and the MQI have tried to anticipate some of that criticism. A progression of photographs of Qadri visually demonstrates the movement's international credibility through his transformation from

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[186] Ewing, 70.

a man who is demonstrably South Asian in his attire to one who wears clothing and hats associated with key Islamic institutions from around the world.

Considering Neo-Sufism

A former professor of law, politician and religious scholar, Tahir-ul-Qadri aligns himself and his organization with the Qādiriyya Sufi order, although "…[the organization does] not always recruit on the basis of the Qādirī identity only; nor do they systematically impose the oath of allegiance to the Sufi master, which is compulsory in most orders."[187] MQI's Qādirī identity is signaled through Tahir-ul-Qadri's name itself. Although the last name Qadri could indicate that he is a descendant of ꜥAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani, in this case, according to his devotees, his last name indicates he has taken *bayꜥat* with a *murshid* in the Qādirī *tarīqa*, or Sufi order.

Although Qadri aligns himself and his movement with a Sufi order, he also emphasizes the *zāhirī* or outer aspect of Islam by focusing on social and political reform. Stressing the inability of the organization to respond to the political needs of its members, Qadri founded the political party Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), or Pakistan People's Party, in 1989,[188] less than a decade after founding Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan.[189] This type of activity, among other characteristics, has resulted in some scholars classifying Minhāj ul-Qurʾan as a neo-Sufi order or movement.[190]

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[187] Philippon, "Sufi Tradition," 112.
[188] S. Iftikhar Murshed, "The Fulminations of Tahirul Qadri," *The News International*, January 13, 2013, accessed May 7, 2013, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-154089-The-fulminations-of-Tahirul-Qadri
[189] Alix Philippon, *Soufisme et politique au Pakistan: Le movement barelwi à l'heure de la <<guerre contre le terrorisme>>*, (Paris: Karthala, 2011), 230.
[190] Philippon, "Sufi Tradition," 112.

Despite this association with the Qādirī *tarīqa*, the MQI does not share all the typical characteristics of a traditional Sufi order. The MQI does not require a formal initiation ceremony or *bayʿat*; instead, becoming a member of the MQI requires, like many secular organizations, banal formalities including paperwork and membership fees. Although Minhājians consider Qadri to be their shaykh, they usually have limited personal access to him. Alix Philippon classifies the MQI instead as a Neo-Sufi order. She claims that such orders:

> …do not always recruit on the basis of Qadiri identity only; nor do they systemically impose the oath of allegiance to the Sufi master, which is compulsory in most orders. Furthermore, mystical initiation is not the main object of these groups. […] They are associations recently created and whose founders are mostly still alive; they recruit along modern lines; they are preaching movements; the form of authority exercised by these leaders is mostly charismatic, that is to say, their devotees often believe the latter to be living representatives of the Prophet, endowed with Baraka and the capability to help win their salvation on the Day of Judgment. Most of them are involved in intensive social activities and also at times participate in political life even though their degree of politicization, protestation, and radicalization has been markedly variable.[191]

Although the MQI appears to fit many of these qualifications, some of these features have evolved naturally over time. First, identification with a Sufi order, Qadirī or otherwise, often occurs *after* initiation, not before. Also, the ability of Sufis, in particular, to adapt to changing circumstances in order to bring more followers to the movement is well documented and not limited to modern times. *Samāʿ*, or the act of listening to recitations of prayers or mystical compositions such as *qawwālī*, has been used historically in South Asia to attract people of various backgrounds. Since the 13th century,

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[191] Alix Philippon, "When Sufi Tradition Reinvents Islamic Modernity: The Minhāj-ul Qurʾān, a Neo-Sufi Order in Pakistan," in *South Asian Sufis: Devotion, Deviation, and Destiny*, ed. Clinton Bennett and Charles M. Ramsey (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012), 112.

not only did Sufi poetry sometimes use Hindi language and imagery from Hindu devotional songs,[192] but Hindu mystical verse was even recited at *samāʿ* gatherings, often by Hindus who converted to Islam.[193] In one hagiography of Khwāja Muʿīn-ud-Dīn Chishtī, the author, W.D. Begg, identifies *samāʿ* and the performance of *qawwālī* as a means to "… mould [sic] the hearts of his audience for accepting the Divine Message gracefully."[194] The author suggests that because music has been important to religious practice in Hinduism (citing the recitation of *bhajans*, or Hindu devotional hymns, during religious ceremonies), Muʿin-ud-Din Chishti incorporated the recitation of Sufi songs, a "… medium [which] suited Indian culture, temperament, customs and traditions," specifically to reach the subcontinental audience."[195]

Furthermore, the varying participation in politics and social activities by Sufis also predates modern times. For example, Scott Kugle's *Rebel Between Spirit and Law* analyzes the life and works written by a Sufi shaykh, Ahmad Zarruq, and focuses on his efforts to create a devotional order that would address social and political tensions in 15th century North Africa. After witnessing political revolution and different Sufi leaders advocating rebellion, Zarruq actively discouraged opportunistic jihad, which he defined as "acts of oppression in opposing oppression."[196] As Kugle later notes, Zarruq's "…legacy is evident

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[192] Regula Qureshi, *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context, and Meaning in Qawwali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 84.

[193] Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India: Volume One* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978), 326.

[194] W.D. Begg, *The Holy Biography of Hazrat Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti: A Symbol of Love and Peace in India* (New Delhi: Millat Book Centre, 1999), 172.

[195] Begg, 172.

[196] Scott Kugle, *Rebel Between Spirit and Law: Ahmad Zarruq, Sainthood, and Authority in Islam* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 23.

in the illustrious career of ᶜAbd al-Haqq Muhaddith Dihlawī who criticized not only the Mughal courtiers Abū al-Fadl and Faydī…but also the ambitious Naqshbandi Sufi reformer Ahmad Sirhindī."[197] Thus, Sufi orders and reformers dating back to the 15th and 16th centuries have been involved both in matters of faith and politics.

Finally, the belief that Sufi shaykhs or saints have been endowed with *baraka*, or blessings from God, and the ability to intercede on the behalf of followers is not a modern phenomenon. In Vincent Cornell's *Realm of the Saint*, the chapter "Qualifying the Ineffable" looks at three different hagiographical anthologies dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries and gives information about saints who died prior to the beginning of the 13th century. Compiling statistical data from these anthologies, Cornell classifies the data into relevant categories and illustrates this data using pie charts and bar graphs. For example, in one graph laying out the criteria "… by which the inhabitants of premodern Morocco judged potential saints to belong to a special (*khāṣṣ*) category of human beings," Cornell confirms that the main role of a saint was to serve as a "broker or intermediary."[198] Although some of the data reflects intercession here on Earth, for example, through political intervention, over 22% of the qualifications of a saint are concerned with intercession before God.[199] Over half of the criteria used to qualify a saint as special was the ability to perform miracles.[200] Thus, the "neo" part of the term neo-

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[197] Kugle, 23.
[198] V. Cornell, 112.
[199] V. Cornell, 113.
[200] V. Cornell, 113.

Sufi is problematic, given that many of its elements can be found in much earlier Sufi traditions.

The term neo-Sufism was first used by scholar Fazlur Rahman, who claimed that it is: 1) a result of reform "under orthodox pressure – both from within and from outside Sufism;" 2) "largely stripped of its ecstatic and metaphysical character and content which were replaced by a content which was nothing else than the postulates of the orthodox religion;" and 3) made to "serve the activist impulse of orthodox Islam and is a ubiquitous fact in all the major forms of pre-Modernist reform movements."[201] These movements dated back to the 18th and 19th centuries and self-described as *tarīqa Muhammadīya*, or the order of the Prophet, which reflected a concern with reforming "medieval Sufism" to a "… recourse to the inner, spiritual and moral life of the Prophet."[202]

While J. Spencer Trimingham does not use the term neo-Sufism, he does maintain the same focus on *tarīqa Muhammadīya* in a chapter he calls "Nineteenth-Century Revival Movements," referring to some of the same movements as Rahman, including the *tarīqa* of Ahmad ʾibn Idrīs.[203] He also uses the term revival rather than reform to reflect the concern of these orders with the ways in which the "true Way of Sufi experience had weakened."[204] Trimingham classifies these movements as those which "… sought to preserve the inner (*bātinī*) aspect of Islam, rejected completely by the Wahhābīs, along with full acceptance of the *zahirī* aspect."[205] Furthermore, they:

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[201] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam: Second Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 205-206.
[202] Rahman, 206.
[203] J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 106.
[204] Trimingham, 106.
[205] Trimingham, 106

… sought to bind believers together through full adherence to the Law along with an emotionalized Islam based on devotion to the Prophet and a personal embodiment of divine power at work in the world. All these new orders were moved by missionary fervour to augment their membership. […] The new *tarīqas* were also marked by their revulsion against asceticism and by their stress on practical activities.[206]

The influence of Trimingham is apparent on other scholars of neo-Sufism, specifically John O. Voll who wrote the 1998 forward for Trimingham's *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, which was originally published in 1971. Voll further developed the concept of neo-Sufism by defining neo-Sufi groups as "vehicles for purification and revival," associating them particularly with a "reforming spirit" and "a return to Islam as it is defined by a literal interpretation of the Qurʾan and the Sunnah of the Prophet."[207] Rahman and Voll differentiated these neo-Sufi groups according to the activism that they engaged in and the push for renewal that they sought.

Rex O' Fahey and Bernd Radtke push back against the neo-Sufi consensus in their article "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered." They list characteristics of reformist orders referred to as Neo-Sufi, which include:

> Rejection of 'popular' ecstatic Sufi practice [such as] … saint worship and visiting of saints' tombs; … 'Union' with the spirit of the Prophet, with a general emphasis on 'The Muhammadan Way,' tarīqa Muhammadīyya; Legitimation of the position of the order's founder through his having received prayers, litanics and his authority generally from the Prophet; Creation of mass organizations hierarchically-structured under the authority of the founder and his family …; [and] the will to take political and military measures in defence [sic] of Islam.[208]

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[206] Trimingham, 106-107.

[207] John O. Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World- Second Edition* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 28-29.

[208] R. S. O' Fahey and Bernd Radtke, "Neo-Sufism Reconsidered," *Der Islam* 70 (1973): 57.

The authors' main argument is that much of the consensus about neo-Sufi orders is based on analysis of colonial literature, which discusses such movements without simultaneous consideration of literature written by the leaders of such movements.[209] In order to understand whether such orders truly rejected popular Sufi practice, *ijtihād*, *wahdat al-wujūd*, and *taqlīd*, and embraced the importance of hadīth, "union" with the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad, and involvement in politics, it is necessary to read the works of those involved with such orders themselves.[210]

While the movements classified as neo-Sufi may have appropriated the term at-tarīqa al-Muhammadīyya, Vincent Cornell rightly points out in *Realm of the Saint* the lack of connection between these movements and the Muhammadan Way of the *Jazūlyya* shaykh al-Ghazwānī.[211] O' Fahey and Radtke also confirm the lack of connection between the Muhammadan Way associated with Neo-Sufi orders and orders like the Tijānīyya.[212]

Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan does not fully fit the model associated with the neo-Sufi models characterized by O' Fahey and Radtke. Although MQI does embrace union with the Prophet, legitimate Tahir-ul-Qadri's authority through the Prophet, emphasize the organization of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan through a hierarchy of Qadri and his family, and include a political wing, the main and most key difference from the neo-

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[209] O' Fahey and Bernd Radtke, 54.
[210] O' Fahey and Bernd Radtke, 57.
[211] V. Cornell, 227.
[212] O' Fahey and Radtke, 64-71.

Sufi model comes with the emphasis on saintly devotion and, by association, saintly tomb visitation.

With the many problems that emerge from the term neo-Sufi, Elizabeth Sirriyeh rightly asks, "if the concept of 'neo-Sufism' as involving substantial changes at the very core of its nature is to be rejected, are there ways in which it is still meaningful to speak of new direction in Sufism at this time?"[213] Cornell also questions whether this concept is useful for early-modern North Africa considering "it is necessary to continually qualify neo-Sufism by explaining away exceptions."[214] Perhaps the term can be problematic, but as Kugle states, the "… label may be misleading even as it points to important changes."[215] Therefore, with the contentious history associated with the terminology, it is necessary to reconsider how to define such orders.

In *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, Olivier Roy moves away from the loaded term "neo-Sufism" and instead characterizes "neo-brotherhoods." These brotherhoods:

> …offer an explicit Sufi dimension [and are] …usually derived from a traditional Muslim *tariqat,* but with some innovations. The brotherhood is headed by a sheikh (or *pīr*), who is more a modern guru than a traditional Sufi master; he is often the founder of the brotherhood, or the founder's first successor, and his biography is disseminated by his devotees. He writes extensively (hundreds of books or, more precisely, booklets) and 'performs' his role at meetings or even on television. The sheikh is a public man who exploits modern media techniques. His followers are recruited as individuals rather than as part of a family tradition […] There is, moreover, no real

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[213] Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Rethinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1999), 11.
[214] V. Cornell, 227.
[215] Kugle, *Sufis and Saints' Bodies*, 269.

initiation or gradation in membership. The follower learns the master's teachings by reading his writings and listening to his sermons (often on video). He has direct and complete, rather than progressive, access to knowledge, which is provided in a discursive form, not through spiritual exercises. […] The disciple is not in regular contact with the *pīr* or his deputies, but with an organization that arranges public meetings with the *pīr*. The brotherhood has an active public presence, using modern public-relations techniques (such as multiple websites, printed media, and appearances on television).[216]

Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan closely fits Roy's definition of neo-brotherhood, especially when compared to studies of other transnational Sufi movements in Pakistan. In *Pilgrims of Love*, anthropologist Pnina Werbner conducts an extensive study on the Sufi Naqshbandī order of Zindapīr, a living saint. Like the MQI, there are branches of Zindapir's order across the world, the charisma of the founding saint is established through miraculous narratives, the order participates in rituals like the commemoration of ʿurs, and like with the networks of the MQI, there is a strong sense of camaraderie among disciples who feel empowered by their relationship with the shaykh and with their fellow disciples.[217] However, the physical *khānqāh*, or Sufi lodge, located in Ghamkol Sharif, a valley in North West Frontier Province, plays a large role in perpetuating the order and hosts many of the disciples and activities of the order. Zindapir refused efforts to publish his pictures or compile a *tazkira*, or hagiography, or a book of his *malfuzāt*, or sayings; thus, his charisma was "personal and immediate, actively flowing from his very presence."[218] Zindapir rejected technology and politics, both of which are embraced by Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan. Also,

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[216] Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 221-222.

[217] Pnina Werbner, *Pilgrims of Love: The Anthropology of a Global Sufi Cult* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 155.

[218] Werbner, 61.

unlike the stipulations in Roy's definition of neo-brotherhood, Werbner found it was "quite rare for people as isolated individuals to become disciples" of Zindapir's order.[219] Thus, the differences are sufficient to label this transnational Naqshbandi movement as distinct from movements like the MQI.

The Sabiri Chishti movement documented by Robert Rozehnal in *Islamic Sufism Unbound* is another transnational Sufi movement based in Pakistan with many similarities to the MQI. Like Qadri, the leadership of the Chishtī Sābirīs are "ardent Pakistani nationalists, … [resist] co-optation by the postcolonial state and [defend Sufi] tradition in public polemical debate."[220] The Chishtī Sābirīs also use publications to establish the orthodoxy of their tradition and the spiritual powers of their shaykhs and mass media technologies to proliferate their transnational movement. Like MQI members, Chishtī Sābirīs use ritual practice to engage in ethical cultivation of the self. One striking similarity is the role of tragedy in framing a particular narrative for the community. Rozehnal analyzes the varying interpretations of the 2001 Pakpattan tragedy in which over one hundred devotees were trampled at the shrine of the Sufi saint Baba Farīd ud-Dīn Masꜥūd Ganj-e-Shakkar.[221] State authorities blamed the stampede on the shrine's custodian, claiming he "had delayed the public ceremonies and the opening of the *bihishti darwaza* by four hours while bickering over the annual payment allotted to him by the Awqāf Department.[222] The shrine's custodians in turn blamed the tragedy on unnecessary force

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[219] Werbner, 153.
[220] Robert Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007),96.
[221] Rozehnal, 19.
[222] Rozehnal, 29.

by the police.[223] In the case of the MQI, the Model Town Massacre is used to shape the narrative of the organization as leading a revolution against corruption. On June 17, 2014, Pakistani police forces clashed with Qadri's followers at the headquarters of his political party, the PAT, claiming that roadblocks put there were illegal.[224] PAT members, on the other hand, claimed these roadblocks had been approved by the Lahore High Court four years ago after Qadri had been threatened by Taliban militants and that this was state-sponsored terrorism against Qadri for leading a revolution against the corrupt state.[225] The Model Town Massacre, much like the Pakpattan tragedy, is used to construct a narrative around "sacrifice and martyrdom,"[226] with the seven slain MQI members called the "*shuhadā-e-inqilāb*," or the "martyrs of the Revolution."[227]

However, the Sabiri Chishtis do differ in some ways from the MQI and the definition of neo-brotherhood identified by Roy. Rozehnal illustrates how the three Sabiri Chishti masters in his case study closely adhere to the profile of a pre-modern Sufi shaykh outlined by Bruce Lawrence. Among the qualities of a pre-modern shaykh are the qualities of "living in isolation from the company of others … [and] avoiding the company of worldly people … and government officials, including kings."[228] This is contrary to Qadri's

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[223] Rozehnal, 29.

[224] Waqar Gillani, "7 Killed as Pakistan Police Clash with Preacher's Followers," *New York Times*, June 17, 2014, Accessed September 5, 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/18/world/asia/pakistan-police-clash-with-qadri-followers.html?_r=0>

[225] "Model Town Massacre- June 17 2014," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, posted on June 17, 2014, Accessed September 5, 2018 <https://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/28605/Model-Town-Lahore-Massacre-tragedy-incident-saneha-June-17-police-state-terrorism-FIR-Shahbaz-Sharif-Nawaz-Govt.html>

[226] Rozehnal, 30.

[227] "Shuhada-e-Inqilab," Lahore Massacre, Accessed September 6, 2018 <https://lahoremassacre.com/tid/41621/Shuhda-e-Inqilab-17-June-2014-Model-Town-Lahore-Massacre-tragedy-incident-state-terrorism-Pakistan-Awami-Tehreek-Minhaj-ul-Quran.html>

[228] Bruce B. Lawrence, "The Chishtiya of Sultanate India: A Case Study of Biograpihical Complexities in South Asian Islam," in *Charisma and Sacred Biography*, ed. Michael A. Williams, *Journal of the American*

methods and mode of operation; he is always surrounded by members of his organization and is quite the public figure. This includes meeting with journalists, program talk show hosts, political leaders, and international officials. Arguably, his political aspirations necessitate this type of company. In order to understand the connection between Islamic reform movements in South Asia and their involvement in politics, particularly that of Pakistan, I will first survey key Islamic reform movements and then provide the context of the history of Pakistan immediately before and after its independence.

Barelwī History and Theology

The Barelwī movement is an Islamic reformist movement in South Asia that preaches extreme love and respect of the Prophet Muhammad. This love is expressed through the practice of *milād*. Barelwīs also advocate becoming closer to God by trying to become close to the Prophet and other friends of God, namely Sufi saints. The term "Barelwī," named after the founder of the movement Ahmad Razā Khan Barelwī, is often contested and followers of the Barelwī movement prefer to call themselves *ahl-e-sunna wa'l jama⁢at*, or "the people of the traditions and community of the Prophet Muhammad." In her extensive studies of the Barelwī movement and its founder, Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwī, Usha Sanyal adopts this term to refer to the Barelwī community, noting that the term Barelwī is rejected by those who associate with the movement.[229] I

Academy of Religion Thematic Studies, Vol. XLVIII, Nos. 3 and 4 (1982), 53, quoted in Robert Rozehnal, *Islamic Sufism Unbound: Politics and Piety in Twenty-First Century Pakistan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 45.

[229] Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870-1920* (New Delhi: Yoda Press, 2010), 8.

would note, however, that the term *ahl-e-sunna wa'l jamaʿat* is strategically appropriated

by many Muslim groups in South Asia. Indeed, the first time I heard this term appropriated

was by a South Asian Salafi. Because the term *ahl-e-sunna wa'l jama'at* serves as a marker

of legitimacy for groups across the spectrum of those who identify also as Sunni Muslims,

I have chosen to use the term Barelwī here, as it is the more recognized term for this

community. This label is also appropriate for the MQI, which is associated with the Barelwī

movement. Although I have never heard the MQI members I conducted fieldwork with

refer to themselves as Barelwī, this is at best discursive politics since their practices and

arguments are typically Barelwī, arguments which are sharpened by the creation of a

political party.[230] Furthermore, the founder of the Barelwī movement, Ahmad Raza Khan

Barelwi , who was also Qādirī, has been honored by the MQI publicly as the *mujaddid*, the

revivalist or renewer, of his century. The MQI also pays tribute to him by sponsoring

"events honoring his life and work throughout the year as well as publishing his books."[231]

The very first Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan conference held in 1987 included as one of its chief guests

Allāma Syed Riyāsat ʿAlī Qādrī, a representative from Karachi's "Idāra-e-Tahqīqāt-e-Imām

Ahmad Raza." He then introduced Tahir-ul-Qadri by saying, "Let me say this, he is the

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[230] At the yearly group *milād* held by the MQI in Dallas, I sat next to a woman attending the milād at the center for the first time. Towards the end of the *milād*, she said she enjoyed this one more than the one she had attended at a local mosque because "that mosque is Barelwi." When I asked her what she meant, she said that they excessively praised their shaykhs and saints and mentioned their names often and forced people to stand at the time of salāt-o-salam. When I asked her why the MQI center wouldn't be considered Barelwi, she wasn't able to give me an exact response other than to say she had heard others call the former mosque Barelwi.

[231] Usha Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi: In the Path of the Prophet* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications, 2005), 130.

biggest devotee of ʾAlāʿ Hazrat [Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwī] to promote his mission. And what is the mission of ʾAlāʿHazrat? It is love of the Prophet."[232]

Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwī (1856-1921) was a Muslim scholar and jurist. Under the guidance of his father, he first studied the *dars-e-nizāmī*, a course of curriculum standard to most madrasas in India and Pakistan today.[233] Ahmad Raza became well known for his *fatāwa*, or juridical rulings, and after one was published with the endorsement of "sixteen *ʿulema* from Mecca and seven from Medina"; he was declared by the Barelwī *ʿulemāʾ* to be the *mujaddid*, or revivalist, of the 14th Islamic century.[234] Ahmad Raza actively disputed the ideas of other movements of his time, such as the Nadwat al-ʿUlemāʾ, the Deobandīs, and the Ahl-e-Hadīth. Barelwīs advocate and participate in practices such as the *mawlid*, *ʿurs* celebrations of saints, and going to saints' shrines to pray for intercession through various trials.[235] These practices are similar to those of the MQI, whose members celebrate *mawlid* and the *ʿurs* of Farid-ud-Din at local branches. Tahir-ul-Qadri and his sons and grandson are often documented visiting saints' shrines, as a photograph of him wearing a traditional turban at Muʿīn-ud-Dīn Chishti's shrine in Ajmer later in this chapter illustrates. Qadri also recounts visiting saints' shrines like Dāta Darbār as documented by his hagiography in Chapter 2. The Barelwīs believe in *wasīla*, or intercession on one's behalf by those who are special to God, specifically saints. Seeking the intercession before God is called *tawassul*, while seeking the aid of the Prophet is called *shafāʿat*, both of

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[232] Sarmad Javed. "1st Minhaj ul Quran Conference 12-03-1987 Pehli Minhaj ul Quran Conference Lahore." Filmed [March 1987]. Youtube video, 2:25:15. Posted [March 2012]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbVMmP_ejAE
[233] Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi*, 55.
[234] Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi*, 64-65.
[235] Sirriyeh, 49.

which are sought out by the group. Barelwīs also believe in *nur-e-Muhammadī*, or Muhammadan Light; *ʿilm-e-ghayb* (knowledge of the unseen); *hāzir-o-nāzir* (presence of the Prophet, who views all actions) and *milād-un-nabī* (birthday of the Prophet).[236]

The idea of *nur-e-Muhammadī* dates to the 9th century and was embraced by both Sufis and Shīʿas alike.[237] *Nur-e-Muhammadī* is the concept that the Prophet Muhammad was "created out of God's light and that his creation preceded that of Adam and the world in general."[238] As a result, Barelwīs do not think of the Prophet as having died in the way that normal human beings pass on. He was made of light, and that light continues to live on. Although they believe that the physical body of Prophet Muhammad has died, he lives on in the form of this light. This is what allows the Prophet to be *hāzir-o-nāzir*, or ever-present and all-seeing. By living on in this form, the Prophet continues to serve as an intermediary between his community and God and "appear in dreams and visions."[239]

The prophet Muhammad is present at all times and he is also considered to have *ʿilm-e-ghayb*, or knowledge of the unseen. This ability is granted by Allah, and in turn, the Prophet Muhammad passes on this ability to selected friends of God.[240] Thus, Barelwīs believe that some Sufi saints or shaykhs have also been gifted with the ability to know the unseen. Ahmad Raza claimed to have seen the Prophet Muhammad in a dream, giving

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[236] Thomas K. Gugler, "Barelwis: Developments and Dynamics of Conflict with Deobandīs," in *Sufis and Salafis in the Contemporary Age*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 179-185.
[237] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 54.
[238] Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi*, 96.
[239] Gugler, 180.
[240] Gugler, 181.

him permission to proceed with his learning of the art of ʿ*ilm-e-ghayb.*[241] This anecdote

illustrates the Barelwī belief in not only ʿ*ilm-e-ghayb* but also in *hāzir-o-nāzir.*

Many of the concepts encouraged in Barelwī theology were challenged or refuted

by other Islamic movements emerging in their time. Thus, the Barelwīs saw themselves

as a necessary counterpoint to other doctrines in need of reform. The very understanding

of *dīn,* or religion*,* for Barelwīs was a "reinstatement of an original, pristine 'Islam' going

back to Muhammad's day."[242] The Barelwī movement emerged in the 19th century from

the socio-historical context of reaction to British rule. There was a mass undertaking

towards Islamic reform that spanned across the spectrum from Wahhābī to Sufi

movements. Many of these movements fought to label themselves as 'authentic' Islam

during the contentious environment of the 19th century in the Indian subcontinent.

Islamic reform in South Asia, much like Islamic reformist discourse in the Arab

world, centers on the question of authenticity (or *aṣāla).* In *Islamic Reform in South Asia*,

editors Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella point out that in the chapters, "'reformism'

refers to projects whose specific focus is the bringing into line of religious beliefs and

practices with what are held to be the core foundations of Islam, by avoiding and purging

out innovation, accretion and the intrusion of 'local custom.'"[243] If reformism involves

efforts to cut out any beliefs or practices attributed as additions, local custom, or

innovation (*bidʿa*), then this implies that these reformist movements accept the idea of

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[241] Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*, 157.
[242] Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*, 50.
[243] Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella, "Introduction," in *Islamic Reform in South Asia*, eds. Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xi.

an original or authentic form of Islam and seek a return to such authenticity. This is exemplified in the words of Ahmad Raza himself, who said "Islam does not need reform but revival."[244] Although Ahmad Raza differentiates between the two terms, Islamic reform and Islamic revival are often used interchangeably by other scholars. While Trimingham referred to neo-Sufi movements as Islamic revival movements, Fazlur Rahman called them Islamic reform movements, and both acknowledged their emergence from a perspective that lamented the loss or decay of true Islamic ideals. The term revival emphasizes a return to the original Islam to remedy a deviation that has now occurred in the way Islam is practiced.

While many of the movements calling for reforms claimed authenticity, the ways in which they proved this authenticity varied and necessarily must, since they often staked claims against each other. This chapter will flesh out the contours of the Islamic authenticity debate and survey some of the most important and well-known reformist movements from the 19th to early 20th centuries in South Asia. Then I will address how claims of authenticity have been used against the Barelwīs and how they have accommodated this criticism. As a subset of the Barelwī movement that expresses Barelwī ideas and practices in a contemporary, transnational context, the MQI is influenced even today by this history of public debate.

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[244] Ahmad Raza Khan, *Did Wahabiyyah existed in the time of the Prophet and Sahabah?* (Stockport: Raza Academy Publication, 2005), **quoted in** Thomas K. Gugler, "Barelwis: Developments and Dynamics of Conflict with Deobandīs," in *Sufis and Salafis in the Contemporary Age*, ed. Lloyd Ridgeon (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 177.

Islamic Reform Movements and Authenticity

There are three main dichotomies that represent the contours of the authenticity debate within Islamic reform in South Asia. In her essay, "The Taqwīyyat al-Imān (Support of the Faith) by Shah Isma'il Shahid," Barbara Metcalf addresses two of these dichotomies: "The terms that would form the core of debate among Muslims over sectarian issues in subsequent decades are evident in the pioneering text translated here, above all: *tauhīd* (Unity), and its opposite, *shirk* (assigning partners to God); *sunna* (obedience to Prophetic example), and its opposite, *bidᶜa* (deviant innovation)."[245] Arthur Buehler describes another dichotomy to be charismatic versus scriptural authority, which is, as he describes, "charismatically connecting to the Prophet Muhammad via a spiritual genealogy on one hand and scripturally connecting to Muhammad via transmitted religious knowledge on the other."[246] The movements and individuals I will cite as examples calling for reform often operate within these three frameworks.

Tarīqa-e Muhammadīyya

Not to be confused with Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi, Sayyid Ahmad Barelwī founded the Tarīqa-e-Muhammadīyya and criticized "customs deemed to violate the doctrine of Unity (*tauhīd*) by unduly honoring holy men and the imam of the Shīᶜa in a

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[245] Barbara D. Metcalf, "The *Taqwiyyat al-Iman* (Support of the Faith) by Shah Isma'il Shahid" in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 204.
[246] Arthur Buehler, "Charismatic Versus Scriptural Authority: Naqshbandi Response to Deniers of Mediational Sufism in British India," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, eds. Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke (Boston: Brill, 1999), 468.

way that compromised the honor due to Allah alone."[247] This movement brought forth

many of the arguments made against Sufism and groups like the MQI today in South

Asia,[248] which may be observed in one of the most important reformist texts produced,

the *Taqwīyyat al-Imān*. In this text, Shāh Ismāʿīl Shāhid (d. 1831) compares acts which

typically occur at shrines to acts which should only occur during the worship of Allah

alone:

> … Allah has specified many acts of veneration for himself, known as
> worship (*ʿibādat*): for example, prostration (*sijda*), bowing (*rukuʿ*),
> and standing with hands folded. Likewise, to spend money in his
> name or fast in his name. [Wrong acts include] undertaking a distant
> trip to a shrine in such a manner that everyone knows that one is
> going on a pilgrimage (*ziyārat*)- for example … requiring
> circumambulation (*tawāf*), prostrating at the shrine, taking an
> animal there, spreading a covering (*ghilaf*) to fulfill a vow … kissing
> some stone, rubbing one's face or chest against the wall, making
> supplication while holding on to the shrine's covering… Allah has
> assigned to his servants all this worship for himself alone.[249]

Despite criticizing tomb veneration and practices associated with murshids who have died

in bodily form, Shahid does not critique the institution of charismatic authority. Instead,

he recommends that one "should take as [their] master (*pīr*) and teacher (*ustād*) someone

who is perfect in Unity and obedience to the *sunna* and far from *shirk* and *bidʿa*."[250] Thus,

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[247] Barbara D. Metcalf, "The *Taqwiyyat al-Iman* (Support of the Faith) by Shah Isma'il Shahid" in *Islam in South Asia in Practice*, ed. Barbara D. Metcalf (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 201.
[248] Marc Gaborieau, "Criticizing the Sufis: The Debate in Early-Nineteenth-Century India," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, eds. Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke (Boston: Brill, 1999), 453.
[249] Metcalf, "*Taqwiyyat al-Iman*," 208.
[250] Metcalf, 207.

while the Taqwiyyat al-Iman elsewhere criticizes the "excessive respect shown for living *murshids*,"[251] the Tarīqa-e Muhammadīyya do not prohibit charismatic authority entirely.

Ahl-e-Hadīth

The Ahl-e-Hadīth is a "puritanical movement" dating back to the 19th century and was founded by Siddīq Hasan Khān (d. 1890) and Nāzir Husayn (d. 1902), who "were influenced by the reformist ideas of Shāh Walīullah." [252] While the Tarīqa-e-Muhammadīyya tolerated a *pīr* who stayed away from *shirk* or *bidʿa*, the Ahl-e-Hadīth rejected the master-disciple relationship completely.[253] Unlike the Tablīghī Jamāʿat, for example, the Ahl-e-Hadīth "condemned Sufism outright and identified themselves with the Wahhābīs of Arabia,"[254] a common adversary of the Barelwīs even today. The Ahl-e-Hadīth had several problems with Barelwī practice and theology. First, the Ahl-e-Hadīth used the example of the Prophet as a criterion to guide practice; when Barelwīs "expressed their devotion in a typically Indian manner … adorning holy persons with flowers and using rose water and incense when in their holy presence,"[255] the Ahl-e-Hadīth took issue. Arthur Buehler outlines three primary elements that caused disagreement between the Ahl-e-Hadīth and Barelwīs:

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[251] Marc Gaborieau, "Criticizing the Sufis," 460.

[252] A.S. Niyazi, "Ahl-e-Hadith," *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[253] Arthur Buehler, "Charismatic Versus Scriptural Authority: Naqshbandi Response to Deniers of Mediational Sufism in British India," in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, eds. Frederick De Jong and Bernd Radtke (Boston: Brill, 1999), 472-473.

[254] Yoginder Sikand, "The Reformist Sufism of the Tablighi Jama'at: The Case of the Meos of Mewat, India" in *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, eds. Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 133.

[255] Arthur Buehler, "Charismatic Versus Scriptural Authority," 473.

1) The means and access the believer has to God, either with or without intercession.
2) Spiritual hierarchy or equality, i.e. how close one is to God through how one is "connected" to Muhammad
3) The primary mode of religious authority as either scriptural or personal[256]

The Ahl-e-Hadīth claim that every believer has equal access to God and reject the notion that some individuals are closer to God than others. Instead, the Ahl-e-Hadīth promote the Qurʾan and hadīth as authorities that every believer can access, thus they reject the need for the authority of a wali, pīr or saint.

Deobandīs

The Deobandī movement emerged in the late 19th century. These reformers, like the Ahl-e-Hadīth, viewed themselves as the "successors" of Shah Waliullah, a Sufi reformist thinker from the 18th century who emphasized the "need for Sufism to have an underpinning of essential Islamic learning and for scholars to appreciate the value of the direct personal experience of the mystic."[257] Like many of the reformist movements criticizing Sufism, the Deobandī reformers criticized many of the customs associated with saint cults as *bidʿa* and *shirk.*[258] Considering their own roots in Sufi discourse and with Sufism as "historically the preeminent source in Islam of the very interior self-formation that they have advocated," their criticism of Sufism is ironic.[259] The Deobandīs relied

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[256] Buehler, 477-478.
[257] Sirriyeh, 7.
[258] Sirriyeh, 46.
[259] Brannon D. Ingram, "Sufis, Scholars and Scapegoats: Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1905) and the Deobandī Critique of Sufism," *The Muslim World* 99 (July 2009), 479.

heavily on print technology to disseminate their teachings,[260] a trend in South Asian reform movements that continues today with the MQI. One key Deobandī scholar, Rāshid Ahmad Gangohī (1829-1905), disseminated collections of his *fatāwa* that reflect his outlook towards Sufism. Brannon Ingram, who has worked extensively on the Deobandīs, has identified five characteristics of Gangohi's thought:

> First, he believed that Sufism is an intensification of the ethos of Sharīʿa; second, he acknowledges the efficacy of Sufi ritual practices, but believes that their popularization results in a distraction from Sharīʿa; third, British rule and the perceived decline of Muslim vitality mean that practices which were once permissible must now be shunned; fourth, acts resembling those of non-Muslims, such as Hindus, become forbidden; finally, visiting shrines is not forbidden except on prescribed occasions, for purposes other than honoring God and if the visit involves practices that mimic religiously sanctioned acts.[261]

Many Deobandīs were critical of the 'popular' Sufism of the masses, and this concern with authenticity involves viewing those practices as being sullied by "adulteration from Hindu and Christian influence."[262] However, Deobandī scholars were not uniform in their stance towards Sufism, including Gangohi himself. While he criticized some practices associated with the Sufism of the masses, he emphasized the importance of the *pīr-murīd* relationship, for example.[263] Thus, Gangohi privileged both scriptural as well as charismatic authority, as long as charismatic authority was within the bounds of *sharīʿa*.

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[260] See, for example, Brannon D. Ingram, "The Portable Madrasa: Print, Publics, and the Authority of the Deobandī 'Ulama" *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 2 (2014).
[261] Ingram, "Sufis, Scholars and Scapegoats," 485-486.
[262] Ingram, 490.
[263] Ingram, 496.

Tablīghī Jamāʿat

The Tablīghī Jamāʿat is an offshoot of the Deobandī movement known primarily for its successful proselytization strategies; unlike the Deobandīs, who sanctioned charismatic authority if it remained within the bounds of Islamic law, TJ believed charismatic authority was derived *from* strictly observing Islamic law.[264]. They are so closely linked to the Deobandīs that the founder of TJ, Muhammad Ilyās, studied under Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, the renowned Deobandī scholar mentioned above, for nine years.[265] Furthermore, "Ilyas would later insist that the TJ aimed at spreading the reformist doctrines of the Deobandīs, albeit using different means of popular preaching."[266] Tablīghī Jamāʿat's mission was to make Muslims better Muslims and educate them about their own faith. This mission was "part of a wider project of constructing an 'imagined community' of Muslims."[267] As a part of this project to construct a separate community, the TJ shuns particular practices like "*samāʿ*, the visiting of tombs in the Dargah complex, festivals of Hindu origin like Basant, or annual celebrations like the ʿ*urs*."[268] The criticism of such practices is related to the TJ focus on modeling "one's own behaviour [sic] on that of Prophet Muhammad [...and imitating] as closely as possible the Prophet's way of life as known from the Traditions (hadīth)."[269]

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[264] For a study on the actual institution and methods employed by the Tablighi Jama'at, see Dietrich Reetz, "The 'Faith Bureaucracy' of Tablighi Jama'at: An Insight into their System of Self-Organization (Intizam)" in *Colonialism, Modernity, and Religious Identities: Religious Reform Movements in South Asia*, ed. Gwilym Beckerlegge (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 98-124.

[265] Sikand, "The Reformist Sufism," 131.

[266] Sikand, 131.

[267] Sikand, 132.

[268] Marc Gaborieau, "What is left of Sufism in Tablighi Jama'at?" *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 135 (July-September 2006), 63.

[269] Gaborieau, 65.

Privileging scriptural authority over charismatic authority, the Tablīghī Jamāʿat "challenged the authority of the custodians of the Sufi shrines … [by claiming that] one's faithful observance of the *sharīʿa* alone qualified one to be considered a *wali*."[270] Perhaps in an effort to distance themselves from the power of charismatic authority, then, the TJ completely invalidated the concept by equating total observance of scripture, or following the *sharīʿa*, with the varied qualifications that gave one saintly status.[271] According to this view, any pious Muslim could be a saint.

Disputing popular practices was a display of concern with authenticity. Sikand finds that:

> Early twentieth century Indian Muslim reformists of all hues, including the Deobandīs as well as Islamists and Muslim modernists, railed against popular customary practices, exhorting Muslims to 'return' to the path of the 'authentic' Islamic tradition [despite the fact that] the ways that they envisaged Islamic 'orthodoxy' and 'authenticity' varied considerably …[272]

Despite this challenge to traditional Sufi authority, Muhammad Ilyas himself belonged to the Chishtīyya Sufi order and many of the six points that were so central to Tablīghī Jamāʿat doctrine closely resembled Sufi doctrine.[273] The six points were: the *shahāda*, *salāh* or *namāz*, *ʿilm-o-zikr* (knowledge and remembrance), *ikrām-e-muslim* (respect for all Muslims), *tashīh-e-niyyat* (purification of intention), and *tafrīgh-e-waqt* (spending time

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[270] Sikand, "The Reformist Sufism," 134-135.
[271] Although Tahir-ul-Qadri emphasizes complete observance of the *sharīʿa*, this is not seen as a means of acquiring saintly status but rather as a necessary qualification to become a better Muslim and to become closer to God. Saintly status can be attributed to *al-qadr*, or predestination by God's will, alone.
[272] Sikand, 131-132.
[273] Marc Gaborieau, "What is left of Sufism in Tablighi Jama'at?" 54.

in for the cause of the faith), all points which "reflect an activist, sharīʿa-centric Sufism."[274]

Furthermore, the genealogy of TJ stemming from the Deobandī movement means that it

likewise inherited Sufi connections and influences from the Deobandīs.

Historical Contestation between the Barelwīs and other Islamic Reform Movements

Barelwīs have historically countered the various criticisms hurled at them from

other Islamic reform movements. As mentioned earlier, the Deobandīs often released

compendia of *fatāwa* supporting their positions. In return, the Barelwīs released their

own fatwa, drawing on "traditional Hanafi jurisprudence to reach very different

conclusions."[275] The principles of *hazir-o-nazir* (the Prophet's presence and ability to

observe at all times), *nur-e-Muhammadī*, and ʿ*ilm-e-ghayb* are all related to another

major point of disagreement between Barelwīs and Wahhābīs: their view on the status of

the Prophet after his death.[276] Barelwīs believe that the Prophet did not die, but instead,

remains as light, is present in all places at all times, and is able to have knowledge of the

unseen. Those that denied these claims, such as the Ahl-e-Hadīth, were accused by

Ahmad Raza Khan of "[decreasing] the glory of Muhammad [and therefore] guilty of

infidelity to Islam (*kufr*)."[277] For the Barelwīs, "exuberant praise of the prophet was the

touchstone of correct religious practice and belief, enabling them to legitimize both weak

hadīths, if they elevated Muhammad's stature, and innovations in practice, if they

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[274] See Sikand "The Reformist Sufism," 134.
[275] Sirriyeh, 49.
[276] Pnina Werbner, "Reform Sufism in South Asia," in *Islamic Reform in South Asia*, eds. Filippo Osella and Caroline Osella (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 67.
[277] Buehler, 472-473.

honored the Prophet."[278] Therefore, when movements like Tablīghī Jamāʿat and Ahl-e-Hadīth emphasized hadīth and framed the contours of the debate on authenticity on whether a practice could be considered *shirk* and/or *bidʿa*, Barelwīs, the most prominent proponents of traditional Sufi customs in South Asia, could counter their opponents by framing their love for the Prophet, an undoubtable requirement of any Muslim, as a reason to legitimize innovative practices and weak hadīths.

Barelwī *ʿulemāʾ* and followers also use the Qurʾan to legitimate their ideas. For example, Q19:85-87 states: "They will have no power of intercession, save him who hath made a covenant with his Lord."[279] This is used as evidence of the idea that saints and others who have made a covenant with their Lord will have the ability to intercede on behalf of others, hence justifying *iltijā*, or petition/supplication for *shafa'at*, or Prophetic intercession, or *tawassul*, the intercession of saints, in worldly matters.

Despite facing criticism from other movements, Sufi communities like the Barelwīs have been historically popular in South Asia and crucial to the formation of a Muslim state. Thus, political leaders have manipulated the influence of *pīrs* to suit their varying agendas over time. In the case of Pakistan, *pīrs* were used to rally support for the creation of the new state and later, although the state has also tried to diminish the level and type of influence *pīrs* have on their communities. Barelwīs as well as other reformist movements therefore have had a major influence on Pakistani history.

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278 Buehler, 473.
279 Werbner, "Reform Sufism," 68.

Pakistani History and the Politicization of Islam

An analysis of the history of the period immediately preceding the partition of India and the first few decades after Pakistan's creation illustrates two points: first, Islamic reform movements had varying views and contributions to the Pakistan movement. Despite the call to create a separate state for Muslims, many Islamic movements often downright opposed the Pakistan movement. Second, those who were perhaps most crucial to the Pakistan movement, namely, Muhammad ʿAlī Jinnāh and Muhammad ʿIqbāl, had significantly different visions for Pakistan from the reality that came to exist just a few years after its creation. This sparked a politicization of Islamic reform movements that has trickled down to Barelwī movements like the MQI, which serves as both devotional community and political protest movement. That is, the creation of Pakistan as an independent state for Muslims is intimately connected with the history of Islamic reform and the ultimate creation of the MQI.

In the years leading up to the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan as a separate state, it was clear that forging a national sense of common Muslim identity would be a challenge. The 1937 provincial elections proved to be eye-opening for Muslim leaders in India; the Muslim League failed to secure a majority vote even in Muslim majority provinces.[280] Jinnah had strong support amongst the educated Muslim elite, but other Muslim parties had varying interests. The leading party of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Khuda-ye Khidmatgar, sided with India's Congress; the Momin Ansar Conference in Bihar was opposed to the All-India Muslim

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[280] Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History* (Hyderabad, India: Orient BlackSwan, 2012), 337.

League (AIML), a political party that previously focused on securing rights for Muslims as a minority within a united India; and the Jamiat ʿUlemāʾ-e-Hind (JUH) and Baluchistani nationalists opposed the division of the country.[281] In Punjab, kinship ties and commitments between landlords and peasants took precedence.[282] These fractions betrayed a lack of Muslim national identity, politics that Muhammad Ali Jinnah would need to engage in to successfully advocate for the creation of Pakistan. *ʿUlemāʾ* had varying opinions on whether the idea for a separate Muslim state should be supported. The overwhelming majority of Deobandī scholars opposed an independent Muslim state, promoting "cooperation between religious communities in an independent India" instead.[283] However, when the Muslim League helped form the Jamiat-ul- ʿUlemāʾ -e-Islam to counter pro-Congress *ʿulemāʾ* in the JUH, it included the followers of renowned scholar Maulana Ashraf ʿAli Thānawī while Maulana Shabbīr Ahmad ʿUsmānī became president.[284]

After engaging in identity politics that relied heavily on the use of the word "*qaum*," or nation, Jinnah called for the creation of a separate Muslim state.[285] In March 1940, the AIML enacted the Lahore Resolution, which finally called for the creation of independent Muslim states.[286] The 1940 Resolution moved forward with the concept that

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[281] Malik, 337.

