



Imam Ahmad Raza
Sunni Scholar, Sufi and Scientist

A branch of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri's ancestry first came to India in the 17th century from Qandahar, also known as Kandahar City, South Afghanistan joining the Mughal imperial bureaucracy as soldiers and soldier-administrators. A family ancestor eventually settled in Bareilly [Uttar Pradesh], where he was awarded a land grant for military service.

The family of Alahazrat is dynamic with Ulama (Islamic savants) of blue blood and nobility. His grandfather, Hazrat Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) [d.1282/1866] was a great Islamic saint and savant of his time. He fought for the freedom of Indian Muslims in 1857. Breaking the family tradition of military service he became well known as a faqih (jurisprudence-one who is knowledgeable in fiqh) and Sufi Gnostic in the Qadiri Order. He was educated in Tonk, the only Muslim state in Rajputana, completing his study of the dars-e nizami syllabus at 23 years. After his time the warrior's profession became a thing of the past, as succeeding generations became to enjoy a reputation for Islamic scholarship and/or saintliness.

In his biography of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (mat Allah be pleased with him), Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari (may Allah be pleased with him) relates a story about Hazrat Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) following the British resumption of control over Bareilly after the 1857 revolt:

After the tumult in 1857, the British tightened the reigns of power and committed atrocities toward the people, and everybody went about feeling scared. Important people left their houses and went back to their villages, but Hazrat Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) continued to live in his house as before, and would go to the Mosque five times a day to say his prayers in congregation. One day some Englishmen passed by the Mosque, and decided to see if there was anyone inside so they could catch hold of them and beat them up. They went inside and looked around but didn't see anyone. Yet Hazrat Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) was there at the time, Allah had them blind, so that they would be unable to see him....He came out of the Mosque, they were still watching out for people, but no one saw him. [Hayat-e Alahazrat]

His father, Hazrat Naqi Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) [d.1297/1880] was a renowned scholar and was author of 25 books on Islam. Imagine the magnitude of his knowledge that one of his books "Tafseer Alam Nashrah" published from Pilibhit, which is a commentary of a small surah of the Holy Qur'an consisting of only eight ayats (verses), is spread over more than 300 pages. Alahazrat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan's (may Allah be pleased with him) father-in-law was Shaikh Fazl-e Hussain (may Allah be pleased with him), was a government officer in the Rampur Post Office, and attended the Nawab's court.

During Alahazrat (may Allah be pleased with him) commencement of Islamic education a very strange incident occurred. His respected teacher asked him to read the Tasmiyah and then told him to read "Alif, Baa, Taa, . ". Alahazrat began reading the alphabet "Alif, Baa, Taa, . ." until he came to the word "Laam Alif" at which point Alahazrat silenced. When his teacher asked him once more to read "Laam Alif", he remained silent. The teacher instructed him, "ay, Laam, Alif". Alahazrat, then replied, "I have already read them earlier on. What need is there for me to repeat it?"

Hazrat Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him), who was witnessing this incident said, "Son! Listen to what your teacher (Ustaad) is saying." Upon further reflection Hazrat Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him), realized the reason for the objection of the young Alahazrat. Ahmad Raza was being taught single alphabets and he questioned how a complete word like "Laam Alif" could be found in a lesson that dealt only with single alphabets! Hazrat Maulana Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) knew that it was a very delicate matter not be understood by a child. Nevertheless, he explained: "Son! It is true that which you are thinking of. But the 'Alif' which you had earlier read, in reality, is 'Hamza' and this which you are reciting now is 'Alif'. 'Alif' is always 'Sakin' and one cannot commence with an alphabet, which is 'Sakin'. Therefore, it is for this reason that the alphabet 'Laam' is brought before the 'Alif'."

When Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) heard this answer, he replied, "If that be the case, then any other alphabet could be joined to the 'Alif'. Why the 'Laam'?" Maulana Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) out of sheer happiness and excitement embraced Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) and made prayer (dua) for him. He then explained the answer to Alahazrat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) in the following brilliant manner:

"In looking at them they both appear to be very much alike, since they are both empty. Even when writing them together, they look very much alike. When it comes to their qualities then 'Laam' is the heart of 'Alif' and 'Alif' is the heart of 'Laam'."

Hazrat Maulana Raza Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) was in reality opening the doors and the treasures of knowledge and spiritual insight to Alahazrat (may Allah be pleased with him).

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) was 4 years old when he completed the recitation of the Holy Quran due to the extraordinary intelligence bestowed upon him by Almighty Allah. He received the customary Islamic education of his time and his name was listed amongst the graduate ulema (scholars) of the Islamic world. He states that, "I completed my religious education during the middle of the month of Shabaan in the year 1286 AH. I was 13 years, 10 months and 5 days old at that time. It was also at this time that salaah became fard upon me and I began to have great interest in the Laws of Shariah". (al Ijazatur Radawiyya)

By the time Ahmad Raza's education began in the 1860s, the family already had a well-established reputation for scholarship. Its inclination was toward rationalist studies (maqalat) and fiqh (jurisprudence), specialties also of the ulema of Badayun and Khairabad. This was in contrast to the hadis (prophetic traditions of the descendants of Shah Wali Ullah (may Allah be pleased with him)). By the second half of the 19th century, the ulema of Badayun and Bareilly had distanced themselves considerably from the Delhi ulema.

He gained his basic knowledge at home and then later continued his studies under the guidance of certain noted teachers. He studied under his father, Hazrat Maulana Naqi Ali Khan (may Allah be pleased with him). His first teacher was one Mirza Ghulam Qadir Beg for whom Ahmad Raza is said to have retained a lifelong affection sending him fatawa whenever he requested and under whom he studied the book, "Mizaane Munsha'ab." Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) also studied under the guidance of the following luminous personalities:

1. Hazrat Maulana Abdul Ali Rampuri (may Allah be pleased with him),
2. Sheikh-e-Kabeer, Hazrat Sayyid Shah Abul Hassan Ahmed Noori (may Allah be pleased with him),
3. Sheikh-e-Tariqah, Hazrat Sayyid Shah Al-e-Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him),
4. Sheikh Ahmed bin Zain-e-Dahlaan Makki (may Allah be pleased with him),
5. Sheikh Abdur Rahman Makki (may Allah be pleased with him), and
6. Sheikh Hussain bin Salih Makki (may Allah be pleased with him).

Academic Qualifications

🕋Islam and Science

He was a master of a number of disciplines that included his scholarly perfection of the Quran and Hadith, Fiqh, Mathematics, Geometry, Astronomy, Modern and Ancient Philosophy, Phonology, Chronometry (Ilm al-Tauqit), number manipulation (Ilm-i-Jafar), Logarithms, Spherical Trigonometry etc, etc. He studied under various teachers however with personal study he perfected himself in more than 55 different disciplines of knowledge. These details were given in the Arabic Sanad-i-Ijaza, which

was given to Hafiz Kutub al-Haram Maulana Sayyid Ismail Khalil Makki (may Allah be pleased with him). In 1323 oral Ijaza was given, on sixth Safar 1324 the manuscripts were prepared and on 8th Safar 1324, a fair copy was finalized.

The chronological name of this sanad (certificate or testimonial) is al-Ijaza al-Rizawiyya Li-mubjali Makka al-bahiyya. In this sanad, he has mentioned the following disciplines:

1. Ilm al-Quran (knowledge of Quran)
2. Ilm-i-Hadith (knowledge of Traditions)
3. Usul-i-Hadith (principles of Hadith)
4. Fiqh-i-Hanafi (**Hanafi Jurisprudence**)
5. Kutub-i-Fiqh Jumla (all books of Jurisprudence)
6. Usul-i-Fiqh (principles of Jurisprudence)
7. Jadal-i-Muhazab
8. Ilm-i-Tafsir (knowledge of interpretation of Holy Quran)
9. Ilm-al-Akalam (scholastic theology)
10. Ilm-i-Nahaw (syntax)
11. Ilm-i-Sarf (grammar, accidence and Etymology)
12. Ilm-i-Maani (Elocution)
13. Ilm-i-Bayan (Rhetoric and Eloquence)
14. Ilm-i-Badi (Style)
15. Ilm-i-Manthiq (Logic)
16. Ilm-i-Munazara (knowledge of argumentation)
17. Ilm-i-Falsafa (knowledge of Philosophy)
18. Ilm-i-Taksir (carrying figures)
19. Ilm-i-Hayath (Astronomy)
20. Ilm-i-Hisab (Mathematics)
21. Ilm-i-Hindsa (Geometry)

The 21 aforesaid disciplines he writes, "these disciplines I mastered from my revered father". After this he mentions the following disciplines:

22. Qhirath (art of recitation of Quran)
23. Tajwid (knowledge of right pronunciation)
23. Tasawwuf (Islamic Mysticism)
24. Suluk (knowledge of manners in Islamic Mysticism)
25. Akhlaq (Ethics)
26. Asma al-rijal (science of names of tradition-narrators)
27. Siyar (biographies)
28. Tawarikh (Chronology)
29. Loghath (Lexicon)
31. Adab Majumla Funni (1319/1901-2) he spoke for 6 hours on Surah al-Zuha. Then he said that he had written commentaries on some ayah of this holy Surah; he stopped commentaries after writing 80 Jn-i-Zamin-o-Aasman in 1338. In this treatise, he discussed the movement of the earth and opposed the views of Prof. Hakim Ali. His angle of view about the modern and ancient philosophies was not imitative or apologetic, but he was very creative and sincere. He had unshakable faith in the Quran and the Hadith, and no vicissitudes of time could shake him.