[282] Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 214.

[283] Metcalf and Metcalf, 208.

[284] Ayesha Jalal, Self and Sovereignty: Individual and Community in South Asian Islam Since 1950 (New York: Routledge, 2000), 454.

[285] Malik, 339.

[286] Nadia Ghani, "Lahore Resolution," *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Muslims are a separate nation. As Muhammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, put it in his address to the AIML in 1940: "Mussalmans [Muslims] are not a minority as it is commonly known and understood … Mussalmans are a nation according to any definition of a nation, and they must have their homelands, their territory, and their state."[287] The 1940 Resolution did not promote explicitly the idea of Pakistan as it exists today; however, this was considered the turning point for what happened until Pakistan achieved independence in 1947.

Jinnah's nationalistic rhetoric meant that after the 1937 elections, the Muslim League did not make the same mistakes as they did in the 1937 elections. The subsequent elections became the means through which Muslims expressed solidarity with their community, using their vote as "a ritual act of incorporation in the body of Islam."[288] "In the 1946 elections, Jinnah and the League won all the Muslim seats to the center assembly and polled 75 per cent of the total Muslim vote cast in the provincial assembly elections."[289] This was not without some support from Sufi *pīrs*. The *pīr* of Manki Sharif, for example, "snatched Pakistan from the jaws of the Congress in the Frontier Province."[290] Jinnah and the Muslim League sought the support of *pīrs* and their institutions in Punjab and Sindh, where their hold was especially strong, to rally a following for the Muslim separatist cause.[291] Thus, Jinnah used the *pīrs* and their institutions to his advantage.

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[287] Metcalf and Metcalf, 208.
[288] Metcalf and Metcalf, 214.
[289] Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2011), 150.
[290] Ahmed, 195.
[291] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 340; Also see Metcalf and Metcalf, 214.

Letters from Muhammad Iqbal, poet-philosopher and ideological father of Pakistan, to Jinnah reflect concerns about the lack of rights afforded to Muslims in an undivided India. Although Iqbal's famous "*Tarānah-e-Hindī*," a poem written in 1904, focused on unity between Hindus and Muslims as Hindustanis against the rule of the British, by contrast, the "*Tarānah-e-Millī*," written in 1910, promoted Islamic nationalism.[292] Thus, within a span of a few years, Iqbal's focus on religious unity was replaced by an emphasis on the importance of a Muslim *umma* forming a separate state. Iqbal contributed to the idea of Pakistan in significant ways: first, by coining the two-nation theory a decade before the AIML proposed the Lahore Resolution, by convincing Jinnah to push for a separate Muslim state, and through his theory of *khudi*, or ego, which could apply to both the individual and communal self, as applicable to the Muslim *umma*.[293] As Iqbal Singh Sevea states in *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal*, Iqbal's philosophy centered upon the construction of a *khud*i (self, ego, or individual), which "fortified its 'I-amness' through struggle and the assertion of its selfhood."[294] Iqbal argued that the Muslim community could achieve this "I-amness" by asserting its national identity and struggling for a separate state.

Despite championing Muslim rights in India, Iqbal was very much an advocate of Islamic modernity, and he saw the *pīr-murīd* relationship as contrary to the concept of Islamic modernity he pushed. Despite Iqbal's affinity for Sufi imagery in his poetry and

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[292] Frances Pritchett, "A Study in Contrasts," Columbia University, <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/taranahs/juxtaposition.html>

[293] Hafeez Malik, *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), xi-xii.

[294] Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Political Philosophy of Muhammad Iqbal: Islam and Nationalism in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 109.

admiration of Sufi saints and figures like Nizām ud-Dīn Awliya, he denounced the *pīr-murīd* relationship "in which the individual is trained to respond with passive acceptance to the appeals of any leader and to political domination."[295] In regions where the *pīr-murīd* relationship is prevalent, the "population is functionally organised [sic] into traditional networks of lineages and forms of institutional patterns like tribes, families and patronage."[296] Thus, Iqbal was able to recognize the ease with which this relationship could be exploited for political advantage. In his recommendations for a Muslim state, Iqbal believed that an assembly of *ˤulemāʾ* should be created to "protect, expand and if necessary, to reinterpret the laws of Islam in the light of modern conditions."[297] He invited Maulāna Abū'l Aˤlā Maudūdī to establish the Islamic Research Institute in the Punjab in 1938 as part of an endeavor to create cultural institutions that would instill Muslims with an awareness of what Islam has and could still achieve.[298]

Iqbal died in 1938 and perhaps would not have been able to foresee the effects that such decisions made on the future of Pakistan. Although Jinnah's initial goal was to ensure Muslims were given due privileges under a democratic system in which they would always be considered a minority by number, the struggle for Pakistan stirred up Muslim nationalism with a fervor. Just one year after the 1940 Resolution, the Jamāt-e-Islāmī, an Islamic movement pursuing the "revival of Islam on the national level … [by mobilizing] the masses through the usage of religious symbols and ideals," was founded by

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[295] Ewing, 254.

[296] Malik, *Islam in South Asia*, 430.

[297] Hafeez Malik, *Iqbal: Poet-Philosopher of Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 94.

[298] Malik, *Iqbal,* 398n55, 94.

Maududi.[299] Thus, an organization that functioned as both a religious community and political party was formed.[300]

In the years after Pakistan's founding, Jinnah's dream for Pakistan as a country in which religion had "nothing to do with the business of the State" quickly dissolved.[301] Jinnah died in 1948, and just one year later, in 1949, the Objectives Resolution was passed, a resolution which detailed the "aims and objectives of the Constitution of Pakistan."[302] It explicitly tied government and religion together forever in the newly formed state, by declaring that "sovereignty belongs to God."[303] The Deobandī scholar Shabbir Ahmad Usmani was at the forefront of the Objectives Resolution, and despite concerns from religious minorities in Pakistan who worried that the use of religious doctrine in its language would lead to Islamization, the Objectives Resolution eventually facilitated Pakistan's transformation into an Islamic Republic.[304] Despite Maududi's unwillingness to support the Pakistan movement, he was intimately involved in the country's affairs afterwards. He "campaigned to establish an Islamic state in the country on the Prophetic model," which he did by pushing for an Islamic constitution.[305] Maududi's demands were met through the Constitution of 1956, which helped move

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[299] Vali Nasr, "Jamaat-i-Islami," *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[300] Vali Nasr, "Jamaat-i-Islami," *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[301] Akbar S. Ahmed, *Jinnah, Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin* (London: Routledge, 1997), 175.

[302] Hamid Khan, "Objectives Resolution," *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[303] Hamid Khan, "Objectives Resolution."

[304] Hamid Khan, "Objectives Resolution."

[305] Vali Nasr, "Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi," *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Pakistan towards increased Islamization.[306] The 1956 Constitution declared Pakistan an Islamic Republic, mandated that only a Muslim could be President of the country, and forbade the passing of any law that could be considered anti-Islamic, among other measures.[307]

Jamāt-e-Islāmī and Deobandīs had varying levels of involvement before and after Partition, however, both groups by and large opposed the creation of Pakistan. The Barelwī *ʿulemāʾ* were no different. The All-India Sunni Conference, a body of Barelwī *ʿulemāʾ* from throughout pre-Partition India founded by Naʿīm-ud-Dīn Murādabādī, announced their support for Pakistan at the annual meeting in 1946., while Burhān-ul-Haqq Jabalpūrī joined the Muslim League in the 1930s, citing concerns that Muslims were being taken advantage of as a result of their minority status.[308] The *Ahl-e-Sunnat kī Awāz*, a monthly journal written by *pīrs* under Shah Aulād-e-Rasūl 'Muhammad Miyan' Marāhrawī, opposed the Muslim League because it saw the Muslim League's goals as purely political and unrelated to the overall wellbeing of the Muslim *umma*.[309] Overall, none of the *ʿulemāʾ* mentioned left India at Partition, and according to Sanyal, some of this may be attributed to a "need to maintain the continuity of the *khānqāh* and *dargāh* established by [their] ancestors" may serve as a partial explanation.[310]

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[306] Vali Nasr, *Maududi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1996), 44.

[307] Nadia Ghani, "Constitutions," *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[308] Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*, 312, 323.

[309] Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*, 316-318.

[310] Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*, 327.

Despite support from many of the Barelwī *ʿulemāʾ*, the Barelwīs and Sufis had conflicting visions of reform from the eventual government of Pakistan, which opposed appeal to saints through local shrines and the subsequent importance given to local *sajjāda nishīns*, or the "successor of a pīr, usually a biological descendant, who takes over responsibility for the shrine and followers of the pīr."[311] Countering tradition and regional affinities that placed power in the hands of *sajjāda nishīns* and working towards the modern vision advocated by visionaries of Pakistan like Iqbal was a key task faced by the new nation state in trying to build nationalistic ideals.

Modern Challenges to Sufism in Pakistan

Past struggles before Pakistan's creation served as an indication that unifying a nation solely on the basis of religion would be a challenge; several events during the first decade of Pakistan's existence also occurred that would result in the government implementing unifying strategies later. The new state needed to create a sense of national identity around religion; to do this, the government would need to push a modern Islam along the lines of Iqbal and control the hold that tradition had on the people.[312] Jinnah passed away a year after Pakistan gained independence and after working towards the passing of the Objectives Resolution that allowed Pakistan to become an Islamic Republic, the first Prime Minister Līāquat ʿAlī Khān passed away in 1951. Another effort to build a sense of *qaum* along religious lines included the declaration of Urdu as the national

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[311] Ewing, 273.
[312] Ewing, 68.

language in 1948.[313] Despite being the mother-tongue of only a minority of the population, Jinnah insisted on declaring Urdu as the national language of Pakistan, stating "[It] embodies the best that is in Islamic culture and Muslim tradition and is nearest to the languages used in other Islamic countries."[314] The Constitution that was approved in 1956 also pushed more efforts to build the national Islamic identity, as mentioned earlier.

In 1959, as a policy under the rule of Ayub Khan and continued under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Ministry of Awqāf (Ministry of Islamic Endowments) was created in Pakistan to decrease the influence of *sajjāda nishīns,* local caretakers who were also pīrs, at Sufi shrines.[315] The ordinance "gave the government the power to take direct control over and to manage shrines, mosques, and other properties dedicated to religious purposes."[316] The *sajjāda nishīn* was seen as a local form of authority, who because of excessive devotion and admiration by the "masses," was an influence that needed to be controlled and diminished. The government sought to challenge the charismatic and/or hereditary authority of the *sajjāda nishīn* by emphasizing scriptural authority instead. On ꜥurs occasions, the government would publish and distribute pamphlets of recognized Sufi saints that left out any accounts of miracles present in charismatic hagiographies and rather, emphasized the saints' "pious actions" and their tendency to study books on

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[313] Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 212.
[314] Anwar H. Syed, "Iqbal and Jinnah on Issues of Nationhood and Nationalism" in *Iqbal, Jinnah, and Pakistan: The Vision and the Reality*, ed. C.M. Naim (Syracuse, N.Y.: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs), 98.
[315] Ewing, 70.
[316] Ewing, 70.

religion; furthermore, the government made plans to establish research centers and libraries at certain major shrines.[317]

In one pamphlet published on the occasion of Sindhī saint Sachal Sarmast's ʿurs, the government emphasized his lack of consideration for "caste, creed, and geographical factors."[318] These were particularly important aspects to counter since the pīr and the shrine were seen as local and regional influences and thus, as challenges to the government's goal of "consolidating state authority [particularly in places where] regional loyalties competed with central authority."[319]

The ideas contested in the history of Islamic reform in the Indian subcontinent and the pervasive attitude present in Pakistan in which Sufism and devotion to a pīr have been branded as a religion of the "simple and straightforward masses of the area"[320] are views which present an incredible challenge to Sufism and specifically the Barelwī movement today. To confront this idea of Sufism and the Barelwī school of thought as a localized and misinformed version of Islam, Tahir-ul-Qadri and the MQI have undertaken a dual approach: first, since its founding in 1980, the organization and its founder have both transformed to reflect a departure from a simply local appeal to a more global reach. Secondly, Tahir-ul-Qadri and his followers have refuted criticism by utilizing the same strategies as their detractors, an approach that will be covered further in Chapter Six.

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[317] Ewing, 70
[318] Ewing, 71
[319] Ewing 71-72.
[320] Ewing, 71.

A Man of Many Hats: The Transformation of Tahir-ul-Qadri and the MQI

In the over 30 years since it was established, the MQI has changed in certain ways that reflect its move towards becoming a more transnational organization. When it was founded in 1980, it was called Tehreek-e-Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, or the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan movement.[321] [322] In a video posted to Youtube of the annual *milād* in 2004, the opening headings introduce Qadri as the founding patron of Tehreek-e-Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan and later, an email address at which viewers can contact the organization is listed as "tehreek@minhaj.org." [323] Usha Sanyal's work on Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwī and the Barelwī movement led her to Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan in Pakistan; her work cites the name as *Idāra-e-Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan*, or the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan Institute.[324] *Idāra Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan* remains the name on the bank account of the organization in Pakistan,[325] and in one video of Tahir-ul-Qadri speaking to a group of his followers in 1986, a group chant is led in which a man shouts, "*Idāra-e-Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan*!" and the crowd responds, "*Zindābad*!," or "Long live the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan Institute!"[326] Shifting from locally recognized terms like

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[321] Javed, "1st Minhaj ul Quran Conference," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbVMmP_ejAE.

[322] There is varying information on the actual date of the MQI's founding. According to a lecture he gave on his life history, Qadri gave his first dars-e-Qurʾan, or lecture on the study of the Qurʾan in October 1980. Although the organization had not been named at this point, the lecture was given with the intent of starting the mission he had set out to achieve. It was six months after this point that Qadri says it was named "Idara-e Minhaj ul Qurʾan," but he also distinguishes between the name of the movement, "Tehreek-e Minhaj ul Qurʾan" and the center itself, the "idara." See Marifat-e-Mustafa, "Biography of Allama Dr. Mohammad [sic] Tahir-ul-Qadri," Filmed [October 13, 2001], Youtube video 3:01:33. Posted [November 9, 2017], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQjIWqpCNxo

[323] Junaid Aslam, "Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri Milad 2004," Filmed [May 2004], Youtube video 1:57:15. Posted [April 20, 2012], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DDeaOAIY-I

[324] Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi*, 130.

[325] Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, "Membership of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International," <http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/3096/Membership-of-MQI.html>

[326] Baituraza, "Urs Bait-ur-Raza 1986-08-26 Khutba Istiqbaliya by Shah Jee for Tahir-ul-Qadri," Filmed [August 26, 1986], Youtube video 7:39. Posted [December 21, 2009], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T9_9kxB1Lds

"*idāra*" and "*tehrīk*," the organization is now more widely known as Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan International to reflect its transnational reach. Furthermore, the MQI website has also changed drastically from 2011, when I was first introduced to the movement, to 2017. It now provides instant translations of the website from its default English into Urdu or Arabic, an addition that assumes multi-lingual audiences.

More noticeably, Tahir-ul-Qadri has distinctly adapted his appearance over time to fit the transnational image of the MQI. Qadri appears to have been born in a well-to-do family. This upper-class status may be discerned from his father, Farid-ud-Din Qadri, whose connections according to his hagiography included the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal and the founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and who was a well-known medical doctor in his own right. In a photograph published on a public Facebook group devoted to Tahir-ul-Qadri and called "Beautiful Photos of Shaykh ul Islam- Dr. Muhammad Tahir ul Qadri," Farid-ud-Din Qadri's appearance differs markedly from the only picture, which resembles a painting, circulated officially by the MQI of him. In the photograph, a younger Fariduddin is wearing a suit and tie; in the painting-like picture, however, he wears a *sherwānī*, a form-fitting coat worn more formally and associated with upper-class men in South Asia, and a cap that appears to be a hybrid of the *karākul* hat and a *fez*, thus resembling other well-known Muslim men of his era, such as Muhammad Iqbal and Muhammad Ali Jinnah.
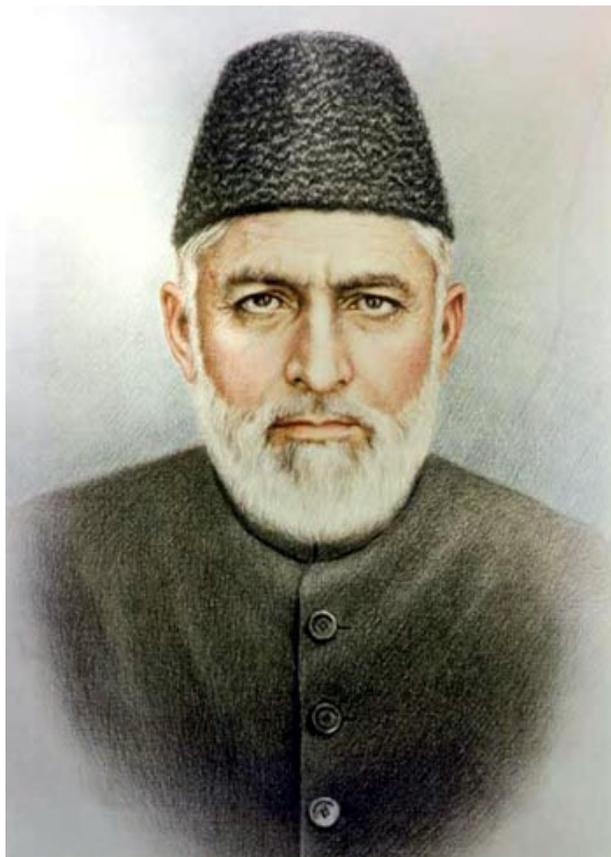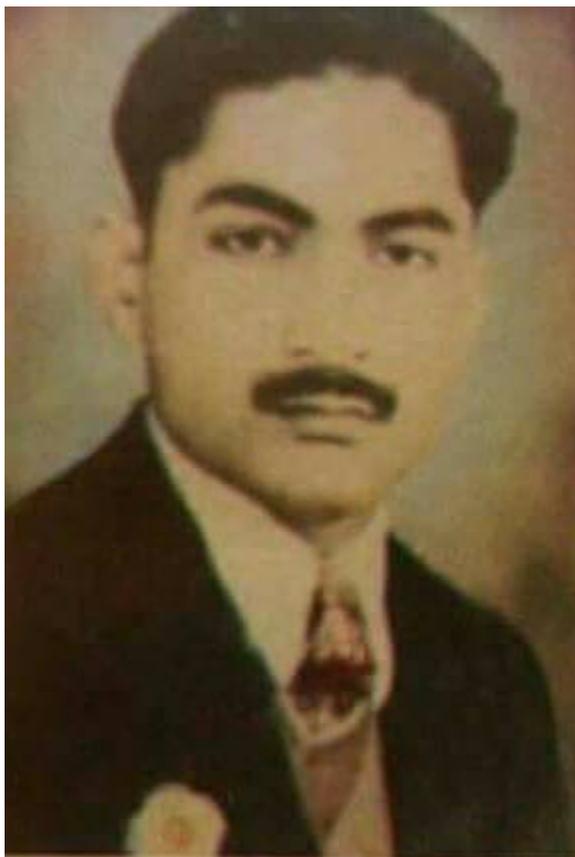
Figure 1- Photograph of Farid-ud-Din Qadri from his younger years   *Figure 2- Official MQI picture of Farid-ud-Din Qadri*

Likewise, in pictures from his youth and young adulthood, Qadri wore Western clothing indicative of his high level of education, which includes a law degree from Punjab University,[328] and related command of several languages.

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[327] "Beautiful Pictures of Shaykh ul Islam: Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri."
<https://www.facebook.com/244498225709181/photos/a.259698177522519.1073741829.244498225709181/916636805161983/?type=3&theater>

[328] "A Profile of Shaykh ul Islam, Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/8718/A-Profile-of-Shaykh-ul-Islam-Dr-Muhammad-Tahir-ul-Qadri.html>
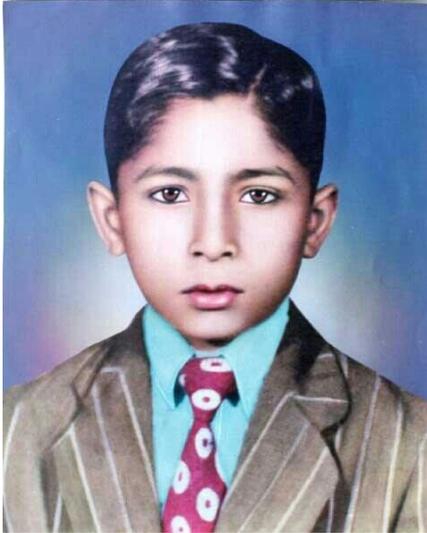
Figure 3- Tahir-ul-Qadri as a child   *Figure 4- Qadri as a young man*
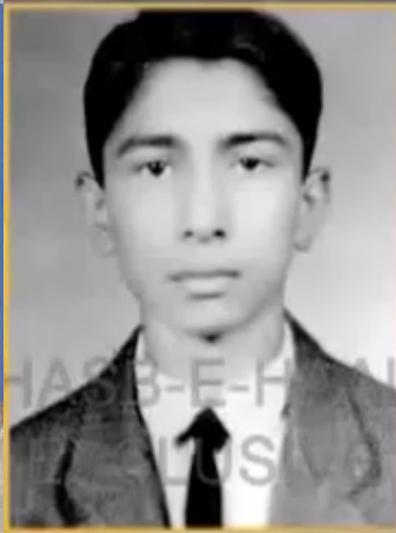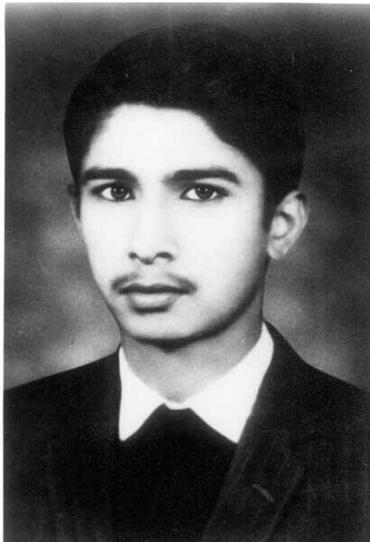
Figure 5- Qadri as a young adult
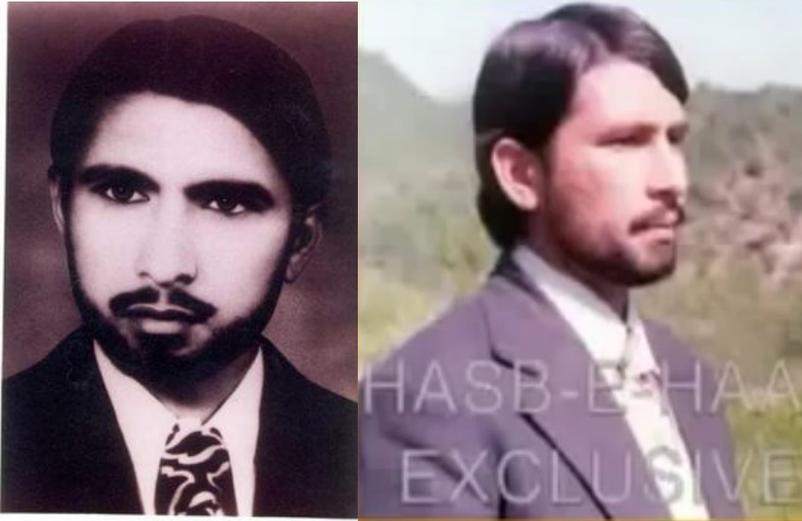
Figure 6- Qadri (d/u, approx. early 1970s)   Figure 7- Qadri (d/u, approx. mid 1970s)

Figure 8- Qadri as a professor at Punjab University (d/u 1978-1983)

In the first few years after the founding of the MQI, Qadri's appearance changed drastically. The earliest photographs I was able to retrieve digitally date back to 1986, documenting a speech given in Nazimabad, Karachi. In a video recording of the speech, viewers can see that Qadri is wearing a waistcoat over a traditional and simple white

shalwār kamīz with a *karākul* hat, the cap most famously worn by Jinnah. From that point until 2005, Qadri is documented wearing a variety of South Asian attire, varying according to regional differences. It is most often his style of headgear that varied during these years, alternating between the *karakul*, also known as the Jinnah cap; the *pākol* or a hat commonly worn in the North-West Frontier Province areas of Pakistan; a Sindhī *topī*, a cap with mirrorwork most often worn in the Sindh and Baloch regions; and the white crocheted *topīs* or skullcaps worn by Muslim men all over South Asia.

Figure 9- Qadri in 1986

Figure 10- Qadri in 1987

Figure 11-Qadri in 1987
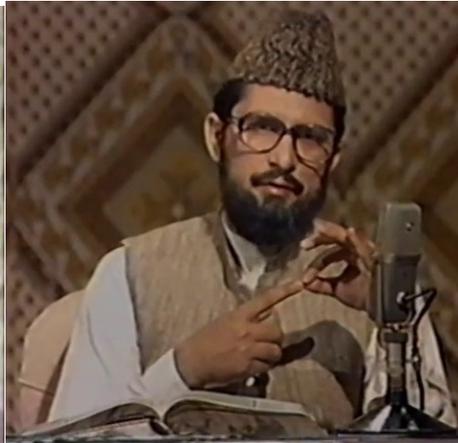
Figure 12- Qadri in 1987
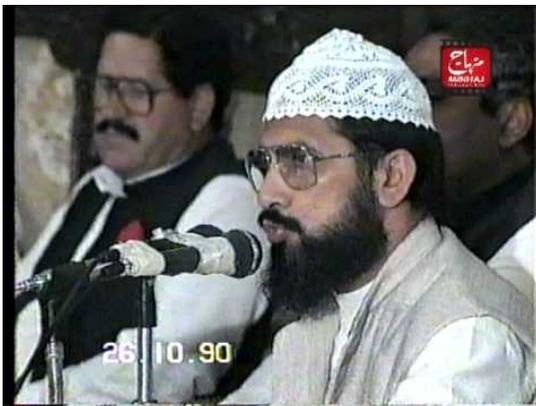
Figure 13-Qadri in 1990

Figure 14- Qadri in 1993

Figure 15-Qadri in 1995

Figure 16- Qadri in 1995
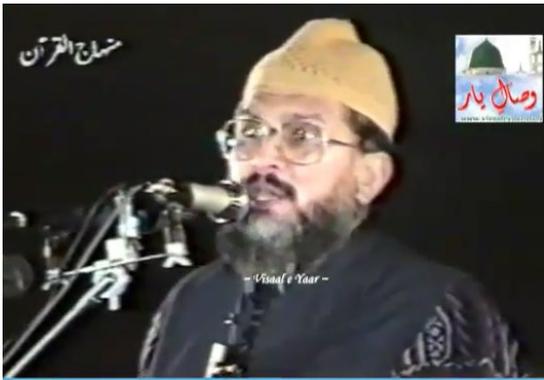
Figure 17-Qadri in 1996

Figure 18- Qadri in 2000

Figure 19- Qadri in 2001

Figure 20- With Benazir Bhutto in 2003

Figures 9 through 20 show Tahir-ul-Qadri from 1986 until 2003. In 2004, during an appearance at the annual *milād* conference, Tahir-ul-Qadri is seen wearing a Sindhi *topī*; however, he wears this over a *thobe*, a robe, and *bisht*, a cloak worn more commonly in Arab countries, as clothing style that reflects a global *umma* rather than a community secluded to Pakistan alone.[329]

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[329] Junaid Aslam, "Milad 2004," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DDeaOAIY-I

Figure 21- Qadri at the 2004 Milad Conference

Figure 22- Qadri at the 2004 Milād Conference with bisht visible

By October of 2005, Tahir-ul-Qadri had completely transformed his appearance. He presided over a funerary prayer for the victims of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan wearing a *djellaba*, or robe commonly worn in North Africa, with a cloak and an *imām sarık* turban. This particular hat, foreign to the Pakistani public, but known more commonly as an *imāma*, has become his signature trademark in the past decade. This is evident in an article published in *The Express Tribune* in which the author writes about

the spectacular attention Qadri's *imāma* has drawn.[330] The turban is of Ottoman origin

but is associated most famously as the symbol of Al-Azhar University. Its origins date back

to the 17th century introduction of the *tarbūsh*, or *fez*, through Muhammad Ali Pasha, the

Ottoman governor of Egypt.[331] Government employees wore the *tarbūsh* while Al-Azhar

students wrapped white linen around the *tarbūsh* as an added distinction.[332] The Al-Azhar

imāma carries symbolic value as Al-Azhar was where Egyptians gathered for multiple

nationalist revolts, including uprisings against the French occupation in the late 16th

century, the British occupation in the early 20th century, and the 'Urabi revolt against

foreign interference by Britain and France.[333] Thus, the Azhari imāma is a strong political

symbol for the Muslim *umma* against injustice of all kind; Qadri's cap of preference

conjures calls for revolution in the past, echoing Qadri's own call for "*Mustafavī inqilāb,*"

or a Muhammadan revolution.

Qadri is not alone as a renowned religious scholar whose hat attracts attention

and performs authority. In *Rebranding Islam*, anthropologist James Hoesterey draws on

two years of fieldwork with Aa Gym, an Indonesian preacher and charismatic leader. Aa

Gym himself discusses his turban as "his trademark" and his associates comment on the

value of Aa Gym's turban as a visual symbol that devotees connect with emotionally and

spiritually.[334] Hoesterey narrates that Aa Gym's assistants were always careful to have "a

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[330] Zarrar Khuhro, "Topi Drama: The Hat Matters as Much as the Head," *The Express Tribune*, February 3, 2013 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/500563/topi-drama-revolution-begins-with-a-hat/>

[331] "ʿImāma al-Azhar fī miṣr min al-ḥamla al-firansīyya ilā al-ghazū as-ṣīnīyya," *Al-Quds al-ʿArabī,* November 26, 2014 <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=256363>

[332] "ʿImāma al-Azhar," <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=256363>

[333] "ʿImāma al-Azhar," <http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=256363>

[334] James Hoesterey, *Rebranding Islam: Piety, Prosperity, and a Self-Help Guru* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 44.

prewrapped turban ready and waiting" before Aa Gym's public appearances. Qadri's

daughter-in-law narrates the care with which he treats his *imāma:*

> If he is wearing his formal Imama, he will carefully remove it from his head and
> delicately place it upon his dressing table to dry if necessary. He will then ask for
> a clean bag, wrap it carefully in the bag and then place the wrapped Imama in a
> special hat box which is then placed inside a cupboard designated for them. Since
> his Imama is very delicate, he will rarely delegate this ritual, preferring to do this
> himself to ensure that it is not manhandled even though he may have arrived back
> from a program late at night and … extremely tired![335]

Figure 23- Qadri praying for earthquake victims in 2005

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[335] Dr. Ghazala Hassan Qadri, "A Day in the Life of Shaykh-ul-Islam," Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri's
Facebook page, posted on March 12, 2011. https://www.facebook.com/notes/dr-muhammad-tahir-ul-
qadri/a-day-in-the-life-of-shaykh-ul-islam/195900350430587/

Figure 24- Qadri in 2005

Figure 25- Qadri in 2007

Figure 26- Qadri in 2008
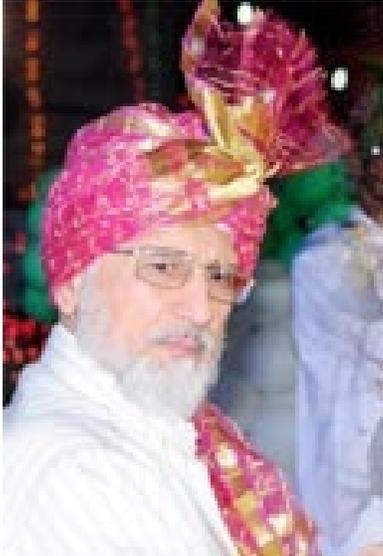
Figure 27- Qadri at Ajmer in 2012
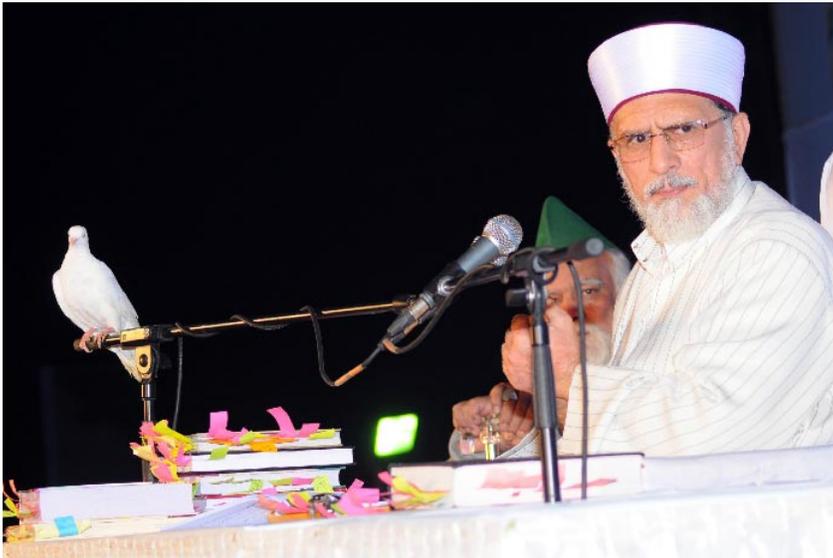
Figure 28-Another photograph of Qadri during the India Tour in 2012
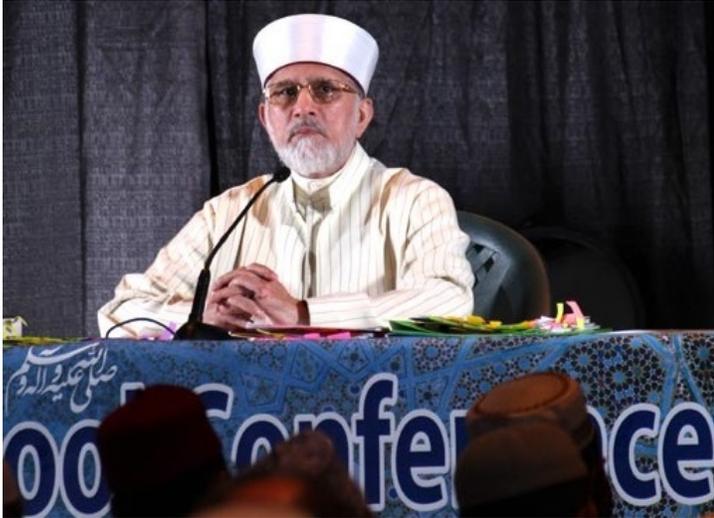
Figure 29- Qadri at the Sirat-e-Rasool Conference in Atlanta where I first met him

Figure 30- Qadri at a press conference in 2015
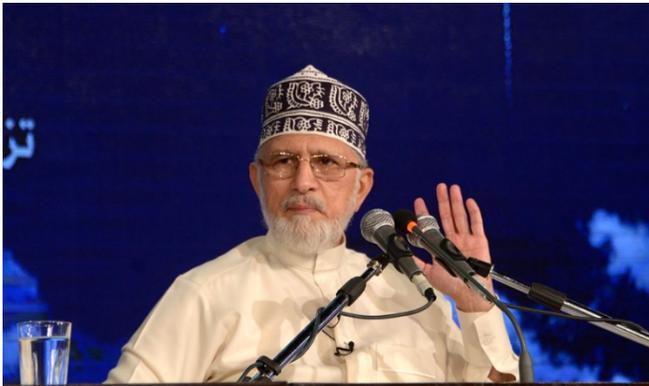
Figure 31-Qadri at his renowned Itikaf City in 2017

Although the photographs above illustrate an outer transformation over the course of Qadri's career, this transformation appears to coincide not only with the founding of the MQI but also with his move to Canada in 2005[336]and, subsequently, the authoring of his famous fatwa against terrorism, which was published in 2010.[337] Qadri's appearance at the holy shrine of Muʿin-ud-Din Chishti in 2012 combines the *djellaba* he has worn most often after 2005 with a traditional South Asian pink turban. As an honored guest of the shrine, this turban was gifted to him and tied upon him by the caretakers of the reputed shrine in a *dastar bandī*, or turban-tying ceremony.[338] This ceremony highlights Qadri's importance at a renowned shrine in South Asia. With the exception of this headgear in Ajmer in 2012, Qadri has consistently worn clothes and headgear that are not exclusively South Asian in origin. Thus, his clothing and headgear perform his transnational authority, reflecting the transformation of the MQI from a regional or Pakistani movement into a transnational one.

A change in image is not the only way that Tahir-ul-Qadri and the MQI have countered the popular perception of Barelwīs as a local and misinformed school of thought. By relocating to Canada, Qadri has shifted his headquarters while maintaining his loyal base in Pakistan through yearly visits. He engages in foreign travel throughout

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[336] Megan O' Toole and Ali Khan, "Tahir ul-Qadri: A 'Political Enigma," Al-Jazeera, October 22, 2014 http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/10/tahir-ul-qadri-political-enigma-pakistan-2014102271530973245.html

[337] "Historical Launching of Fatwa Against Terrorism," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan International, http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/9959/Historical-Launching-of-Fatwa-Against-Terrerism-leading-Islamic-authority-launches-fatwa-against-terrorism-and-denounces-suicide-bombers-as-disbelievers-Anti-terror-Fatwa-launched.htm

[338] "Ajmer (India): Shaykh-ul-Islam Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri visits shrine of Hazrat Moin-ud-Din Chishti (R.A.)," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan International, http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/36711/India-Shaykh-ul-Islam-Dr-Muhammad-Tahir-ul-Qadri-visits-shrine-Moin-ud-Din-Chishti-ajmeri-ajmer-sharif-sufi-Qutbuddin-Bakhtiyar-Kaki.html

the year, most commonly visiting the U.K. and Pakistan but also visiting his followers across the world. (While I was conducting fieldwork in Dallas, Qadri visited Houston and members of the Dallas branch traveled there to be in his company.) Furthermore, although his books are still much more commonly available in Urdu, as Qadri's popularity has surged, his books (including his works on terrorism and the importance of *milād*) are increasingly being translated into English and Arabic and he has also given speeches in English or Arabic when appropriate.

Finally, Qadri's level of education and the degrees attained by his children and daughter-in-law are always emphasized. In the very first MQI conference held in 1987, Tahir-ul-Qadri was introduced as "Professor Tahir-ul-Qadri",[339] despite having obtained his PhD in Islamic Law from Punjab University only a year prior; subsequently, he has been referred to as "Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri" or "Shaykh ul Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri." Unlike most religious figures in Pakistan, he is not referred to using the more localized terms "maulana" or "maulvi."[340] Qadri's two sons both have PhDs.[341] During a personal meeting granted to me in 2013, when I asked for his blessings to conduct my research, Qadri informed me that his daughter-in-law, Ghazala, was also working on her PhD, which she later completed in 2016 from the University of Birmingham from the Department of Theology and Religion.[342] His evident success in expanding his network from a simple

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[339] Sarmad Javed. "1st Minhaj ul Quran Conference," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbVMmP_ejAE
[340] This is like the founder of Al-Huda, who is also based in Canada and whose qualifications are emphasized by always referring to her as Dr. Farhat Hashmi.
[341] His son Hussain graduated with his doctoral degree in Economics from Victoria University in Melbourne, but information regarding Hasan's education is less clear. MQI sources say he has graduated from the "biggest Islamic university in Cairo and the university is named elsewhere as the Arab League University, but I was unsuccessful in finding any sources about the university itself.
[342] Tahir-ul-Qadri, in discussion with the author, Oct. 7, 2013.

domestic or local affair to a soundly transnational organization is further evidence of Qadri and the MQI's ability to counter misperceptions of Barelwī and Sufi thought as merely local.

Conclusion

Despite its problematic history, Alix Philippon adapts the term Neo-Sufi and classifies the MQI as a Neo-Sufi order. However, the movement accepts saintly devotion and the visitation of saints' tombs, thus defying the definition of Neo-Sufi most recently outlined by O' Fahey and Radtke. Thus, the MQI is better defined as a neo-brotherhood, a categorization by Olivier Roy that emphasizes the ways in which modern media and technology have changed the role of the shaykh within the Sufi order and the nature of the relationship between *pīr* and *murid*. As technology advances and membership increases, the movement must reinvent itself to foster the same bonds of comradery that exist in traditional Sufi orders.

In other ways, the MQI has remained grounded in tradition. The MQI fits a pattern of other Islamic reform movements in South Asia. First, reform movements often seek to remove "innovation, accretion and the intrusion of 'local custom'" and many of these movements call this revival, not reform. [343] The emphasis on revival as opposed to reform is discernible today in the rhetoric of the MQI. Minhājian women consistently emphasize reinstilling love for the Prophet Muhammad rather than creating this love for him out of nothing. They mourn that the Muslim community no longer loves the Prophet or

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[343] Osella and Osella, xi.

expresses this love as they once did, and they seek to return to the love that has been lost or left behind by the Muslim community.

In analyzing the history of Islamic reform movements in South Asia, each movement contests and debates "regimes of truth" with other competing reform movements. In a continuation of historical precedent with other Islamic reform movements in South Asia preceding it, the MQI and its members, including women, devote much of their time countering accusations of illegitimacy, working to prove the authenticity of their beliefs and practices. Much of the previous research conducted on this group relates to the debate between scholars.[344] However, far from being the domain of scholars alone, arguing for the legitimacy of these Sufi practices is a main concern of especially female members of the MQI, who are key to organizing action on the community or ground level.

As a part of the concern of Islamic reform movements with contesting "regimes of truth," they were not all in agreement on pursuing a separate Muslim home land in the form of Pakistan. In the case of some Sufi communities, this was attributed to the importance of the *khānqāh* and the *dargāh*, or the centers for Sufi brotherhood and the Sufi shrine, in maintaining a community. These spaces were thus considered indispensable, resulting in some Sufi communities staying behind in India. The MQI has not only grown as a transnational movement through the transformation of its shaykh

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[344] See Ashok K. Behuria, "Sects Within Sect: The case of Deobandī-Barelvi Encounter in Pakistan," *Strategic Analysis* 31, no. 1 (2008): 57-80; Alix Philippon, "Sunnis Against Sunnis: The Politicization of Doctrinal Fractures in Pakistan," *The Muslim World* 101, no. 2 (2011): 347-368; Magnus Marsden, "Talking the Talk: Debating Debate in Northern Afghanistan," *Anthropology Today* 25, no. 2 (2009): 20-24; Simon Stjernholm, "Sufi Politics in Britain: the Sufi Muslim Council and the 'Silent Majority' of Muslims," *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 12, no. 3 (2010): 215-226.

and organization, but also by reinventing the Sufi space into one that allows women to overcome some of the limitations that exist in spaces like the traditional *khānqāh* and the mosque.

Chapter 4: The World Wide Web of Networks: Utilizing a Neo-Khanqah

During a trip to India in the summer of 2013, I discovered on Facebook that Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan had a branch in Lucknow, where I was studying Urdu. I contacted the administrator of the Facebook page hoping to meet with the two sisters who had founded the Lucknow branch. Over coffee, they explained what inspired them to establish a branch of the organization. Having listened to Qadri's lectures on the channel QTV (Qurʾan TV) and been moved with inspiration, the sisters called the number broadcast on screen and immediately asked the MQI headquarters in Lahore how they could start a branch in their city. This seemed to be the next step to progress in their devotion to the shaykh. Despite admitting the small scale of their endeavor (the branch was limited to their immediate family and a few family friends), the sisters talked about the sense of acquiring family all over the world once they joined MQI. I was surprised when they knew some of my MQI contacts from the U.S., to the extent that they were aware of the MQI events those members were organizing as well as personal situations in their lives. When I expressed shock, one of the girls said, "We are like a family. We feel happy for each other's happiness and sad for each other's sadness." What is it that makes such deep connections possible between female members spanning from India to the U.S. who have often never met face to face?

This sense of community has been common in most Sufi local communities; as Annemarie Schimmel observes, *bayʿat* "brought the Sufi formally into a close community

of people with whom he [or she] felt like a single body."[345] However, in the absence of

formal Sufi initiatic rituals and with members spread across the oceans, how does the

MQI create, foster and sustain the sort of community necessary to allow the organization

to function and grow? How do women in particular benefit from the use of the neo-

khānqāh to acquire authority and overcome restraints that exist in traditional Muslim

spaces?

The volume *Women, Leadership, and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic

Authority* primarily focuses on "female Islamic authority in mosque and *madrasa* space"

because these two spaces "are platforms where religious leaders can exert influence over

the religious and social practices of their communities."[346] Although the authors claim to

focus on space "both physical and virtual" in which female leadership occurs, only one

chapter out of the 20 case studies truly address the role of women in virtual space.[347] MQI

followers operate in a combination of physical and virtual religious space, the neo-

khānqāh, and often, it is by exercising authority in both that women extend their network

of influence; the virtual aspect of the neo-*khānqāh* is what allows this on a greater scale.

Thus, I would argue that although mosque and madrasah spaces are important, studying

the various arenas in which women exert authority is crucial, particularly when scholars

of women and Islamic authority assert that "the exercise of female religious authority is,

in almost all cases, limited by gendered norms, interpretations, and practices."[348] While

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[345] Schimmel, 235.

[346] Hilary Kalmbach, "Introduction: Islamic Authority and the Study of Female Religious Leaders," in *Women, Leadership and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority*, eds. Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach (Boston: Brill, 2016), 2-3.

[347] Hilary Kalmbach, "Introduction," 2

[348] Hilary Kalmbach, "Introduction," 3.

this is true, this makes the study of the neo-*khānqāh* even more important since virtual

spaces often allow women to circumvent traditional norms and limitations for women in

male-dominated spaces.

In *Mullahs on the Mainframe*, another study of an Islamic society and its

relationship with new media, anthropologist Jonah Blank shows how the Daudi Bohras

paradoxically use modern technology to foster and maintain tradition. I use ethnography

to understand how women in a transnational Sufi community use the internet to create

a sense of identity, exhibit authority, and transcend the limitations that exist for women

in traditional Sufi contexts. Traditional Sufi communities lived in close proximity to their

shaykhs; likewise, "close access to their *da'i* [or cleric] had been the hallmark of [the Daudi

Bohra] sect in previous centuries."[349] Like the MQI, the Daudi Bohras use technology

ranging from television to internet to bridge the distance that now exists today. In the

same way that Daudi Bohras embraced Blank's research in the hopes that "other

traditionalist communities (Muslim and non-Muslim alike) might find some benefit from

the study of the Bohras' effort to maintain their cultural and spiritual identity," in an

interview on April 8, 2018, Dr. Mayanaz also advocated technology as the means to "help

the dīn…by spreading the message to other people [about] what you're learning; in that

way, they can also learn…[and] also get inspired."[350] This study of the MQI thus shares

many similarities with the Daudi Bohras, who have used technology and embraced

modernity much like the Minhājians have. Although both groups use technology to

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[349] Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity Among the Daudi Bohras (*Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 174.
[350] Blank, 285.

maintain access with their spiritual leaders, the MQI's scope is far more expansive, with

Minhājians using technology to get to know one another, learn how to develop branches,

defend their belief system, and take part in the political and social welfare activities of

their community. Using technology not only to sustain a connection with the shaykh, the

MQI's existence demands the use of technology to foster a sense of community between

members spread out all over the world.

In this chapter, I argue that one way the MQI does this is through creation of what

I call a neo-*khānqāh*, an environment utilized by a neo-brotherhood that comprises of

both online and physical components, may involve face-to-face or virtual interactions of

a group bound by their commitment to a Sufi master or shaykh, and is characterized by

actions that express devotion to the shaykh and his brotherhood or organization. The neo-

khānqāh empowers MQI women in particular, giving them positions of authority on the

basis of their ability to maneuver the internet and social media, allowing women to

surpass boundaries that exist in traditional spaces like the mosque to argue with men and

defend their beliefs on the same terms, and giving them an arena to express their

devotion to the shaykh in a way that is not possible without virtual space.

Cyber-Sufism

In chapter two, I addressed the concept of sainthood and Tahir-ul-Qadri 's

centrality, as a saint, to the MQI movement. The concept of "sainthood" is heuristically

meaningful in this post-modern age. Although Weber has "argued that 'pure' charisma

will not be found in modern, rational-technological contexts,"[351] Bradley's work on urban

communes in the U.S. in the 1970s shows that "commune members with high socio-

economic/urban backgrounds … may still surrender control of their lives to a charismatic

leader."[352] My fieldwork with Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan shows that regardless of class distinction,

some members of contemporary societies, even educated elites, are attracted to a saint-

like figure. Qadri's devotees thus span across different continents, generations, financial

and social backgrounds.

Most effective in maintaining and expanding the MQI's network of followers has

been the widespread use of social media networks, primarily but not limited to Facebook

and Instagram. These sites allow members of MQI to reach out to one another, expand

the network of branches in different countries, and create a system of support through

which the network is maintained. Although one might presume this medium is most

utilized and directed towards younger members of the movement who are more

accustomed to and familiar with its operation and consumption, my fieldwork with

branches of the MQI has shown mothers and daughters, or family members of different

generations, working side by side to operate branch Facebook pages, Whatsapp groups,

and email listservs. Both in Atlanta and in Dallas, mother-daughter pairs worked

relentlessly to publicize their spiritual activities and attract a stronger local following.

In this post-modern era, newer technologies are key to the dissemination of both

power and knowledge. Sufis have long had a reputation for using the latest technologies

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[351] Raymond Trevor Bradley, *Charisma and Social Structure: A Study of Love and Power, Wholeness and Transformation* (New York: toExcel, 1987), 279.
[352] Bradley, *Charisma and Social Structure*, 279.

as a means of expanding their network. Carl Ernst and Bruce Lawrence's *Sufi Martyrs of Love* and Robert Rozehnal's *Islamic Sufism Unbound* show how the Chishtīyya utilized print media to reach out to and expand their networks, illustrating the eagerness with which some Sufis embrace new technologies. Anticipating the effects of the information age on the way that sainthood operates, Ernst and Lawrence predict a shift from print media to the use of internet technologies, suggesting that "the future will resemble what Castells calls the information age, with multiple sites but no fixed center."[353] With no single center of activity and sites spread out all over the world in physical spaces and on the internet on various virtual sites, the MQI is very clearly in the information age.

MQI's vast presence on the internet includes a website where members can join, news regarding Qadri, the organization's work and events are posted, and several of the purported thousand books written by Qadri are published for free access to the public. This is key to the construction of Qadri as not only a shaykh to his devotees, but also as an *'ālim*, or an Islamic scholar. In addition to this website, the widespread use of social media networks, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram has been effective in maintaining and expanding a network of followers.

Like Ernst and Lawrence, in the analyses that follow I depend on Castells' theory, but focus on the idea of the network society, which is:

> … a society where the key social structures and activities are
> organized around electronically processed information networks. …
> it's about social networks which process and manage information
> and are using micro-electronic based technologies.[354]

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[353] Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love,* 144.

[354] University of California at Berkeley, "Conversations with Manuel Castells," Conversations with History, accessed April 3, 2018, https://conversations.berkeley.edu/castells_2001.

As part of a vast transnational network, members of the MQI establish and maintain contact with one another, receive feedback on problems and issues, get help with organizing events, gain support, and experience comradery primarily through the electronically processed information networks referred to by Castells. While not diminishing the importance of face-to-face interaction at locally based branches and centers, Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan is best described as a network society that functions through the organization and dissemination of information using technology; the events, activities and movements which are organized over electronic networks are then often (but not always) held at specific locations. Castells characterizes this phenomenon as the *space of flows* and the *space of places*. The space of flows "links up electronically separate locations in an interactive network that connects activities and people in distinct geographical contexts," while the space of places "organizes experience and activity around the confines of locality."[355] The space of flows works within the space of places, and the MQI network society communicates using different technological spaces and mediums to operate within particular localities.

This chapter analyzes the spaces occupied by the network society of MQI and the utility of those spaces for the movement. Ernst and Lawrence note the "formation of virtual Sufi communities based on electronic networks in proliferating Sufi web sites and discussion groups [but state] these are pretty much localized in America and Europe."[356]

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[355] Manuel Castells, "Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age," in *The Cybercities Reader*, ed. Stephen Graham (New York: Routledge, 2003), 85.
[356] Ernst and Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love*, 144.

Studies of virtual space occupied by Muslims and/or Sufi orders have most often focused on web pages; others have singularly focused on particular social media sites like Facebook. Fewer still have attempted to analyze the use of relatively newer mediums like Instagram, Tumblr or Snapchat. The MQI is undoubtedly a technologically-savvy movement, operating through a variety of online environments, including its main webpage, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, with some of its most influential and esteemed members running Tumblr sites or Snapchat accounts. This proliferation of the network allows members to connect in any number of ways.

Although the space of flows is a more modern phenomenon facilitated by the advent of technological innovation, the space of places in a Sufi context, the institutions of *khānqāh*, dates back to 10th century Iran.[357] Today, the internet facilitates intimacy in an environment where communities are separated by oceans and thousands of miles; during premodern times, the institutional structures known as *khānqāhs* were established as centers for Sufi brotherhoods, where members of the fraternity would live in the service of their shaykh. The *khānqāhs* "were sometimes isolated but more frequently were connected with a mosque, a large kitchen for both of disciples and the guests, and sometimes a school."[358]

The MQI's center in Dallas, the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī, resembles the traditional *khānqāh* in many ways. It has a prayer hall, kitchen, classrooms, a library and administrative office, bathrooms for men and women with facilities for *wudūʿ,* or ritual

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[357] Jonathan Berkey, *The Formation of Islam: Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 157.

[358] Schimmel, 232.

ablution, but also an auditorium to celebrate major events like *mawlid*, community

weddings and the birthday of Tahir-ul-Qadri. *Khānqāh* centers often welcomed foreign

visitors, and "arrangements for occasional and for long-term visitors were found in almost

every *khānqāh*."[359] Although the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī does not have living

accommodations on the property itself, the center welcomes foreign visitors frequently;

I was often introduced to MQI members who were just passing through the Dallas region

and stopped by the visit, or members from states like Oklahoma that did not have their

own branch and were interested in seeing the facility and meeting other members. Before

I moved to Dallas for fieldwork and flew in for events, Dr. Mayanaz often insisted I stay

with her and I suspect that these offers of hospitality were extended to other guests of

the center on occasion as well.

However, the Sufi space of the MQI in Dallas differs from traditional *khānqāhs* in

one major way; the shaykh of the *khānqāh* "would live, with his family, in one quarter of

the compound and see his disciples at fixed hours to supervise their spiritual progress; he

would generally lead the five prayers in the congregation."[360] As a neo-brotherhood,

disciples or members of the MQI are not in regular contact with Qadri. Residents of the

traditional *khānqāh* "had to serve the sheikh and the community, and their main

occupations were prayer, worship, and the study of books of devotion and the

biographies of saints."[361] MQI members do much of the same; however, political and

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[359] Schimmel, 232.
[360] Schimmel, 232
[361] Schimmel, 347.

social activism are a key occupation of Minhājians, and the leadership of the MQI actively

promotes engagement in "*dīn* and *dunyā*," or religion and the material world.

For the MQI, distance, sheer numbers and other obligations prevent the shaykh and

his thousands of followers from being centered in one location. Thus, MQI centers all over

the world and the internet in conjunction serve as a neo-*khānqāh* for the organization,

enabling MQI members to "see" their shaykh and learn from him, whether by listening to

his lectures, hearing his talks, viewing his image, or studying his writings and saintly

biographies. While MQI branches strive to build centers that support religious guidance

and training for the local community as well as host visitors, the online MQI community

serves their shaykh Tahir-ul-Qadri and facilitates flows of communication between

members who may never get to meet in person. As a Sufi transnational organization, MQI

is not unique, but it is remarkable in its extensive use of the internet to maintain networks

and connections not only between members of the organization across the world, but

also to their charismatic founder. The mediums that maintain the neo-*khānqāh*

environment online are thus utilized to achieve certain objectives. MQI is well-versed with

the communication mediums of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, with members

venturing into Tumblr and Snapchat as well. What does the use of these sites create in

terms of a virtual Sufi community? How does the use of social media sites facilitate

transnational flows? How is each medium used uniquely to create a sacred space? In this

chapter, I will attempt to answer these questions.

Internet Utilization in Dallas

Dr. Mayanaz, one of the female exemplars I worked with in Dallas, is constantly on the move. If you enter the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī, she is usually rushing to make sure that there are enough chairs for the elderly to sit on during prayer time, that boxed meals are being taken care of in the kitchen for distribution after events, and that she is greeting each attendee and asking about their health and family. She is one of two women on the MQI Supreme Council and the only one who is not directly related to Qadri, yet her official title is simply Social Media/Communications Director. This speaks volumes not only to the importance of the cyber environment in propagating the MQI movement, but also to the authority that her proficiency in social media affords her.

When speaking with Dr. Mayanaz about the MQI's use of technology and the internet in an interview held at the Dallas center in April of 2018, she connected technological advancement with the progress and facility with which Minhāj members have been able to spread Qadri's message. Narrating her own journey, she refers to their initial struggles to build a community in her local area. Initially, Dr. Mayanaz and her husband only sent CDs across the United States to individuals who indicated interest. They did this from their own income, paying for the CDs and the shipping costs, not to mention the amount of time the couple spent recording the lectures and mailing them out. By Qadri's instruction, the Mians started a service by which parties could opt to pay $25.00 a year to receive these CD lectures. This was their sole endeavor from 2007 to 2009, after which they continued to send out CDs, but initiated an additional effort in 2009 called Mobile Minhāj, a vehicle used to transport CD recordings of Qadri's lectures

for free distribution and to sell books written by Qadri that had been discounted for sale. Mobile Minhāj also carried technology including monitor computers and cameras to transmit live lectures by scholars in Pakistan. These lectures were shown at the homes of community members who had agreed to host *halaqa-e-durood*, gatherings which usually commence with the recitation of Qurʾan, include a lecture of some sort, and end with salutations upon the Prophet Muhammad. To ease their ability to host, they were instructed through Qadri to simply make sure the house was clean and to serve tea. Any appetizers or entrees were brought by those who came to attend the *halaqa-e-durood.* The Mians' Mobile Minhāj helped host over 75 *halaqā-e-durūd,* or gatherings to recite praise fo the prophet Muhammad*,* in the North Texas area from 2009 to 2011. From 2010 to 2012, the budding MQI community in Dallas, which consisted of the Mians and a handful of other members, held quarterly meetings for which an agenda would be set, minutes would be taken, and goals would be discussed about how best to spread the mission of Qadri.

Before the community had its own center, its members worked in conjunction with the larger Ahl-e-Sunnat (or Barelwī), Shīʿa and Ismāʿīlī communities in North Texas to host a yearly *mawlid* that, according to Dr. Mayanaz, used to cost about $20,000. She notes that although on the surface, these three communities may not have a lot in common, they all shared a love and respect for the celebration of the *mawlid* and were held with the permission of Qadri, who often cites one of the goals of the MQI as being the promotion of inter-faith and intra-faith harmony. These *mawlid*s were celebrated

until 2012. In September of 2013, the current Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī Center in Carrollton,

Texas was purchased and regular services at the center commenced on November 2014.

Prior to the opening of the center, the Mians spread the word of Qadri primarily

through on-the-ground efforts. Although this continues today, their work is facilitated

greatly by the advancement of the internet. Dr. Mayanaz led me through the process of

advertising an event for the center: after creating a flyer advertising the event, she posts

it on the Facebook page of the local Dallas branch. MQI members go to stores or

businesses frequented by the Dallas Muslim community and post the flyer in those

locations. They email the flyer across MQI listservs so that both members in the US and

members globally are aware of the events being held at the Dallas branch. Finally, Dr.

Mayanaz sends the flyer on the Dallas MQI Whatsapp group and also personally texts

several local members an image of the flyer. Having been the recipient of such texts

before, despite having Whatsapp and being included on their local Whatsapp group, I was

surprised to know she does this routinely and asked her why. "Not everyone has or checks

Whatsapp," she replies. "And [receiving an individual text] makes others feel special."

MQI members thus utilize different mediums to achieve different goals. The first Internet

medium used by Qadri and MQI members was the website, a tool that has been

continuously developed and revised to account for changing needs and times.

Welcome to Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan International: The MQI Website as Gathering Space

Before social media, the MQI website served as the original "assembly-hall" on

the internet for the organization. The Minhāj Internet Bureau (MIB), a division of MQI

integral to "present[ing] the activities and achievements of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan International," launched the website in 1994.[362] The MIB's work is not limited to the website; they work to document all official MQI presence online. On their website, the MIB lists official Facebook pages and classifies them according to personality, e.g. Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri and Dr. Hassan Mohi-ud-Din Qadri; organization, e.g. Pakistān Awāmī Tehreek (PAT) and Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan Women League; institutes, e.g. Minhāj University Lahore and Farid-e-Millat Research Institute; country, e.g. MQI U.K. and MQI Spain; and finally, cities, e.g. MQI Faisalabad and MQI Karachi. In addition, the MIB lists social media links to pages on Twitter, Google Plus, Pinterest, Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo, and RSS. Only Instagram is not listed despite official accounts held by Qadri and both of his sons, but it is unclear whether this was intentional, or a result of the website not being updated frequently enough. By my estimates, the MIB's listings are far from complete according to their own claims of membership. For example, the listings for Facebook pages by city only mention larger cities or branches in Pakistan and do not list any Facebook pages for cities abroad, including the Dallas branch of the MQI. The MQI purports branches in 90 countries, yet only six overseas Facebook pages are listed.[363] I would conclude that despite actively functioning abroad and recruiting overseas members, the MQI is still more widespread within Pakistan itself. Their members abroad are primarily of Pakistani descent, so despite being a transnational organization, the MQI is intimately connected

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[362] "Minhaj Internet Bureau (MIB)," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, accessed April 2, 2018, https://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/219/Minhaj-Internet-Bureau-(MIB).html.
[363] "List of Social Media Links by Minhaj Internet Bureau (MIB)," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, accessed April 2, 2018, http://portal.minhaj.net/mib/list-of-social-media-links-by-minhaj-internet-bureau-mib/

with Pakistan, its citizens, and the Pakistani diaspora. Furthermore, although the claim of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan branches existing in 90 countries is oft-cited, this appears to be part of the rhetoric of the organization. A branch is never clearly defined: that is, it is unclear whether a physical space needs to exist, active meetings should be held, or whether the presence of one MQI member in a country justifies claims for a branch. Mundane information like the number of branches, the number of MQI members,[364] or the number of books written by Qadri can fall under the rubric of *karamāt,* defined by Rozehnal as "nonconfirmatory feats performed by saints."[365] However, members themselves see the vast number of books written by Qadri or the spread of MQI branches as evidence of his scholarly prowess and charisma.

From my first exposure to MQI in 2013, the interface of the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan website has evolved immensely. During the period of my fieldwork, there was one major update to the website after which I realized I did not have access to a screenshot of the old website. Upon contacting the MIB, they were able to provide me with their own record of screenshots that documented the major changes that have occurred with the website over a period of 15 years.

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[364] During a brief interview with Qadri on August 17, 2018, I asked about the number of MQI members. The organization has a three-tier scale of members, ranging from those who are in contact with centers or attend branch events to those classified as *rafīq* (pl. *rufaqā*), the term the MQI uses for lifetime members. The word *rafīq*, meaning companion, is derived from Q4:69 which states, "And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger- those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions." This sort of scale, however, makes the exact number of members difficult to determine, according to MQI leadership.

[365] Rozehnal, 55.
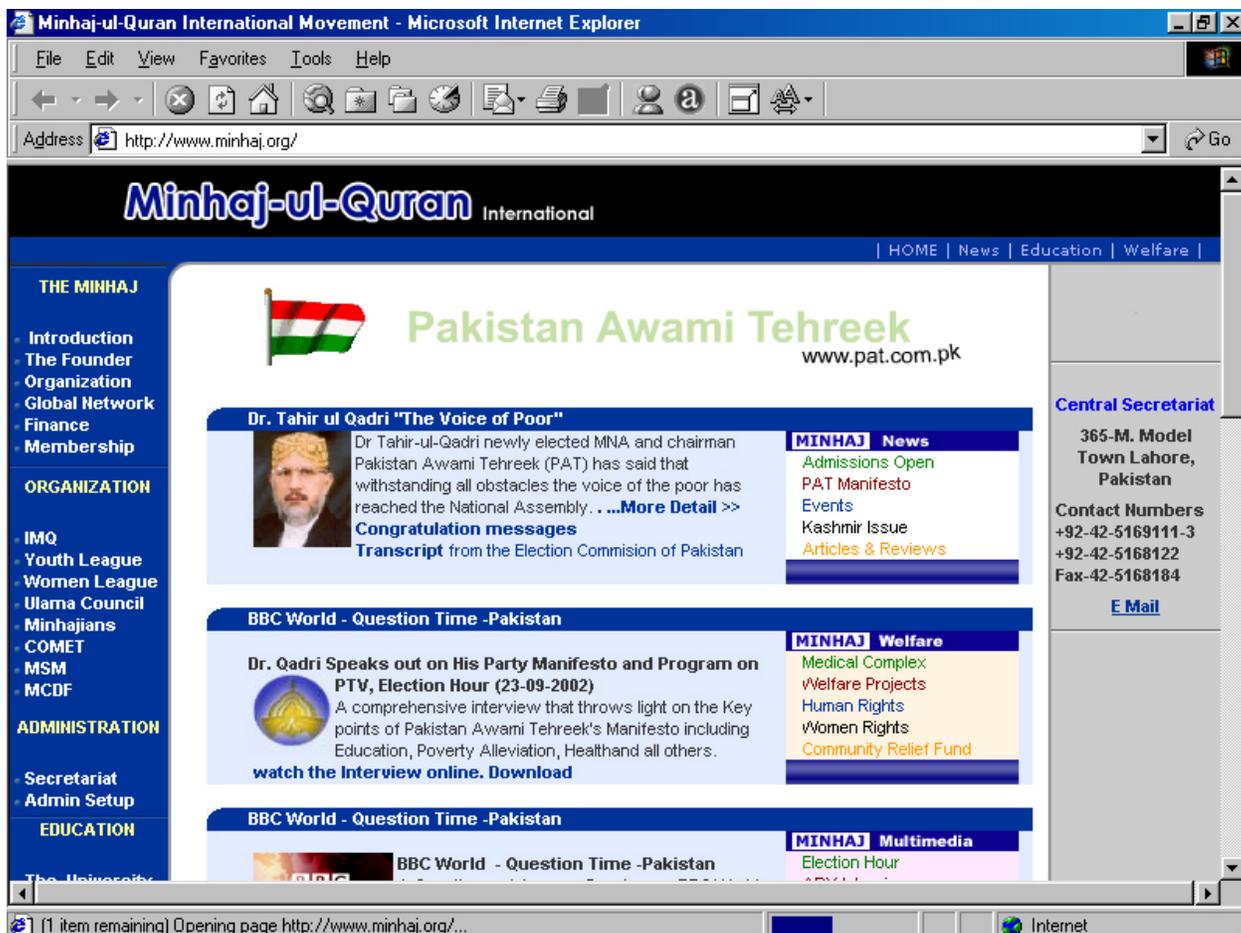
Figure 32- MQI Website in 2001

Although the MIB states that the first website was created in 1994, they do not appear to have a screenshot record of that website and the first documentation appears seven years later in 2001. This website was very basic, with a simple design describing the history of the organization, the existence of branches around the world, and the membership process. Figure 32 shows that a layout of the organization involves different divisions, including the Idārat-ul-Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan (IMF), the Youth League, Women League, the Mustafavī Students Movement (MSM), the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum (MCDF) and the apparently now-defunct Council of Muslim Engineers and Technologists

(COMET). The MCDF, which was established in 1998, was also quite active until 2008, after which MQI formed the Centre of Interfaith Relations on March 20, 2008.[366] [367] The 2001 website also centered around Pakistan, including news on Pakistan and featured the work of the PAT front and center of the website.
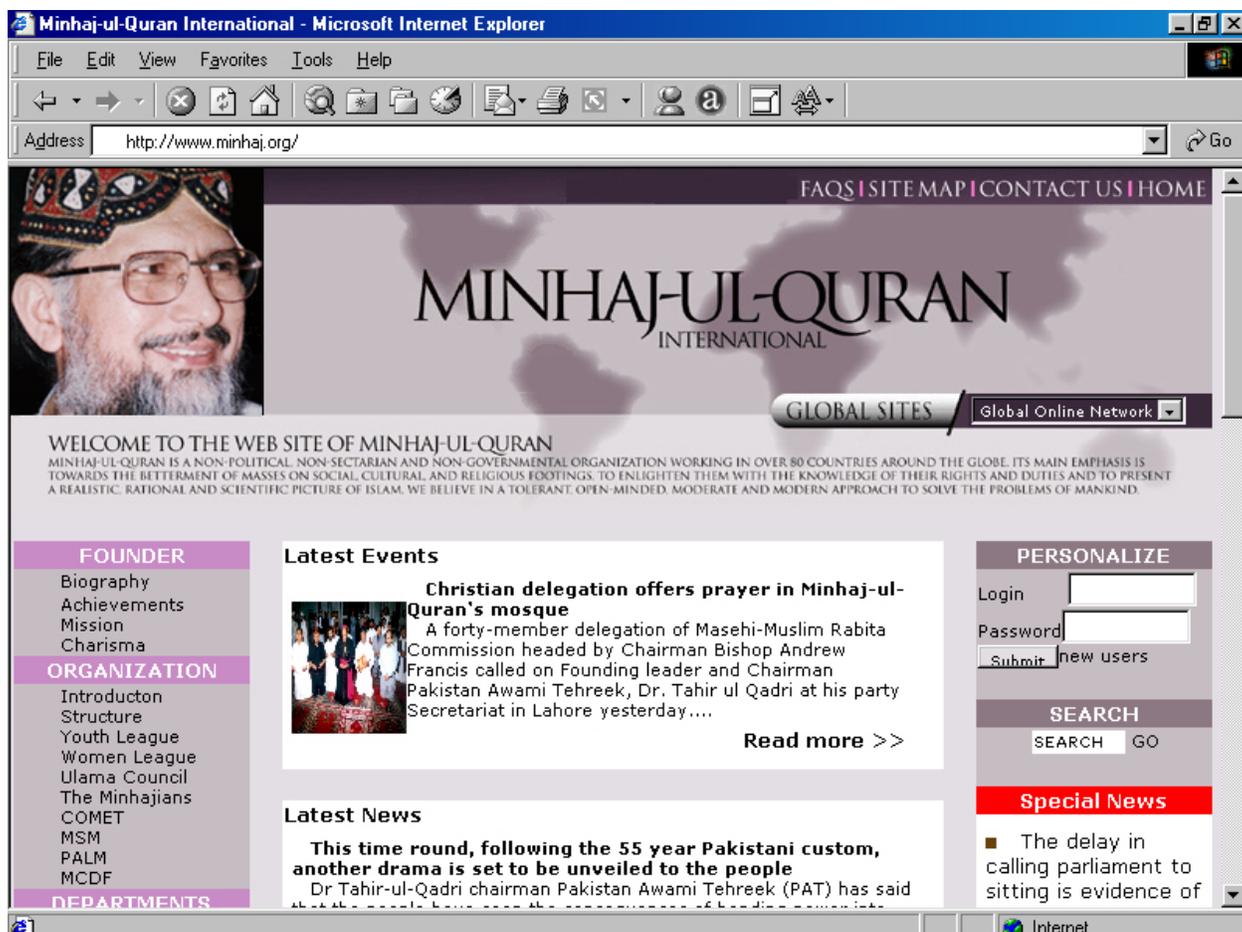
Figure 33- MQI Website in 2002

The updated website a mere year later in 2002 included much of the same layout as the 2001 version. However, the IMF was deleted from the layout of the organization;

[366] "Summary Reports of Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum (MCDF)," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, accessed April 4, 2018, https://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/3561/Summary-Reports-of-Muslim-Christian-Dialogue-Forum-MCDF.html

[367] "Interfaith Dialogue- A Peace Mechanism," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān Interfaith Relations, accessed April 4, 2018, https://www.interfaithrelations.com/english/tid/13752/About-Interfaith-Relations/.

the Pakistan Awāmī Lawyers Movement (PALM), established in 1998, was added to the

organizational layout; Qadri appears more central to the website with a larger portrait at

the top of the page; and there is a feature that allows users to enter a username and

password to "personalize" their experience.[368]

Figure 34- MQI Website in 2005

As shown in Figure 34, the MQI website in 2005 displays the logo for MQI still used

today. The logo is a globe in red, white and green, the colors of the PAT and MQI, with an

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[368] "MQI Forums," Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān International, accessed April 4, 2018,
https://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/8722/The-MQI-Forums.html.

open Qurʾan sitting atop and a Qurʾanic verse across it. The verse features the word

minhāj and states, "To each of you We prescribed a law and a method."[369] The heading

that laid out different branches of the organization in previous versions was removed and

placed more discretely in a horizontal fashion in smaller font at the top of the website.

Many of the branches no longer appear under this heading, and the organization instead

added the headings of multimedia, research, welfare and cyber space. The site highlights

multimedia features in the form of recorded lectures and online books written by Tahir-

ul-Qadri. It also includes some headings of information about press

Figure 35- MQI Website in 2013

releases in Urdu.

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[369] Q5:48

The 2013 website shown in figure 4 shows a progression of eight years after the previous website. There is a distinct turn towards a more international image of MQI with this website, a turn reflected in Qadri's own appearance, as discussed previously. The website appears in English but has translations available in Urdu and in Arabic. This global turn is further illustrated with the addition of an "Overseas" heading at the top of the window. The front page of the website features sections on print media coverage, tv programs featuring Tahir-ul-Qadri, popular news and press releases. Icons at the top left corner allow users to share the website on Twitter, Facebook or through text messaging.


Figure 36-The 2018 MQI Website, updated in 2015

In 2015, the website updated to the latest and most globally savvy version. The links at the top right of the screen reflect MQI's turn towards becoming a more international movement. The "World Wide[sic] Locations" heading links to a map that shows each MQI branch. "Mobile Apps" links users of the website to eight different applications, including one of Qadri's translation of the Qurʾan, produced by the MQI and available through the Android, iOS and Windows Mobile operating systems. The "Interaction" heading has subheadings that allows users to learn about membership, donating to the cause, and providing suggestions.

After clicking on the "Websites" section, the site is titled "Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan in Cyber Space" and users can see the over eighty websites run by MQI. Upon the first look, it may seem as though this is extensive; however, the MQI lists separate Urdu and English websites for each MQI forum; e.g. the Minhāj Youth League (Urdu) and the Minhāj Youth League (English) are listed as separate sites. Furthermore, some of these websites, although they continue to exist on the internet, belong to forums that exist in theory, but do not meet, operate regularly or have separate functions from other currently existing forums. One example of this is the MCDF, which appeared to be the MQI's primary venue through which interfaith dialogue occurred prior to 2008. Once the Centre of Interfaith Relations (CIF) was established in 2008, all events relating to the MQI and the Christian community were subsumed or duly posted under the CIF website. The MCDF website appears now to simply post any news related to the Christian community, including old videos of Tahir-ul-Qadri and his outreach with Christians, and a heading that allows user to contact the MCDF does not list any MCDF personnel, but simply links to the main MQI

email, tehreek@Minhāj.org, whereas the CIF has a separate director with an email that users can contact.

The updates to the MQI website after 2015 have greatly improved the user's ability to interact with the MQI network. The "Sale Points" heading lists all locations by city in Pakistan where literature by Qadri may be purchased. There is also a section that lists sale points overseas, however, it is currently limited to Spain and India. A site map includes sections on *Shaykh-ul-Islam*, Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, News and Events, Videos, Tours, Letters to Leaders, Literature, Periodicals, Speeches, Sale Points, Training and Interaction.

In 2018, the Minhāj Internet Bureau added a welcome screen to their website, which states clearly what the organization sees as its purpose in utilizing the internet: "Spreading Islam through Cyberspace."
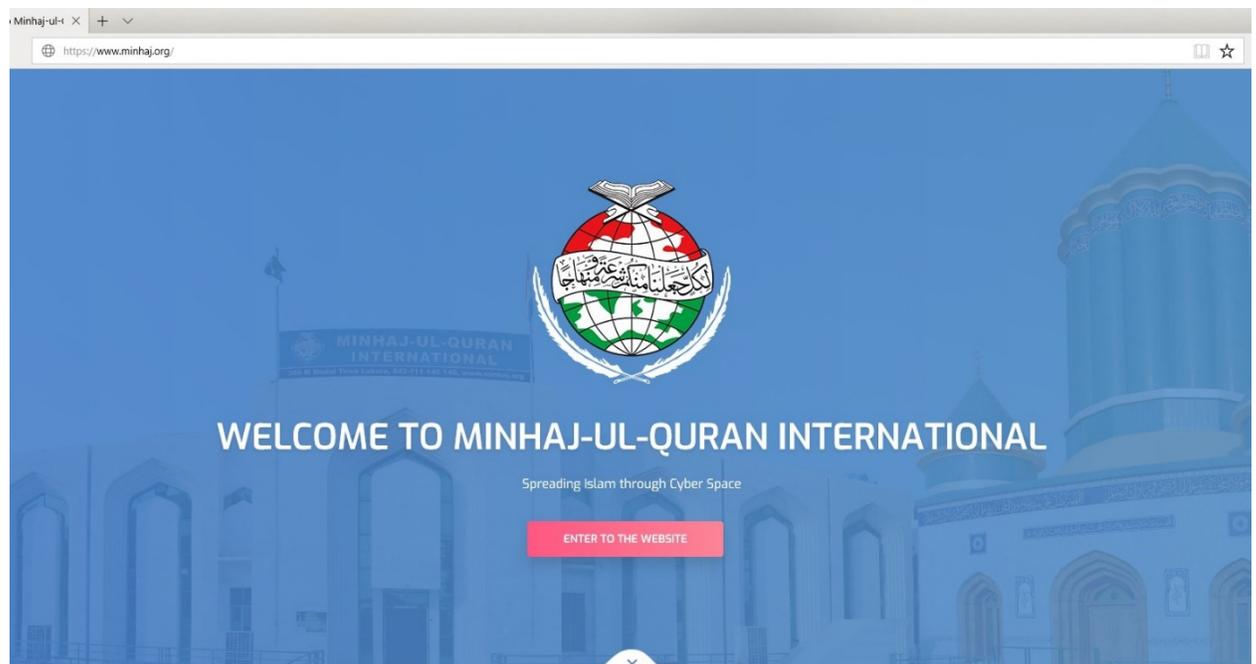
Figure 37- Welcome Screen to the 2018 MQI Website

Upon clicking on the arrow to expand options on the welcome screen, visitors may view

the wide array of offerings on the MQI website. This has been organized by "Other

Websites," "Literature," and "Educational" headings.
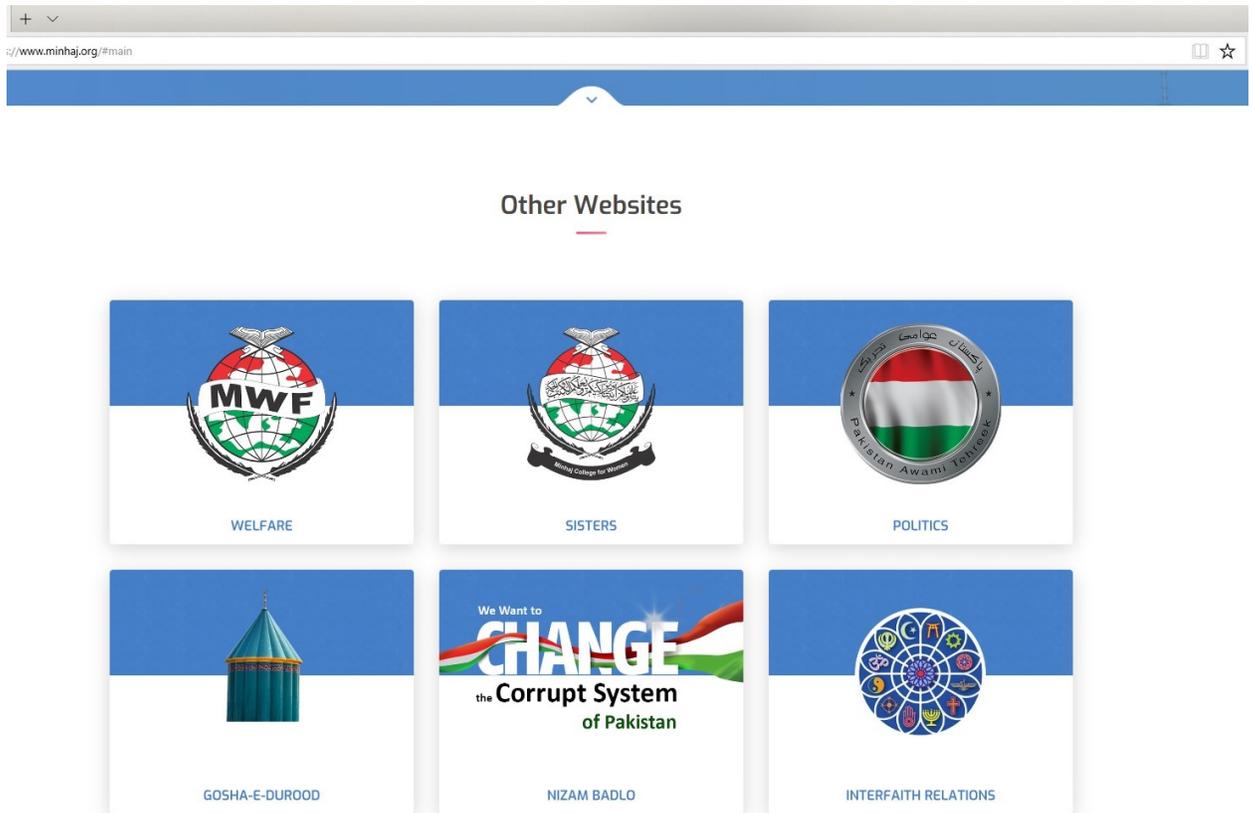
Figure 38- Welcome Screen (List of other websites)
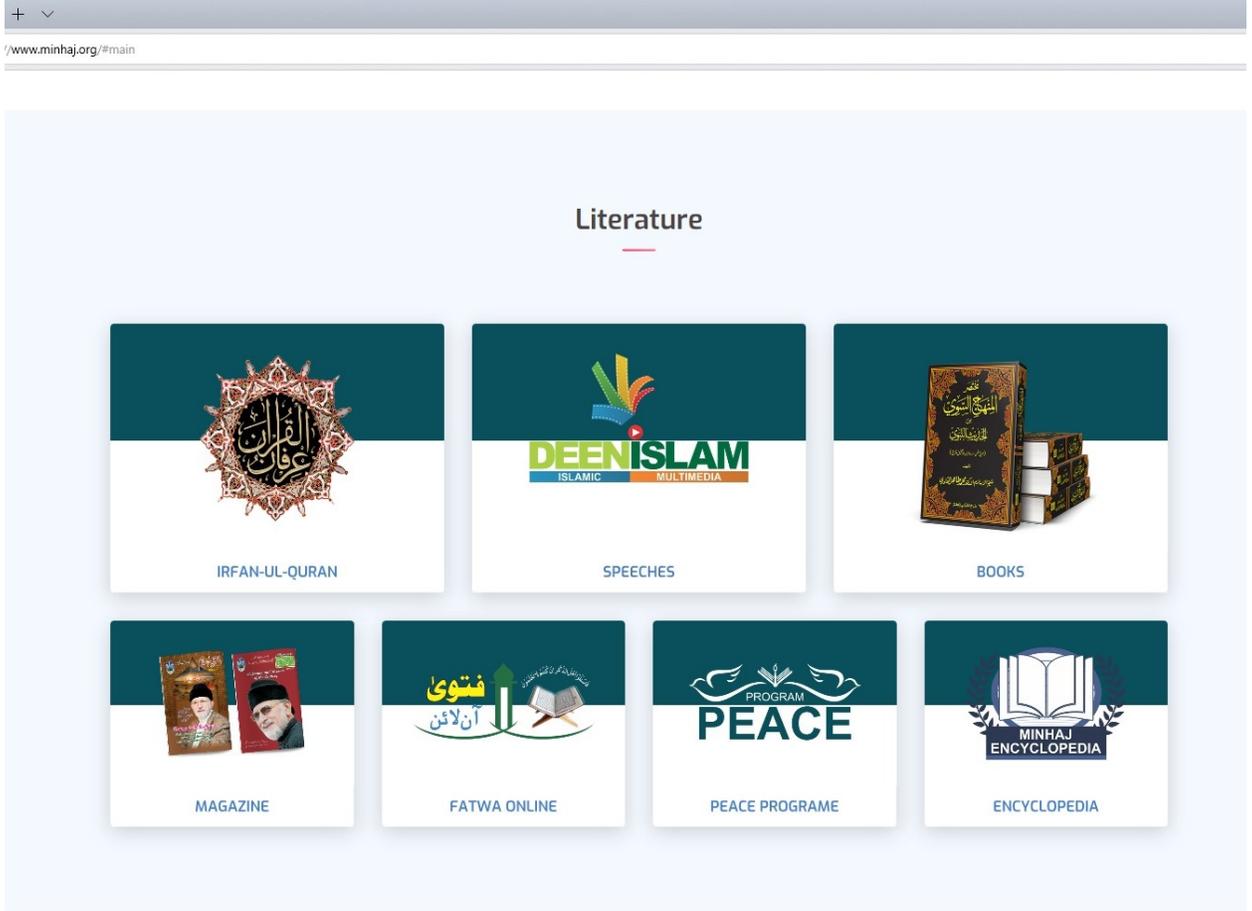
Figure 39- Welcome Screen (Literature)
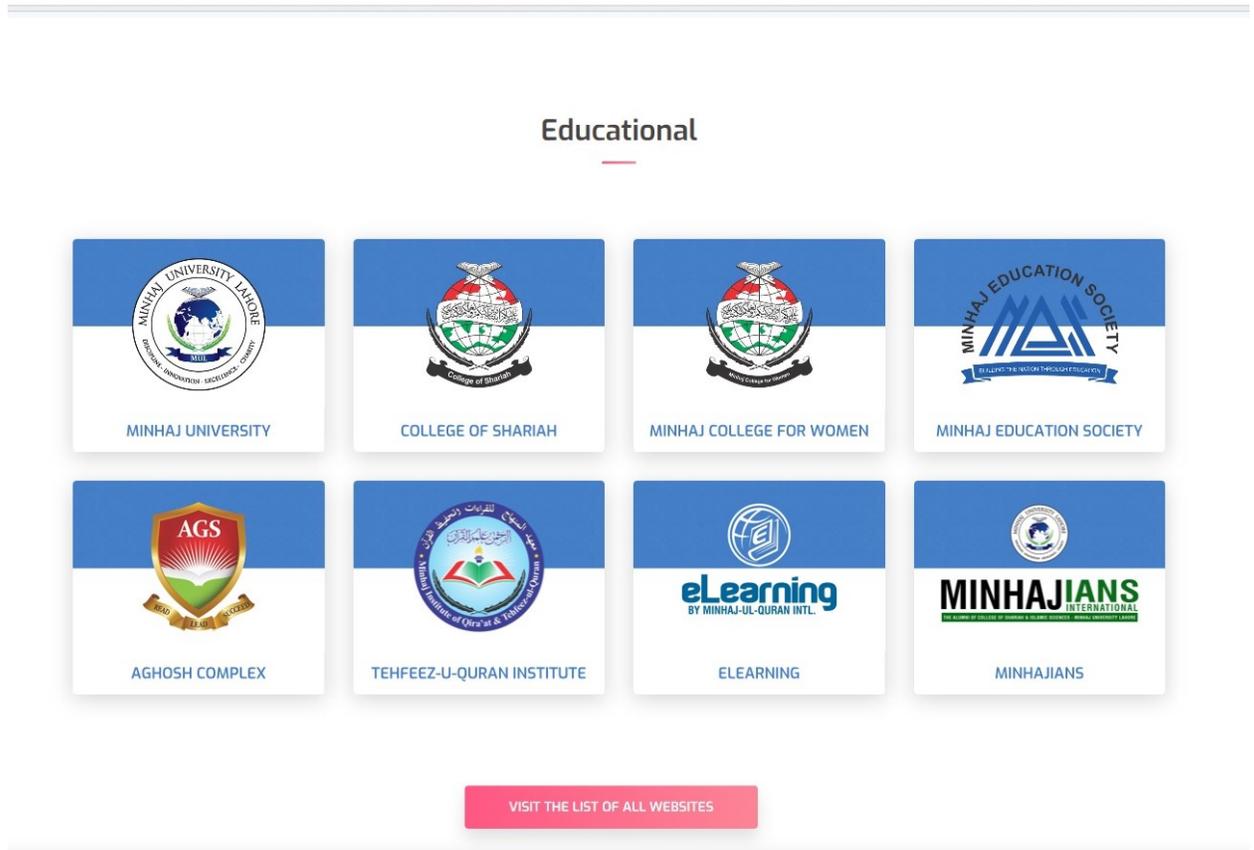
Figure 40- Welcome Screen (Educational)

The welcome screen serves as a visual map to why the website may be considered a gathering place for Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan members all over the world. Some members' involvement may be limited to following the teachings of Tahir-ul-Qadri through reading his books or listening to his lectures. Others choose to participate in the groundwork of the organization by engaging in social world or serving as active participants of different branches such as the Minhāj Women's League or the political wing of Pakistan Awami Tehreek. Finally, some members involve themselves with MQI daily by taking e-classes or enrolling at any of the educational institutions run by Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan.

Facebook: In the Sohbat of the Shaykh and the MQI

Facebook is the MQI's most widely used social media site. Their presence on Facebook includes personal sites for MQI leaders for not just Qadri or his sons, but also for the President of the PAT, Dr. Raheeq Ahmad Abbāsī, and the oldest alumni of Minhāj University and *amīr*, or leader, of the MQI in Europe, Allāma Hassan Mīr Qādrī. MQI is also present on Facebook in the form of sites for different branches within the organization, like the Mustafavi Students Movement and the PAT, as well as institutes like the MIB and Minhāj University Lahore. Finally, each branch of the MQI and regional division has its own Facebook page; for example, there is a Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan USA page as well as a Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan Dallas page, and the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan in Dallas has a separate page in addition for the Youth League at their branch.

However, the extent to which all these pages are all operational or actively consulted is debatable. Tahir-ul-Qadri 's official Facebook page has over three million followers; however, as of April 2018, the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan International Facebook page had not met 300,000 followers. Thus, the MQI Facebook page could not boast even ten percent of the number of followers of Qadri. These figures may be indicative of the number of fans Qadri has for his political, religious, or social stances, admiration that may not always result in efforts to join his religious movement or even awareness of its existence. Most of the pages affiliated with the MQI have fewer than 50,000 followers. Despite lower followings for the MQI, the political wing and party of the MQI, the Pakistan Awami Tehreek has over 600,000 followers. This is not surprising given that Qadri came most prominently into the public eye through his venture into politics.