About these 10 disciplines he writes: "I give Ijaza in these disciplines too, which I have not studied under any teacher but I have Ijaza in these from discerning Ulema."

Then he mentioned these disciplines:

32. Arsma-tiqi (Arithmetic)
33. Jabr-o-Moqhabila (Algebra)
34. Hisab-e-Satini
35. Logharsamath (Logarithm)
36. Ilm al-Tauqith (Chronometry)
37. Manazir-o-Maraya (Science of Sight, etc)
38. Ilm al-Ukhur (Knowledge of the Spheres)
39. Zijath (Astronomical Tables)
40. Muthallath-i-Kurrawi (Spherical Trigonometry)
41. Muthallath-i-Musathah (Plane Trigonometry)
42. Ilay'ath-i-Jadida (Modern Astronomy)
43. Murabba'at (Quadrangular)
44. Jafr (Art of Cipher)
45. Za'ircha (Horoscope)

About these 14 disciplines of learning he writes: "I give Ijaza in these which I have not learnt from any useful teacher, either by reading or by listening or by mutual conversation."

Lastly Imam Ahle Sunnat Shah Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) says: "The knowledge of these 19 disciplines I received by the Heavenly Blessings."

46. Nazm-i-Arabi (Arabic poetry)
47. Nazm-i-Farsi (Persian poetry)
48. Nazm-i-Ilindi (Urdu poetry)
49. Nathr-i-Arabi (Arabic prose)
50. Nathr-i-Farsi (Persian prose)
51. Nathr-i-Ilindi (Urdu prose)
52. Khath-i-Naskh (Arabic Calligraphy)
53. Khath-i-Nastha 'liqh (Persian Calligraphy)
54. Tilawath Ma'Tajwid (Recitation of Holy Quran with correct pronunciation)
55. Ilm al-Fara'iz (Knowledge of Inheritance)

After listing these disciplines Imam Ahmad Raza writes:

"I seek Allah's refuge that I have not said these things as a matter of pride or to promote myself, but i have counted the blessings of the Munificent [bountiful] Allah. It is not my claim that I am an expert in these discipline."

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan had exceptional insight into most of the disciplines he has mentioned. This can be testified by his published books and unpublished manuscripts. The Xerox copies of more than one hundred manuscripts are in my [Prof. Dr. Masud Ahmed's] personal library at Karachi [Sindh, Pakistan]

One can thus deduce that Imam Ahle Sunnat Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) possessed Gnostic knowledge (esoteric revelation).

Revivalist

He reviewed and revolutionized the Muslim Society, especially the Muslims of Indo-Pak sub-continent that is why the Arab scholars commended him as the Revivalist of the 14th Century AH. None among his contemporaries was so powerful as to influence the majority of Muslim population of Indo-Pak sub-continent. It was during the debates surrounding Ahle Sunnat differences with the other 'Islamic movements' that a number of Ahle Sunnat 'ulema' made the remarkable claim that Imam Ahmad Raza was the mujaddid (revivalist) of the Hijri 14th century. In the course of this meeting in Patna in 1900, Maulana Abdul Muqtadir Badayuni, the Pir (Sufi Master) of the Khanqah-e-Qadiriyya at Badayun, referred to Ahmad Raza in his sermon as the mujaddid of the present (14th Hijri) century. Maulana Zafar-uddin Bihari (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote that all those present at the meeting accepted the title, and later thousands of others including several 'ulema' of the Haramayn, did so.

The proclamation of Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) as the mujaddid at this meeting occurred at a time when ulema who identified themselves as Ahle Sunnat wa Jamaat were strongly united in condemnation of the Nadwat ulema and Ahmad Raza had written extensively in its rebuttal, and it was not surprising that his personal influence should have grown considerable as a result.

As Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) and his followers saw it, of course, their movement was not new: their main purpose being to revive the beloved Prophet's (Allah bless him and give him peace) Sunna, they were following in the footsteps of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) and his Companions (RA), and thereby reviving the 'old' way. For the same reason, the term 'founder' was, as it is today, rejected as a way of describing Imam Ahmad Raza's relationship to the movement. To the 'ulema' attending the Ahle Sunnat meetings, the term 'mujaddid' seemed to perfectly describe the role he had come to play, while at the same time being a means of commenting on that they collectively found wrong with the Muslim community of their day.

The concept of mujaddid is based, as Maulana Zafaruddin Bilhari (may Allah be pleased with him) indicated on the hadith of the beloved Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) from Abu Daud (may Allah be pleased with him) in which the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) is reported to have said, "On the eve of every century Allah will send to this community a person who will renew its religion". The need for renewal is premised on the Muslim belief that 'an almost unarrestable process of decline' set in immediately after the death of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace). The process of decline could, however, be temporally reversed by the appearance once every hundred years, of the renewer or mujaddid who would revive the beliefs and customs of the prophetic age.

Among the conditions necessary for one to qualify as mujaddid, Maulana Zafaruddin wrote, were that the man (it could not be a woman) be a Sunni of sound belief, an alim who combined in himself all the sciences and skills (ulum o funun ka jami), that he be well known (the most famous among the celebrated of his age), a protector of religion unfettered by fear of going against prevailing 'innovations', and learned in Sharia and Tariqa (Sufism). He also has to satisfy the technical requirement that he be well known by the end of the century in which he was born, and at the beginning

of that in which he was to die. In fact, failure to appear at the right time disqualified an otherwise acceptable person. According to Zafaruddin, Sha Wali Ullah (RA) [1115-76/1703-62] could not be a mujaddid because he was born and died in the Hijri 12th century, thus failing to span two centuries. Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1201-47/1786-1831) was disqualified for the same reason. Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) on the other hand, did span two Islamic centuries, having been born in 1272/1856, and died in 1340/1921.

The Ahle Sunnat saw Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) as having succeeded Shah Abdul Aziz (may Allah be pleased with him), Shah Wali Ullah's (may Allah be pleased with him) eldest son, as mujaddid. Shah Abdul Aziz as mujaddid of the Hijri 13th century was said to have had all the necessary qualities of learning, piety, and fame among the 'ulema' both in India and the Arab countries. He was a brilliant teacher of Hadis, and writer of fatawa, and moreover, had disassociated himself with the movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi and Shah Muhammad Ismail. When Shah Ismail wrote the book 'Taqwiyat al-Iman (strengthening the faith)', he was unable to write a rebuttal (disproof) to it, being then a blind man in old age. However had he not been so weak it is said that he would have done so.

Maulana Zafaruddin recognized (as does the classical theory of tajdid) that there could be more than a single mujaddid in any one century. Sometimes there was no consensus on any one person. This was indeed the situation in late 19th and early 20th century British India, in which different Muslim groups looked to different people as the mujaddid of the century. The Deobandis looked to Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (though he himself suggested that the term could be applied to a group of 'ulema' rather than a single individual), while the founder of the Ahmadi movement claimed that he was the mujaddid.