Figure 41- Tahir-ul-Qadri 's official Facebook page
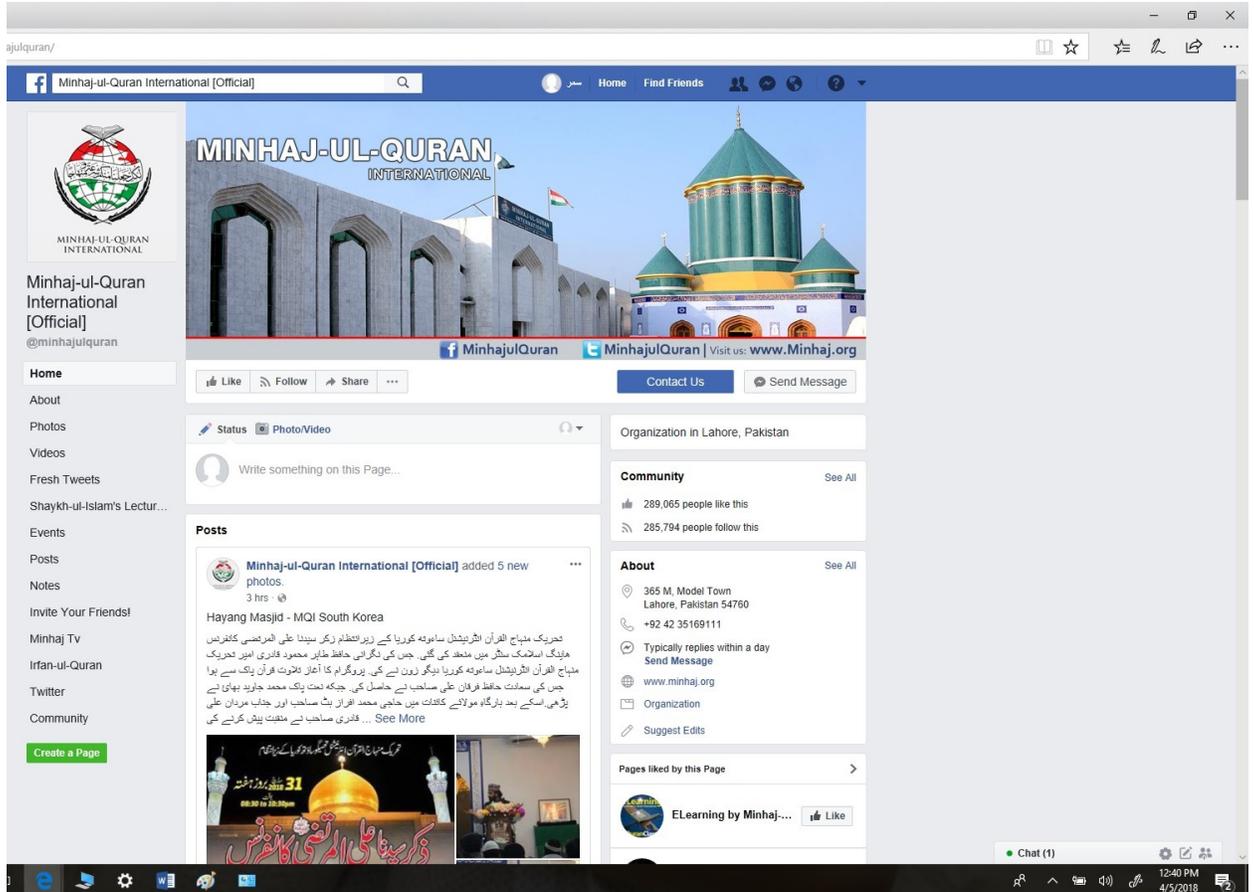
Figure 42- MQI Facebook page

Figure 43- Pakistan Awami Tehreek Facebook page

Through a seamless ability to share pictures, videos and narrative, Facebook allows Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan members to follow the charismatic personalities they admire within the organization, stay up to date with events held and services offered at their local branches, and become acquainted with MQI members across the world that they may never have the chance to meet otherwise. Although visa restrictions and other circumstances may prevent members meeting in person, followers of Tahir-ul-Qadri operate and employ the internet efficiently as a tool to communicate across these hurdles, as my experience with Indian MQI followers in Lucknow and Pakistani MQI members in Atlanta illustrates. With regards to social media, Facebook is the primary

medium through which MQI members stay in touch with one another and stay abreast of the activities and events held by individual MQI centers all over the world.

According to Dr. Mayanaz in an interview held in Dallas in April of 2018, Facebook is used to achieve multiple goals. First, as mentioned towards the beginning of the chapter, the internet allows MQI members to propagate the organization's mission: to reinstill love for the Prophet Muhammad. Dr. Mayanaz notes that she always tries to post pictures and news of events held at the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī Center the day the event occurs. When I asked her what the objective was, she replied "There are three reasons. First, we inspire others. We help people learn. Then, we spread the message." She cited Facebook as a tool that she used in the initial stages of trying to establish a branch in Dallas. She used Facebook to check the websites of branches that had already been established to see what sort of services they offered and the types of events they were conducting. Secondly, she listened to Qadri's lectures daily, claiming that he conveys a universal message that instructs those who are receptive in how to work for the mission of the organization.

Interestingly, Dr. Mayanaz and other members also use Facebook to respond to criticism made by adversaries of Qadri. "Just recently," she claims, "a man responded under a video of Minhāj women reciting *naʿat*, commenting 'Didn't Qadri Sahib (Mr. Qadri) teach them not to recite in front of men?' I immediately sent him a video of *Qibla Huzūr* giving sources stating it was ok with women to recite naʿat in front of men. He

never responded after that. My purpose isn't to argue, it's to give him knowledge. '*Lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn.*' (Unto you is your religion, and unto me mine)."[370]

Dr. Mayanaz also noted the many MQI members she has been in contact with and met all over the world through Facebook. Sometimes they are in contact initially over Facebook and get the opportunity to meet in person at key MQI events; other times, she has met followers of Qadri and then used Facebook to maintain contact. Thus, Facebook is used not only to stay abreast of news of the MQI and Qadri, but also to respond to criticism by opponents of their shaykh and initiate and maintain communication with other members of the larger MQI network. Social media tools like Facebook grant MQI members *sohbat*, not only of their beloved shaykh, but also of others in the same *tarīqa*. Because of the nature of the order, members are often unable to be near Qadri or one another. Technology creates this intimacy in a different way and allows devotees of Qadri to feel a sense of attachment with one another when they join forces against critics of their shaykh.

Twitter: The Mouthpiece of the MQI

Although Facebook may be used primarily as a social networking tool by MQI members, Twitter is used by members of the transnational network to stay up-to-date with Qadri and, specifically, his views on important current events and issues. As Dr. Mayanaz notes from our April 2018 interview, Twitter is not used for local or on-the-

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[370] Here, Dr. Mayanaz cites a popular verse, Q109:6.

ground efforts as much as other mediums like Facebook. It is primarily utilized to stay connected with the words and teachings of Qadri. Dr. Mayanaz used Twitter primarily during what MQI members called the *dharna,* (peaceful protest), the period in 2013 when Qadri led a protest of MQI members against the corrupt political leaders and system of Pakistan. Dr. Mayanaz said the *dharna* was a crucial and busy period and she often worked to tweet translations of Qadri's lectures one line at a time to get the word out about his efforts. This was vital because people all over the world were following Qadri's movement and political initiatives at the time. Now, however, she rarely uses Twitter because her primary work on the internet is the circulation of news regarding the local branch. Although Twitter continues to be utilized to follow Qadri and the MQI on a global scale, it is not commonly used by local branches. However, the MQI does typically represent itself on a national and departmental scale on Twitter; for example, the MQI UK and the MQI USA have their own Twitter accounts as do the Minhāj Sisters and Minhāj Welfare.

Figure 44-Tahir-ul-Qadri 's Twitter page

Figure 45- MQI Twitter page

Figure 46- MQI UK Twitter page

Figure 47- Minhāj Welfare Twitter page

Instagram: Bestowing Baraka

My research interest in Minhājian women was first sparked in 2011 by my interactions in Atlanta with the Alams, a family who, like the Mians, were incredibly devoted to Qadri. The mother, Asiya, and college-aged daughter, Sarah, were especially active in the movement.[371] The mother worked to establish a local community of women in her generation, while her daughter assembled the youth. Sarah helped her mother incorporate modern technology in their *dars* (pl. *durūs*) gatherings that helped the organization with its mission of reinstilling love for the Prophet. At one *dars* in 2012, this was done by showing a documentary on the influence of the Wahhābī's on the kingdom

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[371] Their names have been changed.

of Saudi Arabic, making explicit the connections between politics and the government's crackdown on the practice of *mawlid*.

While attending a *dars* at their home in 2012, I was struck by the framed photo of a smiling Tahir-ul-Qadri kept separately on a small side table along with one of his books and a fresh rose. When I asked Sarah about it, she stated that looking at the photo made her feel as if she was in the *sohbat*, or intimate company, of the shaykh. When I asked Dr. Mayanaz about this concept, she explained the different emotions she felt upon contemplation of her shaykh: "When I listen to him, it feels as though I am in his company. When I look at his picture, it gives me blessings." The phenomenon described by Dr. Mayanaz is reminiscent of *darshan*, the idea common to South Asia that a viewer may gain blessings by looking upon the image of a holy or saintly figure. Tahir-ul-Qadri, his sons and his grandson all have official Instagram accounts. However, these accounts differ vastly from the fan accounts created for Qadri by devotees.

Figure 48- Official Instagram page of Qadri
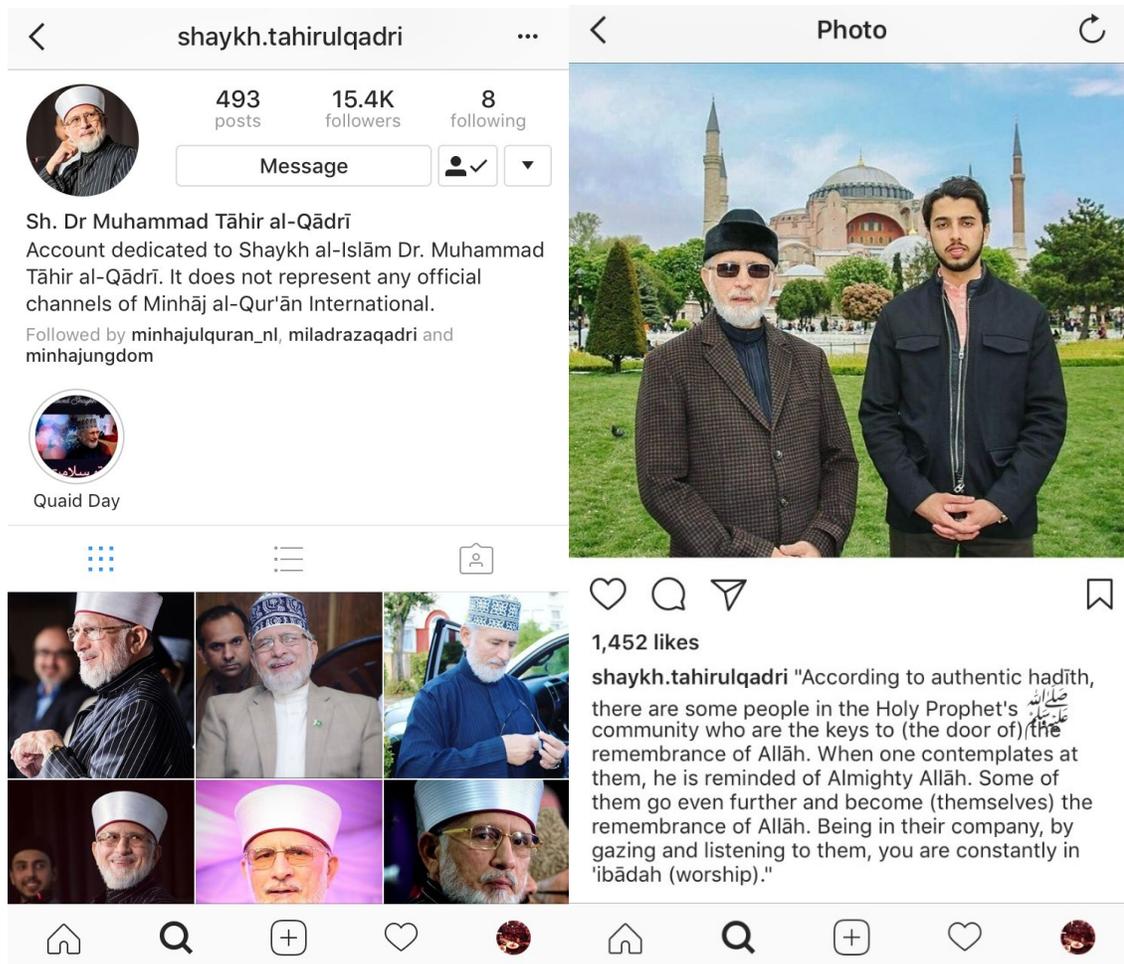
Figure 49- @shaykh.tahirulqadri Instagram Fan account   Figure 50- Caption under fan account post

Fan accounts dedicated to Qadri display rows upon rows of his photographs as well as occasional photographs of his sons or grandsons. Posted photographs of Qadri most often included some sort of caption, either a quotation by Qadri or praise of him. In a picture posted on the @shaykh.tahirulqadri Instagram fan page from February 24th, 2018, the creator posts a caption of a quotation by Qadri underneath a photograph of him and his eldest grandson, Hammād Mustafa Qādrī. The caption states:

> According to authentic hadīth, there are some people in the Holy Prophet's (*salallahu alaihi wassallam* or peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) community who are the keys to (the door of) the remembrance of Allah. When

one contemplates them, he is reminded of Almighty Allah. Some of them go even further and become (themselves) the remembrance of Allah. Being in their company, by gazing and listening to them, you are constantly in 'ibādah (worship).

The caption alludes to Qadri and his descendants and affirms the sentiments that Dr. Mayanaz and Baji Riffat express. When women mention the effect that Qadri's words and presence have on them, it is intimately linked to the concept of sight. During an interview held in Dallas in October of 2017, Baji Riffat explains what she "sees" in Qadri:

> [He] gives me that sense that there is Allah and there is the Prophet. … You get that sense from other people, but that satisfied sense that you want to see Allah, and when you see Him, you want to see His *Rasūl*, that's what I see in [Qadri.] That sense [like] how can a person love Him so much and love His *Rasūl* so much? He must have seen something.

Baji Riffat thus attributes Qadri's closeness with God and with the prophet Muhammad as his ability to "see" something the rest of the world cannot. For women, viewing Qadri conjures up strong sentiments and emotion. The quotation cited by Qadri legitimizes it by claiming the idea appears in hadīth (without citing a specific reference), which is meant to confirm its authenticity. In an interview held in Dallas dating July 26, 2017, Dr. Mayanaz conveys her desire to see and hear the shaykh:

> The first [time he spoke to Qadri] my husband started crying. He started crying after listening to his voice because we were … yearning to hear him personally for a long time, and [Qadri] was on speakerphone so I was just listening. Because as a woman, I was not too [emotional] because you know, the scholar is a man. … You know because I'd never met him. You don't know him, and you're living with your husband and you're talking about someone who you do not know. I had a passion to meet him and a yearning to meet him, but I was not expressing that. But the first time my husband went, I wrote a letter.

Figure 51- @tahirulqadrifanpage Instagram fan account for Qadri

Figure 52- @qiblahuzoor Instagram fan page

Instagram and the virtual space of the neo-*khānqāh* allows women to surpass some limitations in the realization of their devotion to Qadri. As members of the opposite sex, women must necessarily curb the outward expression of their yearning to see and be in the company of the shaykh. Both men and women express this desire; however, women are limited in the realization of this yearning because of rules of *adab* and gender segregation. Following Instagram accounts dedicated to Qadri allows women to partake

in the *baraka* of gazing upon the shaykh without concern for the constraints of societal norms and gender segregation. The expression of their desire on the internet, however, is not without bounds. After surveying accounts dedicated to Qadri, two-thirds of the followers of Qadri's official Instagram account, @drtahirulqadri are male, while the followers of @qiblahuzoor are approximately 50% male. The official account primarily posts quotations or statements made by Qadri, while fan accounts are largely photos of Qadri and his family.
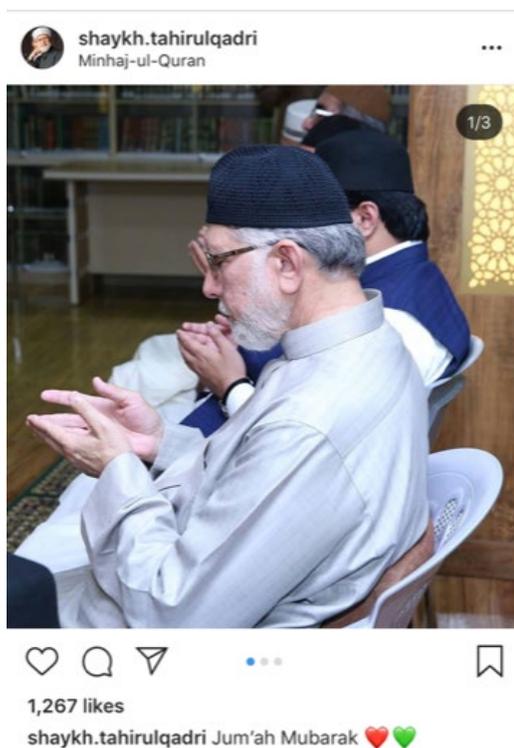
Figure 53-Sample post (9/21/18) on fan account   Figure 54-Commentary under post from Figure 53

Those who post comments underneath pictures of him on Instagram are still predominantly male (as far as their Instagram accounts or user names portray). Yet,

women who do post often include hearts or emojis with heart eyes. On the internet, this is not a gendered expression, as Figure 55 shows that male followers often use these emojis as well as crying or kissing emojis. However, expressing these emotions outside of the virtual space of the neo-*khānqāh* would be nearly impossible for women.[372]

Figure 55- Commentary (continued) from Figure 53

[372] When Qadri visited Dallas, an American woman unfamiliar with rules of *adab* or segregation was censured by other women for trying to have her picture taken next to Qadri.

Figure 56-Commentary (7/27/18) from fan account

Figure 57- Post (7/29/18) on fan account

Figure 58- Commentary under post in Figure 57

Photographs of Qadri on fan accounts are usually accompanied by statement made by Qadri or general quotations that express love or admiration. The post referenced in Figure 58 is captioned in Urdu with poetry that states, "Ever since I have laid eyes on your image, people fawn over my eyes."
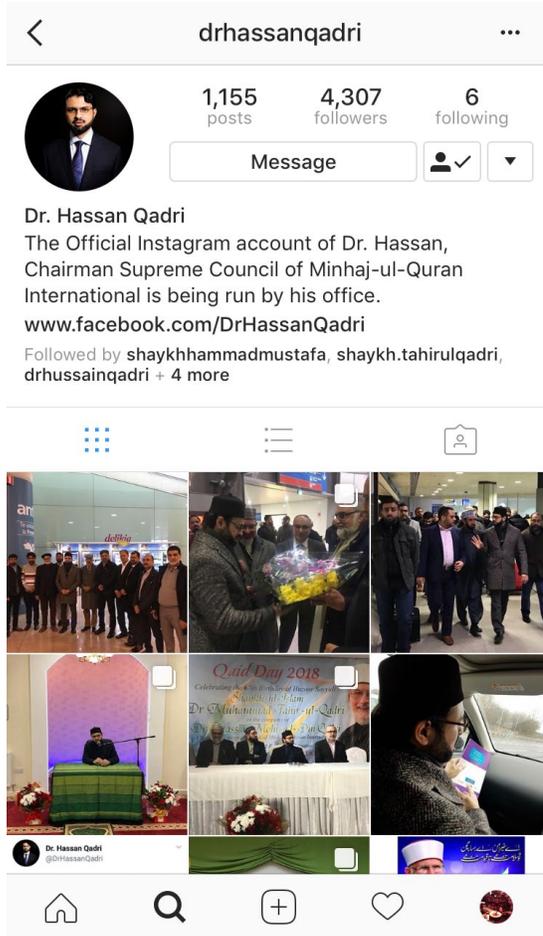
Figure 59- Hassan Qadri official Instagram page

Figure 60- Hussain Qadri official Instagram page

Figure 61- Hammad Qadri official Instagram page

Official Instagram accounts created for Qadri, his sons, Hassan and Hussain, and his grandson Hammad are quite different from the fan accounts. On the accounts of Hassan, Hussain and Hammad, pictures are posted with the intent of informing viewers about their whereabouts; captions include information about where the photo was taken. On Qadri's official account, pictures are primarily images of text. These textual images cite Qadri's views on political issues reminiscent of his tweets on Twitter. In recent scholarship on Islamic communities on Instagram, researchers found that "within the

online visual culture of Muslim representation on Instagram, the most dominant 'visual' appears to be text."[373] However, fan accounts dedicated to Qadri are more often devoted to sharing various images of Qadri and his family as a means of bestowing *baraka* upon the viewers of the photographs.

Tumblr: Allowing a Feedback and Response Loop from MQI Followers

Founded in 2006, Tumblr, like Twitter, primarily serves as a microblogging site. Users visit the blogging sites "where your interests connect you with your people."[374] My experience fit this description exactly when I was researching criticism of Qadri on Pakistani news media and from those outside the MQI network. During the time of the *dharna*, there was widespread censure of Qadri for participating in "The Long March" in a bulletproof container while his followers marched alongside him. I was trying to locate and analyze MQI responses to such criticism when I stumbled across the Tumblr page, "Clarification of Propaganda Against Qadri." A quick look at the microblogging site shows that the author was active only during the year 2013; questions were answered, and critiques were addressed during this year alone, after which the site became inactive.

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[373] Thomas Frissen, Elke Ichau, Kristof Boghe, and Leen d'Haenens, "#Muslim? Instagram, Visual Culture, and Mediatization of Muslim Religiosity: Explorative Analysis of Visual and Semantic Content on Instagram," in *European Muslims and New Media*, ed. Merve Kayıkcı and Leen d'Haenens (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2017), 160.

[374] "About |Tumblr," Tumblr, accessed April 11, 2018, www.tumblr.com/about.

Figure 62- The "Clarification of Propaganda" Tumblr

Another Tumblr, titled "Signs of a Revivalist," operated similarly: the author posted and answered questions on the idea of a *mujaddid*, or revivalist, of the faith. The blogging site outlines the characteristics of a *mujaddid*, then posits that Qadri fits the description for a revivalist of this century. Like the "Clarification of Propaganda" Tumblr, this site and its posts were all created in 2013. Dr. Mayanaz revealed her role in creating both Tumblrs and explained in an interview held in Dallas in April 2018 that while the layout and related content continue to be relevant today, they were particularly vital in 2013 because of the *dharna* and the Long March. While the "Clarification of Propaganda" Tumblr served to address criticism by Qadri's opponents, the "Signs of a Revivalist" Tumblr affirmed his saintly and crucial status not just for Muslims in Pakistan, but for the global Muslim *umma* as well.
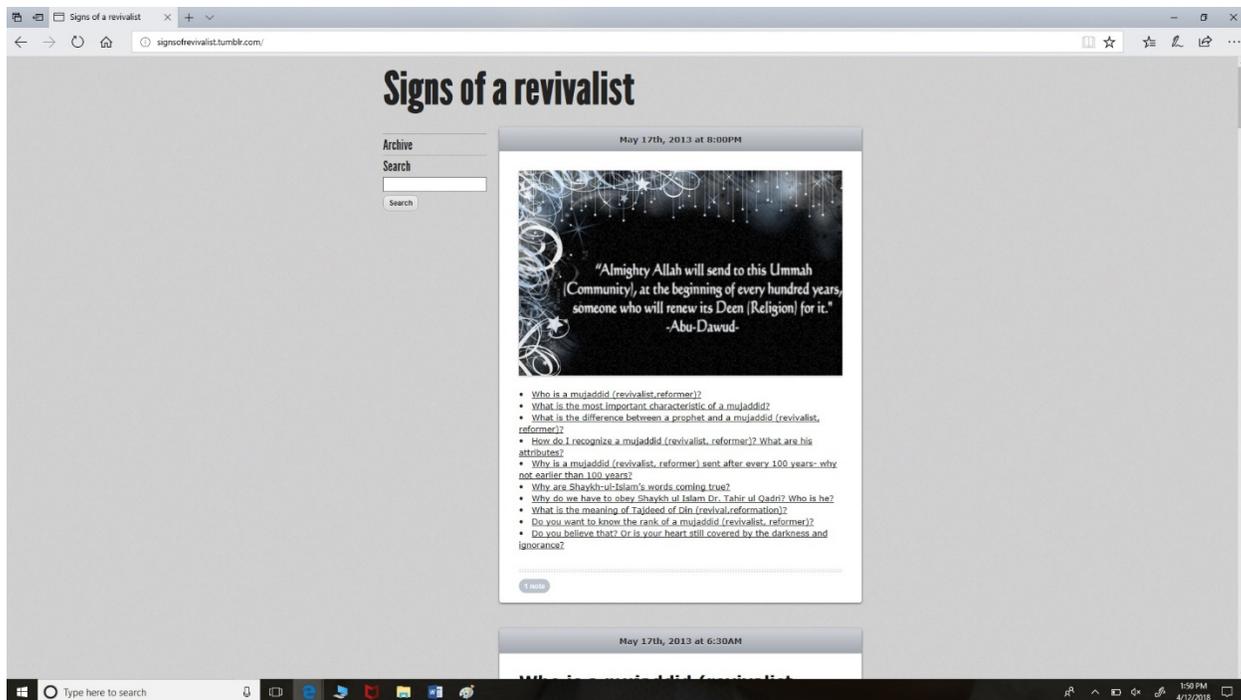
Figure 63- "Signs of a Revivalist" Tumblr

Conclusion

Dr. Mayanaz and other members of the MQI use the internet routinely to facilitate

the spread of the message and the mission of the organization. The internet is crucial to

the ability of the MQI to do its work. As Dr. Mayanaz has stated, the internet "allows us

to establish links to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). We can help the *dīn*

(religion) of the Prophet by spending [money] or by spreading his message." Minhājian

women do both. As Dr. Mayanaz has noted, the MQI uses both the internet and in-person

meetings, events and activities to achieve their goals. Thus, the MQI community utilizes

both spaces of flow and spaces of place in organizing, maintaining and expanding their

network. New media allows transnational communities to be in constant dialogue and to communicate quickly, more effectively and more explicitly than in the past.

Minhājian women are innovative in their utilization of the internet, using it not only to maintain or expand the MQI network, but also articulate their authority in interesting ways. In a transnational network where followers do not take a formal oath of initiation, the internet plays an important role in granting followers *sohbat*, or an intimate form of company, with the shaykh. This is especially important for women precisely because they are not given the same sort of *sohbat* with the shaykh as men. Sarah facilitated an introduction for me with Qadri during his visit there to speak at a conference. I was given the opportunity to meet him and seek his blessings for my project, a permission that I felt was crucial to my ability to conduct work with his followers. Many women expressed envy at the chance I had, and I was aware that this opportunity was the exception rather than the convention. However, as I waited for my turn to speak to him, I watched some male academics who were also given the chance to meet Qadri; one of them was a graduate from my doctoral program. The meeting seemed to go on forever, and I sat with the other women and watched from behind some glass sliding doors in the Alams' home that separated two living spaces. When it was finally my turn to speak to Qadri, I turned on my recorder to document his permission. Our conversation was just six minutes long. I was given certain privileges because of my educational background, with permission to meet Qadri personally. He even allowed me to sit in on a talk only for MQI members; that is, those who filled out the paperwork and paid membership fees,

something I have never done. However, as a woman, my access to him in a physical space was far more limited than the access given to men.

The cyber environment and the usage of social media by the movement allows women to subvert certain patriarchal structures that traditionally kept women in marginal roles in both Sufi and reform movements. Women use the virtual space of the neo-*khānqāh* to gain *baraka* by gazing at pictures of their shaykh or his family or express their devotion in ways that may not be possible in physical proximity to the shaykh. Unlike men, women are unable to live in close quarters and learn in an intimate setting from the shaykh. They overcome this limitation by watching his videos on YouTube. Intellectuals like the ʿ*ulemāʾ* considered women to be the subject of reform in movements like the Deobandīs.[375] Mastering the internet gives women positions of power in the organization like Social Media/Communications Director. The neo-*khānqāh* allows women to serve as the new intellectuals, responding to criticism of the MQI individually on Facebook or collectively via the microblogging website, Tumblr, which women use to outline their critiques and position Qadri as a saintly figure. These are the ways in which women undermine patriarchal structures and exhibit authority in the virtual space of the neo-*khānqāh*.

Further research is needed on the neo-*khānqāh* and the types of conversations and forms of authority that it creates, and the ways in which online activities and debates in the online component of the space feed into and inform the events and conversations

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[375] See Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar*, trans. Barbara Metcalf (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

that occur in the physical space. As the next chapter illustrates, women's religious authority differs significantly in the physical space of the neo-*khānqāh*, becoming much more gendered and affected by limitations created by the segregated space of the center.

Chapter 5: Female Exemplars and Islamic Authority

On September 30, 2017, the MQI branch of Dallas was commemorating the 10th

of Muharram, or the occasion of ʿAshūra, when members of the Prophet's family were

unjustly slaughtered by the Umayyad ruler, Yazīd. The event was called the "Ullama

Conference in Remembrance of Shahadat-e-Imam Hussain", or the "Conference of

Scholars in Remembrance of the Martyrdom of Imam Hussain", the grandson of the

Prophet. The scholars at the conference focused on Hussain, of course, but also discussed

other male exemplars, mainly the prophet Muhammad, ʿAli and Hasan. The week after

this conference, the usual women's *dars* was held at the center on October 7th. Baji Riffat

addressed her women's *dars* class, weeping as she ended the lecture. She concluded the

dars with a particularly emotional *d'uā'*, or prayer, that included quotations from the

Qurʾan:

> My Lord, take us out of the state of being the lowest of the low! [*asfala sāfilīn*][376]
> Take us out of these low depths! My Lord, make us from among those who do
> righteous deeds. Make us the type of mothers and daughters who follow in the
> footsteps of Zaynab [the granddaughter of the prophet Muhammad]. My Lord,
> bless this gathering with Your mercy. For all the sisters who are attending here
> today, transform all of their difficulties, worldly or religious, into ease. For those
> … who were able to come, we thank You for granting us with this *tawfīq* (the ability
> to achieve success) God, Grant Minhāj ul Qurʾan infinite success. God bestow
> *Shaykh-ul-Islam* a long life, health, and vigor. Ya Allah, grant us the *tawfīq* to abide
> by and deliver the message and work which he has set out to do for the sake of
> religion.

As Baji Riffat implies in her *d'uā'*, women are integral to fulfilling the mission of the MQI

and achieving the goals of Qadri. However, women's authority is both contingent upon

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[376] Q95:5.

the authority of the shaykh as well as established through their role as mothers and daughters. Thus, Minhājian women have agency, albeit with limits in a patriarchal culture. Even as they choose to attend a *dars* or participate in the MQI movement, they attribute this to Allah's *tawfīq,* their ability to fulfill a particular goal or outcome successfully.[377] In an interview held on July 26, 2017, Dr. Mayanaz credits her ability to remain dedicated to the mission of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan to *tawfīq* granted to her by Allah, even as other people abandoned the mission:

> Some people left … but you continue; you do not lose hope or … get disappointed. This was our main goal … because of the teaching of Shaykh -ul-Islam that you always ask for steadfastness from Allah because the *dīn* work is always from the *tawfīq* of Allah. You do not do anything yourself because Allah is giving you the *tawfīq* to do [it.] So, whoever is losing, it is because Allah has taken away *tawfīq* from them, [even though] they have excuses … of family or friends or something happening in their life.

According to Dr. Mayanaz, if Allah gives you *tawfīq*, He gives you a task and picks that task for you. I was interested in how the concept of *tawfīq* affects women's agency, but as she articulates, women choose to be involved in the mission, but you know that you've been destined to have *tawfīq* because *"dīn ka kām āsān ho gī* (working for your religion will be easy). The person will feel pleasure in it instead of feeling burdened. It will be easy for them to do because Allah will start managing their other affairs to make it easier." MQI women strive in the name of the mission and their success reflects the *tawfīq* and favor bestowed upon them.

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[377] *Tawfīq* may be understood by looking at a Qurʾanic example. In Q11:88, the prophet Shuʿayb addresses his people as they question his prayer reforms. Shuʿayb tells his people, "I only intend reform as much as I am able. And my success [*tawfīqī*] is not but through Allah." Although his actions indicate agency and him taking on the initiative, the blessing that comes from Allah granting *tawfīq* is the endeavor being successful.

Because male figures like Qadri, his sons, and grandsons serve as the public image of the movement, the role of women in the MQI has not been fully recognized; Qadri is often the focus of studies involving Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, and little research has been conducted to shed light on the importance of women within the movement. However, Tahir-ul-Qadri himself has highlighted the crucial role of women in society. When I asked him to share his thoughts on women in Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan in an interview on August 17, 2018, he stated:

> The thing that I have always emphasized is that any good cause cannot advance without the participation of women. […] Families make up society, but the whole family revolves around the lady. She must deal with the husband and accept his mindset, she facilitates his work for good causes like charity and education. At the same time, the *tarbiyyah* [development], upbringing and grooming of the children depend upon the mother. … Because religious and spiritual organizations have neglected involving the women and kept them looking after the children, they [prevented them from] participating in spiritual and religious activities. 50% of the development is thus withdrawn and as a result, 50% of the development of children's character building. I have been focusing right from the beginning on the role of women. She has different roles at different times. She starts as daughter, then becomes a wife, then a mother, then mother-in-law then her grandchildren. At every stage of her life the woman has a very pivotal role in building the organization and society.

Qadri's philosophy on women's involvement is practical: by involving women in the activities of the organization, the attitudes and ideas of women can be cultivated according to the ʿaqīda of the MQI. When the views of women are molded accordingly, the next generation of MQI followers is created. Observing MQI women at the Dallas branch illustrates the effectiveness of this strategy. Older women often bring their daughters or are accompanied by their daughters-in-law and grandchildren, who in turn participate in the weekly Sunday School program or the Minhāj Youth group get-

togethers. The younger generation of MQI members run their own Minhāj Youth Facebook pages, practice recitation of *naʿat* together for the annual *mawlid* program and in the demonstrative display of the success of this strategy, marriages held between young adults raised within this community have been celebrated at the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī auditorium.

Women are especially crucial to attracting and sustaining membership in the MQI. MQI leadership has wisely discerned the effect that especially mothers have in bringing their children towards a particular cause; indeed, the women I conducted fieldwork with often mention the influence of their mothers on their religious beliefs and practices or the desire to influence their children's spiritual development as a key incentive for their serious involvement with the organization. Women's participation is actively encouraged and supported by Qadri because of their authority within the family and impact on society, which in turn creates the next generation of MQI devotees.

With different divisions for the Minhāj Women League, the Minhāj Sisters, and a Women Parliament, Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan features women prominently, involving them in the regular activities of the organization. This strategy brings more people within the folds of membership. The bureaucracy of the MQI allows for titles and separate branches that give women key roles within local branches. Women strengthen those roles through a system of exemplars in which women learn how to be ideal members of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan through the lived model of exemplars within the organization. On the ground, that is, in the physical space of the neo-*khānqāh*, women in positions of leadership serve as immediate exemplars to women who are newer to the organization or center.

Most recently, the MQI fostered women's involvement through the "Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan Women League Organizational Training Camp 2018 for the Implementation of Vision 2025." This training was held over five days to properly train, motivate and support women as they work for and with the organization. Topics addressed include *rafāqat-sāzī*, or membership; *daʿwah* (or spreading the message) and how to evolve from a *rafīq*, or member, into a *dāʿī*, or one who calls others to the cause. Efforts like this demonstrate a vested interest on behalf of the MQI in encouraging women's involvement as a way of expanding the network of members. Women circumvent gender limitations by taking advantage of new media and serve in varying roles across the MQI, including as community organizers, activists, preachers, teachers and speakers.

This chapter will illustrate how women in the MQI use a system of exemplars to function as authorities in the absence of formal religious training and what factors legitimize their authority in the absence of such training. The Dallas MQI branch hosts several women who are exemplars of proper practice, belief and comportment. For example, Riffat Qazi leads a *dars* bi-weekly for women at Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī. Although Baji, or Sister, Riffat is a leader in her own right as president of the MQI Women's League in Dallas, she often cites another woman at the center, Dr. Mayanaz Mian, one of only two women on the Supreme Council of the MQI, as her inspiration. In an interview held on October 13, 2017 in Dallas, Baji Riffat states:

> I get a lot of help from Dr. Mayanaz. She does a lot of work. She does important work like translation of his works, she's been on this mission for a long time. She is on a completely different level, a much higher level than me. I cannot explain to you how she is in my eyes. You know, they say Allah knew the Prophet, and the Prophet knew Allah. It's like that. In my eyes, she understands *Qibla Huzūr's* message.

Dr. Mayanaz is an exemplar for Baji Riffat, a model to be emulated who motivates her in her efforts and work for the organization. In this chapter, I will show how women's success in furthering the influence and spread of the organization is primarily through a system by which women follow and serve as exemplars to others in the community and within their families. My fieldwork shows exemplars to fit a few criteria: first, they are *rafīq*, or lifetime members of the MQI. Secondly, they are actively involved in the organization, whether through recruitment, teaching, organizing activities, or publicizing the MQI in some way. Finally, exemplars help women navigate their spiritual and personal lives to facilitate working for the mission of the organization, that is, to reinstill within Muslims a love for the prophet Muhammad and thus, Allah.

During my fieldwork, I worked with three female exemplars in the MQI: Baji Riffat, a *dars* teacher and President of the Minhāj Women League of Dallas; Dr. Mayanaz, member of the MQI Supreme Council, Social Media/Communications Director of the Dallas branch and community leader; and Dr. Ghazala Qadri, the only other female member of the MQI Supreme Council, a popular speaker and the daughter-in-law of Tahir-ul-Qadri as the wife of his son, Dr. Hassan Mohi-ud-din Qadri, Chairman of the MQI Supreme Council. All three serve the organization in different capacities. Baji Riffat serves as a traditional female religious authority, instructing women in her *dars* classes on Islamic principles according to the teachings of Qadri and using Qurʾan and narrations of *sunna*, hadīth and Islamic history to guide her lessons. Dr. Mayanaz is a leader and community organizer; she is involved in almost every aspect of the day to day

management of the center, often opening the doors of the center for prayer, creating flyers to advertise events, running multiple social media accounts for the center, meeting and communicating with out-of-town MQI visitors and Qadri followers, coordinating the center's Sunday School program, translating Qadri's works and staying in touch with his family. Finally, Dr. Ghazala, or Baji Ghazala as she is often called, is a female figurehead for the MQI. She travels across the world, giving talks and making appearances at women's events. As of April 2018, Baji Ghazala has also been featured on MQI sites with her own hashtag, #TheLadyoftheSubstance [sic]. Although these women could be described as exemplars and role models to other women at MQI centers, the ways in which they function as figures of authority and what factors legitimize their authority vary. Women in the MQI illustrate that modernity has opened the possibility for those outside of the arena of traditional Islamic learning to speak as authorities of Islam.

Figure 64- Ghazala Qadri being referred to as #TheLadyoftheSubstance

Women and Islamic Authority

Academic scholars have drawn attention to the ways in which modernity and technology have broadened the definition of who may or may not speak for Islam.[378] This "democratization of authority" emerged from the introduction of print technology, which gave communities greater access to the Qurʾan, collections of hadīth and texts published

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[378] See Juliane Hammer, *American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More Than a Prayer* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012); Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach, ed., *Women, Leadership and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority* (Boston: Brill, 2016).

by the ʿulemāʾ.[379] Reformist ulemāʾ, in part, created the ability for "literate individuals with little to no exposure to traditional religious learning" to speak on behalf of Islam through a historical move in the early 20th century to base interpretations of Islamic law primarily on Qurʾan, sunnah and hadīth rather than on previous rulings and legal precedent.[380] The democratization of authority has allowed the Minhājian female exemplars I conducted fieldwork with to teach others and to be seen as figures of authority within the organization. These female exemplars may be considered "new religious intellectuals," or those "seen as religious authorities due to their pious reputations, commitment, and ability to connect with lay audiences, as well as a capacity to understand and interpret Islamic texts, often (though, not always) gleaned through part-time instruction obtained outside traditional scholarly institutions."[381] Although Tahir-ul-Qadri 's authority is partially due to his charisma, he is also seen as an authority as a Sufi shaykh , and because of his background in Islamic law and his role as an ʿālim with ijāzāt, or certificates, from other known ʿulemāʾ. The women with whom I have worked do not claim to have an ijāza from any particular scholar; however, as a dars teacher, Baji Riffat watches Qadri's lectures repeatedly and teaches with his verbal permission. Thus, women like Baji Riffat and Dr. Mayanaz have education, but not in the traditional modes that would be classified as top-down certification. In following with historian-anthropologist David Kloos and political scientist Mirjam Künkler, I adopt

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[379] Juliane Hammer, American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More Than a Prayer (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012), 101-102.
[380] Kalmbach, "Introduction," 5.
[381] Kalmbach, "Introduction," 5.

Charles Tilly's definition of certification as "the validation of actors, their performances, and their claims by external authorities."[382] Top-down certification then refers to validation of authority through state and higher-educational institutions, for example, the sort of validation provided to muftis and ʿulemāʾ.[383] A bottom-up certification is then validation to one's authority based on the community's acceptance.[384]

Opportunities do exist within Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan for women's top-down certification. As the organization has developed, it has built institutions for higher education near its headquarters in Lahore, like Minhāj University, which awards bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, as well as Minhāj College for Women, which awards a bachelor's degree. There are also additional opportunities through secondary education, such as the Minhāj College Manchester in the U.K. and according to the Minhāj Education Society, a department instituted to handle all matters relating to education, there are 600 schools spread out across Pakistan although in a list of campuses on the website, 268 campuses are named.[385] The MQI also offers an e-learning initiative in which 13 different courses are available. Although Minhājians have a variety of institutions available at their disposal for achieving certification, these are relatively recent developments in the MQI's larger history and thus, certification through actual

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[382] Charles Tilly, "Repression, Mobilization and Explanation" in *Repression and Mobilization*, eds. C. Davenport, H. Johnston and C. McClurg Mueller (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 222 **quoted in** David Kloos and Mirjam Künkler, "Studying Female Islamic Authority: From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Modes of Certification," *Asian Studies Review*, 40, no. 4 (2016): 488.

[383] David Kloos and Mirjam Künkler, "Studying Female Islamic Authority: From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Modes of Certification," *Asian Studies Review*, 40, no. 4 (2016): 480.

[384] Kloos and Künkler, "Studying Female Islamic Authority,"488.

[385] "Campuses," Minhaj Education Society, accessed September 30, 2018, http://www.minhaj.edu.pk/mes/english/tid/14052/Campuses/.

institutions of higher learning, that is, Minhāj University or Minhāj College for Women, are still primarily availed by the younger generation of MQI followers.

In an interview held in Dallas on July 29, 2017, Dr. Mayanaz explains her journey in gaining spiritual knowledge and understanding by articulating a sense of her own certification:

> [*Shaykh-ul-Islam*] cannot go … to every *idāra [center]* of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, so he prepares people in his *idāras* [of education] on the scholar level. Of course, I'm not on that level. I have not gone to Minhāj University[386] … [but] because I was learning from the lectures, from the books, from self-education or staying in his company, I learned a lot in the company of *Shaykh-ul-Islam* and his family. That has really given me speed- … the speed in knowing things, in learning and knowing what his teachings are, by looking at him as a live model.

Dr. Mayanaz is self-effacing in assessing her own knowledge, but she assigns value to *sohbat*, or company, as a means of attaining certification. She articulates two modes of learning: through *taʿlīm*, or study, and *sohbat*. The ways in which women at the Dallas branch learn from female exemplars, viewing them as live models to emulate, mirror the ways in which Qadri himself is an exemplar.

There is a need for more academic work on Muslim women's authority through bottom-up certification and exemplars because work on religious authority and Islam have often focused primarily on top-down certification.[387] By following exemplars,

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[386] Dr. Mayanaz did however take the Irfan-ul-Qurʾan course, an e-learning course consisting of 63 lectures on Qadri's translation of the Qurʾan, over a period of four months several years ago. She even repeated the course as a way of enhancing her knowledge of Arabic grammar.

[387] See *Women, Leadership and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority*, eds. Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach (Boston: Brill, 2016); Sadaf Ahmed, *Transforming Faith: The Story of Al-Huda and Islamic Revivalism Among Urban Pakistani Women* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009); Juliane Hammer, *American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More Than a Prayer* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012); *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*, eds. Gudrun Krämer and Sabine Schmidtke (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2006).

women may gain bottom-up certification by alluding to adhering to a lived model in the absence of top-down certification. However, this is not to say that there is not work on the ways in which women's authority is established via bottom-up certification. In *In Amma's Healing Room*, Joyce Flueckiger, a scholar of religion, asserts that the authority of Amma, a female Sufi healer in Hyderabad, is contingent upon her efficacy as a healer as well as permission to engage in healing and its related practices from a *pīr*, her husband. These factors grant her authority with and acceptance from the community. Like Amma, female exemplars in Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan cite Qadri's permission to give *dars* or edit his lectures down to size for distribution to legitimize their authority.

In a special issue of the *Asian Studies Review*, an article by Kloos and Künkler, "Studying Female Islamic Authority," prefaces a series of six articles on women and Islamic authority in Indonesia, Singapore and Tajikistan, covering case studies of women ranging from *ʿalīmāt* to female saints to girls in *madrasas*. In one of these articles titled "Models of Achievement," Claire-Marie Hefner conducts an anthropology of a girls' madrasah under the Muhammadīyah, a social reform movement founded by a male preacher.[388] Although the history of the Muhammadiyah, founded in 1912, far precedes the MQI, the movement shares many similarities in structure with the MQI. Like Qadri, the founder of Muhammadīyah, Kyai Hajji Ahmad Dahlan, "recognized the importance of women's involvement in the organization early on."[389] Much like the MQI, the Muhammadīyah has created different groups for women, with Aisyiyah devoted to

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[388] Claire-Marie Hefner, "Models of Achievement: Religious Authority in a Modernist Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review*, 40, no. 4 (2016): 566.
[389] Hefner, 567.

women while the Nasyiatul Aisyiyah is dedicated to girls of school-going age.[390] The Muhammadīyah also run several schools in which women play a key role, much like the MQI. Despite the separate structures for women within the organization, these "groups are considered subservient to the parent organization" in both the MQI and the Muhammadiyah.[391] The goal for both organizations in involving women is the hope that they will foster the next generation of women who will continue their involvement in their respective movements.[392]

As Hefner notes, "programs of mass education, sometimes fostered by nationalist movements in post-colonial countries but also promoted by Islamic organizations themselves, created more opportunities for greater "popular" participation in religious discussion and association and a portion of that participation involved women."[393] As illustrated in Chapter 3, the MQI emerged out of a particular historical context in Pakistan and this sort of program within the MQI allows women to serve as religious authorities without traditional education in the mode of madrasahs.