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him), a Naqshbandi Sufi and contemporary of Shaikh Abdul Haq (may Allah be pleased with him) was widely accepted by the 19th century 'ulema' as the renewer of 11th Hijri century, and perhaps even as 'Renewer of Second Millenium' (mujaddid-e alf-e sani), whose task was of particular importance because it happened to inaugurate a millennium. Alahazrat Imam Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) respectfully refers to him on one occasion as 'Hazrat Shaikh Mujaddid', and mentions with approval his work 'Mabda' o Ma'ad'. Imam Ahmad Raza's evident familiarities with Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) works make it unlikely that he would not have known about Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's (may Allah be pleased with him) 'unorthodox' views on the Prophet Muhammad's (Allah bless him and give him peace) prophethood, and of Shaikh Abdul Haqq's (may Allah be pleased with him) strong objections to these. The controversy over Shaikh Sirhindi grew even greater during Aurangzeb's reign and in 1682 some Indian ulema asked certain others in the Haramain for their opinion, and the Sharif of Mecca wrote that 'the ulema' of the Hejaz thought Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) was a kafir (infidel). In 1679 Aurangzeb issued a decree forbidding the teaching of those 'false ideas' contained in Shaikh Sirhindi's 'Maktubat', which 'are apparently opposed to the views of the Ahle Sunnat wa Jamaat'.

Debate about Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) appears to have ceased in the 18th century, perhaps Shah Wali Ullah's (may Allah be pleased with him) acceptance of Shaikh Sirhindi as renewer of the 11th century (though not

the Renewer of the Second Millennium) eased the way and calmed the later 'ulema', who do not appear to have interested themselves in the controversy. Barbara Metcalf writes that the Naqshbandi order, increasingly influential in the 18th century in north India due to the contribution of mystics and poets like Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (1700-80) and Mir Dard (1721-85), both of Delhi, 'was to shape the views of many ulema toward sobriety in spiritual experience and rigorous adherence to religious law'. In this their position resembled Shaikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis Dehlawi's (may Allah be pleased with him) insistence that tasawwuf (sufism) be guided by sharia.

The same trend is also associated with the Chishti order, though along somewhat different lines than the Qadiri and Naqshbandi Sufi orders.

Discipleship

Before Going on Hajj, Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) went, in 1294/1877, to Marahra, to receive discipleship (bayat/bai'a) from an elderly Pir of the Barkatiyya Sayyid family resident there. He was about 21 years old at that time, and was accompanied by his father, for both wanted to become murids (disciples) of Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him) [d.1297/1879]. Sources indicate that this visit was preceded, for Ahmad Raza, by a period of very painful spiritual longing during which his grandfather appeared to him in a dream and assured him that relief would be forthcoming. This happened as prophesied in the dream when a very good friend and mentor of his father's, Maulana Abdul Qadir Bayduni (may Allah be pleased with him) [1837-1901], came to their humble abode and advised father and son to seek bayat from Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him).

Hazrat Abdul Qadir Bayduni (may Allah be pleased with him) was the son of Hazrat Maulana Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni (may Allah be pleased with him) and studied under a number of well-known teachers. Among them was Hazrat Maulana Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi (may Allah be pleased with him) [d.1861], who was imprisoned by the British in the Andaman Islands for anti-British activities during 1857. Hz. Abdul Qadir Bayduni (may Allah be pleased with him) was active against the 'Wahhabis' and in opposing the Nadwat Ulema in the 1880s.

According to biographical accounts, when Ahmad Raza and his father arrived at Marahra they were welcomed with unusual honors and Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him) accepted them both as his disciples immediately, although a 40 day period of waiting and training, called chilla, was customary. Ahmad Raza and his father received permission to accept disciples from all Sufi Tariqas and sources suggest that Ahmad Raza and his Pir, Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him) shared an intuitive bond: while Ahmad Raza had experienced this strong internal longing, Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him) had been waiting for several days to see him. Now that he had done so, Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him) said he could die in peace, knowing that when Almighty Allah asked him what he had brought Him from the world, he could offer Him Ahmad Raza in reply. [Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him) was in his eighties.]

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) was admitted to the Qadiriyya Order and was permitted to enroll and train neophytes. He had similar authority in 13 other Sufi orders. As an adult Ahmad Raza also received instruction

and sought advice from, Sayyid Nuri Miyan (may Allah be pleased with him) , Shah Al-e-Rasul's successor and grandson. Even though Sayyid Shah Al-e Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him) died soon after Ahmad Riza became his disciple, Ahmad Riza did not consider his relationship with his Pir or the Barkatiyya Sayyid family to have ended. He embraced the Barkatiyya ancestors of Sayyid Shah Al-e Rasul and Sayyid Nuri Miyan as his Pirs (Sufi Masters) and continued in time beyond his death. From about 1905 or 1906, until his death in 1921, Ahmad Raza held annual Urs for his Pir on his death anniversary, at his own home in Bareilly. For three days each year, from the 16th to the 18th Zul Hijja, the occasion was commemorated with Milad, khatme of the Quran, recitation of na't poetry, and sermons by the ulema.

Imam Ahmad Raza's relation with his Master transcended death reaching to the chain of spiritual (and actual) and ancestors who were the source of his spiritual authority. Through such eminent figures as the Hazrat Sayyiduna Abdul Qadir Jilani (may Allah be pleased with him) whose source of authority was in the final analysis their descent from the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace). The Shajara or family tree, which listed ones ancestors by name, was an important testimonial of authority linking its bearer to the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace).

Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani (may Allah be pleased with him) played a very important presence in Imam Ahmad Raza's (may Allah be pleased with him) life, with which he identified more closely than with other orders, though he was also affiliated with the Chishti, Naqshbandi, and Suhrawardi Sufi Orders; and finally the place of the beloved Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) as a pivotal figure in his life. He wrote numerous poems in devotion to this great Grand Master [Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani (may Allah be pleased with him)]. He believed that mediatory power (grace, baraka) inheres most specially in lineal descendants of the Holy Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace); hence his marked respect for Sayyids, regardless of their social standing.

Ahmad Riza was an authority on both the rational, traditional branches of knowledge and was recognized as a versatile genius of his age. In his youth he was a perfect master of the different arts and sciences and he left a rich academic memorabilia in all the branches of knowledge before his demise at the age of 65 years. The rational aspect of the academic knowledge of Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) is very important and interesting to our modern age. His valuable research and written work took an analytical view and a critical survey of the scholastic and modern philosophers also the discoveries, research and practical findings of scientists to which he pointed out their shortcomings and mistakes.

He wrote estimated 1000 books and treatises in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu on more than 50 branches of knowledge. Very few have been published and many are lying unpublished in Bareilly. The most voluminous work is the collection of Verdicts i.e. Fatawa-e-Ridawiyya. In 1324/1904, he had completed its seven volumes, which afterwards increased up to 12 volumes of 26x20/8 size and each volume containing more than 1000 pages.

Ahmed Raza Khan was a genius writer. His first book was the Arabic commentary of "Hidaya al-Nahv" (Arabic grammar), which he wrote at the age of 10. The second book was "Dau al-Nihaya" in Arabic, which he wrote in 1285/1868 at the age of 13. In 1305/1887 at the age of 30 years he has completed 75 books and treatises. In 1327/1909 this number increased up to 500. Apart from these contributions he had

written annotations and commentaries on more than 150 books pertaining to various branches of learning. Some of these papers are of such a high degree that the bibliography consists of books innumerable.

A Master Jurist

On 14th Shaban 1286/1869 when he was 13 years, 10 months and 4 days old he started giving fatawa (legal opinion) under the guidance of his father. After about 7 years in 1293/1876, he received permanent permission to issue fatawa. After the death of his father in 1297/1880, he took the duty of giving fatawa on a full time basis and issued fatawa for more than 50 years and was very cautious when issuing verdicts.

He was mindful that the extent of leniency the Sharia has given should be adhered to. If anybody asked any question orally, he used to answer it spontaneously and never said that he would refer to the book and reply later. His prodigious memory was very astonishing. His biographers have given many instances how he would recall months later, what he had read once. His fatawas are not just Islamic decrees, but a comprehensive work of research. He has a vigorous command in Hanafi Jurisprudence.

On some occasions Muftis use to write the fatawa that he would correct and these Fatawa would be dispatched under the name of the Mufti who has given it. On certain subjects his writing appears to be a product of extensive research. For example, on the subject of the size of a water-tank for ablution, al-Nahi al-Namir fi al-Mail al-Mustadir, looks like a mathematical treatise. Likewise fatawa, Rajab al-Sabaha fi Miyahi La Yustawi Wajhu ha wa Jawfuha fi al-Masaha, is another illustration of a mathematics treatise. About running water and stagnant water the following fatawa is an excellent research on Physics.

Al-Diqqa wa al-Tibyan li ilm al-Riqqa wa al-Sayan deals with the construction of the tanks, color of the water and the reflection and convergence of the suns rays deal with the subject of Physics.

Al-Matr al-Said Ala Binti jins al-Said deals with Geology, the formation of the earth, its kinds and age and Geography:

1. How stones are formed
2. Loosely formed bodies could not be turned into alloys by fire
3. Why mercury does not stay on fire?
4. What effect fire produces on body?
5. The cause for the melting of gold and silver
6. All minerals are formed by the mixture of mercury and sulphur
7. Sulphur is masculine and mercury is feminine

In short, the fatawa are distinguished with many features and deserve the attention of distinguished people of learning.

An example of a question sent to Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him): A question sent by Hafiz Abdur Rahman Rafoogar on 28 Muharram 1332 AH from Muhalla in Banaras. "My question directed at your office, Oh! Hazrat, is that whilst visiting the Mazaaraat of the Auliya-e-Kiraam, what should be the method of reading Fateha, and what items (Ayaats of the Quraan) are to be recited in this Fateha?"

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) gave the following response: Allah in the Name of the most Compassionate the Merciful. Praise be to Allah and Salutations upon the gracious Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace). My dear Hafiz Saheb, Peace be upon You!

When one enters the Holy Shrines (Mazaaraat of Auliya-e-Kiraam) one should do so from the foot end (i.e. the feet side of the Wali), and as far as possible one should maintain one's presence at a distance of four hand lengths (from the foot end). Thereafter, in a moderate

voice, one should announce Salaams in the following way: "As Salaamu Alaikum! Ya Sayyidi! Wa Rahmatullahi Wa barakaatuhu." Then, the following should be recited:

1. Durood-e-Ghausia - thrice
2. Sura Fateha - once
3. Ayatul Kursi - once
4. Sura Ikhlas - seven times
5. Durood Ghausia - seven times

If time permits, Surah Yaseen and Surah Mulk may also be recited before supplication (making Dua) to Almighty Allah in the following manner, "Oh! Allah! In lieu of what I have just recited, grant me that volume of reward (Sawaab) which is worthy of Your generosity, and not that amount which is worth of my actions, and deliver from me to Your chosen servant (i.e. The Wali in whose Mazaar one is present) the every same reward."

Thereafter, one should supplicate (make Dua) to Almighty Allah for any request which is permissible by Shariat, by pleading with Almighty Allah that He grants acceptance of the Dua with the mediation (Waseela) of the Holy Soul of the Wali. In the same manner as before, one should announce the Salaam and return.

The task of writing fatawa had been started by his grandfather, handed over after many years to his father, and passed on in turn to him when he was a mere lad of almost fourteen. He had continued the work throughout his life and now he, in his turn entrusted it to his two sons and nephew as part of his bequest. He rendered this religious service uninterruptedly for about 50 years. Questions came from cities in India and as well as countries as far as China, Africa and America. Questions even came from the Haramayn (Mecca).

Mujaddid of the Hijri 14th Century

It was during the debates surrounding Ahle Sunnat differences with the Nadwis that a number of Ahle Sunnat 'ulema' made the remarkable claim that Imam Ahmad Raza was the mujaddid (renewer) of the Hijri 14th century. In the course of the Ahle Sunnat meeting in Patna in 1900, Maulana Abdul Muqtadir Badayuni (may Allah be pleased with him), the sajjada-nishan [successor to a Sufi pir] of the Khanqah e-Qadiria at Badayun, referred to Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) in his sermon as the 'mujaddid' of the present [that is, 14th century Hijri] century. Zafaruddin Bihari wrote that all those present at the meeting accepted the title, and that later thousands of others, including several 'ulema' of the Haramain, did so. Thus there was ijma (consensus) among the Ahle Sunnat wa Jamaat on the question.

The proclamation of Imam Ahle Sunnat Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri as the mujaddid at this meeting occurred at a time when 'ulema' who identified themselves as Ahle Sunnat wa Jamaat were strongly united in condemnation of the Nadwat 'ulema' and Ahmad Raza had written extensively in its rebuttal, and it was not surprising that his personal influence should have grown considerable as a result.

As Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) and his followers saw it, of course, their movement was not new: their main purpose being to revive the beloved Prophet's sunna, they were following in the footsteps of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) and his Companions (RA), and thereby reviving the 'old' way. For the same reason, the term 'founder' was, as it is today, rejected as a way of describing Imam Ahmad Raza's relationship to the movement. To the 'ulema' attending the Ahle Sunnat meetings, the term 'mujaddid' seemed to perfectly describe the role he had come to play, while at the same time

being a means of commenting on that they collectively found wrong with the Muslim community of their day.

The concept of mujaddid is based, as Zafaruddin Bilhari indicated on the hadis of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) from Abu Daud (Radhiya Allah ta'ala anhu) in which the Prophet is reported to have said, "On the eve of every century Allah will send to this community a person who will renew its religion". The need for renewal is premised on the Muslim belief that, 'an almost unarrestable process of decline' set in immediately after the death of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace). The process of decline could, however, be temporally reversed by the appearance once every hundred years, of the renewer or mujaddid who would revive the beliefs and customs of the prophetic age.

Among the conditions necessary for one to qualify as mujaddid, Maulana Zafaruddin Qadiri Razvi (may Allah be pleased with him) wrote, were that the man (it could not be a woman) be a Sunni of sound belief, an alim who combined in himself all the sciences and skills (ulum o funun ka jami), that he be well known (the most famous among the celebrated of his age), a protector of religion unfettered by fear of going against prevailing 'innovations', and learned in Sharia and Tariqa (Sufism). He also has to satisfy the technical requirement that he be well known by the end of the century in which he was born, and at the beginning of that in which he was to die. In fact, failure to appear at the right time disqualified an otherwise acceptable person. According to Zafaruddin, Shah Wali Ullah (may Allah be pleased with him) [1115-76/1703-62] could not be a mujaddid because he was born and died in the Hijri 12th century, thus failing to span two centuries. Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (1201-47/1786-1831) was disqualified for the same reason. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) on the other hand, did span two Islamic centuries, having been born in 1272/1856, and died in 1340/1921.

The Ahle Sunnat saw Imam Ahmad Raza Khan as having succeeded Shah Abdul Aziz (may Allah be pleased with him), Shah Wali Ullah's (may Allah be pleased with him) eldest son, as mujaddid. Shah Abdul Aziz as mujaddid of the Hijri 13th century was said to have had all the necessary qualities of learning, piety, and fame among the 'ulema' both in India and the Arab countries. He was a brilliant teacher of Hadis, and writer of fatawa, and moreover, had disassociated himself with the movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi and Shah Muhammad Ismail. When Shah Ismail wrote the book 'Taqwiyat al-Iman (strengthening the faith)', he was unable to write a rebuttal (disproof) to it, being then a blind man in old age. However had he not been so weak it is said that he would have done so.

Maulana Zafaruddin recognized (as does the classical theory of tajdid) that there could be more than a single mujaddid in any one century. Sometimes there was no consensus on any one person. This was indeed the situation in late 19th and early 20th century British India, in which different Muslim groups looked to different people as the mujaddid of the century. The Deobandis looked to Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (though he himself suggested that the term could be applied to a group of 'ulema' rather than a single individual), while the founder of the Ahmadi movement claimed that he was the mujaddid.

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him), a Naqshbandi Sufi and contemporary of Shaikh Abdul Haq (may Allah be pleased with him) was widely

accepted by the 19th century 'ulema' as the renewer of 11th Hijri century, and perhaps even as 'Renewer of Second Millenium' [mujaddid-e alf-e sani], whose task was of particular importance because it happened to inaugurate a millennium. Alahazrat Imam Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) respectfully refers to him on one occasion as 'Hazrat Shaikh Mujaddid', and mentions with approval his work 'Mabda' o Ma'ad'. Imam Ahmad Raza's evident familiarities with Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) works make it unlikely that he would not have known about Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's (may Allah be pleased with him) 'unorthodox' views on the Prophet Muhammad's (Allah bless him and give him peace) prophethood, and of Shaikh Abdul Haqq's (may Allah be pleased with him) strong objections to these. The controversy over Shaikh Sirhindi grew even greater during Aurangzeb's reign and in 1682 some Indian ulema asked certain others in the Haramain for their opinion, and the Sharif of Mecca wrote that 'the ulema' of the Hejaz thought Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) was a kafir (infidel). In 1679 Aurangzeb issued a decree forbidding the teaching of those 'false ideas' contained in Shaikh Sirhindi's 'Maktubat', which 'are apparently opposed to the views of the Ahle Sunnat wa Jamaat'.