Despite the similarities between the MQI and the Muhammadīyah, none of the women I encountered during my fieldwork were formally trained in MQI schools or universities. Hefner's study of female students at a Muhammadīyah madrasa in Indonesia finds that "education, employment, respectability, family, courtship, and marriage patterns all come into play in the establishment of women's standing."[394] While women

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[390] Hefner, 568.
[391] Hefner, 567.
[392] Hefner, 570.
[393] Hefner, 578.
[394] Hefner, 578.

who teach in the schools studied by Hefner are often trained in the tradition of their parent organizations, this is a supplemental factor in the authority of Minhājian women. As an organization much younger than the Muhammadīyah, formal religious training rarely factors into the religious authority of women in established in the MQI. While female exemplars choose to avail opportunities in e-learning by taking courses based on Qadri's Qurʾanic translation, *Irfān-ul-Qurʾan* (*Mystical Knowledge of the Qurʿan*), and in *fiqh,* or Islamic jurisprudence, and *tajwīd*, or pronunciation of the Qurʾan, they do this after becoming members of the MQI. Therefore, while education is a factor that contributes to women's authority in the movement, it is not the primary factor. Women by far emphasize a sort of informal religious training that results from the heart being fully persuaded that Qadri is *Shaykh-ul-Islam*. Minhājian exemplars refer to God's will and God's plan and a sense that God led them to the right places or the right people at the right time, resulting in them following Qadri and becoming members of the MQI. Their strong belief in the mission of the movement and the teachings of Qadri mean that they watch and re-watch his lectures, listen to his CDs in the car, and read his books. This informal training through the dedicated self-pursuit of knowledge, dedication and their family background in this religious tradition are the primary legitimizing factors used for bottom-up certification to establish women's authority in the movement.

In "Studying Female Islamic Authority: From Top-Down to Bottom-Up Modes of Certification," authors Kloos and Künkler draw attention to the lack of case studies that answer the questions:

> How do communities react to women functioning as religious leaders? What modes of female religious authority are more likely to be accepted than others

(providing counselling versus leading prayer, for example)? What modes are actively being encouraged? What patterns and local variations can be discerned in bottom-up processes of certification? Are genealogical characteristics (stemming from a locally recognised [sic] *‘ulamā* family) or personal charisma sometimes more important than expertise in *fiqh* in order to gathering a following, for example? Finally, how do different modes of certification interact with other factors relevant to the production of religious authority, including gender, class, affiliation with particular political or religious groups and transnational connections?[395]

These are the questions that this chapter will try to answer through my fieldwork with female exemplars in the MQI. Mapping the variety of ritual practice that occurs in an American branch of a Sufi transnational organization, this chapter will show how women claim authority in practice by serving as exemplars and/or exhibiting ritual expertise and a concern with orthodoxy in their religious practices. During my fieldwork from December 2016 until April of 2018, I have been able to engage in participant observation on two Minhāj Women's League *mawlid*s as well as numerous ladies *dars* gatherings and other ritual events at which female leaders in the MQI serve as exemplars for the women they teach and with whom they interact.

Exemplars within the MQI and the Islamic Tradition

In her chapter "Exemplars and Rules," Caroline Humphrey's anthropological study in Mongolia emphasizes cultivating the self through the discourse of exemplars in following rules.[396] Humphrey explicitly connects the idea of an exemplar with a teacher, someone who has "advanced and improved him- or herself in relation to some moral

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[395] Kloos and Künkler, "Studying Female Islamic Authority," 480.
[396] Caroline Humphrey, "Exemplars and Rules: Aspects of the discourse of moralities in Mongolia," in *The Ethnography of Moralities*, ed. Signe Howell (London: Routledge, 1997) 32-43.

principle. In the case of religious people, behind the teacher there may lie a saint or god, to whose qualities the teacher also aspires."[397] In *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shiʿism*, Karen Ruffle outlines the "hero(in)es of the *ahl-e-bait*" as exemplars, illustrating how narratives bring these personalities to life for those who listen to them and transform them "into 'real' people-imitable saints and socio-ethical exemplars- aspects of whose model devotees can aspire to cultivate."[398] The women of the *ahl-e-bait* serve as models "for Shiʿi women to contribute to society through religious, educational, social service and legal professions … [while compelling them] to be good wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters."[399] Women of the *ahl-e-bait* are seen as exemplars but Minhājian women distinguish between a *paikar*, a model, and that model's *kirdār*, or role. Women of the *ahl-e-bait* are *paikar* of a particular *kirdār*, and the exemplar that women are urged to follow, whether Fatima, Zaynab, or some other female relative of the Prophet's, depends upon the needs of that particular time. However, both the prophet Muhammad and the person through whom his power is distributed, in this case, Qadri, are admired as central exemplars in all circumstances. Women take on female exemplars in the local MQI branches in order to learn through lived experience how best to emulate Qadri and live life like the prophet Muhammad, as far as they are able. I illustrate this system in the diagram labeled Figure 65 below. The power plant signifies Allah's unharnessed power, which is then transmitted to the prophet Muhammad,

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[397] Humphrey, 34-35.

[398] Karen Ruffle, *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shiʿism* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 17.

[399] Ruffle, 61-62.

symbolized through the high voltage transmission lines.[400] The guidance and power is then distributed, first through substations, which signify saints. In this case, Qadri is the primary substation for MQI members.[401] Qadri then transmits this energy to his followers, and the most dedicated exemplars are signified through low-voltage transmission lines. They influence women who then bring their families to fulfill the mission of the MQI.
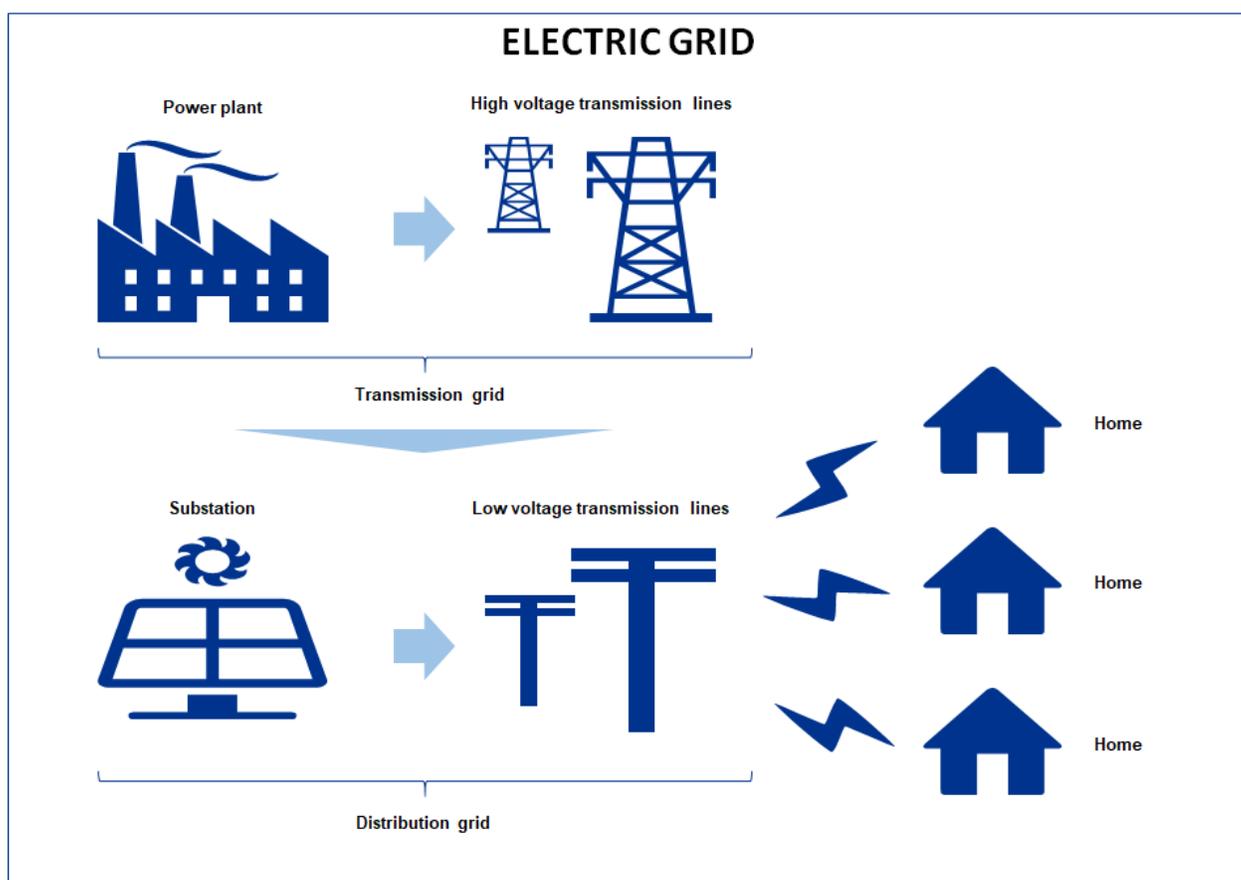
Figure 65- Allah's energy transmitted to the Prophet, the Prophet transmits to saints, saints transmit knowledge to exemplars who influence women to bring their families to work for the mission.

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[400] These could potentially signify other prophets who have received guidance directly from Allah, but the prophet Muhammad is the ultimate prophet as the one who is last in a line of prophets.
[401] Another "substation" accepted by MQI members would be ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jilānī for example, however, Qadri is the figure who distributes knowledge to his members.

Women who come to learn from MQI female leadership view their teachers as exemplary models insofar as they share the same ideas regarding the correct Islamic practice and creed. However, MQI teachers also constantly emphasize that they are true devotees of Tahir-ul-Qadri and his mission and that their knowledge and abilities may all be attributed to his instruction. Many of the attendees at the center have a similar *ʿaqīda*, part of which includes celebrating the *mawlid*. Although the MQI is responsible for organizing and running events at the center, several members of the community who are not explicitly affiliated with the MQI are attracted to the center based on religious practices, like *mawlid*, that often are not celebrated or are openly discouraged by other mosques and Muslim communities in the greater Dallas area. Thus, events like this attract members of the wider Muslim community to the center, including many attendees who are not followers of Tahir-ul-Qadri. However, MQI teachers hope that their students, like them, become followers of Qadri and his teachings.

Women at the center witness the effect of Qadri's teachings firsthand through their engagement with exemplars. Most of the women who come to the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī center are often unable to meet with Qadri personally because he is rarely able to visit the center and second, because their gender prevents them from having the same close access to Qadri as men do. In all of my interactions with her, Dr. Mayanaz emphasized *sohbat*, experience, and *adab*, or etiquette and behavior, above simple *taʿlīm* (education). These modes of learning are necessarily through interaction and observation of exemplars. James Laidlaw also emphasizes that "people grasp and understand moral

values…through their engagement with exemplars."[402] Rather than obeying a systematic code of rules or adhering to a Geertzian sense of "shared culture,"[403] people acquire and develop virtues by aligning themselves with one or more exemplars. My fieldwork with the MQI illustrates this principle, with attendees of the center engaging with exemplars at the local level through teachers and community leaders, while aspiring to the standards upheld by their central exemplar, Tahir-ul-Qadri. I call Qadri the central exemplar because the prophet Muhammad is the ultimate exemplar. However, as the electricity metaphor conveyed, it is the pīr who makes the raw power accessible.

To take this metaphor a step further, however, I argue that women in the MQI are the electricity lines that distribute the power into individual homes. MQI members, who call themselves *kārkunān*, or workers for the cause, see Qadri as their shaykh and do not discursively claim the feminist label; however, their roles within the organization, their families and even their discourse during women's *dars* embody ideals that put women at the forefront of a movement that calls for a religious and political revolution. Female MQI leaders often emphasize womanhood as giving them a distinct advantage in society and specifically within this movement. Their role as those who spread Qadri's mission reinforces this belief.

Those who come to the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī center are primarily people who share the same *ʿaqīda* as those who run the center. The goal of the leadership is thus to bring followers of the same Barelwī creed towards joining the movement; they often

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[402] James Laidlaw, *The Subject of Virtue: An Anthropology of Ethics and Freedom* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 87.
[403] Laidlaw, 87.

encourage the audience to take the next step of becoming a member of MQI, and thus,

take on Tahir-ul-Qadri as their central exemplar. Women promote membership gradually

but explicitly by encouraging the purchase of books written by Qadri, distributing CDs of

his speeches, referencing his name when teaching material, and presenting videos of his

talks at major events. The women's *dars* sermons are crafted after watching Qadri's

lectures repeatedly and when celebrations like the *mawlid* are commenced with the

recitation of Qurʾan, the verses are always interpreted using Qadri's translation of the

Qurʾan. Other major events occur around important days involving Qadri, such as the

celebration of Founder's Day on February 19th, Qadri's birthday.

Female leaders are crucial to the functioning of the center and the expansion of

the MQI in the U.S. They serve as exemplars to the center by displaying moral leadership

which often spreads to their families and social circles. Despite their role at the Jameʿ

Hasan al-Basrī center, female MQI leaders do not discursively claim the feminist label;

indeed, most consistently attribute their knowledge to Qadri, who serves as the central

exemplar for the organization. This is further illustrated by how Qadri's followers refer to

him as *Qibla Huzūr*, reflecting the extent to which followers see Qadri as a moral compass

for their lives. The three different women I conducted fieldwork with, Dr. Mayanaz, Dr.

Ghazala and Baji Riffat, recall their involvement with Tahir-ul-Qadri and the MQI as a

matter of fate, a miraculous encounter, or a final destination on a path to find the truth

with regards to religious belief.

Dr. Mayanaz: Community Organizer, Live Model

I was first introduced to Dr. Mayanaz in 2013 at the Sirat-e-Rasool Conference. At

the time, I had been attending some Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan events in Atlanta, attending their

Ladies *Mawlid* Conference in 2011 and taking part in women's *dars* gatherings, so the

women in the budding branch there were aware of my interest in the movement. After

years of effort on the part of his followers there, Qadri finally agreed to make an

appearance in Atlanta and the Sirat-e-Rasool Conference was held on October 1, 2013.

Dr. Mayanaz had traveled to Atlanta for this conference from Dallas, and I was introduced

to her as the person in charge of the Dallas center, the most active MQI branch in the U.S.

Although her husband is also quite active, Dr. Mayanaz is the clear leader at Jameʿ Hasan

al-Basrī; she was responsible for instituting Baji Riffat as the President of the MWL in

Dallas, and at any given event, her presence is palpable as she scurries from room to

room, setting up, delegating tasks and greeting those who enter the center. This is despite

her hesitancy to claim any official titles at the branch or otherwise; when pressed, she

responds that she is technically the Social Media/Communications Director of the Dallas

branch. However, it is obvious she assumes far more duties than those responsibilities

associated with documenting the day-to-day activities at the center. The best way to

describe her is as a community organizer; Dr. Mayanaz works hard to facilitate all events

and activities at the center, expand the size of the current community while maintaining

ties and bonds of kinship that ensure the community remains tight-knit at the same time.

Dr. Mayanaz was instrumental in facilitating my fieldwork events, responding to

me immediately when I had a question or directing me to someone who could better

help. She is a practicing psychiatrist and manages to balance her professional work and her family life as the mother of three children with her incredibly active position at the Dallas branch. On any given weekend, you can see Dr. Mayanaz rushing from room to room to organize an event or meet with women, cooking or plating food to give to attendees after an event or taking pictures of events to document on social media, which she usually does the same evening. Despite her active role, finding a picture of her on any of the MQI websites is very difficult because she is always behind the camera as the Director of Social Media/Communications for the center. When asked how she manages everything, Dr. Mayanaz asserts that she puts in her full effort with her job or when she's doing housework so that Allah gives her *barkat*, or blessings, in her work with the MQI.

I engaged in participant observation at the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī center during *dars* lessons, *mawlids* and other ritual celebrations throughout the year from December 2016 until April of 2018, holding specific interviews with Dr. Mayanaz in July of 2017 and later in April of 2018 in the administrative office of the center in Dallas. The thoughts and life history detailed recounted here stem from those interviews. Despite her obviously crucial role in organizing the MQI community, when asked about whether she saw herself as a leader, Dr. Mayanaz calls herself a "*kārkun*," or a worker, for Qadri and Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan instead. According to Dr. Mayanaz, she has been following Qadri since around 2006 when she first listened to his lectures on QTV, or Qurʾan Television, a subscription only television channel. She even remembers that the very first lecture she heard was about *tahārat*, or purification, recalling that "her heart [became] more inclined just after one lecture," calling her to listen to it again and again. Dr. Mayanaz and her husband, Dr.

Mansoor, both became active followers of Qadri through a journey of listening to different scholars and not feeling a change. Once the couple started following Qadri, they set off on a series of efforts to learn more about the organization and bring others to the same path. Dr. Mansoor had the opportunity to meet Qadri in Canada in the middle of 2006, and after receiving Qadri's permission, the couple started actively mailing CDs of his lectures across the United States to interested followers reaching across 27 states in 2007.[404] This effort alone continued for two to three years, according to Dr. Mayanaz, during which Qadri visited the home of the Mians for the first time in 2008.[405] For the next two to three years, from 2009-2011, Dr. Mayanaz and her husband recorded and created CDs of Qadri's lectures, distributing them locally through the Mobile Minhāj effort mentioned in Chapter 4. Dedicating herself to the cause of inviting more people to the MQI, Dr. Mayanaz broadened her network of friends and acquaintances to try and invite people to *halaqa-e-durūd* held at her home, and to convince others to hold similar events at their home, where Mobile Minhāj would assist with projecting online or live lectures from scholars in Pakistan.[406] Although she recalls sometimes she would invite 10 people to her home and only two would show up, her dedication to growing the network of people who would willingly host and attend such events was successful to the extent that

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[404] They did this as Dr. Mayanaz states *fī sabīlillah*, or for the sake of Allah, spending their own funds for the cause. Dr. Mayanaz recalls that initially the efforts cost them $500-600 a month, later the costs went up threefold and Qadri suggested charging $25 a year for 12 CDs.

[405] They continued sending out CDs for another two years afterward, but this was in addition to other efforts on the ground locally.

[406] *Halaqa-e-durood* are traditionally called *durūd kā khatm;* perhaps as part of their efforts to present a global Islamic appeal, the MQI avoid terminology native to South Asia, preferring Arabic expressions instead. These gatherings commence with recitation of the Qurʾan and proceed with attendees using containers full of beads or seeds to count the number of times they have read *durūd*, or salutations upon the prophet Muhammad.

she says every weekend would be booked three months in advance and by the end of the Mobile Minhāj effort, they had held more than 75 lectures.

After growing their network locally in Dallas, the Mians spent 2010 to 2012 organizing a local MQI community. They held quarterly meetings for those who had signed up to be Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan members. Agendas were printed, and minutes were distributed so that they could organize as a community to "spread our work." This group helped with the distribution of CDs, discussed the work of Qadri and his current global activities and planned local events, particularly a yearly *mawlid* celebration that was held in conjunction with the local Shīʿa and Ismāʿīlī communities of Dallas.

During an April 2018 interview, Dr. Mayanaz attributes this cooperation with different religious communities to two factors: first, there was a financial incentive. Because the *mawlid* was held in a large conference center and the costs ran around $20,000 a year, it made fiscal sense to cooperate with other interested groups. She noted, however, that their own religious community, referred to as Jamāʿat Ahl-e-Sunnat, contributed the most. Secondly, despite their religious differences, Dr. Mayanaz emphasized "Our common ground is *mawlid*. That's why we were together: we all celebrate *mawlid*. We got permission from *Shaykh-ul-Islam* [to cooperate with these two communities]. That's how we spread [and] that's how people got to know us [in Dallas]." In September of 2013, they were finally able to purchase the building used to house Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī and regular services offered today commenced at the center in November of 2014.

Thus, Dr. Mayanaz has been instrumental and indispensable in creating an MQI community and center from the ground up, serving as an exemplar to not only local women in Dallas, but to Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan women all over the world. Dr. Mayanaz updates the social media sites of the Dallas branch to bring others to the same calling; not only does she run Whatsapp groups that notify followers of events, but as she recalls in an interview from April 2018, she personally texts women because "it makes them feel special." She plays an integral role on a global scale as well, translating doctrinal works and praise poetry of the prophet Muhammad written by Qadri and is often credited for her efforts. She also helped run the global MQI Twitter page during the crucial Long March era, painstakingly posting key parts of Qadri's speeches line by line. Dr. Mayanaz also founded the "Clarification of Propaganda Against Qadri" Tumblr page during this time, since criticism was likely at a high during this point in Qadri's career.

Figure 66- A rare photo of Dr. Mayanaz (2nd from left in the first row) at the inaugural ceremony of the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī Center in 2014

Dr. Mayanaz is a devoted *kārkun* and she fits work and family obligations around her devotion to the mission and responsibilities at the center rather than the other way around. In following with Laidlaw's concept of attaining moral virtues by engaging with exemplars, Dr. Mayanaz prioritizes being in the company of Qadri to acquire and develop *adab* over attaining book knowledge in an interview from July 2017:

> So [being around him and witnessing his example has] helped me more than just reading the books. Book reading is the knowledge. You're gaining knowledge because without the knowledge, you can't live on just experiencing. One of the *buzurg* (respected elders) spent 18 years learning the reverence and only two years learning the knowledge, and after that, he wished he could have spent those 20 years in the company learning *adab*.

Taʿlīm, study, or book knowledge as Dr. Mayanaz calls it, as accessible to almost everyone at the center. What sets Dr. Mayanaz apart from other devoted Minhājians at the Dallas branch and what gives her bottom-up certification is her access to Qadri and his family. She went on *umrah*, or the optional pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, with the family of Qadri. Dr. Mayanaz is aware of their likes and dislikes, and in the initial stages of my research, I was referred to her as someone who could facilitate my fieldwork. This has been an understatement, as Dr. Mayanaz set up interviews for me and introduced me to people in the MQI network. Her husband often visits Qadri and his family in Toronto, attending the birthday celebration of Qadri on February 19th. Her sons have spent time with the family of Qadri, attended Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan's Itikaf City, a spiritual training camp that goes on for the last ten days of Ramadan, and taken an interest in e-learning *naʿat* recitation courses; her daughter balances medical school with leading the girls of the center's Minhāj Youth League. Thus, Dr. Mayanaz has not only brought her family into the MQI, but an entire community. Her success is an example of how women work within the organization to expand its network within the confines of traditional norms and recommendations of MQI leadership; that is, with the permission and support of their husbands.

Baji Riffat- Teaching Dars that Touches the Heart

Baji Riffat leads and teaches the *dars* group and serves as the Dallas Minhāj Women League President. She is a mother of four, has a full-time job, and helps care for her elderly mother; her sister, brother, and grown children and their families all live in the area, so she works hard to balance familial responsibilities with her devotion to the

movement. Her *dars* lessons are crafted with Qadri's permission and after hours of watching his lectures. Although both Baji Riffat and Dr. Mayanaz are faithful *kārkuns*, their personalities are quite the opposite. Baji Riffat's level of spiritual knowledge and devotion to her faith is evident, but she is always hesitant to own that knowledge, while Dr. Mayanaz exudes more confidence. At every *dars*, she prays for Allah to allow the truth to escape her lips, emphasizing that all errors were her own and all that is good is from Allah and by the grace of her shaykh. She is soft-spoken, always smiling, but emotional and resolute when the topic of Qadri is broached, often getting tears in her eyes when she speaks about the influence he has had in her religious belief and practice.

I attended Baji Riffat's dars lessons throughout my period of fieldwork. I also sat down for formal interviews held over a few sessions at the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī center in October of 2017 to hear her thoughts about the MQI, Qadri and to hear her recount her own life history. After continuously praying to have the chance to move to Dallas, Baji Riffat moved here in 1993 with her family looking to take advantage of the large local mosque where she could take her children to learn more about Islam. Her mother moved here later, and her sister lives in Dallas as well. Baji Riffat recalls that her mother always taught her to maintain two additional religious practices, reciting *durūd*, or praise of the Prophet Muhammad, and reciting the *kalima*, or the declaration of Islamic faith. Baji Riffat then started the practice of having *halaqa-e-durūd* at her home, inviting local ladies from the neighborhood to take part. She started learning more about Qadri through her mother, who watched his lectures on QTV and called Baji Riffat to listen to them as well.

During an interview held on October 13, 2017, Baji Riffat recalls that her brother

used to attend Qadri's lectures when she lived in Pakistan and her mother had a shaykh

there as well, so she claims she "was born into this [*aqīda].*" Even though her mother's

shaykh in Pakistan was someone other than Qadri, Baji Riffat calls attention to this in

order to make her mother's Sufi affiliation explicit. In her book, *In Amma's Healing Room*,

Joyce Flueckiger conducts fieldwork with a female Sufi healer in Hyderabad; however,

linguistic distinctions mean that Amma never calls herself Sufi.[407] Flueckiger therefore

outlines religious practices that indicate Sufi affiliation in the context of South Asia:

> These practices include honoring the founding saints of various established Sufi orders/lineage (*silsilā*, such as Qadiri, Chishti, etc.), celebration of the death anniversary of a founding lineage saint, the centrality of the master-disciple [*pīr-murīd*] relationship through which spiritual knowledge is transmitted, the absolute authority of the *pīr*, articulation of the importance of the distinction between inner and outer meanings of certain phenomena (esoteric and exoteric knowledge) and the importance of the interior life, the practice of *zikr*, participation in *samā* [musical assemblies of devotional singing], and acknowledgment of the spiritual significance of dreams and illness/healing.[408]

Among these practices, the one that Flueckiger found the best indicator of "whether or

not someone participates in Sufi practices" was whether they had a *pīr* or shaykh.[409]

However, the MQI women accept all of the practices mentioned by Flueckiger as part of

their world-view.

Baji Riffat's mother offered to bring back his books for her during a trip back to

Pakistan in 2008 in which she would try to meet Qadri personally. Riffat Baji recalls the

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[407] Flueckiger, 31.
[408] Flueckiger, 31.
[409] Flueckiger 31.

fortuitous way she was able to meet Qadri here in Dallas as her mother had to fly across the world to meet him:

> [A friend][410] came to my house one time with my other friends. And she saw I had plastic chairs …. so [she said] 'I need a chair, there's somebody coming to my house and they have a back problem, so they could sit on that. I said do you mind if I ask who's coming? She said, 'I don't know if you know him or not.' I said, 'I don't know, tell me. So, she said ...that Qadri is coming to my house. I said, 'Oh my God, he is coming to your house? … I'm not giving you that chair unless you invite me!'

Baji Riffat attributes the way that she met Qadri and started along this path to "Allah's will and my prayers and how I want to be closer to His *Rasūl* [Messenger] and Allah." Although she reads Qadri's books, listens to his lectures, is an active member of the MQI and teaches *dars* courses, Baji Riffat does not merely rely on her knowledge, but often uses her heart to guide her towards the right decisions. When discussing how she knows she has chosen the right person to follow, she says:

> We haven't seen Allah. We haven't seen the Prophet, and we haven't seen his Companions. … You follow those who love Him dearly and deeply, so I feel like I've seen in [Qadri] that light that he is the right path and his love of the Prophet and Allah is pure. He cannot tell me that himself, [but] his eyes, his actions, his words give me that sense that there is Allah and the Prophet.

She discusses how the heart plays a role in the way she teaches, emphasizing *qawl* and *fiʿal*, or words and actions, stating that it is how Qadri's words and actions align with one another that attracts her to his teachings. This affects how she serves as an exemplar in her capacity as a *dars* teacher. She states, "When I give you lectures, I'm always asking myself, do I implement this? Do I do this? Do I think like this? […] Because I think if I tell you to do something, and if I am not following it myself, it's not going to hit your heart."

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[410] The friend turned out to be a childhood friend of Dr. Mayanaz, which was narrated as a fortuitous twist of fate.

Baji Riffat also connects this need to coordinate words and actions as a necessary measure to mold virtuous children. She insists all her children care for and listen to her; however, her youngest child, who is significantly younger than her siblings, attended Islamic school, took part in the MQI's Al-Hidayah spiritual retreat, is a leader amongst the Dallas branch's Minhāj Youth League, and according to Baji Riffat, understands more than she does about ʿaqīda and how to explain concepts to her siblings. She attributes this difference to her own change in understanding between the time she raised her elder children and her youngest. Baji Riffat speaks often of her role within the broader family, claiming it her duty to fulfill the obligations due upon her children, her husband, and her mother. She sees the role of women within the family as fulfilling a vital part of the Prophet's mission:

> If we don't give this [religious] training to mothers--if I don't train my daughter [and say] "Tomorrow, you will have your own children; what sort of upbringing will you give them?" … The mission of my Prophet was to bring people closer to Allah. If I them [my children] to lie, to steal, or if I don't admonish them for these things; if I teach them to remain filthy, what will happen is that [I will] produce an immoral person for society. We won't have an ethical *umma* [community]. If my mission is to put my children on the path of what Allah and His Messenger have told us, first I have to walk that path.

Although women in Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan do not often explicitly challenge patriarchal norms, they work within the system of the organization and their own families to embody feminist ideals and refer to female moral exemplars within the Islamic tradition. During the *dars* that followed the MQI's commemoration of the 10th of Muharram, Baji Riffat broached the topic of Hussain's martyrdom. Diverging from the previous week's event, however, she also went on to focus on the role of women in Karbala, but more specifically,

focusing on the personality of Zaynab, the sister of Hussain who accompanied him. During

this *dars* held at the Jameˁ Hasan al-Basrī center on October 7, 2017, she says:

> Zaynab became the recognized example of someone who even today, there never
> existed nor will there ever exist her equal. We have been discussing the
> importance of the *shahādat [martyrdom]* of Imam Hussain, and the role that his
> sacrifice played in the history of mankind. If we want to understand the role of
> women, however, we need to look at the role that Zaynab has played. … Just close
> your eyes and imagine that time. …. She had to witness the loss of her family
> members, corpses everywhere, covered with dirt and dust, the clothes of these
> pious women were ripped, and still, she gathered the courage to march forward.
> … From this story, we get the message of what the role of a woman should be.

Baji Riffat draws attention to the role of women, generally overshadowed by men in the

Karbala narrative. While the exemplar for men, Hussain, represents sacrifice, Zaynab is

marked by the qualities of bravery and courage. Baji Riffat goes on at the *dars* to define

three types of roles women can play:

> Women have three possible roles. The first is the one that men enforce upon us.
> This is the role where we just take care of his children, his family, his house, his
> relatives and the people he meets with. The next is that of Western women. If you
> see what's going on in the West, society has given them freedom and in return,
> society turns them into their playthings. Everyone speaks of women's freedom but
> there are no real actions, nothing is being done or discussed about what rights
> they should have. It's just nothing. The final role is that of Zaynab's, the
> granddaughter of the Prophet, what the role of a Muslim woman should be.
> Zaynab, whose scarf was snatched, teaches us the lesson of patience and
> steadfastness. … She was forbearing, she was steadfast; she didn't cry, or self-
> flagellate, or scream or yell. Instead, she stepped out with the sick and wounded
> of her family.

Baji Riffat thus outlines three paths: women can be fully dependent on men, they can be

completely independent from men, or they may adopt Zaynab's role, which is framed as

the ideal and middle path, a role that embraces the best parts of the other two options

that are otherwise extreme. Although Zaynab is suggested as the ideal role for women,

Baji Riffat goes on to mention other exemplars that Muslim women may adopt, depending on the situation:

> [Zaynab's] mother, Fātima, was the very *paikar* [image] of modesty; if just one of her hairs came into view from behind her veil, the sun would not even rise out of respect! … Now taking both of these models [of Zaynab and Fatima], we learn that when we are in a *Mustafavī* era, we adopt the role of Fatima. [This is] during times where women are given so much respect that the sun does not rise out of respect when a lock of hair emerges by mistake, when the instructions of *sharīʿa* [are being followed] around you, then you should adopt the role of Fatima. But when you see an era of Yazīd, where there is a Yazīdī government, women should adopt the position of Zaynab; [that is,] we must firmly contest it!

Fātima and Zaynab are contrasted by their actions and those actions were justified according to the time that they were living in. The era in which Mustafa, or the prophet Muhammad, was the ruler, women must adhere to rules of modesty. The idea of modesty with regards to Fatima does not apply simply to clothing or covering of the head, but extends to the detection of women in the public sphere:

> This is the meaning I was able to derive from these lessons [of Muslim female exemplars]: when the time called for it, even the exposed hair of the daughter of the Prophet was not tolerated by Allah. Women must fulfill that role. Now, when we are told about the ruling of *pardah,* we often hear "No, the veil of the eyes should be sound." No! Understand the message that Fatima was the exemplar of! When [the Prophet] received the ruling that Allah said that women should cover their head, they should hide their adornments, and when they walk, the sound of their feet on the ground should not betray their presence of their body, we must adopt that role. But at the same time, [we must assume] the role that Zaynab realized for her religion. If you must stand up for your religion and your veils are snatched, you should be steadfast and forbearing! You must rally and come out with your children, your sons and your husbands!

Fatima and Zaynab are consistently referred to in terms of the role they have played in Islamic history. They serve as a *paikar*, an image or model that women must emulate.

However, these exemplars are models of a particular *kirdār*, or role. Baji Riffat goes on further to implore women to self-reflect and analyze their own roles in society through the example of women in the Prophet's family:

> These women of heaven, without whose permission us women cannot even enter, they are our masters. If we look at ourselves today, do we play the same role as them? … Are we even worthy of asking Fatima for her permission to enter heaven? Yes, I mention Fatima! Fatima who, when the Day of Judgment occurs, will be in a crowd of 70,000 *huzūron* [nobles] and all of humanity, whether they were good or bad, will bow before her! This is how much she will be honored. … Khadija initiated this movement, she gave women importance [and established the idea] that women are not the opponents of men but rather, we are meant to stand with them. …The lesson that Khadīja taught was the position realized by Zaynab.

Although Baji Riffat also mentions Fatima and Khadija as exemplars, it is apparent that she identifies Zaynab as the ideal exemplar for women from among women in the *ahl-e-bait*. She is distinguished by her devotion to her family as well as her willingness to challenge oppression. The activities of the MQI illustrate their belief that we currently live in a Yazīdī era where injustice must be contested, and thus women are implored by Baji Riffat to adapt Zaynab as a *paikar*:

> … We were not made to be compared to men, we were made to stand side by side with them. Whatever role we want to adopt, the choice is ours. … And we can only get where we want to be when we become exemplars of the role that Zaynab played.
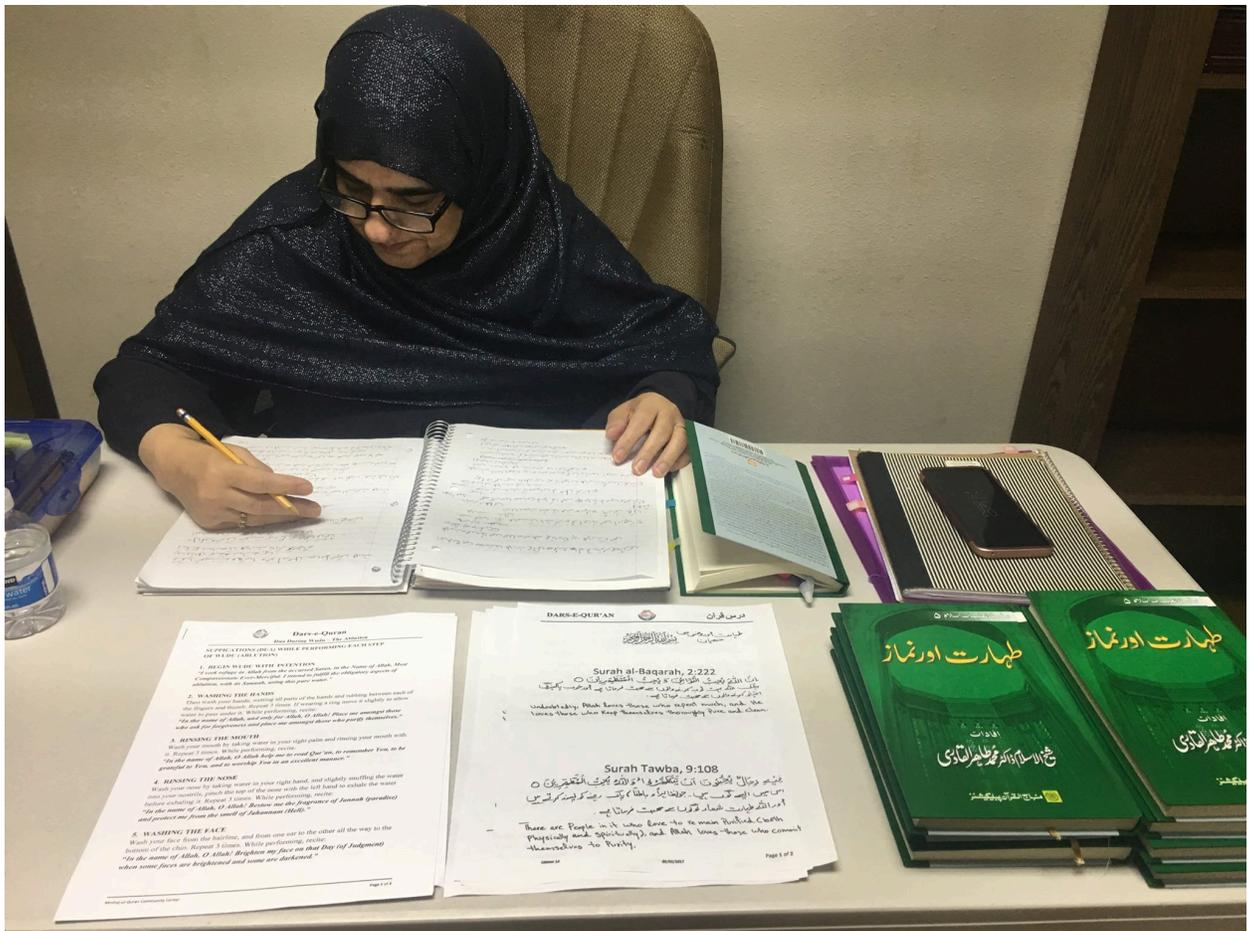
Figure 67- Baji Riffat reviewing her notes before a dars

During the *dars*, Baji Riffat acknowledges Hussain's significance in the Karbala massacre but she also uses the opportunity to highlight a dimension which was left out of the previous week's event and often underemphasized in the popular narrative. Wanting women to understand the importance of Zaynab as a Muslim female exemplar, she stresses her role in standing up for the truth and gathering her community to challenge injustice. Baji Riffat inspires the women she teaches to aspire to the example set by Zaynab. She does not espouse feminist ideology explicitly, discouraging women from seeking the same goals as Western feminists. Women and men must work side by side, and by citing the example of Western women, she alludes to the dangers of adopting a

feminist vocabulary without analyzing what has been lost and what has been gained in the struggle for women's equality. Baji Riffat thus scrutinizes this struggle, advocating cooperation between men and women rather than "comparison."

Dr. Ghazala Qadri- The Daughter of the Movement, a Lady of Substance

The most visible and widely known woman in the MQI movement is Dr. Ghazala Qadri, the daughter-in-law of Tahir-ul-Qadri and wife of his younger son, Hassan Mohi-ud-Din Qadri. Known to women within Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan as "Baji Ghazala," she was born and raised in the U.K., and has the highest position within the organization as a woman. Having shared a meal and spoken with her for over two hours, her role as a leader does not come as a surprise. First, she is one of the few people in Qadri's intimate circle of companions. As an immediate family member, she has access to him in private quarters, giving her detailed knowledge of his personal habits, as evidenced by the essay she wrote about him referenced in chapter three. Her ability to captivate an audience, her high level of education through a secular institution, and her proximity to Qadri all generate a great deal of admiration for her on the part of Minhājian women. As an exemplar to other women in the MQI, her role as a female religious authority is primarily due not to her level of religious instruction, but her connection to this pious family and her charisma as a speaker.

Figure 68- Baji Ghazala speaking on the topic of Woman's Identity and University Life at Minhāj University on April 20, 2018

Through the efforts of Dr. Mayanaz, I was fortunate enough to be granted an interview held on January 20, 2018 with Baji Ghazala. During this interview, from which all of the information here stems, I asked her questions about the MQI's goals and setup, her understanding of practices and beliefs that have been criticized by the outside community, and also to recount her life history. Baji Ghazala is an effective speaker, never wandering off topic or losing focus of the question asked. She has a kind manner about her and spoke with a sense of humility, answering my questions patiently and acknowledging when she might need to contact me later about an answer. Having studied law and obtained a Ph.D. in Theology and Religion, she has an intimate knowledge not only of the MQI, but also of the Western academic system. Her familiarity and detailed

knowledge of Qadri and the MQI and its history, however, cannot be attributed simply to her role as Qadri's daughter-in-law and thus as a member of his intimate circle; it was her upbringing and her parents' influence, specifically that of her mother, that led her towards Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan initially.

Figure 69- Baji Ghazala fourth from the left) on the occasion of being awarded her PhD in 2017

In her diasporic community in Southampton in the U.K., Baji Ghazala was one of the first women to go to university. It was common when she was growing up for women to do their O levels, an exam taken at the end of 11th grade, or A levels, taken at the end of grade 13, the year until which secondary education is now compulsory. Afterwards, women would simply get a job or get married. However, Baji Ghazala's parents

encouraged her to "be something [and] do something" and she went on to study law. As a child, she grew up seeing her parents, especially her mother, searching for "some kind of guidance about … the true Islam." Her parents joined various Islamic organizations with different ʿaqīdas, however, always felt "something lacking." In 1985, her mother was given a cassette tape with a lecture from a then up-and-coming scholar, Professor Tahir-ul-Qadri. In the same way that Dr. Mayanaz recalled being mesmerized by her first Qadri lecture, Baji Ghazala recalls that her parents "listened to it over and over again," even traveling three hours from Southampton to purchase new tapes after hearing a man in East London sold a collection of Qadri's different lectures.

In my interview with Dr. Ghazala in January of 2018, she echoed the importance of understanding the role of women in Islam as opposed to the role that women often play in Islamic societies. She criticized certain cultural norms in Pakistan while discussing the Pakistani communities that originally immigrated to the UK, contrasting these with the personality of Khadija, the Prophet Muhammad's first wife:

> That was a key thing … getting women involved within--particularly women perhaps who were not born in England, women who had immigrated because of marriage or just through the open visa system in the UK in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, because they came from a very restrictive culture and they maintained their culture. … They wanted to maintain the cultural values of Pakistan, so many were very insular looking and even more restrictive than what it was in Pakistan. … Even if you go to Pakistan now, if you have a mosque in Pakistan, the likelihood of there being a separate ladies mosque … it's just not something that's culturally accepted or seen as necessary, whereas for *Shaykh-ul-Islam*, he says that Khadjiah *radhiAllahu ʿanha*, she was an integral element to the Holy Prophet, she was his support, she was his beacon and she really helped guide him through one of the most tumultuous times of his life, and when I listened a lecture [Qadri] gave … in Denmark on "Women's Role in Islam," I was so shocked …. you know, it's 50/50, we have to work side by side with our brothers and the men of the family, and he very much promoted that.

Baji Ghazala and Baji Riffat both actively encourage Muslim women to cooperate and coordinate with their male peers. These modes of female religious authority are encouraged by referring to female exemplars within the Islamic tradition like Zaynab and Khadijah, women whose narratives are cited as epitomizing support of traditional male authority while refusing to play subordinate roles. Baji Ghazala, Dr. Mayanaz, and Baji Riffat also cooperate and coordinate with the male leaders of the MQI, explicitly rejecting the term feminist while embracing feminist ideals in their work and efforts within the organization. Baji Ghazala is reflective about the authority she has in the organization, discussing it as three different types of authority she holds:

> One is, in the organizational network, mine is an advisory role. I'm in contact with the organizational heads throughout the world, but I don't get involved in local matters because that's not within my jurisdiction. If there is a matter that has not been resolved within the existing mechanisms that we have … it can then come up to me and I can deal with it and then consult … my husband, who is the president of the Minhāj-ul-QurʾanSupreme Council. [That's] if something hasn't been taken care of locally, which is not that often. So, one is an advisory role to advise within the organization itself and within policy matters because I am a member of the Supreme Council so if theres a policy decision being made, I'm in touch with senior heads on policy, on aims, and whats happening.

Baji Ghazala has authority in an advisory role both as a member of the Supreme Council as well as the wife of the head of the Supreme Council, and she consults him on issues that may not be resolved at the local level. She also exhibits authority as a role model or exemplar for women:

> Secondly, an unintended consequence: I know I'm a role model for many sisters. One reason is purely because I happen to be the daughter in law of *Shaykh-ul-Islam*, and that comes as part of the territory. I have to act and behave in a certain way, and I find that's a massive responsibility on my shoulders. I understand that Im a role model for many sisters and I hope to do justice to my position because I'm in a position of authority and I'm in in a position where I do affect others … [through] anything I do, the way I react, the way I speak, and so forth.