Debate about Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (may Allah be pleased with him) appears to have ceased in the 18th century, perhaps Shah Wali Ullah's (may Allah be pleased with him) acceptance of Shaikh Sirhindi as renewer of the 11th century (though not the Renewer of the Second Millennium) eased the way and calmed the later 'ulema', who do not appear to have interested themselves in the controversy. Barbara Metcalf writes that the Naqshbandi order, increasingly influential in the 18th century in north India due to the contribution of mystics and poets like Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (1700-80) and Mir Dard (1721-85), both of Delhi, 'was to shape the views of many ulema toward sobriety in spiritual experience and rigorous adherence to religious law'. In this their position resembled Shaikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis Dehlawi's (may Allah be pleased with him) insistence that tasawwuf be guided by sharia.

The same trend is also associated with the Chishti order, though along somewhat different lines than the Qadiri and Naqshbandi sufi orders.

Fatawa-i-Razawiyya

The Reformer of the Muslim World
Ahmad Raza Khan
by
Prof. Dr. Masud Ahmed, M.A. PhD

Imam Ahmad Raza had a deep grasp for the miniature of Jurisprudence was matchless in his understanding of the Hanafi School. His collection of fatawa is an evidence of this claim and 11 volumes have been published in India and Pakistan. The 12th volume will be published in the near future. Abu Hasan Ali Nadwi has testified to Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri's (may Allah be pleased with him) understanding in Jurisprudence: "The grasp he had in Hanafi jurisprudence and the minute details were matchless."

Justice D.F. Mulla, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Prof. J.M.S. Baljon of Leiden University (Holland) also appreciated the command of Imam Ahmad Raza in Hanafi jurisprudence. For instance the water permissible for ablution [wuzu], he explained, has 160 kinds, and the water not permissible for ablution is of 146 kinds. Likewise

the inability to use water for ablution, he classified, could be due to 175 reasons. On this subject he wrote a treatise Samh al-Nida fima Yurith al-Ijz an al-ma. He wrote another treatise defining 'running water' and 'stagnant water' under the name: Al-Nawr wa al-Nawriq U Asfar Mai Mutlaq. The things on which tayamum is permissible, he described, are of 181 kinds. Then he enumerated 103 things on which tayamum is not permissible.

People used to turn to him for fatwa not only from India and Pakistan but also from China, Africa, America and Arabian countries. Sometimes there would be a pile of 500 fatawa. Perhaps there was no Dar al-Ifta anywhere, which was so much sought after. Once a person had asked about the fee for fatwa [legal opinion given by a Mufti].

He replied:

Almighty Allah be praised, no fee on fatwa is charged here. By the grace of Allah, people's requests for fatwa come here from countries like China, Africa, America, Arabia and Iraq. At one time there is a pile of 400 letters for fatawa. From the days of my grandfather till now, 1337/1918, fatawa has been issued for about 92 years and I myself have been issuing fatawa for the last 51 years. There are 12 volumes of fatawa of my own. Neither I have taken any fee for them nor I will take anything in future. I don't know who would be so mean minded as to adopt it as a livelihood. Because of such people, people from distant places have inquired about fees. Brethren! I don't ask any returns on my fatawa, my returns are with my Almighty Allah.

At another place he writes: Here, apart from other religious activities, the work of fatawa is so much that even 10 muftis could not cope with it. From different states like Bengal, Punjab, Malabar, Burma, Arakan, and from countries like China, Ghazni, America, Africa and even Arabia, Istiftaat [letters for fatawa] come. At a time about 500 such letters piled up.

His eldest son Hamid Raza Khan writes:

Almighty Allah be praised, at the age of 13 years, 10 months, and 4 days, after completing his studies, with the permission of his father, he occupied the seat of mufti. After the demise of his father, all letters of fatawa, from Hindustan, Bengal and even from China, Africa and Eden were addressed to him [Ahmad Raza]. One distinctive feature of Ahmad Raza's fatawa was that every query used to be answered in the language in which it was asked. Even queries written as verse were replied in verse form, like those in Fatwa-i-Rizawiyya, where the fatawa was written in both prose and verse [poetry, rhyme, free verse] form.

I have seen many of his fatawa, some are works of excellent research, and in some about 150 source books have been referred to. In spite of all these, he did not accept any monetary benefit, and did everything for the pleasure of Almighty Allah. With great courage, thousands of complex problems were critically assessed with their applications and preferences. All problems were categorized into according the taste of Mohaddith [experts in Traditions], Mufassir [Commentators of Quran], Faqih [Experts in Islamic Jurisprudence] and Sufism [Tasawwuf].

About every 'problem' hadith had been quoted profusely and detailed discussion about problems relating to Astronomy, Mathematics, Geometry and fixation of time. Plenty of evidences were gathered in favor of the Truth of the ways of the Ahl-e

Sunnah [people of the sunnah]. Problems of the modern day age and their solutions were diagnosed and solved.

From this advertisement it is learnt that the printing and publication of Fatawa-i-Rizawiyya had begun in 1327/1909. By the grace of Almighty Allah, every month two chapters were published from the month of Rajab and were printed on 20-26 imported paper. The price was Rs 2.00 inclusive of postal charges and for the residents of the town the price was only Rs 1.5.

By reading through Fatawa-i-Rizawiyya we understand that Imam Ahmad Raza's extensive study, his amazing power of memory, the competence to infer and the felicity of expression. Even the Ulema, then, in support of his first views, he had given 22 evidences from 13 books of Fiqh. After that, under Aqulu [I say] he preferred one view and passed his judgment. From the word Aqulu, Imam Ahmad Raza's stature in jurisprudence and creative interpretation is obvious. He writes:

I know pretty well when it is not permissible for conformist [muqalidin] to say, 'I say'. In the first volume of Fatawa-i-Rizawiyya, there are 114 fatawa and 28 treatises. The research of Imam Ahmad Raza under Aqulu is about 3536 in number. In some of these he has disagreed with many experts in Islamic Jurisprudence. For example:

- a) Shaykh Abd al-Haqq Mohaddith Dehlawi [d.1052/1642] says that to utter 'Bismillah' and to remember Allah while doing Wuzu (ablution) is Wajib. Ahmad Raza disagreed with him and wrote: Aqulu Lam Yati al-Mustadal bi Shayin Hatta Samia ma Samia.
- b) In wuzu, dropping one or two drops of water on concerned parts is enough but it is not enough if water is applied like oil. Here he has disagreed with Ibn- i-Najim [d.970/1562].
- c) After wuzu, the concerned wet parts have to dry with clothes or not? Imam Nuwi [d.676/1277] considers it Makruh (detestable) and he bases his inference on a tradition quoted by Umm al-Mominin Hazrat Maimna had.
- d) Allama Tahawi [d.1231 /1815] says that water running from nose renders wuzu defective. Ahmad Raza opposed in al- Traz al- Mualim fima huwa Hadatha min Ahwal al-Dam.
- e) Ahmad Raza has disagreed with Sahib-i-Bahar, Tahtawi, Shami [d.1251 /1835], Shamublani [d.1069/1658] and Sahib-i-Maraqi.

In his fatawa, treatises and speeches, Imam Ahmad Raza struggled against bidat [unlawful practice in Islam] and strove for the resurgence of Islam.

His father Muhammad Naqi Ali Khan had founded a Dar al-Ulum Misbah al-Tah-zib in Bareilly in 1289/1872. This later became famous as Misbah al-Ulum in 1312/1894 another Dar al-Ulum by the name Manzar-i-Islam was established by Ahmad Raza. Students from Bengal, Bihar, Punjab and the Frontier areas used to come to Dar al-Ulum Manzar-i-Islam. After the completion of his studies, Ahmad Raza was teaching in this Dar al-Ulum for a brief period as well as writing and issuing Fatawa. He himself writes about it:

Praise be to Allah, at the age of 13 years, 10 months and 4 days, my education was completed. After that I taught the boys for a few years.

Ahmad Raza's son Hamid Raza Khan [elder son] writes:

Alahazrat taught the boys even during his student days. In any case after the completion of his education he did teach for a brief period and then took to writing and issuing fatawa and Hamid Raza Khan looked after the maintenance of Dar al-Ulum Manzar-i-Islam. On 14 Shaban 1286/1869, when he was 13 years, 10 months and 4 days he started giving fatwa under the guidance of his father. After about seven years, in 1293/1876, he got permanent permission to issue fatawa. After the death of his father in 1297/1880 Ahmad Raza took the duty of giving fatawa on a full time basis.

The first fatwa Ahmad Raza issued was about rizaat (fosterage). Years later when a fatwa of the same type came before him, he wrote:

This is the same fatwa I issued on 14 Shaban 1286/1869, and it was on the same day I was permitted to pronounce fatwa, and, It was on that day namaz (prayer) became obligatory on me. I was 13 at that time. I have been serving till now in this capacity. May Almighty Allah be praised. In one letter [7 Shaban 1336/1918] he writes: May Allah be praised. On 14 Shaban 1286 at the age of 13, I issued my first fatwa. If life grants me another seven days, I would be completing 50 years of issuing fatawa, on this day of Shaban 1336. How can I express my thanks to Almighty Allah for this?

Ahmad Raza issued fatawa for more than 50 years. He used to be very cautious in issuing fatwa. He was mindful that the extent of leniency Sharia has given should be adhered to. In 1303/1885, he was asked to give fatwa on the use of sugar. Some ulema and Sufis have said that the use of sugar was prohibited and its consumers had committed a sin. But he defended the use of sugar and wrote:

I have not seen sugar nor do I intend to buy it in future. In spite of this, I don't prohibit its use, nor consider its users as sinners.

If anybody asked any question orally, Ahmad Raza used to answer it spontaneously and never said that he would refer to the book and reply later. His prodigious [exceptional] memory was very astonishing. His biographers have given many instances. He could recall months later, what he had once read. Some times he could quote the entire passage verbally. Once, during an illness, he had gone to a hilltop resort and he had no books with him. But while on vacation, he still continued to write fatawa with appropriate references. Referring to this he writes:

During summer, from 29 Shaban onwards, I have been on this hilltop resort to spend the month of Ramzan. Separated from home, sequestered [impounded] from my books, deprived of access to commentaries, but by the grace of Allah every question about religious problems has been answered with clarity. During his illness, away from the books, the fatawa he had given contain 31 references to books of Fiqh and Hadith. From this it is clear that books were always within his mind.

Writing about his daily activities Maulana Zafar al-Din Rizawi writes that the key of the letterbox was always with Imam Ahmad Raza. After asr prayers, the letter-box would be opened and the letters would be read to him one after the other.

Symbol 168 \f "Symbol" \s 14 \hlf: letters were about Tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism) and he would keep them with himself.

Symbol 168 \f "Symbol" \s 14 \hlf: the letters were about amulets they would be given to Maulana Zafar al-Din Rizawi or Maulana Hamid Riza Khan.

Symbol 168 \f "Symbol" \s 14 \hlf: they were about fatawa he would submit the letters in accordance with the status to Maulana Nawab Mirza Sahib, Maulana Sayyid Shah Ghulam Sahib Bihari, Maulana Zafar

al-Din Rizawi, Maulana Amjad Ali Azami, and Hakim Sayyid Ghawth, etc.

Symbol 168 \f "Symbol" \s 14 \hlf: The letters were too complicated or about an important fatwa he would retain them for himself.

Symbol 168 \f "Symbol" \s 14 \h: letters regarding faraiz would be given to Maulana Hamid Raza Khan.

Symbol 168 \f "Symbol" \s 14 \h: letters about madrasa would be also given to Maulana Hamid Raza Khan.

Symbol 168 \f "Symbol" \s 14 \h: letters about the Printing Press would be given to Maulana Zafar al-Din Rizawi.

Muhammad Hussain Meeruti, proprietor of Tilismi Press, has recorded his personal observations of how these letters were replied to:

After evening (maghrib) prayer, four men, Maulana Mustafa Raza Khan, Maulana Amjad Ali Sahib, Maulana Hashmath Ali Khan Sahib and another Sahib came and placed their chairs around a cot. Alahazrat, out of the 30 letters of the days post, distributed the 29 letters among the four persons. They used to read the letters, one after the other, in turn, and Alahazrat used to dictate the answers. During this dictating session, people used to visit him with their questions. But continually while dictating the replies to the letters would not be disturbed. Thus all the replies would be completed.

Some times Muftis used to write the fatawa and he would make corrections in them, and these fatawa would be dispatched under the name of the mufti who has given it. About one such mufti, Ahmad Raza has written that the particular mufti was asked to come in person to effect the necessary corrections, instead of doing this through somebody. That mufti felt mortified [ashamed/embarrassed] to be so corrected in the presence of others. It is because all the fatawa that go from Dar al-Ifta bore the name of the mufti who had issued it and all the corrections and improvements made by Ahmad Raza were kept a secret. In those days Hafiz al-Kutub al-Haram Sayyid Ismail came from Makka to meet Ahmad Raza. When he heard about this he commented:

Such a person would be deprived of the grace of knowledge. It so happened that the man, who felt mortified, left the service.

Among the muftis who were in the Dar al-Ifta of Ahmad Raza, Maulana Amjad Ali Azami [1367/1948] was of a distinguished personality. Ahmad Raza in his letter to Sayyid Ahmad Ashraf Kachochwi writes about Amjad Ali Azami:

Of those present here Maulana Amjad Ali Sahib has intuitive understanding of jurisprudence. It is for this reason; he reads fatawa to me and writes down whatever I say.

In the beginning for about 12 years [1282 to 1297] the copies of fatawa were not retained. After this, they were collected, and it was found that for one question asked, 10 to 12 fatawa's were given. Only one was retained. Like this, seven volumes were compiled. Each volume comprised of 70 parts. Later the number of

volumes increased to twelve. He writes: My fatawa alone makes twelve volumes [It is written in the sanad of Abd al-Wahid of Garhi-Kpura, Frontier Province, 20 Dhi al-Hijja 1338]

Iftikhar Ahmad Qadiri, Professor, Al-Jamia al-Ashrafiyya, Mubarakpur, India, in his letter dated 25 April 1979, writes:

Five volumes of Fatwa-i-Rizawiyya have been published from here. Composition of the sixth volume is proceeding, but with slow speed. The seventh and eight volumes are with us and the other four volumes are in Bareilly.

The early volumes of fatwa-i-Rizawiyya have been published from Lyallpur (Faisalabad) and Lahore in Pakistan. In one treatise Aina-i-Qayamat [published at Bareilly, 1327] I saw one advertisement about Fatwa-i-Rizawiyya.

Some features of the Fatawa-i-Rizawiyya listed there would be useful to reproduce here, for example:

1. Lakhs of minute details ancient and modern critically assessed with clear instructions.
2. Although Ulema of Arabia have acknowledged these characteristics, on certain subjects his writing appears to be a product of extensive research. For example, on the subject of the size of a hawz (water-tank for ablution) al-Nahl al-Namir fi al-Mail al-Mustadir, looks like a mathematical treatise.
3. Likewise fatwa Rajab al-Sabaha fi Miyahi La Yustawi Wajhu ha wa Jawfuha fi al-Masaha, is another illustration of a mathematics treatise.
4. About running water and stagnant water the following fatwa is an excellent research on Physics; Al-Diqqa wa al- Tibyan li Ilm al-Riqqa wa al-Saylan:
The construction of the tanks, the color of the water and the reflection and convergence of sun rays deal with the subject of Physics.
5. The following fatwa deals with Geography the formation of the earth, it's kind and age;
Al-Matr al-Said Alabinti jins al-Said. The following discussion also deals with Geography and Geology:
 - 5.1 How stones are formed?
 - 5.2 Loosely formed bodies could not be turned into alloys by fire.
 - 5.3 Why mercury does not stay on fire?
 - 5.4 What effect fire produces on the body?
 - 5.5 The cause for the melting of gold and silver.
 - 5.6 All minerals are formed by the mixture of mercury and sulphur.
 - 5.7 Sulphur is masculine and mercury is feminine.

In short, the fatawa is distinguished with many features and deserve the attention of people of learning.

In 1325/1907, Ahmad Riza sent some Arabic fatawa from Fatawa-i-Rizawiyya to Hafiz al-Kutub al-Haram Sayyid Ismail Khalil who after reading these fatawa wrote: I swear and say the truth that if Abu Hanifa Numan were to see these fatawa he would have felt happy and would have the writer as his disciple.