Her authority as an exemplar is intimately connected to her relationship with the shaykh as his daughter-in-law. The last role of authority she articulates is bound with her educational and professional qualifications:

> The third [role] hopefully is to educate really. I do travel wherever sisters want, if there is a program, a lecture here in Canada or abroad. Now that my PhD is finished, I'm all free alhumdulillah …but I think people tend to forget, because every member of my household is involved in Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, I do get a lot of demands to go here [or] travel there, and I have to remind them that I'm also a mother, I'm also a wife.

Baji Ghazala's authority is thus bound to her executive position to influence policy within the organization, her connections as an insider with the shaykh, and her educational qualifications to speak on matters of importance in religion, and Dr. Mayanaz and Baji Ghazala have leadership positions in the MQI Supreme Council and maintain contact and coordinate with the male leaders of the organization, including but not limited to Qadri and his sons. Baji Riffat spends hours crafting *dars* lectures to instruct women in her local branch but does so with the permission of Qadri and after carefully modelling her own lessons after his lectures online. As in the narrative related at the beginning of the chapter, Baji Riffat mentions Dr. Mayanaz as a personal model and inspiration. Despite not having any formal religious education through the Minhāj University system, Dr. Mayanaz is respected as an exemplar by other women because of her proximity to Qadri and her dedicated involvement with the center. Furthermore, MQI women express motherhood as a distinct advantage over men in the ability to influence and impact a society.

Motherhood and Traditional Authority in the MQI

Not only do MQI women see their roles as mothers as giving them to ability to bring their own families to the cause of the MQI, but also cite their own mothers as key factors in their own journey towards becoming workers for the mission. As her children grew older, Baji Ghazala's mother worried that her children were not interested in Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan. Baji Ghazala recounts hearing Qadri's lectures on TV, but not finding them "as appealing" because of the high level of the Urdu utilized and the politics around the "Rushdie Affair," and what it meant to be Muslim in the UK at the time. She explained how her mother was instrumental in bringing her towards the message of Qadri and the MQI:

> What my mom would begin to do, quite cleverly actually … is that when she would watch a lecture or video and there was a particularly beautiful part where *Shaykh-ul-Islam* was saying something where you would stop and listen, she would stop the recording there. We would come in, and we'd be sitting down because there was only one tv, and my mum would put this on and say, "I want you to just hear this one thing," so she would put on the climax, this really integral bit, the really beautiful part … and we began to become mesmerized by the lectures. Our mom would sit with us and begin to explain what they meant … so then I was very intrigued, and I started to listen to *Shaykh-ul-Islam*'s lectures.

Baji Ghazala's mother was not only instrumental in bringing her own children and family towards the mission, but she also served as an exemplar to other women within the organization. In 1992, she became the first Women's League President in Southampton and was a founding member of the Women's League in the U.K. According to Baji Ghazala, her mother "would go around setting up Women's League in every city that she would travel to [in the U.K.]." Like Baji Ghazala, her mother is a speaker and gives lectures in Urdu. As mentioned earlier, Baji Ghazala cited cultural norms in Pakistan and

amongst the Pakistani diaspora in the U.K., for example, the absence of women in mosques, as the main hindrance to a lack of women in the program in 1990; however, her mother's involvement and example meant that "changed very quickly in 1991 and in 1992, Women's League[s] were set up." Thus, Dr. Ghazala was attracted to the MQI and Qadri quite substantially by the efforts and dedication of her own mother towards the cause.

Likewise, Baji Riffat too was brought towards Qadri by the efforts of her own mother:

> My mom started listening to QTV. I started in my house reading *durūd* … [and] my mom was watching QTV and Qadri every single day from 2002. … I was working so every time I came home, she would tell me what the lecture was about, and she would say, "You have to watch this. If you want to learn Islam, you need to watch this," so I started listening from 2002. From listening to him, I started understanding myself, my relationship with God [and that] we should have a relationship with our Prophet.

Baji Riffat also links the piety and devotion she witnessed in own mother with a desire to do the same for her children as a key motivation for coming towards the MQI:

> I was a year old when my father passed away. My mom raised me [so] I'm very close to my mom. I always saw my mom praying, reading the Qurʾan … Seeing my mom praying for us, struggling for us, she was so young, and raising us, especially in Pakistan. … When I came [to the United States], I was 19. I was just culture shocked. … I prayed here and there, not regularly, but when I had my kids, I thought, how am I going to raise him as a good Muslim? That was the big question. It changed my life when my son was born. I prayed more regularly, I wanted to learn more about what Islam is.

For Baji Riffat, while her mother played a major role in the formation of her religious thought, becoming a mother herself was crucial to her spiritual development.

Motherhood is a major theme in the narratives of all female exemplars in the MQI, who cite their own mothers as essential to their religious upbringing. However, none of the women accepted their mothers' teachings blindly; all of the exemplars narrated individual efforts to discover the correct ʿaqīda. Dr. Mayanaz states this explicitly:

> We were searching for the truth, because we heard so many things from our parents [who were of] good background, from awliya and saints …. Our family tree is more inclined towards religion. I had listened to the stories from my mom, but there were unanswered questions because I was never explained the reason for everything; I was just listening when she told me stories. … So, I thought we have our own children, they are growing up; instead of just learning Barney or things like that, we have to do certain things too in order for them to learn. So how are we going to nurture and teach our children? We have to have knowledge ourselves about our dīn.[411]

Dr. Mayanaz's point illustrates the idea that for Minhājians, genealogy is related to religious authority. All three exemplars illustrate a link with families that believed in mawlid, and Baji Ghazala is also married into a recognized ʿulemāʾ family. Genealogical links establish validation from the community, more so, perhaps, than knowledge of fiqh alone. Dr. Mayanaz, Baji Riffat and Baji Ghazala all had mothers who engaged in religious practices like the mawlid, observed the ʿurs of saints, and had their own shaykhs other than Qadri. Women often cited the religiosity of their mothers and previous generations who engaged in such practices as evidence that observing these traditions cultivates piety.

However, female exemplars report a generational difference in accepting the piety of their mothers and grandmothers as proof enough of the effectiveness of

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[411] Interview held with the author on July 29, 2017.

traditions that have come under scrutiny. As Baji Riffat states, "when I would ask [my mother and grandmother about *mawlid*], they would not really answer me. They said, that's the right way to do it, you need to love Allah and love His *Rasūl* [messenger]. I said, I understand that; you can satisfy me, but I cannot satisfy my kids." Women cite this generational difference when analyzing the difference between what counts as "proof" for following the correct *ʿaqīda*. Here, Dr. Mayanaz outlines how she distinguished which scholars taught the truth:

> I started learning and [my husband and I] were listening to CDs [of other scholars] but we were not satisfied. The things we learned from our parents, the stories [of the *awliya*] I learned from my mom. I was like, where are they? Were they fake or what? What is the answer to that? They were saying "This is *shirk*, this is *bidʿa*; you can't do this, you can't do that." So, was Mama doing [*shirk and bidʿa*] all her life, but she had the *kalima* on her tongue before she passed? … No, that's not true.[412]

Dr. Mayanaz cites her mother's piety and the honorable way in which she died, reciting the *kalima,* or declaration of Islamic faith, as proof that her mother's *ʿaqīda* and the practices it entailed were correct. For Sufis, the form in which birth, death and dreams come are all significant and are often cited as evidence of one's piety, as the hagiographies in Chapter 2 suggest.[413] In relating her journey to further knowledge and seek the "truth," Dr. Mayanaz prioritizes the wisdom gained from viewing her mother as an exemplar over knowledge imparted by *ʿulemāʾ*. The shaykh's authority is established through the traditional means of transmission and lineage; MQI women's authority is

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[412] Interview with the author held on July 29, 2017.
[413] For an illustration of how these establish authority, see Joyce B. Flueckiger, *In Amma's Healing Room: Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006).

established through the shaykh, but also by virtue of the piety of their mothers. It is noteworthy that Minhājian women always focused on their mothers when establishing their background and tradition in following the practices of Qadri's *'aqīda*. While the example of their mothers is enough to Baji Riffat and other female exemplars, listening to the lectures of Qadri in which Qur'an and ahādīth are used to justify such practices not only confirmed their own beliefs, but also allowed them to go back to their children and convince them using other means.

Minhājian women have authority not just with their families, but with the women they teach, illustrating through exemplary behavior how to be a good wife and mother, but also be completely devoted to the cause and the mission of the MQI. Not only do women have major roles within the organization, serving as members of the Supreme Council of the MQI and heading up operations in North America and Europe, they also are integral to the running of local branches and Minhāj centers. Like male followers, the most active female MQI members rarely take credit for their work and often defer to the charismatic authority of Tahir-ul-Qadri, attributing their knowledge and abilities to him, but also to other exemplars, as with the case of Baji Riffat deferring to the authority of Dr. Mayanaz.

The MQI takes advantage of the role of women in society to bring entire families to the fold of the organization; however, women also assert that families are the backbone of the MQI: if being active within the organization incites positive change, husbands and children and extended families will follow suit and do so with enthusiasm. Minhājian women emphasize that Qadri does not encourage family rifts over dedication

to the mission. They do not explicitly challenge patriarchal norms and often highlight the need for women to fulfill the rights of their husbands and children. When I asked Baji Riffat about how she balances her obligations working full-time, being a wife, a mother of three, taking care of her own aging mother and being so active at the center in a position of leadership, she emphasized that Qadri wants women to work towards the mission only with the permission of their husbands and after having fulfilled their obligations towards their immediate family members. She goes on to state:

> There is a hadīth that says, "You can see how a person is by noticing how they behave with their own family." If I have accepted this mission in God's name with the permission of my family, have I considered my own behavior? Have I done well by my family and stayed attached to them? Because today, what is happening--you are like my own daughter, so I can tell you this--what is going on is increasingly we are abandoning our families. Our Prophet said upbringing and religious training starts in the lap of the mother. This is our mission.[414]

 Thus, although MQI women do not explicitly challenge patriarchal norms by going against their husbands or the wishes of their families, they emphasize the role of women in ensuring the security of the family unit, viewed as the basic building block of society, and cite their womanhood as being a distinct advantage, a notion that MQI leadership and administration has also observed and implemented in their own expansion strategies.

The MWL Organizational Training Camp 2018

 In April 2018, the Minhāj Women League held a training camp in Lahore for its female members in Pakistan. The training camp commenced with a swearing-in ceremony

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[414] Interview held with the author on October 13, 2017.

for a new endeavor created by the MQI: The "Women [sic] Parliament." According to Dr. Mayanaz, this was created primarily to provide Minhājian women in Pakistan with a forum to promote women's education and empowerment. Hassan Mohi-ud-din Qadri administered the oath-swearing for over 500 women taking part in the Women Parliament, and these women, according to Baji Ghazala, were only senior position holders of the MWL network in Pakistan.[415]

Figure 70- Hassan Qadri administering oath to Women Parliament

This effort took place over five days starting from April 11th to April 15th of 2018 and featured Riffat Jabeen Qadri, also known as *Mādr-e-Tehreek*, or mother of the movement, and Dr. Ghazala Qadri and Fizza Qādrī, the wives of Hassan Qadri and Hussain Qadri, respectively. Despite being Qadri's wife, Riffat Jabeen Qadri is rarely seen in public. Minhājian women attribute this to her health or general desire to be more private and state that she engages in religious studies in the home. Fizza Qadri, however, does appear

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[415] "Dr Hassan Mohi-ud-Din Qadri administers oath to Women Parliament," Minhaj-ul-Quran Women League, accessed May 4, 2018, https://www.minhajsisters.com/english/tid/43527/Oath-taking-ceremony-of-MWL-Female-Parliament-members/.

at some public events and gives speeches, but her public and online presence is nowhere near the scale of Baji Ghazala. Dr. Ghazala is by far the most active women's leader in the movement; she is often invited to give lectures all over the world at major Women League events in different cities, and when she graduated with her PhD in Islamic Law from the University of Birmingham, the news of her success was announced on various MQI sources, including all forms of social media and the MQI website, with followers congratulating her all over the world.

The camp was held to discuss "Vision 2025," an initiative made by the MQI to plan and discuss what the role of women should be in the organization and in broader society as well as what goals need to be implemented by the organization by the year 2025. Every day of the camp commenced with recitation of Qurʾan, *naʿat* and *durūd*. The training camp featured speeches and special appearances by key figures like Fizza Qadri, Hussain Qadri, Baji Ghazala and other important figures within the MWL of Pakistan, as well as talks on the importance of training and the achievements of the MWL in Pakistan over the past two and a half years, including in welfare and politics.[416]

The first two days of the camp focused primarily on organizational matters and sessions on resources available to women within the MQI to improve their skills as leaders. Day one of the training camp involved welcome speeches, discussions around the schedule of the camp, and reports from different MWL branches all over Pakistan

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[416] "1st Day: MWL Organizational Training Camp 2018," Minhaj-ul-Quran Women League, accessed May 5, 2018, https://www.minhajsisters.com/english/tid/43480/1st-Day-MWL-Organizational-Training-Camp-2018/.

regarding their achievements.[417] On day two, there was a talk by Hassan Mohi-ud-Din

Qadri on the MQI as the only "reformatory organization of the century," as well as

sessions on courses participants could take as a part of training (like Arabic grammar and

pronunciation), leadership training by Dr. Ghazala, and a question and answer session

with Fizza Qadri.[418]

On day three of the training camp, a speech by Dr. Ghazala Qadri focused on the

role of women in *daʿwah*, or proselytization. She stressed that *daʿwah* begins in the home

with family members, a sentiment Miccessed Apreinhājian women have echoed in their

efforts to bring spouses and children towards the path of the MQI.[419] Baji Ghazala also

emphasized *daʿwah* must be spread "to society through collective sittings;" this is the

goal achieved by individual Minhāj centers, which do not cater just to Minhāj members

but seek to incorporate members of society that engage in similar religious practices and

gradually introduce them to the work of the MQI and Qadri. Baji Ghazala also

differentiated between a *dāʿī*, or a person who calls others to the right path, and a *rafīq*.

Rafīq, or a friend, is the term used by the MQI for members of the organization, while a

dāʿī, implicitly would attract more members to the MQI first by "act[ing] before advising"

and working on her own personality, which must exemplify "worship, good dressing,

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[417] "1st Day"

[418] "2nd Day: MWL Organizational Training Camp 2018," Minhaj-ul-Quran Women League, accessed May 5, 2018, https://www.minhajsisters.com/english/tid/43491/2nd-Day-MWL-Organizational-Training-Camp-2018/.

[419] "3rd Day of MWL Organizational Training Camp: Dr Ghazala Hassan Qadri shares strategies on Dawah," Minhaj-ul-Quran Women League, accessed May 5, 2018, https://www.minhajsisters.com/english/tid/43610/3rd-Day-of-MWL-Organizational-Training-Camp-Dr-Ghazala-Hassan-Qadri-addresses-last-session/.

[and] ethical behavior."[420] A *dāʿī*, must have "undaunted and firm believe[sic] in the leadership and ideology" and also focus on "propagation and preaching to new audiences [while] staying connected with the old ones which are connected to you through…*daʿwah*."[421]

Thus, the lecture focused on the importance of converting a *rafīq* to a *da'ie* within the organization. *Rafāqat* is considered membership in this world and the next; essentially, membership is a substitute for taking actual *bay'at*. Dr. Mayanaz once narrated the reason for membership, stating that Qadri never wanted followers to take *bay'at* from his hands. He oncehad a dream in which "Ghous-e-Pāk," or Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, appeared; he gave Qadri permission to use membership as a replacement for the act of formal *bay'at*, promising him that those who became members would be standing under the flag of Ghous-e-Pāk in the hereafter. Even though all who attain membership can be called *rafīq*, Dr. Mayanaz differentiates between different types of members just as the *sahāba*, or companions of the Prophet, had "different levels of experience, different levels of love." Seeing the MQI as group of companions, membership itself is deemed *rafāqat-sāzī*, or the act of becoming a *rafīq*. The third day of the workshop was dedicated to the topic, with *rafāqat-sāzī* kits being distributed to the *kārkunān*. These kits consisted of lecture materials from Qadri on *rafāqat*.[422] [423] Primarily then, the MQI is

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[420] "3rd Day: Ghazala Qadri"

[421] "3rd Day: Ghazala Qadri."

[422] "3rd Day of MWL Organization Training Camp: Rafaqat sazi session," Minhaj-ul-Quran Women League, accessed May 5, 2018, https://www.minhajsisters.com/english/tid/43562/MWL-Orgnizational-Training-Camp-2018-3rd-Day-Rafaqat-sazi-session/.

[423] The various materials published and distributed during the training camp were in Urdu, and Dr. Mayanaz informed me of an initiative following the camp called the Minhaj Women League Research Desk. Dr. Mayanaz and two MWL members in Australia and New Zealand were given five books or

actively encouraging modes of female religious authority that *support* male religious authority. Women are encouraged to stand by their brothers and fathers and assist in their efforts, defend their ideals and values, and cooperate with them. Apart from male-led efforts, women are given the tools and training to promote the organization, boost membership and engage in *daʿwah* efforts. Therefore, in certain modes of religious authority, like the role of the *dāʿī* or the *dars* leader as with Baji Riffat, factors like gender become less relevant to the production of that authority and indeed are more likely to be accepted because women who function as religious leaders in this capacity are expected to appeal to other women exclusively. They are actively encouraged to work in these capacities because of a "trickle-down" effect; the idea that by exemplifying ideals like "acting before advising" or "improving one's personality through worship, good dressing and ethical behavior," women will bring their families, which include sons, brothers, fathers and husbands, to Qadri's cause.

The fourth day of the training camp continued this emphasis on a trickle-down effect with a speech by Afnan Babar, the Secretary General of the Minhāj Women League. In her speech, she proclaimed it "the obligatory duty of all office holders that they must delegate their authority and experience to their subordinates in order to strengthen the organizational setup."[424] By delegating authority, the MQI can ensure that members stay involved and feel invested in the success of the organization. Fizza

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booklets, ranging in length from 16 to 108 pages, to translate into English with the intention of publishing and distributing these materials during the next training camp for women, most likely to be held in Europe.

[424] "4th Day: MWL Organizational Training Camp 2018," Minhaj-ul-Quran Women League, accessed May 5, 2018, https://www.minhajsisters.com/english/tid/43515/4th-Day-MWL-Organizational-Training-Camp-2018/

Hussain Qadri made another appearance, speaking on the topic of "the working of the religion by giving the examples of he[sic] mothers of believers and the female companions."[425] Although the MQI's description of her talk is quite vague and it is not available in video format online, the title indicates that the organization recognizes that women connect to female exemplars in the Islamic tradition and understand their key role in the functioning of the MQI by relating to the importance of female *sahāba* in the establishment of a mass religious and political movement. Hassan Mohi-ud-Din Qadri also spoke on this day. The topic of his speech was "*Rafāqat bayʿat kā mutabādil aur tehrīk hī haqīqī murshid hai*," or "Membership is a substitute for *bayʿat* (oath-taking), and the movement is the true *murshid* (shaykh)." Despite using modern and often mundane techniques like membership and subsequent paperwork, the organization and its leadership utilizes traditional Sufi terminology and concepts to draw parallels between a contemporary neo-brotherhood and a conventional Sufi *tarīqa*.

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[425] "4th Day."

Figure 71- Afnan Babar, Secretary General of the MWL, speaking at the Organizational Training Camp 2018

The training camp concluded on the fifth day on April 15, 2018, with an inaugural ceremony of the Women Parliament, followed by different talks, including one by Fizza Qadri on the importance of doing Itikaf, one by the Secretary General of the Mustafavī Students Movement (MSM) Sisters, Zainab Arshad, on how that branch operates, and another question and answer session by the editor of the MQI magazine, *Dukhtrān-e-Islam* (*Daughters of Islam*), Miss Umm-e-Habiba.

Conclusion

Although studies of female Islamic authority primarily focus on women in the mosque and madrasah spaces, MQI women work in, outside of and around those spaces to create platforms for themselves to serve as exemplars to other women in the organization, their communities and their families. However, women operate largely

under the guidance and instruction of male leaders like Qadri and his male descendants. The organization and its leadership recognize the power that women have within society and train Minhājian women to become better leaders and draw more members into its folds through efforts like the Minhāj Women League Organizational Training Camp in 2018. Thus, women are encouraged to function as religious leaders within women-only communities. Minhājian women largely function as religious authorities in the absence of *madrasa* training. Instead, genealogy, *sohbat*, education, career, and community standing all function as validation in the process of bottom-up certification. These factors then grant women the legitimacy to speak on behalf of the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan community as they seek knowledge from listening to Qadri's lectures or take online courses.

There are still unresolved issues around the legitimization of female religious authority in the MQI. The factors that validate the authority of certain MQI women and bottom-up certification exists in the absence of top-down certification, which I predict will increase in the years to come. Minhaj-ul-Quran continues to work extensively to open schools and colleges and create online courses to train future leaders with a particular focus on women, as evidenced by the Minhaj Women League Organization Training Camp. These top-down certifications exist in the absence of their shaykh being able to train every member and leader directly.

I anticipate that there might be a shifting of bottom-up certification, as exists with the MQI in 2018, to top-down certification, much like the Muhammadiyah. However, this will require several years and perhaps a new generation of MQI followers born into the

tradition, attending its relatively new schools and colleges, to properly research this phenomenon.

Although women feature prominently in the MQI as community leaders, *dars* teachers and counselors, women are limited in their ability to subvert patriarchy in a patriarchal culture. For example, during my period of fieldwork, I never personally witnessed women giving a *khutba* to a mixed gender gathering or leading the prayer, even after or during women-only gatherings.[426] Women serve as authorities to other women, although there are indications that this may be slowly changing, as I will address later in the conclusion to this dissertation. Within female-only spaces, however, Minhājian women organize, lead and preside over events, featuring front and center of special programs like the annual *mawlid* celebration. This is also the mode of authority that is encouraged by MQI leadership: to serve as leaders within a community of women and guide their families towards religious truth in a cooperative manner. That is, women are not encouraged to work for the mission of the MQI to the extent that they irritate their husbands, but to cultivate their own *adab* in such a way that their families are naturally drawn to the movement.

This is not to say that women are simply tools of a male-run apparatus; female exemplars in the MQI see their endeavors as part of a prophetic mission, a final destination on a journey to find the truth, and an obligation to bring their families and

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[426] Because the center also functions as a mosque and prayer space, prayers during women-only gatheings would coincide with prayers at the center during which an imam would show up, as usual, to lead the prayer. This changed just a month prior to my defense, a development I will address in my conclusion later.

others in their network toward the ʿ*aqīda* and goal of the MQI: to bring others to loving

Allah and His prophet. Women employ different strategies in their effort to encourage

particular practices and respond to their detractors, strategies that will be covered in the

following chapter.

Chapter 6: "A Spark in the Heart:" Women's Strategies for the Defense Against

Critique

In women's only *mawlid* and *dars*, female leaders serve as exemplars to the community not just by exhibiting ritual expertise and a concern with orthodoxy in their religious practices, but also by modeling how best to negotiate their participation in a Sufi movement with Muslim friends, family, or members of the community who may not agree with their celebration of the *mawlid* or their Sufi allegiance. Most often, members of the MQI employ methods similar to their detractors in order to prove their legitimacy and concern with authenticity. Chapter Two addressed Islamic reform movements in South Asia, situating Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan and related ʿaqīdas like the Barelwīs within a broader context and history of censure from detractors and rival movements. Minhājian women today are also very aware of differing opinions and criticism from rival factions and Baji Riffat, Dr. Mayanaz and Dr. Ghazala all recount incidents in which they faced skeptics or how they came to believe in the belief system followed by Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan and advocated by Qadri as opposed to alternative schools of thought.

MQI women use the scripturalist strategies of their detractors when proving the legitimacy of their beliefs and practices, citing Qurʾan, hadīth, *sunna* and Islamic history. However, MQI exemplars equally utilize affective strategies, citing matters of emotion, whether by emphasizing the cultivation of an emotion like love or the experience of a negative emotion on the heart when listening to the methods or approach of an ʿālim from a different *maslak*. Emotion is most often used as a form of validation when discussing religious practices like the *mawlid* that elicit polarizing opinions between

different *maslaks*, or Islamic schools of thought. Minhājian women who perform and attend *mawlid* are primarily those who were exposed to the practice from childhood, which necessarily creates an emotional connection to the practice. Although emotion has been used to delegitimize certain practices associated with Muslim women, it has also been employed historically as a means of justifying rituals labeled as *bid°a*.

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of scholarly discourse around emotion and religious ritual, discussing how *°ulemāʾ*, both medieval and contemporary, and academic scholars have addressed emotion, how some Muslim men have interpreted the use of emotion in ritual, and how women who practice these rituals discuss emotion. Not only do MQI women justify particular practices on the basis of emotion, they use emotion to enhance the ability of *mawlid* to "develop a spark in the heart" and use ritual as a means of expressing emotion. Cultivating this "spark" that alludes to the spiritual change and transformation that occurs when love for the prophet Muhammad is felt and infused into the heart. This is not to say that men do not employ the use of emotion in *mawlid*. My gendered positionality as a woman gives me access to *mawlid*s exclusively for women and the meetings and decisions that lead up to them. However, I did attend some communal *mawlids* that were open to men as well as women, and it is clear that emotion is important for both men and women in the MQI, although there are differences in how it is expressed, and women seem to appeal to emotion more frequently than men in the MQI.

Despite emotion appealing to women both in the practice of religious ritual and in the defense of religious ritual, MQI women also defend practices using similar

strategies as their detractors, namely Qurʾan and hadīth, to accommodate the common criticisms made of *mawlid*. Thus, MQI women ward off critique using both scripturalist and affective strategies, but historically, it is women's appeal to emotion that attracts criticism, despite the fact that men too employ emotion in practices like *mawlid*.

Women, Emotion and Ritual

Emotion has been historically linked to Islamic rituals and plays a significant role in the legitimization or denunciation of certain practices. However, the opportunity to express emotion provides a meaningful incentive to women to participate in these very practices. Rites and customs associated with women have been denounced citing a lack of reason in women; this discussion is framed using the *ʿaql* and *nafs* dichotomy.[427] Practices associated with popular religion, including shrine devotion, grave visitation, and *mawlid* have been cited by *ʿulemāʾ* as practices void of *ʿaql*, or logic, and rather, are associated with the *nafs*, or the ego/self.

In a series of seven *dars* lectures from May 2017 to July 2017, Baji Riffat talks about the *nafs*. The *nafs* can control us through our outer extremities, our *zāhir*, or our interior *bātin*, our heart. She translates *nafs* as "*mein*," or "me." The *nafs* is thus not particular to women alone, but to all of mankind. This is clear when Baji Riffat relates the story of creation in a dars from June 3rd, 2017, citing Q2:30:

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[427] See Azam Torab, *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2006), 13; Zahra Kamalkhani, *Women's Islam: Religious Practice Among Women in Today's Iran* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1998), 8; Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar*, trans. Barbara Metcalf (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 8.

When God was creating man, He commanded the angels to bow down to him. The angels were astonished, because there was such a difference in their creation [from light] and man's creation from a foul-smelling clay [*badbūdār mittī*]. God declared, 'You know not what I know.' The being who is worthy of serving as my authority [*khilāfat*] on earth is the one who, despite having the capability to sin and living in an environment surrounded by sin, still chooses to leave the comforts of this world out of fear of me and love for me and wanting to be close to me. [And who is that being?] Humans. They live in this environment of sin.

Baji Riffat explicates that the *rūh*, or soul, is associated with the heavens (*ālam-e-'alā*). The *nafs* controls us through the body (*jism*), which is made of foul-smelling clay; dirt is the lowest object on earth, so the *nafs* is associated with lowliness (*pastī*). In Chapter 5, when Baji Riffat implores Allah to "remove us from [among the] *asfala sāfilīn*," or the "lowest of the low," it is this lowliness she references. She explains that the *nafs* wants to make its holder "go to sleep' (*sulāna chahtā hai*). Therefore, the *nafs* can mesmerize its owner, deceiving it into thinking that "this world is everything." Baji Riffat associates emotion with the *rūh*, not the *nafs*. Instead, it's the *nafs* that pulls us away from the emotions that believing women pursue: "At dawn prayers, it is the *nafs* that asks, 'Why are you ruining your sleep?' This is why Allah blew the *rūh* into us! That *rūh* says, 'Why are you causing your own ruin by sleeping? Awake! Awake for the One whose love and closeness you seek!'" Therefore, the tempting *nafs* lacks sensitivity to emotion, a quality that would bring it closer to God. In this series of *dars*, Baji Riffat used the lectures of Qadri to define the seven types of *nafs* (pl. *nafūs*), starting with the basest (*nafs-e-ammāra* or the Inciting Self) with the *nafs-e-kāmila* as the complete self that is totally under its holder's control. This perfect *nafs* is explained using a *hadīth-e-qudsī* (sacred tradition) in which Allah states, "Neither the heavens nor the earth can contain Me, but

the heart of a believer can contain Me." Thus, the holder of a *nafs-e-kāmila* is said to possess a heart than is even bigger than the heavens and the earth.

In the same way that Baji Riffat advocates a type of diagnosis and prescription for the *nafs*, Rkia Cornell's essay, "Soul of a Woman Was Created Below," finds that "most medieval commentators agree…that once the *nafs* has been properly disciplined, it is capable of transcendence and may become a vessel for divine inspiration."[428] This is why the heart of the true believer, the one with a *nafs-e-kāmila*, is portrayed as a vessel that can contain God Himself. *Nafs* has different variants depending on the control harnessed onto it by its owner, therefore, much like humans themselves vary in terms of morality and character, *nafūs* similarly vary. Cornell's Qurʾanic analysis of *nafs-e-ammāra* shows that, "all human beings, and not just women, are susceptible to evil."[429] However, despite the Qurʾan's egalitarian teaching of the *nafs*, medieval Islam sources portrayed women both as *nafs*, or the lower soul, or *nafs al-hayawānīyya*, or the animal soul; these depictions "have [contributed] to the cultural prejudices that make woman a potential source of evil in Islam" or more particularly, in Islamic societies.[430]

Despite women's own nuancing of *nafs* and emotion and the Qurʾan's egalitarian view of the *nafs*, the historical association of women with *nafs* and uncontrolled emotion has meant that their religious rituals have likewise been described as chaotic, irrational, emotional and unsound. In "Wailing for the Dead: The Role of Women in Early Islamic

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[428] Rkia Cornell, "'Soul of a Woman Was Created Below: Woman as the Lower Soul (Nafs) in Islam'" in *Probing the Depths of Evil and Good: Multireligious Views and Case Studies*, ed. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, and Hendrik M. Vroom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 260.
[429] R. Cornell, 259-260.
[430] R. Cornell, 258.

Funerals," Leor Halevi examines women's mourning rituals during the early Islamic period to analyze the reasons Muslim men objected to wailing. Women's lamentation was linked to violent emotions because "not only did women shriek and lament in ululation; they also scratched at their cheeks, drawing blood, and tore at their hair," causing men to see wailing "…as an 'uncivilized' ritual."[431]

However, the hadīth cited to discourage these practices come with their own histories, which mean that some Islamic traditions may have been pushed for political reasons in different regions. For this reason, Halevi recommends, "new scholarship should perhaps concentrate on the ideological agenda of the transmitters who advocated oral traditions."[432] Pietists, defined by Halevi as *muhaddithūn*, or narrators of hadīth, and *ahl al-ᶜilm*, or those who possess religious knowledge, opposed wailing for a few reasons.[433] First, they claimed that wailing expressed displeasure with God's decree rather than exercise the recommended virtue of forbearance. However, men did not problematize what women did, but how they did it. Pietists considered hiring professional wailers along with "candles [and] silken shrouds … [as] funerary pomp,"[434] opposed gathering at the home of the deceased[435], and associated the practice with pre-Islamic times.[436] To discourage wailing, pietists circulated oral religious traditions linking wailing to punishment of the deceased in the grave and interpreted the Qurʾan to suggest that

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[431] Leor Halevi, "Wailing for the Dead: The Role of Women in Early Islamic Funerals," *Past & Present* 183 (May 2004): 4-5.
[432] Halevi, 10.
[433] Halevi, 7.
[434] Halevi, 15.
[435] Halevi, 15.
[436] Halevi, 15.

women had agreed to discontinue the practice as part of a pledge to the Prophet Muhammad. Early Islamic pietists detested women gathering in general and could refuse to pray for the deceased or perform their last rites to dissuade women from engaging in the rituals. Halevi argues that "the Kūfan traditions working to hinder women from joining funerary processions were pietistic fabrications aiming to transform society, not genuine traditions conveying the original customs of Medina."[437] This is because those transmitting the traditions were primarily from Kūfa; a key source of Medinan traditions relates nothing against women joining processions; and the eminent Medinan mufti, Mālik, ruled that women could be part of processions.[438] As Halevi observes, because "certain Kūfan pietists celebrated the locking of women behind closed doors," they propagated traditions against the gathering of women for funerary processions in an attempt to "[build] an ideology of praxis."[439] Wailing was thus just part of a larger problem in the eyes of early Islamic pietists in Kūfa. Iraqi jurisprudents were disinclined towards the congregation of women in any circumstance, a situation which would result if wailing was allowed by ʿulemāʾ.

ʾIbn al-Hajj (d.1336), a Mālikī scholar writing in the 14th century, claimed women are deficient in ʿaql not just due to culture but by birth and opposed women's gatherings as well. In "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy Versus Male Sharʿī Order in Muslim Prescriptive Treatises," Huda Lutfi examines al-Madkhal, a treatise by Ibn al-Hajj. Ibn al-Hajj attributes women's behavior with social

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[437] Halevi, 23.
[438] Halevi, 23.
[439] Halevi, 24.

anarchy, supporting this view with a Prophetic tradition that states, "You are lacking in mind and religion."[440] Ibn al-Hajj struggles both with the resulting ignorance that he believes women perpetuate in the home and, like early Kūfan pietists, the possible chaotic situations that may occur when women exit the home. Reiterating advice that women may only exit the home upon their wedding day, when their parents die, and when taken to her own grave,[441] Ibn al-Hajj also makes an exception, allowing women to leave the home to seek religious education to prevent the proliferation of "vile traditions" only if their husbands were not able to educate them inside the home.[442] He associates social corruption with "neglecting the advice of religious scholars on matters regarding proper Muslim behavior; the infiltration of base customs and traditions to the extent that they become the accepted religious practices; and acceptance of the opinion of those whom the Lawgiver, may God be pleased with him, has regarded as lacking in religion and reason [that is, women]."[443] Ibn al-Hajj associates the first two factors with women, that is, ignoring the advice of religious scholars and advocating traditional customs as religious ones.

Ibn al-Hajj expresses a traditional, patriarchal viewpoint that has been expressed by South Asian *ʿulemāʾ* and is often upheld by South Asian Muslims. The historical correlation of women with a lack or deficiency in *ʿaql* relates to their association with the

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[440] Huda Lutfi, "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy Versus Male Shar'i Order in Muslim Prescriptive Treatises," in *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), 101.

[441] Lutfi, 99.

[442] Lutfi, 100-101.

[443] Lutfi, 100.

private sphere. Ashraf ʿAlī Thānawī (1864-1943), a Deobandī scholar, wrote *Bihishtī Zewar (Heavenly Ornaments)*, a reformist prescriptive document, to "[challenge] the received cultural tradition preserved above all by women in the home."[444] It is this cultural factor that Thanawi believes is responsible for "women [being] more likely than men to be troubled by *nafs*."[445] However, unlike Ibn al-Hajj, Thanawi believed this trouble was due to culture and not a genetic deficiency; women were as capable as men and could reform improper practice through education, an effort he worked towards by writing *Bihishtī Zewar.* As a Deobandī scholar, Thanawi's teachings often discourage many of the practices advocated by Barelwīs; for example, he discourages *mawlid* for many reasons, including the "[reading] of verses of poetry expressively."[446] Far from being the domain of the *ʿulemāʾ* alone, *Bihishtī Zewar* was "intended to provide a basic education for a respectable Muslim woman" and became renowned for being presented as part of women's wedding dowries.[447] From my experience in Pakistan, almost any Urdu bazār will carry Thanawi's *Bihishtī Zewar*, thus his teachings are quite widespread amongst women in the subcontinent and coming from the Deobandī school of thought, Barelwī women must often respond to the popular conception of their religious practices as emotional or irrational.

In ethnographic studies of Muslim women's rituals, men often characterize women's practices as emotional. In her study of women's activities at shrines in Iran, Anne

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[444] Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf ʿAli Thanawi's Bihishti Zewar*, trans. Barbara Metcalf (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 9.
[445] Thanawi, 8.
[446] Thanawi, 157.
[447] Thanawi, 3.

Betteridge was told on numerous occasions that "women are emotional creatures, easily swayed by sentiment and inclined to be irrational. Men were described as serious, likely to reason clearly, immune to emotional concerns."[448] R. Cornell shows how ahadīth that comment on women as being deficient in ʿaql and religion led to renowned Sufi scholars, including Abu ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulāmī, Abu Hafs ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī, and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, accepting the inferior status of women. [449]

However, the association of women with emotion could also result in their prayers being considered particularly efficacious and grant them authority within the household. Because of the emotional nature associated with women, they engage in devotional practices and vow-making on behalf of their family members, including sons and husbands.[450] Furthermore, although ʿulemāʾ prohibit practices based on a perceived lack of ʿaql in women, women themselves reject the idea that they are deficient in ʿaql. In *Performing Islam*, Azam Torab works with Mrs. Omid, leader of a women's *jalaseh*, or religious meetings like *dars*. In one gathering, Mrs. Omid tells the story of an ascetic who sees a man who is able to pray day and night without stopping for food or rest. Impressed, he asks the man his secret, who confides that he committed *zina*, or fornication, and repented, and because God loves those who repent, he was now blessed with the ability to pray nonstop. The ascetic subsequently goes to visit a prostitute, who informs him that any man who can pray nonstop without the need for food, water or sleep must not have

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[448] Anne Betteridge, "Women and Shrines in Shiraz," in *Everyday Life in the Muslim Middle East* eds. Donna Lee Bowen and Evelyn A. Early (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002): 244.

[449] See Rkia Cornell, "'Soul of a Woman Was Created Below: Woman as the Lower Soul (Nafs) in Islam'" in *Probing the Depths of Evil and Good: Multireligious Views and Case Studies*, ed. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, and Hendrik M. Vroom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

[450] Betteridge, 245.

a *nafs* and therefore, must be the devil in disguise. Thus, she stopped the ascetic from committing a major sin. Mrs. Omid uses this narrative to point out that both men and woman have *ʿaql*, regardless of their perceived piety, and "if God had intended to give *ʿaql* to some and not to others, that would not have been justice…God gave all equally faith and *ʿaql*."[451]

Although some *ʿulemāʾ* have historically prohibited religious practices based on emotion, others encouraged the expression of emotion as a means of cultivating particular virtues. In *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam*, Marion Katz observes that the *mawlid*, despite often being acknowledged as a *bidʿa*, was justified on the very basis of emotion. Ibn al-Tabbākh (d. 1178-1179 CE) issued a *fatwa* claiming that "if one makes expenditures on this day and displays delight out of joy in the entrance of the Prophet into this world … then this is a good gathering, and anyone who intends that and performs it will be rewarded."[452] Sadr al-Dīn Mawhūb ʾIbn ʿUmar al-Jazarī (d. 1274 CE), a *qādī,* and Abū Zurʿa ʾIbn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 1423 CE) additionally supported the *mawlid* on the basis of the expression of "delight and joy (or *al-surūr waʾl-farah*) in the birth of the Prophet."[453] The *mawlid* was most often justified on the basis of the expression of joy, delight and love in and for the Prophet, and in some Sufi contexts, was advocated because it was viewed as a way of cultivating these emotions so that they persist long after the *mawlid* concludes.

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[451] Azam Torab, *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 55
[452] Marion Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 104.
[453] Katz, 104.

Additionally, *mawlid* was often discussed in relation to the "religious formation of children (as well as, to a lesser extent, women)."[454] Abū'l- ˤAbbās al-ˤAzafī (d. 1236 CE), author of the earliest available *mawlid* text, justifies *mawlid* as a means to an end with regards to the proper upbringing of children. Citing the celebration of Christian holidays by Muslim children, who are enticed by the exciting customs, al-Azafi mourns that Muslim children celebrate the birth of Jesus or John the Baptist without knowing anything of their own Prophet Muhammad. The best way to inculcate a love for the Prophet, al-Azafi suggests, is to celebrate *mawlid* as a festival "to elicit happiness and rejoicing."[455] The Sufi scholar Muhammad ʾIbn Qāsim al-Rassā (d. 1489 CE) wrote about the *mawlid* as an pedagogical tool in his *Tadhkirāt al-muhibbīn fī asmāʾ sayyid al-mursalīn*, instructing Muslim men to teach their children poems praising the Prophet, narrate the miracles of the Prophet, and reward his wife and children with treats on the day of the *mawlid* simply out of joy in the Prophet's birth.[456] Thus, ˤulemāʾ also saw the merit in celebrating *mawlid* as a means of inculcating proper love and respect for the Prophet Muhammad.

Minhājian women often advocate *mawlid* in this way as well; *mawlid* creates the opportunity to observe proper decorum and observing this may cultivate the love and respect for the prophet Muhammad that the MQI seeks to recreate.[457] According to Barbara Daly Metcalf's translation and commentary of *Bihishti Zewar*, Maulana Ashraf ʾAli

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[454] Katz, 139.

[455] Katz, 119.

[456] Katz, 119-120.

[457] The use of religious ritual to cultivate virtue through emotion is not subject to mawlid alone. In ritual mourning practices during the Islamic months of Muharram and Safar, dirges are recited to create the appropriate mood for the ritual and spur followers to weep and feel sorrow at the deaths of the relatives of the Prophet Muhammad. See Azam Torab, *Performing Islam: Gender and Ritual in Iran* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 41.

Thanawi states that "even feigned emotions serve a legitimate end;" therefore, "Thanawi… teaches that correct external behavior is the first step toward creating inner virtues."[458] Here, intention takes precedence. Because *mawlid*s are held to show love and joy at the birth of the Prophet, the display of emotion during the ritual practice is justified and, even if not felt from within, should still be displayed to encourage cultivation. During Iranian *mawlid,* the hosts encourage a celebratory mood by singing songs, clapping, ululating and sprinkling sweets over the heads of those attending.[459] Likewise, MQI women also use *mawlid* as a tool to encourage the religious development of their children and to cultivate virtue in the Muslim community in general through the use of emotion.

There is a large literature on the use of emotion and affect by women in Islamic ritual as a part of cultivating moods or virtues. Most notably, Saba Mahmood notes the desire of participants in the women's mosque movement to cultivate the virtue of *khushūʾ*, or humility. The ultimate sign of this "is the act of weeping during the course of prayer, especially at the time of supplication."[460] Mahmood details exercises that the participants recommended in order to induce weeping; the goal of weeping is to "habituate the cardinal virtue of fear of God (taqwa) to the point that it infuses all of one's actions, of which ritual obligations are an important part."[461] As Mahmood finds, "the pedagogical program among the mosque participants was geared precisely toward making prescribed behavior natural to one's disposition."[462] For mosque participants,

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[458] Thanawi, 168.
[459] Torab, 100-101.
[460] Mahmood, 129.
[461] Mahmood, 130.
[462] Mahmood, 131.

ritual prayer "serves both as a means to pious conduct and an end."[463] Like women in the

mosque movement, Minhājian women connect religious practice and the expression of

emotion within that practice as a means of cultivating virtue. *Naʿat* and *mawlid* are

likewise viewed as both a means and an end; MQI women emphasize that delighting in

the birth of the Prophet is a religious obligation upon all Muslims, and thus celebrating

the *mawlid* is a way to fulfill this obligation. At the same time, the practices are meant to

infuse the believer's heart with love for the prophet Muhammad.

In discussing affect in women's ritual performance in Iran, Azam Torab utilizes the

term *hāl*, which indicates an "expectation of transformation" and refers to a "pleasurable

feeling … indicating the extent to which a ceremony moves or fully engages [its

participants.]"[464] This can be a state induced by listening to poetry conveying an intense

love of God or by listening to dirges during Muharram; in both instances, "ritual tears"

are considered an expression of emotion that equates to a "positive, meritorious

devotional act."[465] Women are thus encouraged to shed tears as an act of worship, one

for which they are rewarded. For the women in Torab's study, "ritual performances … are

meant to be embodied, emotive experiences," cleansing them of sins and affecting their

hearts.[466]

In *Partners of Zaynab*, Diane D' Souza addresses the emotional ritual of *majlis*

mourning gatherings commemorating the tragedy of Karbala. Like *mawlid*, *majlis* includes

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[463] Mahmood, 133.
[464] Torab, 232.
[465] Torab, 233.
[466] Torab, 234.

remembrance poetry that help attendees "to focus on some aspects of the trials and sufferings of the Ahl-e-Bayt."[467] These ritual events thus help construct a shared memory of the past. During the emotional climax of *majlis*, participants "get to their feet," like the climax of *mawlid*.[468] Women weep as a part of the communal experience of grief from the loss of the *ahl-e-bayt* at Karbala, and this expression of grief is a way to show solidarity with the family of the Prophet, an act Shīʿa women see a religiously meritorious.[469] D'Souza theorizes that "the opportunity to connect with one's emotions, especially grief and loss," may serve as incentives for women to attend.[470] Dr. Mayanaz also discusses attendance at *mawlid* as a religious act that some participants may find calming as they cope with their own problems. Emotion has also been discussed by D'Souza around exemplars for Shīʿa women. Fatima is seen as both emotional and powerful, and interestingly, her power as the "Mistress of the Day of Judgment," which gives her the authority to intercede on behalf of those who love her family, comes from her strong emotion; love of her by God and from her, for her family, as well as the intense "sorrow and anger" at events that transpired over her lifetime.[471] The expression and cultivation of emotion is thus key in Shīʿa women's religious practice.

Although emotion is significant for Minhājian women, Minhājian men who celebrate *mawlid* also express emotion and discus its importance with relation to *mawlid*; however, women's *mawlid*s are framed differently at Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī in subtle ways.

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[467] Diane D'Souza, *Partners of Zaynab: A Gendered Perspective on Shia Muslim Faith* (Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 84.