Discussing the competence of a Mufti, Ahmad Riza has written: It is not enough if a Mufti quotes different views but it is also necessary for him to distinguish between those views with a preference of one over the other, and give his final judgment. Even in the fatawa of his earlier period we find these characteristics. In his earlier fatawa there is a fatwa on the yardstick. In it he has presented the views of three different Ulema of Arabia said that he was the Mujaddid of this century. Hafiz al-Kutub al-Haram Shaykh Ismail Khalil Makki writes:

But I say if it were said about him that he was the Mujaddid (revivalist) of this century, it would be true and correct right. For Allah, it is not difficult to accumulate the entire universe into one person.

For Ahmad Raza the meaning of Islam is very simple and straightforward. But he chases that man who creates unlawful things in the name of religion and mixes facts with fiction. He criticizes that man who scuttles the unity of the community and creates a 'new' Way, leaving the way of the majority.

He was once asked if the English knowing non-Muslims would become Muslims or not, if they recite the Kalima. He said: Undoubtedly they would become Muslims even if they did not know the translation of the Kalima. Even if they had not recited the Kalima and uttered this much, "I have left that religion and accept the religion of Muhammad", it is sufficient for their conversion.

Love for the beloved Prophet

Imam Ahle Sunnat Shah Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri (may Allah be pleased with him) has made his 'Love for the Prophet' not only a motto for his life but also a mission for his life. According to him the fundamental of all Muslims, the beloved Prophet Muhammad (Allah's grace and peace be upon him) is the holiest of the holy and he was the beloved of Almighty Allah Himself who has lavished praises on him again and gain in the Holy Quran in boundless measures. It is therefore incumbent upon every Muslim believer to become an obedient slave of the Prophet Muhammad (Allah's grace and peace be upon him).

The guidance of the Holy Prophet (Allah's grace and peace be upon him) is to be sought not only for the welfare of this mundane world, but also for the ultimate salvation in the hereafter. He emphasized that in fact we owe our Faith and all our blessings of life, spiritual and material to him. This demands that our devotion to him should be so great that we place him and his reverence above everything and we should be prepared to lay down even our lives for him. Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) also learned from the history of Islam that since the days of the Prophet (Allah's grace and peace be upon him) and afterwards, the anti-Islamic forces like hypocrites, Jews and Christians were determined to instigate the fall of Muslims. Failing in their efforts to win them over by force they tried to weaken their ideology and faith in the Prophet Muhammad (Allah's grace and peace be upon him) by preaching and propagating such ideas to undermine the sanctity, love and

faith in the Prophet (Allah's grace and peace be upon him).

The beloved Prophet (Allah's grace and peace be upon him) was the focal point and apex of all religious and spiritual authority for Ahmad Riza. The goal of this devotion is lead by a Pir. All such forms of devotion are undertaken ultimately to reach Almighty Allah, and whoever seeks the help of the Saints and the Prophets and of the Master of the Prophets, Muhammad Mustafa (Allah's grace and peace be upon him) is in reality seeking Almighty Allah. His poetry in praise of the Holy Prophet (naa't) is known all around the world today. Veneration of the beloved Prophet (Allah's grace and peace be upon him) has a long history in Sufi devotionals. It dates back to Sheikh Ibn-al-Arabi, Maulana Rumi and numerous other great poets and Sufis.

Though he was well-versed in numerous branches of knowledge he later restricted his interest in the following branches of religious learning. The skills and arts, which he had obtained full competence, and degree of love and passion, are three, all of which are very beneficial. Imam Ahmad Raza writes:

"I left Philosophy when I realized that it was superficial, dark and rusty and suppresses religion, lessens the fear of the Hereafter, whereas I have many responsibilities. For pleasure I engage in Mathematics, Astrology, Geometry and also they help in the determination and changes in time for worship and fasting. But I am most interested in 3 things:

1. Top of the list, the most superior, loftiest and highly praised is defending the honor and dignity of the Holy Prophet, the leader of all the prophets (on whom be peace and blessings of Allah). At all times I am fully alert and ready to denounce and refute the derogatory remarks and words made against the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). If the Lord and Creator can accept this effort of mine it will most certainly be sufficient for my salvation. I am certain that the mercy of my lord will grant acceptance to my effort, because he says "Whatever thought my servant has with Me I will deal with him in a likewise manner".
2. On the second stage I use my energies to refute the false beliefs of the irreligious sects besides the 'Wahabis', who though claim to be the leaders of religion are actually causing disunity and dissension.
3. Lastly, I issue religious verdicts in accordance with the Hanafi school of thought, which is firm and lucid. All these are equal to an asylum or refuge to me, and of these I fully rely. [al-ijazatul Matiena Le Ulema-e-Bakkata Wal Madina: pages 160-166]

Translation and commentary of the Holy Quran

Many people have translated the Holy Quran into the Urdu language, but the translation of the Holy Quran presented by Alahazrat - called "**Kanzul Imaan**" - is proven to be the most unique translation in the Urdu language. In his translation one sees that Alahazrat (may Allah be pleased with him) used only those words in his translation that are worthy for the Attributes and Qualities of Almighty Allah and of His beloved Prophet (Allah's grace and peace be upon him).

We have taken just one example of a Verse from the Holy Quran that has been translated by various persons and compared it with the beautiful translation of Imam

Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri (may Allah be pleased with him). We have taken Sura 93, Verse 7 as an example:

1. "And he found you lost on the way and he guided thee."
Translation by Mohammad Asad
2. "And found thee groping so he showed the way."
Translation by Muhammad Ali Lahori Qadiani
3. "And He found you uninformed of Islamic laws so he told you the way of Islamic laws."
Translation by Ashraf Ali Thanwi
4. "Did he not find thee erring and guide thee."
Translation by Arberry
5. "And saw you unaware of the way so showed you the straight way."
Translation by Fatheh Muhammad Jalledhri
6. "And he found thee wandering and He gave thee guidance."
Translation by Yusuf Ali

Now that we have examined six different translations of Sura 93, Verse 7, let us examine the difference and the uniqueness of the translation of Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him):

"And he found you drowned in his love therefore gave way unto him"

Look at the uniqueness and the cautiousness that is present in this translation of Imam Ahmed Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him)! He abstained from using those words that may cause any disrespect to the dignity and personality of the Holy Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace).

The latest English translation of the 'Kanzul Iman' is by Prof. Shah Faridul Haque. Prof. Haque writes that no one is allowed to assign novel meanings to the revealed words of the Quran on his own accord. In his translation, Hazrat Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) has tried to assign such meanings to the words of the Quran, and any occurrence and contradiction in the meaning of the words and verses of the Quran. He also has kept in mind while translating the Holy Quran that such meanings should be selected that may not injure the status and dignity of Allah Almighty, and His Prophets.

By this translation he has illuminated the flame of true faith, love and respect of Allah Almighty and the Holy Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) in the hearts of Urdu speaking Muslims of the world. Prof. Shah Faridul Haque commented that he has tried his best to translate the Urdu version of Hazrat Ahmad Raza Khan into simple English conveying the thought given in Urdu translation. He has labored hard to choose such English words which should necessarily convey the same sense that has been expressed in the Urdu version.

His Poetry

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri (may Allah be pleased with him) was a true poet. Besides being a Mufti and a missionary, the Imam was a man of letters par excellence. His love for the Holy Prophet, his power of imagination, his vigorous vocabulary, his selection of words, use of similes and metaphors, rhythmic couplets, photographic phraseology and his lovely expression is matchless. The **Haddaiq-e-Bakhshish [Gardens of Bliss]** consists of two volumes. The first volume consists of 103 pages and there are 80 poems of varying lengths in it. The second volume consists of 94 pages and there are 28 long and short poems in it.

Among his published outpourings, some are critical, some are Sufistic, some are philosophical, some are discerning and some are of best literary excellence. Not only in Urdu and Persian but even in Arabic he had the same purist style. The Ulema of his time, before his scholarship, his intellect, his resourcefulness, his perception and rhetoric's, nobody could measure unto his rank. There was no subject of which he was not a master; no art which he did not know. Even in literary pursuits, we have to acknowledge his greatness. If his idioms, his usage and his proverbs are selected from all his writings, a voluminous dictionary could be compiled.