[468] D'Souza, 87.

[469] D'Souza, 93.

[470] D'Souza, 109.

[471] D'Souza, 32-33.

First, as Dr. Mayanaz has pointed out before, there are no events at the center that are truly "only" for men, but there are *dars* classes, *mawlid* and other selected events that are only for women. The center has two major *mawlid* celebrations: the "grand" *mawlid*, which is open to the entire community, and the women's *mawlid* which is only for women and children. The grand *mawlid* is celebrated consistently on the actual date of the prophet Muhammad's birth, that is the 12th day of the Islamic month of *Rabīʿ-ul-Awwal*. This celebration is the culmination of smaller-scale *mawlid*s celebrated every day starting on the 1st of *Rabīʿ-ul-Awwal*. At this annual *mawlid* celebration in 2015 at the Dallas branch, Shaykh Abdul Basit al-Qadri al-Azhari, an imam at the center, served as the host for the event. Most of the event on this particular year was held in the men's section of the prayer hall, with cameras recording and displaying the scene to the women's side of the prayer hall. Small groups of school girls recited *naʿat* and were allowed to cross over the folding standing barriers set up to divide the prayer hall into men and women's sections to do so. Most of the *mawlid* was characterized by speeches emphasizing the importance of *mawlid* and providing evidence of its legitimacy in the Islamic tradition. Shaykh Abdul Basit encourages the youth "show their *jazba* (passion), show their emotion" as the new generation of Muslims. He then calls for attendees to display this "fervor and *muhabba* (love)" by "[raising] the slogans of Allah and his Rasūl." In a system of call-and-response, loud calls of "*Naʿrā-e-Takbīr! Naʿrā-e-Risālat! Naʿrā-e-Hyderī! Naʿrā-e-Ghousīya*!" are answered by "*Allahu Akbar! Ya Rasūl Allah! Ya ʿAli! Ya Ghous-e-ʿAzam*!" respectively. These are the main displays of emotion at communal *mawlid*, and I never witnessed the same call-and-response at ladies' *mawlid*s, although women were

often urged to recite "*Assalāmu alaika ya Rasūl Allah, wasalāmu alaika ya habīb Allah*"

together with the *naʿat* reciters loudly and with passion. A bulk of the communal *mawlid*

program is spent defending *mawlid* using scripturalist strategies. Shaykh Abdul Basit also

states that "Allah instructs us to be happy- but on what occasion? [...] When Allah gives

you *fadl* [bounty]." He then cites Q10:58 that states, "Say, "In the bounty of Allah and in

His mercy - in that let them rejoice; it is better than what they accumulate." The prophet

Muhammad is thus considered Allah's bounty, a gift in which Muslims should rejoice and

celebrate. Emotion clearly appeals to men as well, and MQI members often insist there is

no difference between men and women's *mawlid*. At the same time, in an interview from

September 15th, 2018, Dr. Mayanaz states that "it is a fact [that] women are more

emotional than men." She cites differences between men and women, like their

physiques and hormones, which mean that when women receive the message from

mawlid, "the expression is different;" that is, women "cry more" due to what is perceived

to be their intrinsic nature.

It is this perceived nature that result in descriptions of the grand *mawlid* published

online varying markedly from descriptions of women's *mawlid* or other women's events.

In an account of the Dallas Grand *Mawlid* from December 2017, which was published on

the MQI global website, the event was methodically described in terms of speakers and

structure. The introduction was simple, stating the community's happiness at the

celebration of the 12th of *Rabīʿ-ul-Awwal*:

> 'The onset of the blessed month brings with it a message of peace, happiness, and
> tranquility. Our individual happiness is no match to the collective happiness
> symbolized by the holy month.' With this message of *Shaykh-ul-Islam* Dr.
> Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan International Dallas celebrated the

Grand Mawlid-un-Nabī at Uways al-Qarani ﷺ[472] Auditorium of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan Dallas on 13th of Rabīʿ-ul-Awwal on December 2, 2017.[473]

However, an online description of the women's *mawlid* held earlier in March of the same year explicitly connects the practice of *mawlid* with emotion and love:

> The essence of faith lies in the state of one's heart—possessing this state bestows a mu'min with its sweetness. Even believing in the Prophet (ﷺ) is, in its essence, an act of the mu'min's heart; his obedience and following originates from one's love for him. The Prophet's blessed arrival to this world is Allah's mercy. His birth is declared in the Qurʾan as the greatest benevolence upon mankind *[Qurʾan 3:164]*. How can this favour be appreciated? How can the arrival of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) be given what it deserves in honour and veneration? How can one's love for the Prophet (ﷺ) in the depth of the heart be expressed? The answer to these questions all take us to one direction, which is the expression of joy and happiness by celebrating *Mawlid* al-Nabī (ﷺ): that we arrange gatherings and become emotional in his love, and every step we take is taken in his obedience. Being of the Community of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan Dallas tried to keep the memory of this 1400-year-old emotion alive by arranging a gathering of Mawlid al-Nabī (ﷺ) at Jame' Hasan al-Basri Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan Community Center Dallas on Saturday, March 4, 2017. An impressive number of audience [members] consisting of sisters of all ages and children attended the program from near and far distance.[474]

Despite denying any differences in communal and women's-only *mawlid*, women also acknowledge that a successful *mawlid* will make its attendees listen attentively and bring

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[472] This symbol is a miniature of the Arabic phrase "ṣallā Allāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam," or "the blessings of God and peace be upon him," an honorific reserved for the Prophet Muhammad. Because I quote Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, I maintain their method of honoring the Prophet here and uphold the use of this symbol in direct quotations.

[473] "USA: Grand Mawlid-un-Nabi ﷺ Ceremony Held Under MQI Dallas," Minhaj-ul-Quran International, accessed September 20, 2018, https://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/42271/USA-Grand-Mawlid-un-Nabi-Ceremony-held-under-MQI-Dallas.html

[474] "Dallas, USA: Fourth Mawlid-un-Nabi (ﷺ) Programme Held," Minhaj-ul-Quran International, accessed September 20, 2018, https://www.minhaj.org/english/USA/tid/40036/Dallas-USA-Fourth-Mawlid-un-Nabi-Programme-held.html

tears to their eyes. At women's *mawlid*s, I was able to observe what moments in the ritual elicited this sort of reaction.

Emotion and Naʿat Recitation

Women exert authority as experts of ritual practice best observed during major ritual events like the *mawlid*. The Dallas Minhāj Women League's annual *mawlid* program provides a venue for all women to get involved in the groundwork of the organization, whether by performing *naʿat*, or religious hymns, preparing speeches or helping with the distribution of food or awards for Sunday School children. Female organizers use this platform to give new members and other women the opportunity to recite in front of the crowd, giving women the chance to get involved with the MQI. For MQI members, the primary goal of holding *mawlid* is to reinstill love for the prophet Muhammad in the hearts of those attending. By striving to involve different women at each *mawlid*, MQI women create new opportunities to successfully cultivate this emotion.

Figure 72- Dallas Women's annual mawlid program in 2018

Many MQI women have grown up hearing these *naʿat* recited at school, at religious gatherings, and in the home by their mothers and grandmothers; they have an emotional, embodied connection to the recitation of *naʿat* and the performance of *mawlid*. "Female power" is often expressed through relationships between mothers and daughters and dialogue in Sufi devotional poetry and lore.[475] Every female MQI member I spoke with stated a family background or roots in celebrating *mawlid* and being exposed to *naʿat* as a motivation to remain involved in this work. MQI women have mothers and

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[475] Abbas, 120.

grandmothers who celebrated *mawlid* and recited *naʿat* to express their love for the prophet Muhammad.

The participation of women in Islamic musical traditions is well documented.[476] In her work *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual*, Shemeem Burney Abbas shows that in South Asia, women participate in Sufi musical traditions as not just influencers "in their roles as mothers, daughters, nurses and mentors," but also as "patrons, singers, guardians of Sufi discourse, mystics, creators of Sufi poetry, and participants in Sufi ritual."[477] My fieldwork both supports and enhances this idea, as women in the MQI not only recite *naʿat* , they produce *naʿat* , take courses or train in *naʿat* recitation, and coach their children in the art of performing *naʿat* as a means to cultivate love for the Prophet both in themselves and in the audience.[478] Minhājian women thus also serve as students, guides, and producers of Sufi musical traditions. Among these roles, Dr. Mayanaz particularly praises those *naʿat* reciters who write their own *naʿat*, which she emphasizes illustrates a sincere love of the Prophet and a greater understanding of how to develop that love in audience members through the spoken word.[479]

One of the members regularly featured at women's *mawlid* in Dallas was Naheed Siddiqui, a woman renowned for writing her own *naʿat* and praise for the Prophet. She

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[476] See for example Anne K. Rasmussen, *Women, the Recited Qurʾan, and Islamic Music in Indonesia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010); Shemeem Burney Abbas, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002); Karen van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1995); Marion Holmes Katz, "Women's Mawlid Performances in Sanaʾa and the Construction of 'Popular Islam,'" *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40 (2008): 467-484.

[477] Shemeem Burney Abbas, *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual: Devotional Practices of Pakistan and India* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002), xx.

[478] Although I did not meet any women at the Dallas branch who personally took the *naʿat* recitation course, it is offered through MQI's online learning portal and Dr. Mayanaz's son took the course.

[479] Interview with the author from July 26, 2017.

was also invited to recite at the *mawlid* and in an online description of the event, she was praised as having been inspired to write it after performing *hajj*, or the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca:

Yasrab des se āne wāle	You who return from Medina
Hāl-e-dil kyā batlāein	How can I relay the state of my heart?
Ākhein bhar bhar ātī hain	My eyes fill to the brim
Aur palkein ānsūn chalkāein	And my lashes overflow with tears
Gūmbad-e-Khizra kī yādein	When memories of the Green Dome[480]
Jab tanhāyī mein āti hain	Are recalled in moments of solitude
Waqt kī dharkan tham jāti hain	The ticking of time slows
Yād āti hain azānein	The calls to prayers are remembered
Rawza-e-anwar kī kirnain	When the rays of the shrine of lights[481]
Jab dil pe utartī hain yāron	Shine upon the heart, friends
Dast-e-dil buland karte hī	As I raised the hands of my heart
Bhūl gaye hum duāein	I forgot the prayer
Rang-o-nūr kī bārish se	Ever since the rain of color and light
Hum bhīg kar jab se āye hain	Soaked me and I returned
Dunya ke rang phīke par gaye	The colors of the world pale in comparison
Yeh dunya ko kyā batlāein	How can I relay this to the world?
Yasrab des se āne wāle	You who return from Medina
Hāl-e-dil kya batlāein	How can I relay the state of my heart?
Ānkhein bhar bhar ātī hain	My eyes fill to the brim
Aur palkein ānsūn chalkāein	And my lashes overflow with tears

The composition of *naʿat* demonstrates a sincere love of the Prophet. This love is reflected in Siddiqui's *naʿat* through emotional imagery, such as effects on the heart and expressions like weeping, serve as illustrations of this love.

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[480] Masjid an-Nabawī, or the prophet Muhammad's resting place.
[481] Masjid-un-Nabawī

During one of the center's grand *mawlid*s, the one held with men and women on December 2, 2017, or the 12th of *Rabīʿ-ul-Awwal*, one of Dr. Mayanaz's sons came on stage to recite *naʿat*. This was the first time I had seen him recite and I was surprised that Dr. Mayanaz had not mentioned his interest before. It was quite possibly the most beautiful recitation that night; there was a sense of the room going quiet initially, then gradually, the sound of men saying "SubhanAllah" or praising God loudly to show their appreciation of his recitation. The audience listened attentively as he altered his pitch, the length of certain notes and volume to emphasize different lines in the *naʿat*. The *naʿat* was titled "*Mein To Khud Un Ke Dar Kā Gadā Hūn*" (*I am but a Mere Beggar at his Doorstep*) and relayed a common theme of suffering, despair and longing for the Prophet, themes I will expand upon later in this chapter. Later, during a conversation about the practice of *naʿat* recitation and its effect on the audience, I asked her how one would know whether a *naʿat* was recited well. She emailed me two vidoes later of the *naʿat* recited by her son and revealed she had selected the *naʿat* for him. Both videos featured *naʿat khwān* with beautiful, melodious voices. She shared how she had instructed him to focus on the difference between the two videos; the second video featured Syed Khālid Hussain reciting the *naʿat* at an MQI event and was identified as being particularly moving

by Dr. Mayanaz.[482] She attributes this to the words and points out his decision to leave

out the follower stanza from the original *naʿat*:

Mere ānsūn bahut qīmtī hain	My tears are very precious
Inse wābastā hai un kī yādein,	They are connected to memories of him[483]
In kī manzil hai khāk-e-Medīna	Their destination is the dust of Medina
Ye gauhar yūn hī kaise lūta dūn	How do I simply give away these jewels?

Dr. Mayanaz found these lines troubling because referring to one's tears as valuable or

jewels goes against the teachings of saints, whose training is "to consider yourself lower

than everyone." She also praised the lines that referred to the Prophet directly, outlining

the criteria for how one should choose a *naʿat*.

The video of Hussain's *naʿat* performance recommended by Dr. Mayanaz was

highly emotional.[484] Hussain stood on stage reciting before an MQI crowd while initially

Qadri sits in one of several chairs on either side of the performer. He begins with the initial

stanza that serves as the chorus, after which Qadri contributes by improvising lines for

the *naʿat khwān* to recite before the crowd:[485]

Main to khud unke dar ka gada hūn	I am but a mere beggar at his doorstep
Apne āqa ko main nazr kya dūn	What could I possibly offer[486] my master?
Ab to ānkhon mein bhī kuch nahin hai	Now there is nothing even left of my eyes
Varna qadmon mein ānkhein bichha dūn	Or I would place them upon his lap.

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[482] The video is not dated, but I would estimate the performance was from the early 2000s based on my visual analysis of Qadri's transformation featured in Chapter 3.

[483] The prophet Muhammad

[484] Tanveer Ahmed, "Main Tu Khud Un K Dar Ka Gada Hn by Syed Khalid Hussain," YouTube video, 18:50, posted on March 24, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSNF5HVa0rY

[485] I indicate lines improvised by Qadri with an asterisk.

[486] The word "nazr" is spelled نذر indicating a gift, as in the word nazrāna. The following lines are a play off the other word "nazr" which is spelled نظر and indicates sight

The *naʿat*'s central theme is the suffering and poverty of the reciter, and the impassioned love felt for the prophet Muhammad. After the initial stanza, the camera cuts to the crowd; after the camera cuts back to the reciter, Qadri and the other men on stage are seen standing next to Hussain, maintaining the respectful stance advocated during *mawlid* by holding their hands clasped above the navel:

Āne wālī hai un kī tārīkh	His date[487] is approaching
*Phūl nāton ke ghar ghar sajā dūn**	I will decorate every home with bouquets of *naʿat*
Mere ghar mein andherā bahut hai	There is too much darkness inside my house
Apne palkon pe shamme jalā dūn	Let me light lanterns on my eyelashes
*Āne wālī hai unn ki sawārī[488]**	His carriage is approaching
*Phūl gajron ke ang ang saja lūn**	I will decorate each body with garlands of flowers
Aur be-nigāhī pe merī nā jāyein	Do not judge me for never having seen it
Dīdā war mere nazdīk āyein	Those with true vision, come close to me
Mein yahin se Medina dikha dūn	I can show you Medina from here
Dekhne ka salīqa sikhā dūn	Let me teach you the eloquence of sight

Upon reciting the line "I can show you Medina from here," Hussain starts sobbing to the point of not being able to recite the next line. Qadri also sobs, shaking his head from side to side, biting down on his lips as his shoulders shake uncontrollably. When I saw this

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[487] This refers to his birthday, the 12th of *Rabīʿ-ul-Awwal* when *mawlid* is celebrated.

[488] This stanza is suggested by Qadri, after which Hussain repeats it loudly.

recording, I was surprised because I had never seen Qadri weep publicly, let alone such an unrestrained, public display of emotion. This sight elicits a strong reaction from the crowd; a member of the audience starts the call-and-response chant of "*Naʿrā-e-Takbīr! Naʿrā-e-Risālat*!" and even more loudly, "*Hum apne nabī ke? Dīwānay*!" or "We are our Prophet's- Ecstatics!" The chanter then pushes them further to demonstrate their fervor by yelling, "*Zarā zor se bolo*!" or "Say it loudly!" Once this impassioned display died down, Hussain was able to continue with the recitation of the *naʿat*.[489]

After watching the video, it was clear why the *naʿat khwān*, Syed Khalid Hussain, became famous after this *naʿat* performance. He elicited a famously emotional reaction from Qadri. In an email dating back to July 27, 2017, Dr. Mayanaz sent me this video hoping it would elucidate the criteria for choosing a *naʿat*, and I understood why she chose this *naʿat* for her son to practice and recite. The words of the naʿat both humble the reciter and elevate the Prophet, and the themes of devotion to the Prophet, poverty and suffering that characterize *naʿat* allow the reciter to elicit an emotional response from the crowd and infuse the hearts of listeners with love for the Prophet.

Dr. Mayanaz's comparison of this performance with another of the same *naʿat* challenged my initial belief that musical talent would play heavily in how women judged the success of a recitation. I had witnessed many different recitations during my time in fieldwork and surprisingly, musical talent was not always a primary concern. The primary concern of the MQI organizers of mawid was to involve people and allow them to express

their love for the prophet Muhammad. Minhājian women view the recitation of *naʿat* and the performance of *mawlid* as a means of instilling love for the Prophet, an emotion they see as a religious obligation upon all Muslims. For Dr. Mayanaz, the ability to recite *naʿat* well means being able to affect the audience, and this ability is inherently dependent upon the reciter's sincere love for the prophet Muhammad. She outlines the signs of a good reciter in an interview from July 26, 2017:

> [They are] people who are not looking for praise for themselves. … [They have] real love for *Rasūl Allah* in their heart, [have an] understanding of *sīra* (biography of the prophet Muhammad), and also some passion for writing *naʿat* … Because if you're writing *naʿat*, you're thinking [about love for the Prophet.] If they bring tears in your eyes, that means it's affecting your heart. Some … *naʿat* reciters are so good …but you don't get any kind of spark in your heart. And that has to do with how their deeds are too. If your outer [self] is good, and … your heart is not … [engaged in] *riyāzat* (spiritual practice), you know, striving in the pleasure of Allah, … that will show in your outer [self] too. Sometimes people are reciting *naʿat* but they are not even doing five [daily] prayers.

Dr. Mayanaz's analysis indicates first that the ability of a *naʿat khwān* to affect others is directly correlated with the reciter's compliance with *sharīʿa* norms, for example, their observance of the five daily prayers. For Minhājians, the virtues of the interior are intrinsically linked with exterior actions made obligatory in the Qurʾan, like praying and fasting. According to Dr. Mayanaz, *naʿat* both cultivates and displays the interior. Therefore, an effective *naʿat khwān*, according to her, should both be affected by *naʿat* by having true love for the Prophet and possess the ability to affect others. To cultivate this true love within one's self, MQI women advise listening to and reciting *naʿat* and being engaged in the practice of *mawlid*. The ritual allows audience members to recall

and revive the past, recreate a connection with the Prophet Muhammad and thus reinstill love for him.

In *How Societies Remember*, social anthropologist Paul Connerton finds that "it is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society's past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions."[490] Furthermore, Connerton argues that "images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past ... are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances."[491] The early Islamic period funerary traditions referenced by Halevi "concerned ritual actions that were repeatedly performed by Muslims with an affinity for memories of Muhammad."[492] Likewise, members of the MQI perform *mawlid* and through that performance, if effective, relive the past with the Prophet Muhammad through their collective memories of him. Dr. Mayanaz explains the purpose of *naʿat* recitation during the *mawlid*: "You learn love for [the Prophet Muhammad]. You learn how he was brought up, his appearance, how he used to walk in the streets of Madina, how he grew up...the *naʿat* gives that image and vision so that you can try to envision it in your mind." Minhājian women are able to share experiences and assumptions because they share memories of love for the prophet Muhammad. Their shared past is most apparent when MQI members recount difficulties teaching their children about the importance of *mawlid*. Women like Baji Riffat and Dr. Mayanaz have a shared memory with their mothers of the Islamic past concerning the Prophet

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[490] Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3.
[491] Connerton, 3-4.
[492] Halevi, 11.

Muhammad; however, part of their incentive to learn more through Qurʾan and hadīth

stems from the difficulties faced when the next generation would ask for evidence.

MQI women promote *naʿat* as a method to nurture love for the Prophet, but they

emphasize this must be done in conjunction with maintaining the obligations outlined in

sharīʿa law. Listening to and reciting *naʿat* is encouraged as a means of keeping "the heart

alive," but this is the effect as long as the reciter is following Islamic ideals. As Dr. Mayanaz

explains in an interview from July 26th, 2017:

> The dead heart has no signs of *imān* (faith) if the person is not practicing. To make your heart alive, you need to see what you're putting into your heart from your body, from your senses. If you're listening, or hearing, or watching things that aren't pleasing to Allah, that will harden your heart. *Naʿat* will keep your heart alive.

Thus, *naʿat* recitation or *mawlid* performance is a means to an end; the message is the

greatness of the Prophet Muhammad: his character, his piety, his dedication to Allah and

his *umma*, and the best way to make the Muslim community feel love for him is through

naʿat that give this message.

Female exemplars often refer to *naʿat* or lectures as pedagogical tools to "touch

the hearts" of those who hear them, thus bringing them towards correct practice and

belief. As a *dars* leader, Baji Riffat cites *naʿat* as a tool to bring an audience towards love

for the Prophet. In an interview in Dallas on October 21st, 2017, she states:

> If people sit there and listen to your lecture for two or three hours, you cannot get that message in their hearts. If you get that message into their hearts with melodious voices that praise Allah and his *Rasūl*, then that's going to touch your heart eventually.

Emotion is key to religious formation and women cite emotion as part of their journeys to becoming active members of the MQI. However, as Baji Riffat points out, not everyone can be receptive to emotion unless your senses are open to it:

> If you are present, not just physically present, [but] everything is present, meaning your soul [and] your ears; your ears are listening but whatever they are listening to, you can feel the words are reaching your heart. And when you see [Qadri], like on the TV, you feel like he's talking just to you. … I've heard people saying that when you first start listening to him, [that] he yells, [that] he did not get emotional and you don't understand what he's saying. I've heard people say that, [but] I don't understand it. … I think the thing is … [if] all your senses are present and want to listen to Allah's message through the Prophet [Muhammad] [and] what he said to us, [only] then can you receive it … you can feel that someone wants to tell you something.

The idea that one's senses need to open and receptive to receiving spiritual knowledge is based in the Qurʾan, which states: "And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless."[493] MQI women and exemplars recognize emotion as a tool to allow eyes to see and ears to hear. Followers of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan seek to fulfill the mission of the organization: to bring others back towards a love of not only Allah, but the Prophet Muhammad. One of the key ways that the MQI does this is by promoting *mawlid* to instill love and respect for the Prophet in the hearts of believers. As a practice that undeniably was not celebrated during the lifetime of the Prophet, practitioners of *mawlid* face criticism from other Muslim

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[493] Q7:179.

communities and have accommodated and adapted in order to encourage the continuation of the ritual.

Criticism and Defense of Naʿat and Mawlid

The practice of *naʿat* recitation, its restrictions and parameters, are debated amongst *ʿulemāʾ*. When seeking opinions on the parameters surrounding acceptable practice, middle-aged and younger internet-savvy Muslims Muslims often turn to popular forums on Islamic practice and fiqh such *as Islam QA*, *Islamweb*, *Ask Imam*, and *About Islam*. Most often, the conversation around the permissibility of *naʿat* regards its recitation by women at all, whether they may recite in front of men, what *naʿat* can or should be recited, and whether *naʿat* can be accompanied by musical instruments. A survey of these popular forums reveals that when scholars are against the recitation of *naʿat* , they most often cite issues that overshadow the main purpose of *naʿat* or *nashīds*: to educate the listener by conveying a spiritual message.[494] These issues are often deemed as incorrect practice, such as softening the voice during recitation, its recitation by women, and the use of musical instruments[495] or other special effects which then lead to negligence in *sharīʿa* obligations.[496] However, the shaykh who answers questions on

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[494] Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid, "Haraam Issues in Modern Anaasheed and the Conditions of Nasheed Being Permissible," *Islam QA*, published February 2, 2008, https://islamqa.info/en/91142.
[495] "Ruling on Islamic Songs," *Islamweb*, published August 14, 2002, http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/index.php?page=showfatwa&Option=FatwaId&lang=E&Id=84664.
[496] Muntasir Zaman, "What is the Islamic ruling of listening to 'Islamic' nasheeds?" *Ask Imam*, published September 20, 2013, http://www.askimam.org/public/question_detail/26951.

the popular website, About Islam, does recommend the performance of *naʿat* and *nashīd* as a method for cultivating love for the Prophet and introducing non-Muslims to him.[497]

Naʿat are often appreciated in Pakistan across the spectrum of different schools of thought within Islam. However, a common point of contention held by opposing factions like the Deobandīs or Ahl-e Hadis is the content of poetry in many popular *naʿat*. In her honors thesis on *naʿat* reciters in Pakistan, Amna Ilyas addresses this criticism of *naʿat,* and many of her interlocutors, including male and female *naʿat khwān*s, or *naʿat* reciters, agreed with the critique. Dr. Abdur Rauf Rufi, a professor as well as a reciter and writer of *naʿat* , disapproved of *naʿat* that "elevates the Prophet Muhammad to the rank of God" and blamed such hymns on "illiteracy and amateur poets."[498] When listing the qualifications of a good *naʿat* reciter, Marhoob Hamdani, an acclaimed *naʿat khwān* in Pakistan, mentions that a reciter must be careful of the words he or she uses in praising the Prophet in order to avoid praise "to the extent that [the Prophet Muhammad] seems equal to God."[499] *Naʿat khwāns* interviewed by Ilyas cited three qualifications for those who perform *naʿat*: the *naʿat khwān* should be a role model (or exemplar), should be well-versed in Qurʾan and Sunnah, and should have a good reputation.[500] In order to avoid accusations of shirk, *naʿat khwāns* anticipate commonly held criticisms of *naʿat* in their

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[497] Ahmad Kutty, "How to Introduce the Prophet to Non-Muslims on his Birthday," *About Islam*, published December 6, 2016, http://aboutislam.net/counseling/ask-the-scholar/prophet-muhammad-ask-the-scholar/introduce-prophet-non-muslims-birthday/.
[498] Amna Ilyas, "Hamd and Naat: Muslim Women Singers in Pakistan," Honors Theses 80 (Bates College, 2013, 49). http://scarab.bates.edu/honorstheses/80.
[499] Ilyas, 28.
[500] Ilyas, 29.

own performances and apply many of the same concepts to their own understanding of the etiquette surrounding a proper *naʿat* recitation.

Naʿat recitation is an important part of general religious practice in Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan. Followers of the organization celebrate occasions in the Islamic calendar such as *mawlid* and the death anniversaries of saints like ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jilani through the recitation of *naʿat* and key figures in the organization like the grandson of Tahir-ul-Qadri, Hammad Qadri, and famous *naʿat khwāns* such as Milād Raza Qādrī, have been trained in the art of *naʿat* recitation and perform publicly at MQI events.

Like the *naʿat khwāns* interviewed by Ilyas, MQI women incorporate negative comments or feedback into their practice in order to avoid censure and often address this criticism directly. During an interview with Dr. Mayanaz on the ways MQI members use Facebook, she narrated an incident in which a man posted underneath a video of Minhājian women reciting *naʿat*: "Women were reciting the *nashīd*s and men were listening. One person just made an objection and said, 'Didn't Qadri *sāhib* teach you not to sit and listen to *naʿat* recited by women?' … I sent him the link because I knew the lecture [where Qadri said] that you can listen to the recitation of *naʿat* and praise of the holy Prophet from a woman too. So, I sent that person the link for his education." She later sent me the lectures and links she had sent to the critic of MQI women reciting *naʿat* publicly, and I recognized the discussion. In it, Tahir-ul-Qadri is asked about *fiqh* and answers the question, "Are women allowed to recite *naʿat* in front of men?" He answers

"Yes, with *purdah*. … This is a *sunna* of the holy Prophet …."[501] He goes on to date the practice of *naʿat* recitation to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, when a group of young children gathered on rooftops and in the streets to sing "*Talaʿ al-Badru ʿAlayna*" upon the Prophet's arrival to Quba just outside the city of Medina. Watching the video, I understood purdah to refer not just to the rules around how a woman dresses herself, but particularly, to the practice of women concealing themselves around non-mahram, or unrelated, men. Thus, I understood Qadri as saying that women may recite *naʿat* in front of men if they are behind some sort of a barrier.

However, Dr. Mayanaz took strong objection to my interpretation when I asked her about it. She immediately sent two links to me over e-mail. The first was a website with a video of Qadri answering a question from a member of the audience on how women can wear hijab if they find it difficult to manage in a Western work atmosphere. The publisher of the website personally titled the video "How Women Should Wear Hija[sic], Viel[sic], Parda, Viels[sic], or Scarf by Tahir-ul-Qadri ."[502] Qadri answers that women should just make sure their bodies are covered and wear a scarf, avoiding black if possible and choosing colorful garments. He focuses on the issue of confidence, guiding women on how to explain their choice of clothing as a cultural matter. He never uses the word *purdah* in the video.

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[501] Shazyboy259. "Are Women Allowed to Recite Naat in Front of Men? Shaykh ul Islam Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri." YouTube video, 1:52. Posted [June 6, 2010]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yTQ9dDeslM0.
[502] "Parda for Women in Islam," *Dr. Tahir-Ul-Qadri Adresses* (blog), March 23, 2015,
 http://drqadri786.blogspot.com/2015/03/how-women-should-wear.html

The other link she sent to me is a portion of a lecture given by Qadri. In it, he discusses how ʿulemāʾ wrote texts or issued fatwas with the conditions and environment of their time in mind; thus, today, if a woman cannot take a face veil for whatever reason and her religious resolve is strong such that she does not fear temptation, she does not have to wear the niqāb. According to Qadri, wearing a niqāb is dependent upon three factors: the setting, necessity, and the religious resolve of the wearer. This means that taking a face veil may be obligatory for some women if a situation calls for it or the woman fears a lack of self-control. However, it is important to note that Qadri also focuses on ʿaql, or rational thought, when issuing this fatwa, addressing his audience: "If [other scholars] focus on this alone, then let me ask their ʿaql: you can hide your face, but what about the temptation of the eyes? Temptation is almost entirely of the eyes! Then what will you do, close your eyes?"[503] When discussing rulings for contemporary issues then, Qadri does not just rely on Qurʾanic verses, hadīth and sunna; he also resorts to discourse around ʿaql to appeal to his audience of primarily women. At the end of the clip, Qadri also discusses the obligation of women in the moral formation of their children, stating: "The upbringing of children is dependent upon your own moral development. If you are pious, God-fearing and righteous, only then can the moral formation of your descendants, children and families advance." As in the first video, Qadri never explicitly mentions the term purdah in this lecture; thus, Dr. Mayanaz understands the term purdah to refer to

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[503] Muhammad Arshid, "Women Hijab View Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri." Youtube video, 2:18. Posted [Feb. 1, 2011]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btFXZ2fAFUY&feature=youtu.be.

what women wear. For Qadri, however, *purdah* is not simply modesty in clothing or covering the bodily form, as he insists in the same lecture:

> Anyways, I have solved your problem. My point in explaining these things was that … if you protect your households from [cable network, tv, dramas, films, songs, or other general programs,], then you will be saved. And the moral training of your children is dependent upon your own upbringing. If you are pious, God-fearing, and righteous, only then will your family, your children, your descendants have the proper upbringing.

Purdah is thus related to modesty of gaze or audition as well; women are encouraged to be careful of what their eyes consume in the form of television and what their ears consume in the form of music.

The former video mentioned was part of a longer lecture, which I listened to in order to understand the context of Qadri's advice. The full lecture contained a much more relevant excerpt defending the practice of women coming to listen to non-*mahram* (unrelated) men and vice versa. In the lecture, Qadri remembers that he was asked about *i'tikāf*, the practice of seclusion during the last ten days of Ramadan, most often in the *masjid*, or in the case of the MQI, at Itikaf City, a camp where thousands gather to hear lectures and engage in worship over the period. In the lecture, Qadri states:

> Someone asked me, is my *i'tikāf* invalidated by looking at a non-mahram man? The ʿulemāʾ and *muftīs* go by reading solely what is written in books of *fiqh*. With rulings, there should also be *hikmat* (wisdom), there is also *tafaqquh* (pondering), and *ijtihād* (reasoning). There are many angles to this. Just remember this my child: *I'tikāf* [or a state of purity] is broken only by the man's lustful look or touch towards someone, a wicked glance. That's it. If you don't look with a wicked glance, but you're looking with righteousness, or you're looking or hearing for the purpose of education or moral training, then looking and listening are equivalent. If you didn't look [because you have wicked thoughts] and you listened, then even a non-*mahram*'s voice shouldn't be heard by you, and nor should your voice be heard by him. To what extent will you issue fatwas then [if looking and listening are always considered improper]? By that account, it is a non-*mahram* who recites

Qurʾan, then don't listen to that either! Don't listen to the *naʿat* or Qurʾan recitation or *dars* lectures of a non-*mahram*! No, this isn't correct. Those actions that can be proven from the *sunnat* of the Prophet, purity cannot be invalidated by those actions. Our Master (Prophet Muhammad), may God's blessings be upon him, used to give a talk and moral training once a week, every week to women. This is the *sunnat* of our Prophet, you understand?[504]

Qadri ultimately uses the example of the Prophet's actions to justify unrelated men and women being in one another's presence if only for the purpose of furthering one's religious education or development and if there is no danger of temptation. This further elaborates on his idea of purdah as modesty of the gaze, which he also relates to intention.

For the women of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, *naʿat* recitation is not only permissible but encouraged as a means of becoming closer to God and the Prophet Muhammad. The women I interviewed illustrated their concern with orthodoxy, or a "correct model," as Talal Asad has defined in his essay, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," when it came to *naʿat* recitation.[505] When interviewing MQI members, female leaders defended the practice without even being explicitly asked about its legitimacy. Dr. Mayanaz states, "Music is allowed in Islam because this is not distracting you from the worship of Allah." In a follow-up interview, when I restated her words, she quickly stopped me to state that she specifically meant music that brings you closer to Allah through the content of the song. As Lois Ibsen al-Faruqi states in her seminal essay, "Music, Musicians, and Muslim

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[504] World Islamic Network, "Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri: Insan kay 3 Dushman Nafs, Shaitan, aur Dunya." Youtube video, 37:33. Posted [Dec. 18, 2017]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2M8UxuYNqoc.
[505] Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam" (Washington, D.C.: Center of Contemporary Arab Studies, 1986), 15-16.

Law," terminology is key because translation often does not convey the nuance between languages and genres. Ibsen al-Faruqi also draws attention to another problem of terminology: what is and is not "music" in Islamic culture?[506] Dr. Mayanaz does not object to the English term "music;" this may stem from her extensive work in translation with the MQI and a recognition of the limitations of language itself.

As Ibsen al-Faruqi states, it is important to consider who academic scholars are allowing to speak for Islam "to avoid misunderstanding the attitude of Islam toward music and musicians."[507] As mentioned in a previous chapter, my dissertation draws on the understandings of Minhājian female exemplars as part of the wave of "new religious intellectuals." It is important for Dr. Mayanaz to emphasize the purpose behind the listening; music that brings you closer to Allah is most often *naʿat* or *qawwālī*, while unacceptable music would be anything that pulls you away from the remembrance of Allah. As she addresses the different reasons why music is not entirely forbidden in an interview from September 15th, 2018, Dr. Mayanaz cites "moderation," stating, "Don't make the religion dry! Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan serves as a bridge between the past and the present. We read the Qurʾan not just for *baraka*, but also [to draw] lessons for today."

For Dr. Mayanaz, the prohibition of music relates only to its interference with types of worship enshrined in *sharīʿa*, like prayer and fasting. After our interview on September 15, 2018, Dr. Mayanaz sends me a video later that afternoon of Qadri called

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[506] Lois Ibsen al-Faruqi, "Music, Musicians, and Muslim Law," *Asian Music* 17, no. 1 (1985): 6.
[507] Ibsen al-Faruqi, 3.

"Good Music is Allowed in Islam,"[508] and cites two hadīths as scriptural evidence of this

belief. The first is a narration by 'A'isha, who reported:

> Abu Bakr [her father] came to see me and I had two girls with me from among the girls of the Ansar and they were singing what the Ansar recited to one another at the Battle of Buʿath. They were not, however, singing girls. Upon this Abu Bakr said: What is (the playing of) this wind instrument of Satan in the house of the Messenger of Allah and this too on 'Id day? Upon this the Messenger of Allah said: Abu Bakr, every people have a festival and it is our festival (so let them play on).[509] (Muslim in al-Sahih: vol.2, pg. 607-608, Hadīth #892)

In our interview, Dr. Mayanaz describes the Day of Buʿath as "the first day of the meeting

of Ansar of Madina with … the Holy Prophet and the girls were singing in happiness and

[out of] love of the Holy Prophet in the house of Sayyida Aisha. This was the relevance of

the Day of Buʿath." Music is thus allowed if done to remember Allah or out of love of the

Prophet. Another hadīth cited by Dr. Mayanaz relates music to the Qurʾan itself. She cites

ahādīth that relate the revelation of the Qurʾan to the ringing of bells or the dragging of

chains:

> 'Abd Allah (b. Masʾūd) reported the Messenger of Allah as saying: "When Allah, the exalted, speaks to send revelation, the inhabitants of heaven hear the clanging of a bell from the heavens like a chain being dragged across a rock, and they swoon. They continue to remain like that until Jibril comes to them. When he comes to them, they recover and say: 'O Jibril, what did your Lord say?' He would say: 'The truth,' and they would say: 'The truth, the truth.'" (Abu Dawood in al-Sunān, book 41 Hadīth # 47200)

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[508] Serving Islam: Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri, "Good Music Allowed in Islam Authentic Hadith Shaykh ul Islam Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri," YouTube video, 9:12. Posted June 30, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pFDVl3rV7I.

Thus, if Allah speaks in the form of music, music could not be forbidden if it reminds you of Allah. The hadīth links this revelation as the clanging of a bell or the dragging of chains, that is in the form of music, to truth itself. She cites another hadīth in which the Prophet, too, narrates hearing revelation in the form of a bell's chimes:

> It was narrated that ʿĀʾishah said: "Al-Harith bin Hisham asked the Messenger of Allah: 'How does the Revelation come to you?' He said: 'Like the ringing of a bell, and when it departs I remember what he (the Angel) said, and this is the hardest on me. And sometimes he (the Angel) comes to me in the form of a man and gives it to me.'" (Sunan an-Nasa'i Vol. 2, Book 11, Hadīth 934)

Here, the medium of music facilitates one to remember. This is often a goal cited with the celebration of *mawlid* through the recitation of *naʿat*; they allow one to *remember* their love for the Prophet.

In the interview from September 15th, 2018, Dr. Mayanaz addresses head-on the notion that *naʿat* recitation is a *bidʿa*, or an innovation, emphasizing that 45 different Companions had recited praise poetry, or *naʿat,* during the lifetime of the Prophet.[510] She cites Qadri's book, *Mawlid Al-Nabī: Celebration and Permissibility*, a text close to 700 pages long.[511] She also likens *naʿat* to "Qurʾanic tafseer," stating "You're praising the prophet, which is what we read in the Qurʾan. The translation of Qurʾan is *naʿat* --that's

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[510] Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Mawlid Al-Nabī: Celebration and Permissibility* (London: Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, 2013), 436-442.

[511] Although she does not mention this, her name is listed as part of the Translation and Editorial Team of the dense text on the page listing publication information. Broadly, the book defends mawlid by relating the practice of celebration and commemoration to remembrance and gratitude. For example, the five daily ritual prayers by Muslims are stated as acts of gratitude originally performed by certain prophets, e.g., Adam prayed the two Fajr prayers as prayers of thanks for the acceptance of his repentance. These acts were so appreciated by God that they were made obligatory for Muslims. In turn, the argument is that by praying the ritual prayers, we are in a way commemorating the acts of gratitude by these prophets to Allah. Qadri goes on to support mawlid using the orthodoxy of the idea of expressing gratitude through the Qurʾan, *sunna* and the rulings of other scholars.

how I would define it because Aisha said if you want to know the Qurʾan, look at the life

of the Prophet. That's a hadīth." In an interview in Dallas from October 2017, Baji Riffat

cites the Qurʾan 49:2-3 to outline the proper *adab* of listening to *naʿat* with respect. The

verse states:

> O' you who have believed, do not raise your voices above the voice of the
> Prophet or be loud to him in speech like the loudness of some of you to others,
> lest your deeds become worthless while you perceive not.
>
> Indeed, those who lower their voices before the Messenger of Allah - they are
> the ones whose hearts Allah has tested for righteousness. For them is
> forgiveness and great reward.

Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan women discursively link the practice of *naʿat* recitation to universally

accepted sources of Islamic knowledge, including the Qurʾan, the hadīth, the *sunna* and

the *seera* or biography of the Prophet Muhammad. As previously mentioned, MQI women

cite the *mawlid* as a means to instill love for the Prophet. They emphasize, in particular,

the role that *mawlid* plays in the ethical formation of children.

Within their own understanding of *mawlid*, however, women often accommodate

common criticisms of the practice. *Mawlid* is commonly attacked as a birthday

celebration of the Prophet, a *bidʿa* in itself. Aware of this idea, Dr. Ghazala Qadri accounts

for this critique in an interview on January 20, 2018 without being asked explicitly, stating:

"Every year on *Milād-un-Nabī*, we had a program in our house, and so it was something

that I grew up with, not even necessarily considering it as celebrating the birth of the Holy

Prophet peace and blessings be upon him. … For me as I was growing up, it was just once

a year, we had a gathering in the house and women sang *nashīds* and my mother … gave

a talk … [and] we talked about the Holy Prophet peace and blessings be upon him." Baji Ghazala also talks about the struggle between the organizations in college she encountered that called the practice *bidᶜa* and her parents, who, like others I interviewed in the organization, cited the religious practices of their parents as evidence of the sound nature of *mawlid*. She summarizes this debate, stating, "It's really about what is *bidᶜa*, what is innovation … and what is it about the *mawlid*?" Simply following the practices of their parents was not enough to sway Baji Ghazala. She recounts meeting Qadri and asking him specifically about the idea of *mawlid* as incorrect practice. Like detractors of their ᶜ*aqīda*, however, Qadri and followers of the MQI both convince and are convinced by the same strategies, namely the citation of Qurʾan and hadīth. Baji Ghazala recalls that Qadri stated two verses in defense of the *mawlid*, Q10:58 and Q21:107, both verses mentioned earlier that were cited in Baji Riffat's talk at the *mawlid* in 2018. As Baji Ghazala explains, "In one verse, you're told [in Q10:58] to celebrate the *fadl* and the *rahma* [the bounty and the mercy] and you're told to spend your wealth; and what is that *fadl* and *rahma*? Of course, the *rahma* is the Holy Prophet [cited in Q21:107]." She goes on to mention *sunna,* referring to the Prophet Muhammad's practice of fasting on a Monday, indicating he did so because he was born on a Monday. Additionally, she narrates a hadīth that she attributes to Sahīh Bukhārī about Abū Lahab, the uncle of the Prophet who famously antagonized him throughout his life. Abu Lahab appeared in a dream to al-ᶜAbbas, stating that he is punished in hellfire every day with the exception of Monday, when he is given some relief through a bit of water. This is because he released a slavewoman, Thuwayba, out of joy from hearing about the birth of his nephew,

Muhammad. Katz also cites this narrative and the Prophet Muhammad's practice of fasting on Mondays as commonly cited in defense of *mawlid*. For women in the MQI, *mawlid* is thus intimately linked with correct practice as a Muslim, an idea emphasized in two women's *mawlid* programs I attended in Dallas.

Annual Women's Mawlid-un-Nabī Program

At *mawlid*s in 2017 and in 2018, the role of *naʿat* in Islamic practice, the importance of the Prophet Muhammad, and the responsibility of women in promulgating this practice in order to cultivate love for the Prophet were highlighted either through speeches or Qurʾanic *tafsīr*.

On March 4th, 2017, the Minhāj-ul-Qurʾanbranch in Dallas, Texas held their fourth annual *Mawlid-un-Nabī* program. The program was held for women only in the Uwais al-Qarnī auditorium of the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī center. Guests and members of the branch attended in their finest clothes and listened with the utmost respect as women recited various *naʿat* and gave brief speeches on the importance of *mawlid*.

The program started with the recitation of a famous verse in the Qurʾan, the light upon light verse in Surah Nūr (Q24:35). It was recited by Baji Riffat's daughter, a woman who has memorized one third of the Qurʾan, followed by the translation, which was read aloud by a young girl from the Sunday School program. The Minhāj Women League often tried to include young girls in this way in order to encourage them and inspire them to participate. The translation was from *Irfan-ul-Qurʾan*, Tahir-ul-Qadri 's translation of the Qurʾan in light of mysticism:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His Light (which is glowing in the world in the form of Muhammad's Light blessings and peace be upon him] is as a niche-like (sacred breast) wherein is glowing the lamp (of Prophethood), the lamp contained in a crystal globe (the radiant heart of the Prophet Muhammad blessings and peace be upon him). This globe is (as dazzlingly bright owing to reflection of Allah's Light) as a glittering star. (This lamp of Prophethood) is lit with the sacred olive tree (i.e., either due to the blissful communication of divine Revelation from the Realm of divinity or owing to the blissful genealogical tree of the Prophets and the Messengers). It is neither (merely) eastern nor western (rather universal and cosmic in its generously infinite luminosity. The likeness of this lamp of Prophethood is as if) its oil (i.e., Light, due to its genuine and inherent potential capability) is glowing, though no fire (or the radiation of celestial miracles and divine Revelation) has even touched it yet. (So it) is Light upon Light (i.e., the Light of Prophethood upon the Light of the Holy Essence, denoting a Self-Embodying double Light). Allah takes to (the gnosis of) His Light whom He wills. And Allah explains similitudes for (the guidance of) people and Allah is Well Aware of everything.

The translation is not a direct one, but rather, as the title of his translation indicates, Qadri interprets this verse mystically and indicates his extensive explication using the parenthesis. This translation was meant to set the stage for an event that was held out of love and a display of complete reverence to the Prophet. Qadri's may be understood as exegesis, interpreting the light in the verse as Muhammadan Light, or *nur-e-Muhammadī*. Although some MQI members have expressed that they do not believe the Prophet is present at the *milād* physically, they recite as though he is present to cultivate love, respect and the comportment appropriate for such a momentous occasion and in the hopes that their good deeds will be presented to the Prophet.

Audience members are expected, but not compelled, to maintain a respectful stance, and the mindful attention of the audience is often cited as an indication of the success of a *mawlid*. An effective *mawlid* does not just have women paying attention but also participating. Women in the audience should praise the prophet Muhammad by

reciting *durūd* with the women on stage. MQI *mawlid*s always have a panel of women who sit on stage and serve as the organizers of the event. They recite *durūd* and sometimes also recite *naʿat* as part of the program. The demographic of the *naʿat* reciters is varied, ranging from women who are grandmothers, to young teenagers and Sunday School children who have been taught and prepared for this performance by their Sunday School teachers and Dr. Mayanaz. Children and young ladies under the age of 18 tend to recite in groups, coordinating their performances with rehearsals sometimes organized by MQI women at the center. However, most of the *naʿat* reciters are younger mothers in their 20s and 30s. At MQI events, the panel of women on stage use *durūd* to help with the flow of the event; *durūd* is recited at the beginning and end of each performance, both speeches and *naʿat*s, to signify moving on to the next portion of the program. As *durūd* is sent upon the Prophet in between *naʿat*, reciters are introduced by the MC and women in the audience are implored to wait until the conclusion of the program before leaving. Dr. Mayanaz shares that when gathered for a meritorious and religiously praiseworthy purpose, it is not recommended to leave in haste for prayers. Although this does not happen at every MQI *mawlid*, for this one, prayers are pushed back slightly to accommodate the delay in schedule.

The most effective *naʿat* chosen by women to recite at the above-mentioned *mawlid* emphasized strong emotions like vulnerability and deep devotion and love. In the *naʿat* "*Tajdār-e-Haram*," or "King of the Holy Sanctuary," the refrain calls out consistently to Prophet Muhammad, or the King of the Holy Sanctuary, to grant the audience one glance of mercy:

Qismat mein merī chain se jīna likh de	Write my destiny as living in peace
Doobe na kabhī mera safīna likh de	Write that my ship never sinks
Jannat bhi gawārah hai magar mere liye	Heaven is acceptable to me but
Ay kātib-e-taqdīr Medina likh de	'O Writer-of-Fates write Medina

Tājdār-e-haram	King of the Holy Sanctuary
Ho nigāh-e-karam	Grant one glance of mercy
Hum gharībon ke din bhī sawar jayenge	We, the poor, will see our situations improve

Hāmi-ye be-kasān	Champion of the Helpless
Kya kahega jahān	What will the world say
Āp ke dar se khālī agar jāyenge	If we return from your door empty-handed?
Tājdār-e-haram	King of the Holy Sanctuary

Many of the *naʿat* chosen and recited by women at the *mawlid*s mention the poor, the helpless and endless suffering. Women in the audience would often have tears in their eyes when reciting *naʿat* that reference the intense desire to see the Prophet or the ill fate of the reciter. Some audience members sway or raise a hand just slightly if particularly moved by the naʿat being recited. When asked about the type of people who attend *mawlid*, Dr. Mayanaz states that often the poor are attracted to *mawlid*:

> If you see the history of the prophets [and] the *awliyāʾ* (saints), you'll see most people who followed the prophets were poor! Poor people, people who were not very influential … so you'll still see those things even now. … If they have issues in their life, they want to come more towards Allah because they have suffered so much. So, you see that historically: … people who are not very influential, rich or wealthy, they are more inclined towards the invitation.

In the diaspora, the probability that attendees are actually poor is unlikely but Dr. Mayanaz clarifies that this does not mean wealthy people do not attend such gatherings. Rather, *mawlid*s appear to be more therapeutic for those who are suffering; they attend because "they might get the thing they're looking for." Poverty is thus associated with suffering in general and attendees may either come to seek divine intervention for their difficulties or because they can identify with the sorrow, pain and distress conveyed in the *na'at*s recited by women.

Other key moments during the *mawlid* emphasize the poor and make use of vivid imagery. At the point of salām, when women stand with their arms folded as a sign of respect to acknowledge the Prophet Muhammad, a group of young women recited "*salāt-o-salām*," or salutations and blessings upon the Prophet. During the recital of this *salāt-o-salām*, perfumed rose water was sprinkled on the attendees as they stood out of respect. This recitation was a compilation of a variety of verses from different compositions selected by the women organizing the conference. The verses selected reflect an emphasis on the believers or listeners as vulnerable and highlights the Prophet's simplicity:

Our *salām* upon the one who helps the helpless
Our *salām* upon the one who lived like a pauper despite being a king
Our *salām* upon the one who had not silver nor gold
Our *salām* upon the one who slept upon a tattered mat made of palm leaves

Our Master, accept our salām
O morning breeze, go to Medina
Tell the Lord
Our master, accept our *salām*

We are broken with pain
We are drowning in injustice
It has been long, O Prophet, since our fates have abandoned us

On the Day of Reckoning for our nation
You are our only hope.

Our master, accept our *salām*
Your people cry for you night and day
Give us but one glance of mercy, our master
When will we get a glimpse of those alleys of Taiba in Medina?
Our master, accept our *salām*

This composition, recited as the climax and followed immediately by the conclusion of the program, consistently highlights images of the vulnerable. The first verses draw upon the idea of the Prophet as someone the believers both highly revere as a man who "helps the helpless" and chooses to "live as a pauper despite being a king" and yet, believers can identify with him as he had "neither silver nor gold" and slept on a "tattered mat made of palm leaves." These images of the Prophet are immediately juxtaposed with verses about the poor state of the believers, suffering from pain and injustice, abandoned by their fates, and left crying out for the Prophet. Women are reminded about the prayer to be held after the conclusion of the program, and the *mawlid* is concluded with a lengthy du'a asking God to grant success to Minhāj-ul-Qur'an and Qadri and create a true and sincere love for the Prophet in the hearts of those attending. Dr. Mayanaz stops me and asks, "Did you get any food? Here!" and grabs three boxed meals of *biryānī* with *raita*, or a cool yogurt condiment, in a container on the side. She thrusts them into my hands. I know this is a gift given to attendees, but I resist, feeling embarrassed at the thought of walking out with so much food. She insists, "No, take them for your family, they will eat [it]." This happens at every major event held at Jame' Hasan-al-Basri.

At the *milād* or *mawlid* held in February 2018, the program commenced with Surah Duha. This Qurʾanic chapter (Q93) again was recited by Baji Riffat's daughter. The translation was read aloud by a young girl from Sunday School using Qadri's *Irfan ul Qurʾan:*

> By the growing morning bright (when the sun gains height and spreads its radiance), Or By (the growing sunshine of your Messengership rising like) the morning bright (whose radiance has replaced the darkness of ignorance with the enlightenment of guidance,) And by the night when it covers up. (Ever since He has chosen you,) your Lord has not forsaken you. Nor is He displeased (ever since He has taken you as His Beloved). Indeed, every following hour is a better (source of eminence and exaltation) for you than the preceding one. And soon your Lord shall bestow upon you (so much) that you will be well-pleased. (O Beloved!) Did He not find you an orphan, and then provided you (a dignifying and graceful) abode? Or Did He not find you (compassionate) and provided (in your person) a shelter for orphans? And He found you engrossed and lost in His love and then made you achieve the coveted objective. (Or) And He found in you (a leader) for a straying people so He provided them guidance (through you). And He found you seeking (closeness with your Lord), and (then blessed you with the pleasure of His sight and) freed you of every need (forever). (Or) And He found you compassionate and benevolent, then (through you) made the destitute non-liable. So, never should you be strict with any orphan, Nor reproach any beggar (seeking help at your door), And proclaim (well) the bounties of your Lord.

Qadri's translation, which was read aloud after the recitation, included exegesis which embraced the role and importance of the Prophet, speaking of him as the Beloved of Allah. At the *mawlid*s I attended, women usually chose verses to recite and explicate from the Qurʾan that addressed the status and greatness of the prophet Muhammad. At this 2018 *mawlid*, Baji Riffat served as the MC and gave a short introduction, using two verses in her speech to instill love for the Prophet and love for the practice of *naʿat* recitation. The first verse is from Qurʾan 10:58 using Qadri's translation, titled *Irfān ul Qurʾan*, and it states: "Say: '(All this) is due to the bounty and mercy of Allah (bestowed upon you

through raising Muhammad [blessings and peace be upon him] as the exalted Messenger). So, the Muslims should rejoice over it. This is far better than (all that affluence and wealth) that they amass.'[512] Baji Riffat expounds on this verse and another verse of the Qurʾan as reasoning behind why the MQI celebrates *mawlid* and recites *naʿat*:

> In Surah Yunus, there are two orders given to us: one is *fazl* [bounty/favors] and one is *rahmat* [mercy], we should celebrate this. Now the question arises of Allah's mercy: what is it exactly? … In Surah Anbiya 107, it says: 'And, (O Esteemed Messenger,) We have not sent you but as a mercy for all the worlds. A lot of exegetical scholars (including Imam Oonsi who cites Sayyid Ibn Abbas in his exegesis) that the mercy God mentions is Muhammad. Likewise, Imam al-Suyuti and Imam ibn al-Jawzi both wrote an exegesis of Surah Yunus and cited this verse, stating that Allah has called the birth of Muhammad the bounty and mercy of Allah. Oftentimes, people ask why should we celebrate *mawlid-un- nabī*? Why are we gathered here today? By Allah's order, we are here to celebrate the mercy and favors Allah has bestowed on us. When we listen to *naʿat*, a spiritual mood is born. That mood transports us towards a love of the Prophet saw. A fountain of respect and love for Allah's Beloved bursts within our hearts when we come here.
>
> Why did Allah make the life of our Master Muhammad, peace be upon him, his habits, and his character as a mercy to all of the world? When we hear about these qualities, another fountain [of love] bursts [within our hearts.] If we follow the prophet and his *sunna* [way of life] and when both fountains of love and obedience combine, then one's faith is complete. Celebrating *milād* is not cultural or traditional; celebrating *milād* means that we want love and respect for the Beloved of Allah to arise in our hearts and [we want to] become those who follow our Master (peace be upon him)'s character and way of life. We come here with our children to make such a connection in our hearts and theirs of love for the Prophet [in the hopes that] we learn something from the character of the Prophet and emulate his character and way of life.

Baji Riffat emphasizes following the *sīrat*, or character, and *sunna*, or the Prophet's way of life as a means of instilling love for him. *Mawlid* and *naʿat* recitation are used

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[512] *Irfān ul Qurʾān*, trans. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri (Lahore: Minhāj-ul-Qurʾān Publications, 2011).

prescriptively as methods to cultivate this type of love. By likening *naʿat* to Qurʾanic *tafsīr*, dating its origins to the time of the Prophet and describing it as a tool to reach the heart of mankind, women illustrate the vital role that *naʿat* plays in facilitate an understanding of the religion and allowing the believer to experience the emotions that would link her to her faith more intimately. Furthermore, like al- ʿAzafi and al-Rassa, the *ʿulemāʾ* cited by Katz, Minhājian women themselves justify the *mawlid* on the basis of the religious formation and pedagogy of the children they are responsible for raising. Baji Riffat not only emphasizes that women come "with [their] children to make … a connection in our hearts and theirs of love for the Prophet," but this connection is quite apparent when attending any MQI women's *mawlid*. Baji Riffat and Dr. Mayanaz lead women in different ways at the center, and their daughters are equally active within the youth group. The female exemplars sometimes give an introduction at the *mawlid*s, make announcements, or call attention to the important type of work done by the MQI in Dallas. Their daughters similarly serve as master of ceremonies or start the program off by reciting Qurʾan or reading and explaining verses of the Qurʾan which relate to the *mawlid*. Dr. Mayanaz even cited her main incentive in translating the *naʿat* of Qadri as to "have the young generation understand what he wrote," citing the general lack of Urdu fluency in the children of Pakistani immigrants.

Katz finds that "most *mawlid* texts (with the exception of those that bear a distinct ṣūfī flavor) do not appear to seek any profound or prolonged development in the emotional makeup of the participant."[513] However, with the MQI as a visibly Sufi

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[513] Katz, 139.

organization, followers and leaders of the MQI alike seek the emotional and moral development of Muslims as a distinct motivation and goal for celebrating *mawlid*. As Dr. Mayanaz puts it, "Most people say [they attend *mawlid*] because they claim their love of the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him. But love is not like after you leave this place [the *mawlid*] and you're back to your normal routine." Thus, MQI women often view *mawlid* as a means to instill religious values that will persist beyond the event itself and the moral obligation that women perceive themselves as having to their children and the Muslim community at large is not to be underestimated.

Conclusion

Minhājian women understand that practices like public *naʿat* recitation and *mawlid* are criticized by other Muslim communities as innovation. At MQI events and gatherings, female MQI members exert their authority in the subject by citing Qurʾan, hadīth and other bodies of key Islamic canon, such as the biography of the Prophet or his actions, in justifying the practice of *naʿat* and *mawlid*. Women are as concerned as religious scholars like Qadri with matters of correct practice and belief, seeking answers in the Qurʾan and hadīth to justify the practice of *mawlid*.

However, in addition to scripturalist strategies used to defend controversial practices, women also favor the use of affective strategies in the defense of *mawlid* and *naʿat* recitation. *Naʿat* and *mawlid* are not simply justified according to scripture; for Minhājian women, these practices are inherently connected to the ethical formation of Muslims and their efficacy is dependent upon the practitioner's adherence to religious

norms outlined in the *sharīʿa*, like ritual prayers and fasting. *Naʿat* is thus both an expression of and a means of cultivating virtue. As a means of cultivating virtue, the practices of *mawlid* and *naʿat* recitation are particularly important for women as figures who bring their families into the movement. MQI women emphasize their moral obligation in the religious formation of children and the community at large. Family is crucial to Minhajian women; not only do they stress the importance of teaching their children the correct tradition, they also consistently cite the practices of pious predecessors, alluding to a sense of proper practice and emotion being lost with each new generation. Although male scholars do this as well, female exemplars primarily cite this reason when questioned about why they listen to *naʿat* or why *mawlid* is important. The women I interviewed always started and ended with stories of their families, recalling the devotion to the Prophet their mothers exhibited, and the intense desire to create the same feelings in the hearts of their children.

At the same time, women cite Islamic obligations to feel love and reverence for the Prophet, to delight in his existence and to feel joy at his creation. These emotions are used to validate the practice of *mawlid*. *Naʿat* recitation is used as a tool to encourage these emotions within audience members, and *naʿat* is considered as an effective way to both cultivate and display the interior state. By preferring those *naʿat* that emphasize the vulnerable, poor and downtrodden, women hope to elicit an emotional reaction to the recitation, the expression of which allows the audience to cultivate these emotions within themselves.

Having said this, it is still not clear how *naˤat-khwāns* elicit these emotions and reactions within the audience. Is simply listening respectfully to the *naˤat* enough for an audience member to be able to instill love for the Prophet, or is the duty to instill this love mainly upon the reciter? The MQI offers courses on *naˤat* recitation, demanding further research on *naˤat-khwāns* how are taught to create an emotional response in the listener.

Women's authority is performed in the practice of *mawlid* and *naˤat* recitation using the arts, emotion and scripture. Women establish themselves as authorities in the defense of *naˤat* and *mawlid*, citing Qurˀan, hadīth and examples from the life of the prophet Muhammad. However, what characterizes a *mawlid* or *naˤat* recitation as successful is the virtue and emotions that are cultivated in the hearts of listeners and attendees. Emotion has historically been used to both critique and validate the practice of *mawlid*. For the MQI, emotion is everything. When Baji Ghazala discusses the effect of *naˤat*, she states:

> It just affects the heart. That's all it is. … The signs of a good *naˤat* is it just makes your heart explode. It makes you cry. It creates some kind of emotion in you. The whole point of a *nashīd* is to create an emotional attachment to the holy Prophet. …It hits you in the heart, that's it.

Awakening these emotions in the hearts of believers foster an enduring love for the Prophet, allowing women to fulfill a desire and the MQI's mission to reinstill this love. Minhājian women are devoted to the mission of the organization to reinstill love for the Prophet. *Mawlid* and the *naˤat* recited at them should develop a spark in the heart, induce tears in the eyes, and infuse a love for the prophet Muhammad that persists long after women say *salām* and the ritual practice concludes.

Conclusion: Sufi Women's Practice and Agency in the Age of the Internet

On October 3ʳᵈ, 2018, just a few weeks before my dissertation oral defense when I was busy planning how I would present my work to the committee, I got an uncharacteristic text from Dr. Mayanaz in the early dawn hours: Baji Riffat's mother had passed away. My heart immediately sank for her. Baji Riffat was extremely close to her mother, who raised her and her siblings as a young widow, and Baji Riffat had even moved to Dallas to be closer to her. Whenever Baji Riffat discussed *naʿat* or her devotion to her *ʿaqīda,* her mother inevitably came up, and when she indicated her desire for her children to be pious, she wondered out loud how she would teach her children all that her mother taught her. Even in the late stages of her illness, her mother tried to attend Baji Riffat's dars, sitting in a chair close to the door so that she wouldn't have to walk as much. When she was too weak to attend, the dars was projected over Skype on Baji Riffat's phone so that her mother could pay attention from home. I knew Baji Riffat must be devastated.

Dr. Mayanaz notified me of funeral arrangements, and I rushed to Jameʿ Hasan al-Basri to attend her funerary prayer later that day. When I arrived, the center was packed with both regular attendees of the center and co-workers of Baji Riffat, all wanting to comfort her during such a difficult time. When the community held a prayer gathering for Baji Riffat's mother a few days later, I attended with my infant son. Dr. Mayanaz confided that she was very nervous because she was giving a brief talk about the life of Baji Riffat's mother and the lessons we should take from it. "I never speak in front of audiences," she said. This was true; I had never seen Dr. Mayanaz even give a talk to our small dars group or at the center mawlids. When I arrived, I was shocked to see an arrangement unlike

anything I had seen in almost two years of fieldwork at the center: audio technology had been set up that would carry her words from the microphone in the women's area to speakers in the men's area. This seemed groundbreaking: women had never been given that sort of authority over men in this way before.

Dr. Mayanaz gave an emotional oratory, weeping and pausing at times to catch her breath while she narrated miracles that characterized the life of Baji Riffat's mother, emphasizing in particular her dedication to the mission of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan. When my baby started crying, unable to soothe himself in the noisy environment, I stepped into the hallway outside the women's area so that others wouldn't be disturbed. As I fed him, I heard attendees talk about Baji Riffat's mother. "I wouldn't say anything if I hadn't seen it myself," a regular attendee at the dars group said to another woman I didn't recognize. "I was at the burial spot before everyone arrived, and there was nothing. As soon as her body arrived, there were butterflies fluttering all over her grave."

This incident is indicative of the need for continued research on the MQI. The sudden death of a pious woman in the community was the instigator for an expression of female authority over both men and women in the physical space of the center. Prior to this development, Dr. Mayanaz's authority in the virtual sphere was firm, having authored a defense on Tumblr consisting of well-articulated responses to what she deemed propaganda against Qadri. She engaged in dialogue over Facebook with critics of Qadri (namely men who condemned him for allowing MQI women to recite naʿat publicly) and sent them evidence supporting Qadri's views. Dr. Mayanaz has moved from distinctly exhibiting authority over men in the virtual sphere to having the courage to give a speech

over an issue in which she is clearly an authority: female piety. By giving Dr. Mayanaz the space to impart knowledge to and exert power over an audience that includes both men and women, the MQI lives up to its goals to be revolutionary. Women are slowly being given the opportunity to articulate authority across gender lines in the physical space of the neo-*khānqāh*, rather than just in the virtual space alone.

In the previous chapters, I argued that women access power through a transnational religious and political movement, articulating authority and demonstrating agency in a patriarchal system that is dependent upon the authority of the male shaykh. Despite the powerful authority of the shaykh, female authority both constructs the community necessary to make a transnational organization function and sustains the movement by expanding its network of followers. Women cannot establish authority within the MQI independently of the shaykh; however, women establish authority through the *sohbat* and permission of the shaykh, through their professional and educational qualifications and through a genetic link that illustrates a hereditary love for the Prophet, often through mothers. Women exhibit authority as those who recognize Qadri as a saint and women help establish this sainthood by constructing his saintly biography and serving as privileged insides who contribute to the preservation of shared memory by this community. Women use the neo-*khānqāh* to subvert aspects of the patriarchal system that traditionally kept women in the margins and prevented them from having access to the shaykh. In this virtual space, they can express their devotion to the shaykh in ways that are not possible in person, be in and learn through his company by listening to hundreds of lectures on YouTube and serve in positions of power through

their mastery of social media. Women serve as the new religious intellectuals over the virtual sphere by articulating a defense of practices that are considered controversial by their adversaries. This power carries over into the physical space of the neo-*khānqāh*, but primarily with other women, although recent developments prove this is changing. In local branches, women serve as exemplars to other women, modeling how best to serve the mission and be in the service of the shaykh. The mission, to reinstill love for the prophet Muhammad, is realized through religious practice, namely *naʿat* recitation and *mawlid*. Criticized by adversaries for these rituals, women articulate a defense based on scripturalist strategies in the mode of their critics as well as affective strategies.

Women are key to the maintenance of the organization because they are integral to establishing a sense of community that will transgress boundaries of physical distance. Women create this sense of community 1) through the establishment of Qadri's living sainthood and the communal acceptance of this sainthood; 2) by building a reputation and image as a global movement with a shaykh that has universal charisma, both of which can appeal to Muslims outside of Pakistan; 3) by utilizing the internet in innovative ways to overcome distance and gain *sohbat* both with the shaykh and fellow *murīds*; and 4) through the far-reaching influence of women who are intensely devoted to the mission of the MQI and work relentlessly to fulfill it, training themselves outside of the traditional environment of the madrasah to respond to the criticism of adversaries by watching Qadri's lectures or reading his books. This is what allows them to serve as "new religious intellectuals" and foster the next generation of Minhājians in their children. Women in this contemporary Sufi revival movement perform authority and legitimize contested

practices against a dominant patriarchal discourse. This dissertation is thus primarily a contribution to the study of Muslim women's authority, but my work also speaks to ideas of transnational and digital religion and the study of emotion in Islam.

The ordering of the chapters reflects the organizational structure of the MQI, moving from the top of the organization with Tahir-ul-Qadri all the way down to members of the organization at local branches, particularly female members. Chapter 2 focused on Qadri, positioning him as a living saint through a discussion of theories of sainthood in religious studies and anthropology with a focus on the relationship between power and sainthood. Although sainthood is often declared after death, saints must establish their status in life. This chapter showed how the organization and Qadri himself follow Sufi methodology when it comes to establishing sainthood through hagiography. Here, sacred biography accomplished two main goals; first, it addressed Qadri's sacred genealogy by establishing his father as a saint. Second, through narrative accounts by Qadri and those close to him of his own life, sacred biography showed that Qadri's life has been marked by a series of miracles, which likewise indicate his status as a living saint. Establishing Qadri's sacred status is a crucial strategy by the organization that drives followers to act passionately for their convictions and, consequently, in his defense. Tahir-ul-Qadri appeals as a saint-like figurehead and shaykh to his followers, establishing his religious credentials in advocating for religious practices beloved to them.

Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan plays a crucial role in the lives of women with an intimate connection to a beloved religious practice: the *mawlid*. This is a practice that comes with a history of contestation, a past that is significant in the way Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan operates

today. Historically, Islamic reform movements in South Asia have clashed over the legitimacy of such practices, with the debate often being framed along the contours of modernity and tradition, authenticity and innovation. Chapter 3 positioned the MQI within a broader history of Islamic reform movements in South Asia, showing how this organization has moved beyond a concern with the local to position itself as a global force. Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan emerged from the movement of Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwī, which encourages saint devotion, shrine veneration, and religious practices like the *mawlid*. Movements like this are often accused of simply advocating local customs and traditions and engaging in innovation by advocating practices that did not exist during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. The MQI, like its predecessors, anticipates the criticism made by outsiders utilizing different techniques, including citing orthodox sources like the Qurʾan and hadīth, as well as traditionally Sufi methods, like proving the saintly status of their shaykh, Tahir-ul-Qadri. One way that the organization counters accusations of promulgating local erroneous customs is by creating global appeal, including visually. This chapter illustrated the evolution of Tahir-ul-Qadri's appearance from wearing primarily South Asian garments to wearing attire associated with the broader Muslim world, primarily Arab and Turkish clothing.

Qadri's transformation from a local preacher to an international scholar is part of an effort to brand the MQI's outreach beyond Pakistan. Smart and efficient use of the internet has been key to reaching out to communities beyond Pakistan and facilitating communication between communities. Chapter 4 illustrated the MQI's use of the internet to bridge the gap of distance between shaykh and *murīd*. The MQI uses its own website,

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to recreate Sufi models of *sam*ā*ʿ*, *sohbat*, and *baraka* which are traditionally experienced in the physical proximity of the *khānqāh* space. I posit that transnational community is formed both in the physical space of the gatherings of MQI followers and branch centers as well as these online spaces. I theorize this as the neo-*khānqāh*, which combines the online and physical spaces where members of Sufi transnational orders congregate. The existence of an online space in the neo-*khānqāh* serves as an important tool for women to exert Islamic authority and overcome barriers that exist in traditional Islamic spaces like the mosque and the madrasa. While women exert authority over other women in the physical space of the Jameʿ Hasan al-Basrī center, women establish authority over men in the virtual space of the neo-*khānqāh.* Virtual space also allows women to overcome limitations that exist in spaces like the mosque or madrasa that deny them front row access or the same *sohbat* as men to the shaykh.

Chapter 5 demonstrated how the organization functions through a system of exemplars which allows women to serve as figures of authority. Using the life histories of women of prominence within the MQI, I showed how female MQI members look up to other women in the organization who model exemplary behavior and ethics. Women serve as figures of authority to other women in the organization as well as within their own families. While the ultimate exemplar for Muslims is the prophet Muhammad, Tahir-ul-Qadri serves as the conduit through which MQI members gain access to the Prophet. However, as Chapter 4 illustrated, most members do not have personal or immediate access to him, thus necessitating frequent use and communication through the internet.

Women in the MQI, who, by virtue of their gender, do not have the same type of access to Qadri as men, develop virtuous selves through a system of female exemplars within the organization. In local branches, women like Dr. Mayanaz and Baji Riffat guide others through this system, encouraging women to attend and hold *mawlid* as a means of cultivating the self. Narrations of their own life stories, including how they discovered Tahir-ul-Qadri or Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan, are often marked by miraculous accounts that serve as indications of following the correct path. All of the MQI women I interviewed were born into this *ʿaqīda*, yet all recounted incidents of "coming to the truth" as part of their life stories.

Because of the intimate and beloved connection women report with the practice of *mawlid* and the naʿats recited during the events, they often vigorously defend these practices from those who frame them as *bidʿa*. Chapter 6 showed how MQI women defend the practice as a means to reinstill love for the Prophet using a variety of strategies. Although some strategies, like the reference of Qurʾan or hadīth, are in line with those used by their adversaries, MQI women also cite pious ancestors who engaged in the practice and the cultivation of proper emotion as evidence of the legitimacy of *mawlid* and *naʿat* recitation. Emotion is a tool used to cultivate virtues like love and respect for the Prophet Muhammad. Developing these virtues in their children was a key factor in celebrating *mawlid* for women. Women often cited their concern that their values and *ʿaqīda* do not disappear with the next generation and often their dedicated involvement with the MQI was driven by this motivation. Although Minhājian women do not employ the feminist label, they find greater strength in their roles as mothers and

wives, roles which they maintain give them more power to change and influence society than men. Minhājian women consistently emphasize the difference between men and women, from hormones and bodily differences to their function in society and how they relate to emotion and maintain that these differences mean that women should not compare themselves to men, but rather, work side by side with them to fulfill the mission. Like female mosque participants in Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*, MQI women operate within a patriarchal system and exert agency within the structures of this system. Women's agency, as Mahmood states, is not "consubstantial with resistance to relations of domination."[514] Rather, women articulate authority and exert agency to fulfill the mission of the MQI within a system that requires submission to the authority of the male shaykh.

Insights Into Working with the MQI

This dissertation asserts that MQI women in the U.S. are concerned with models of orthodoxy, exhibiting power and authority through the internet that gives them unprecedented access to knowledge and their shaykh in a transnational organization. The communication exchange across the internet gives MQI women an extended community in which they can exercise and coordinate strategies to prove the authenticity of their religious practice. This dissertation is not a thorough treatment of the MQI, an organization with active branches all over Europe, North America, and South Asia, but rather, focuses on the most active branch in the U.S. and a few key women within the

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[514] Mahmood, 10.

MQI, a research plan that was set into motion through a meeting with Dr. Mayanaz and witnessing the intensity of her commitment to Qadri and the organization.

MQI women accept Qadri's message and descend from a line of women who likewise believed and engaged in the same practices often criticized by the outside community. With the conviction and memory of their mothers and grandmothers' piety at stake, MQI women vehemently defend *naˤat* recitation and *mawlid* using both scripturalist and affective strategies, interpreting Qurʾanic verses and hadīth to accommodate and advocate the practices as a way to develop a true and deep love and respect for the prophet Muhammad. The ends also justify the means; *mawlid* and *naˤat* recitation are also promoted as a means of experiencing the emotions necessary to cultivate that love and respect.

This dissertation theorized the neo-*khānqāh* as the means through which the transnational Sufi organization is made sustainable. It is also the arena that allows women to overcome the limitations of traditional spaces like the masjid and madrasa by serving as "new religious intellectuals" (as defined in Kalmbach's work on Muslim women and Islamic authority). The groundwork of the MQI and close personal relationships are formed through local branches, while affection for the shaykh and a sense of belonging to a broader movement are forged primarily through the online environment. MQI women serve as figures of authority on the ground and are encouraged to do so by the leadership of the organization. Being a member of the MQI and following Qadri gives many women in the organization purpose and meaning to their lives. The organization's focus on women is recognition of women's power within society; however, the actual

power that women have within the organization is debatable. For the most part, women do not serve as figures of authority to mixed groups of men and women within the MQI because women's leadership is largely promoted through women's only initiatives.[515] For example, in 2018, the MQI founded a Women Parliament, a body that claims to promote "women's empowerment, education among women and elimination of social, economic, and political discrimination."[516] However, this is done within the context of MQI women, and only women with a master's degree and above take part in the Women Parliament; thus, the very body that should be empowering women with fewer opportunities fails at doing so for women with less education. Although they pass resolutions on issues like Model Town or condemnation of the firing upon a Supreme Court judge's home, the Women Parliament and its resolutions appear to be titular. It is difficult to ascertain what the Women Parliament accomplishes without any clear direction of how to achieve the lofty goals it sets; instead, with the existence of a body like the Minhāj Women League, the Women Parliament appears to be an official meeting of the MWL's highest ranking members in Pakistan.

As I mentioned in the introduction of the dissertation, there is incredible complexity to the structure of the organization; centers run independently and check in with other members regionally and then internationally. There are several wings, branches, and sub-branches, making it difficult to understand exactly who is responsible

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[515] The exception would be the Supreme Council on which Dr. Mayanaz and Dr. Ghazala both serve. According to Dr. Mayanaz, the Supreme Council is the Minhaj international body consisting of representatives from different regions that oversees programs, events, and activities of the MQI in their own country.

[516] "Minhaj Women Parliament Members Take Oath," *The Nation*, April 16, 2018, Accessed July 29, 2018, https://nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2018/minhaj-women-parliament-members-take-oath?show=blocks

for what within the MQI. The MQI is quick to create different wings and departments to serve various causes or demographics within the organization; for example, at various stages, the MQI has included the Council of Muslim Engineers and Technologists (COMET), and the Muslim Christian Dialogue Forum (MCDF) which later became Interfaith Relations. The Minhāj Women League, which earlier included primarily female South Asian immigrants in countries like the U.K., later resulted in the offshoot Minhāj Sisters, created to accommodate the new generation of women born outside of South Asia who were more comfortable conducting programs in English rather than Urdu. In many of these cases, the creation of extra wings and departments does not seem crucial to the running of the MQI itself.

The MWL, which presumably has a goal to unite women in the organization, could simply include programming aimed at the generation of followers born outside of Pakistan. The existence of these various branches reflects the MQI's reach to different groups; however, I felt overwhelmed by the sheer number of organizing branches and bodies within the organization which often had vague responsibilities. Thus, I was not convinced that this effort to illustrate the massive scope of the MQI's activity was successful. However, the Minhāj Women League is undoubtedly becoming more efficient and organized; training materials written in Urdu for the 2018 MWL Organizational Training Camp held in Pakistan are now being translated by women so that a distribution training camp may be held for the diaspora in Europe or North America.

Women in North America and Europe appear better positioned to exert real authority because they are in higher positions of power; other than Baji Ghazala, Dr.

Mayanaz is the only woman on the Supreme Council. I believe her connections with the shaykh, her educational and professional background and ability to exert influence on a large scale all contribute to this. She communicates with those interested in MQI all over the U.S., travels to MQI events around the world, and writes impassioned defenses of the shaykh 's actions and theory online. More importantly, women in the U.S. are exert real authority because they build a community from the ground up; they fundraise to build centers, do the advertising and organizing of events themselves, and educate women in order to create a community. The networks they sustain and expand upon construct the local centers that are the building blocks of the movement. There is no Women Parliament in the U.S.; their work is achieved through massive networking, generosity of spirit, and their ability to cooperate with men to sustain the movement outside of its original Pakistani context. Women in the U.S. have easier and faster access to the internet and are thus better positioned to use the virtual space of the neo-*khānqāh* to exert authority. Women are thus able to exert more authority in the context in which patriarchy is challenged, but this is not without its limits. Women are still in a self-consciously Islamic organization with a male-dominated power structure in which the shaykh holds authority. Women's authority in the MQI is therefore contingent upon their acceptance of the shaykh's authority. I witnessed the breakdown of this authority when the Alams, the family who exhibited intense devotion to Qadri initially, stopped following him as their shaykh. Asiya, the mother, was quickly abandoned by many of her co-disciples and the women who formerly coordinated with her on MQI efforts in Atlanta now sought the guidance of MQI exemplars outside of the city.

Thus, the acceptance of sainthood and authority are intrinsically linked in the MQI. Sainthood is vital even in this post-modern age, but the ways in which sainthood is being negotiated and the means through which power and knowledge are disseminated through these networks are changing drastically through the use of modern media and the internet. Proof of Qadri's special status before God is circulated primarily through the internet and is constantly revised and updated, and this is one of the many problems I faced while doing research.

Avenues for Further Research

There are many avenues for exploration outside of the scope or constraints of my dissertation. One future research project would be a more comprehensive ethnography of the lives of MQI women. Prior to the completion of a full draft for my dissertation, I texted Dr. Mayanaz with a basic question about courses offered through the MQI. In the past, whenever I had call or texted Dr. Mayanaz, she would respond within the hour, but in this instance, I did not hear from her throughout the day. She messaged me the next day, and when we spoke on the phone, she apologized profusely, explaining she had been busy helping members of the community. She mentioned the sort of issues that arose: a death, an illness, a divorce, and Dr. Mayanaz was busy with tasks like counseling, visiting the hospital and making funeral arrangements.[517] This was the first I heard her speak of her obligations to the community outside of the center, and when I expressed my

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[517] This is reminiscent of the responsibilities of Pentecostal female preachers in Elaine Lawless' *Handmaidens of the Lord*.

surprise, Dr. Mayanaz responded, "*Yeh kehne wālī bātein nahīn hain*," or "These aren't matters that should be discussed." At times, I would get a glimpse of community life outside of the center; women would briefly mention the impact of their involvement with the MQI on their professional lives, or their personal relationships. I sometimes heard about a wedding in the community between members, efforts to find a bride of the same *ʿaqīda*, or how to convince a son and daughter-in-law of the permissibility of *mawlid*. Conducting in depth ethnography of women's lives outside of MQI would give insight into how their participation in the organization affects their professional and personal lives on a daily basis.

Due to a number of constraints, I was not able to spend the significant amount of time in Pakistan necessary to do comparative work. Initially, one of my goals in studying the MQI's use of the internet was to determine whether women in the U.S. influence or affect the way women in Pakistan construct authority. Although I was unable to follow through with this plan, women in the Dallas branch rarely discussed what MQI women in Pakistan were doing. When I initially told Dr. Mayanaz of this plan anyhow, she was dismissive and insisted that I should go to the U.K. instead. I believe her indifference stemmed from the ways in which women are involved in Pakistan. Women in Pakistan appear much more involved with the MQI on a political scale through the Pakistan Awami Tehreek than women in the U.S, while women in the U.S. are more involved with establishing an active devotional community in their local branches.

As Dr. Mayanaz recalls during her initial efforts to establish a branch in Dallas, she followed other MQI branches, often those in the U.K., that were active and displayed the

events and activities of their centers online. MQI women in the U.S. appear more concerned with branches in the U.K. because their environment, both social and political, and thus, their main concerns, are similar to those in the U.S. In terms of scale, however, U.K. Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan branches are greater in number, size and success, as judged by their ability to garner a sizeable and involved population. MQI members in the U.K. are also particularly concerned with developing the next generation of MQI followers. The Al-Hidayah spiritual retreat, a British endeavor for MQI members in Europe, focuses on developing the next generation of MQI leaders. The retreat includes lectures and workshops on topics like loving the Prophet Muhammad, mentoring in the MQI, Islam in the U.K., social media, countering extremism, and the philosophy of the MQI and always closes with the performance of *naʿat* and *nashīd*s.[518] I predict that this type of engagement with the community on a larger scale and ability to coordinate efforts across Europe will undoubtedly influence women in Pakistan to conduct similar events. In fact, the Minhāj Women League in Pakistan recently launched an endeavor titled Al-Hidāyah (Guidance), possibly inspired by the famous guidance retreat camps held in Europe. Through this effort, women are trained to teach courses to other women on the Qurʾan, *fiqh*, and soul purification, representing the model I have witnessed in the U.S.

In his essay on the presence of Islam on the internet, Bruce Lawrence highlights this as an important question. Lawrence asks, "Who shapes whom? Does the homeland have a greater impact on immigrants abroad than immigrants have on expectations and

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[518] "Al-Hidayah Retreat United Kingdom," Al-Hidayah, accessed October 1, 2018, www.al-hidayah.co.uk

circuits of power within the homeland?"[519] Thus when studying a diaspora and cyber-Islamic environments, it is important also to think about questions of influence, power and authority between the homeland and the diaspora. One possible arena for research in which to explore this difference between the homeland and diaspora is through generational differences arising in the MQI. The differences between immigrants from Pakistan and generations born in the U.S. or the U.K., for example, have resulted in changes to the organization's structures with the creation of the MQI Sisters, separate from the Minhāj Women League, for younger MQI members born outside of Pakistan.

There also exist opportunities in the field of ethnomusicology for further research on the varying musical forms associated with Minhāj-ul-Qurʾan. The MQI trains those who are interested in *naʿat* recitation on its art, how to recite and how to cultivate the appropriate emotions in the hearts of the audience. The organization often also features qawwali groups at their events and this aspect of the MQI's activities was beyond the scope of my research here. I believe that studying bodily practices recommended in the MQI's prescriptive Minhāj-ul-ʿAmal, a practical guide for the spiritual and moral development of Minhāj-ul-Qurʾā n members, alongside courses that teach the art of *naʿat* recitation would allow one to articulate an understanding of how love for the Prophet can be reinstilled in the hearts of believers.

Contributions to the Field

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[519] Bruce Lawrence, "Allah On-Line: The Practice of Global Islam in the Information Age." In *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media: Explorations in Media, Religion and Culture*, eds. Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 241.

I anticipate this research contributing to the field in a few key ways. My dissertation contributes to ongoing scholarly work on Islam and sainthood by engaging with Hayden White's theory of emplotment to show how a saint is formed during his lifetime. This is crucial work as there is necessarily a limited time in which scholars can conduct research, and although the primary focus of this dissertation was not on Qadri's establishment of sainthood, my work does speak to the ways in which a community determines, authenticates and accepts a saint. There are also hints at what factors may cause rifts or disagreements amongst a community; in this case, Qadri's involvement in politics has led to members disavowing his saintly status.

My research sheds light on women's authority from the bottom-up; that is, authority that results from the validation that accompanies acceptance from the community at large. Female exemplars in the MQI were not trained in the madrasa setting and do not possess an ijāza; instead, they function as the "new religious intellectuals" outlined in the work of Hilary Kalmbach. Minhajian female exemplars fulfill this role within their community as members view them as exemplars and lived models of how to be a devoted disciple; they approach them for advice, praise their piety and commitment to the movement and take classes under them in which the exemplars interpret scripture. Their ability to do so is primarily through listening to Qadri's lectures or taking online courses through e-learning.

This digital component is another contribution of my work to the field as I anticipate that my research will be useful to those studying digital Islam, positing that transnational Sufi groups utilize the neo-*khānqāh* to make the network function. The

concept of a neo-khanqah illustrates the way that a neo-brotherhood operates, relying equally on virtual and physical space to sustain the movement, although there is still much to be done. The study of the neo-*khānqāh* is also crucial to scholarly debate on female Islamic authority. Volumes on Muslim women and authority have often focused on leadership in the mosque and madrasa space.[520] This dissertation contributes to ongoing scholarly debate by showing how online space allows women to overcome limitations that exist in settings like the mosque and *madrasa*. Through venues like Facebook and Twitter, MQI women engage in debate or preempt debate with the opposite sex who criticize their religious beliefs and practices. Thus, these spaces have opened the way for them as the "new religious intellectuals" theorized by Kalmbach, and I suggest that the virtual environment opens up new kinds of conversations, discourse that is often not possible in face-to-face interactions. As the instance of Dr. Mayanaz addressing a mixed gender gathering may indicate, women serving as figures of authority in the virtual realm of the neo-*khānqāh* may be one of the factors that contribute to women exhibiting power and authority in the local, physical spaces of the center. However, whether this type of female authority will continue to be exerted over men and women is uncertain and continued research is necessary to follow this development, its causes and its acceptance among the community and the broader movement.

One key contribution of my dissertation is to the field of ethnography of Muslim communities, in showing how Minhājian women live Islam as part of the Pakistani-

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[520] See Juliane Hammer, *American Muslim Women, Religious Authority, and Activism: More Than a Prayer* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2012); Masooda Bano and Hilary Kalmbach, ed., *Women, Leadership and Mosques: Changes in Contemporary Islamic Authority* (Boston: Brill, 2016).

American diaspora. Previous work on the MQI has focused on Tahir-ul-Qadri's philosophy or institutional studies of the organization. Ethnographic work with MQI women, however, allows readers to see how context changes the way that Islam is practiced, understood and provides meaning to the lives of its followers. In understanding Islam this way, we are reminded, as Joyce Flueckiger writes, "that universal Islam is lived locally [and that] vernacular Islam is shaped and voiced by individuals in specific contexts and in specific relationships, individuals who change over time in social, economic, and political contexts that also shift."[521] MQI claims to represent the silent majority of Sunnis who practice a Sufi-inflected "vernacular" Islam and engages in a discursive struggle against some other Muslim communities, including Wahhābīs and Deobandīs, over the territory of "what is Sunni Islam." The MQI branch in Dallas is very much shaped by its social context living in a Muslim-minority country, and the center's activities, such as Sunday School which educates young children according to the ʿaqīda of the MQI, is a part of this vernacular. The women with whom I worked serve as "new religious intellectuals" who speak on behalf of their religious community and defend their beliefs and practices. This dissertation then speaks to women's authority and the way that modernity has opened who can claim to be a "scholar" in Islamic communities.

Although the MQI appears to be dominated by men, women play a vital role in the organization's ability to endure. Women establish the shaykh's sainthood, expand the organization's network by bringing family and friends, and defend the ritual practices that

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[521] Joyce B. Flueckiger, *In Amma's Healing Room Gender and Vernacular Islam in South India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 2.

are key to fulfilling the mission of the organization. This dissertation remedies the gap in current literature on the role of women in the MQI. Indeed, my research suggests that the bulk of groundwork in the U.S. is being done by women, albeit behind the scenes in bringing their family and friends towards the cause. MQI women reject the label of feminist; instead, they articulate an Islamic model of a woman's role in society in which female exemplars from Islamic history are held up as models fulfilling particular roles. By upholding Fatima as an exemplar, MQI women are encouraged to fulfill their roles as mothers, daughters and wives and uphold norms of modesty. However, they are also urged to fight against injustice and stand alongside men, cooperating to fulfill political aims. The power of women comes from their roles as mothers, daughters and wives, and thus as developers of culture and influencers of society. My dissertation has shown the strength that women find in these roles, not only in their ability to effect change socially by bringing men to their school of thought, but also the strength of their belief derived from their mothers' teaching and training. While Tahir-ul-Qadri's teachings give women the tools to defend practices like *mawlid* and *naʿat* recitation and the MQI gives them the venue in which to do it, it is the mother's nurturing of a love for *mawlid* and the Prophet Muhammad that creates intensity of devotion and conviction for these rituals, the strength of which drives them to certainty. Women see their mission to reinstill love for the prophet Muhammad in the hearts of Muslims as one of revival, not of reform. They strive for a return to orthodoxy in which believers feel, experience and express a sincere love for the Prophet and allow this love to permeate every aspect of their lives.

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