Poetry is an art, music expressed in the beauty and harmony of words. No special person, however great, however pious and spiritually advanced, has ever been able to give scripture to the world unless he was blessed with the gift of poetry. When the soul begins to dance in all directions and to touch heaven and earth in its dance, expressing all the beauty and inspiration it has seen. The poet reads the mind of the Universe. The poet dives deep into himself, he touches the perfection which is the source and goal of all things, the innermost depths of his being has touched the Divine, and from there he derives wisdom, beauty and power [Hazrat Inayat Khan Chishti (may Allah be pleased with him)]. The poets Jelaluddin Rumi, Hafiz, Sa'adi, Fariduddin Attar and many more were great thinkers. Sufism is the wisdom of the poets.

Apart from Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri's (may Allah be pleased with him) rank in the Islamic world, his poetry was of the rank that could be considered the major poet of the 19th century. If we read his poetry with a little attention we get the impression that even if he were only to be only a poet, he would have been second to no major poet in Urdu. From his creations, it is clear that he was an accomplished artist and an established poet, for his natyiya ghazals are of innovative distinction.

Imam Ahmad Raza was a disciple of the Divine. He was not a disciple of anybody in the art of poetry, but still his writings are enough to find him a place in the rank of the masters. His younger brother Hasan Raza Khan [1371/1908] was a disciple of Mirza Dagh Dehlawi. Hazrat Mohani [1371/1951] wrote an article on the poetic greatness of Hasan Raza Khan and this article was published in Urdu-i Mualla. Imam Ahmad Raza had the honor of being the guide to such a great poet. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan was very much impressed by Maulana Kifayath Ali Kafi in poetry. Maulana Kafi was martyred during the war of independence in 1858. Ghulam Rasul Mehar write:

He was fond of ghazals of Maulana Kifayath Ali Kafi. He used to consider Kafi to be the King of the Naat writers. In Imam Ahmad Raza's Diwan Hadaiq-i-Bakhshish [3rd section], we find this quatrain:

Mahka hay Miray Bu-i-Dahan Say Alam Yan Nagma-i-Shirin Nahin Talkhi Say
Baham
Kafi Sultan-i-Naat Goyan Hain Raza Insha Allah Main Wazir-i-Azam

Expressing his views on the poetry of Maulana Kifayath Ali Kafi [1274/1858] and Hasan Raza Khan, Imam Ahmad Raza writes:

Except for the verses of the two, I don't want to listen to anybody. From beginning to end the poetry of Maulana Kifayath Ali Kafi and the late Hasan is within the limits of Shariah.

His Descendants

Imam Ahmad Riza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) had two sons and five daughters. His sons **Maulana Hamid Raza Khan** (may Allah be pleased with him) [1362/1934] and Maulana Mustapha Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) [1310/1892] are celebrated savants and Saints of Islam. They rendered great services to Islam and the Muslim community in India.

Imam Ahmad Raza was Pir to a small number of disciples and he founded the silsila Rizwiyya, and in November 1925 appointed and ensured its continuity by appointing his eldest son, Hazrat Hamid Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him), as his sajjada-nishan and the ceremony took place on the last day of the annual Urs of Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him). Imam Ahmad Raza (may Allah be pleased with him) placed his robe (khirqa), received from his Pir Sayyid Shah Ale Rasul (may Allah be pleased with him) on Hazrat Hamid Raza's (may Allah be pleased with him) shoulders, and his own turban (imama) on his head, before reading the authority (sanad) of the sajjada-nishan in Arabic and Urdu. After his death his disciples and followers affirmed their allegiance to Hazrat Hamid Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) as their sajjada-nishan ['the one seated on a prayer carpet'; official successor to a Saint]

His Demise

On the third Ramadaan 1339/10 May 1921 Alahazrat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) foretold his death 4 months and 22 days before its time. He used this verse to deduce the date:

"And there shall be passed around them silver vessels and goblets". (Sura 76: Verse 15)

The last meeting of good counseling, advice and guidance of Alahazrat (may Allah be pleased with him):

Oh people! You are the innocent and inexperienced sheep of the Holy Prophet that are surrounded from all sides by cunning wolves to mislead you. They are waiting to sow seeds of mischief in you to take you along with them into hell. Protect yourselves from their clutches by staying far away from them. The Deobandis, Rafziz, Naturalists, Qadyanis and Chakralwies are all devilish sects who are coming to rob you of faith. Safeguard yourself from their hellish attacks.

His insight and standards are really remarkable. His departure from this mundane world as a true devotee is documented as follows:

Alahazrat (may Allah be pleased with him) documented his final Testament and he himself executed its contents. Every act associated with death is being meticulously and timelessly carried out in accordance with his orders. At 56 minutes past one he inquired about time, then instructed that a watch be left in front of him. Suddenly, he ordered all photographs to be removed from the house. The people present at the bedside thought why the reference to photographs. Seeing their hesitancy, he said remove all cards, envelopes, money, etc and those having photos of them.

Thereafter he instructed his eldest son Maulana Muhammad Hamid Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him) to make wudu and bring the Holy Quran. Before he could come he instructed his second son Maulana Shah Muhammad Mustapha Raza Khan (may Allah be pleased with him). Don't just sit there, begin the recitation of Surah Yaseen and Sura Ra`d.

He listened to their recitation very attentively. The recitation of whichever verse seemed doubtful, or could not be clearly heard or was recited hastily to undermine its accuracy, Alahazrat in that critical condition recited these verses correctly for his son to identify the errors. He then recited all the prayers associated with the Sunna acts of a journey properly and beautifully, exceeding even his normal practice. Thereafter he recited Kalima Tayyiba fully. When his strength began to fade away his last breath came upon his chest, as his lips stopped moving with the remembrance of Allah Almighty a sudden speck of light shone on his blessed face, which was moving, just as the brightness of the sun reflects in a mirror. Thus he departed the pure blessed soul of a true devotee of Allah on 25 Safar 1340 AH/ 28 October 1921 at exactly 38 minutes past two at the time of Friday prayer. "To Allah we belong and unto him is our return".

Maulana Abdul Aziz, the Caliph of Ajmer Shareef writes:

After the Imam's death he met a scholar from Syria at Delhi asked him why he had come to Delhi. The scholar said that on 25 November 1921, he dreamt of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) while he was in the Baitul Mukaddas. In his dream, he saw many Sahaba-Ikraam (radi Allahu anhum ajma'in) seated around the Holy Prophet (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam). All of them seemed to be waiting for someone. The scholar says that, in his dream, he asked, "Ya Rasoolallah (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam)! Whose presence is being awaited?" The Holy Prophet (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) replied, "Ahmed Raza Khan." The blessed scholar then asked, "Who is Ahmed Raza Khan?" The Holy Prophet (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam) answered, "An Aalim from Bareilly."

When this scholar awoke, he immediately journeyed from Syria to Bareilly Shareef to meet Alahazrat (radi Allahu anhu), but to his dismay, he learnt that Alahazrat (radi Allahu anhu) had already departed from this world.

It is said by those true lovers of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (radi Allahu anhu) that after he passed away he was spiritually transported to Madinatul Munawwarah to be close to the Holy Prophet (sallal laahu alaihi wasallam). They say this because once, Alahazrat (radi Allahu anhu) personally said: "The time for demise is close and India is India. But, I do not even feel like passing away in Makkah. My desire is this, that I should pass away with Imaan in Madinatul Munawa'wara and then be buried with kindness in Jannatul Baqi. Almighty Allah is most powerful.

Mazaar Shareef

The Mazaar Shareef (Blessed Tomb) of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri (radi Allahu anhu) is situated in the Mohalla Saudagran, Bareilly Shareef in India (U.P.). Each year, in the month of Safar, during the Urs Shareef of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri (radi Allahu anhu), hundreds of thousands of Muslims from all over the world present themselves in Bareilly Shareef to partake in the Urs Shareef of the Mujaddid of Islam, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Qadiri (radi Allahu anhu).

May Almighty Allah shower his choicest blessings upon the Mazaar-e-Anwaar of this great Saint and Scholar of Islam

Conclusion

Islam is neither retrogressive nor conservative. Its nature is flowing, moving onwards, creating new values and systems strictly confined to the fundamental beliefs of Islam, along with the commandments and prohibitions. It is not solid; resisting changes of form and dimension, but is dynamic and progressive in character. In its sleeves, Islam has wrapped up thousands turmoil of the centuries, but flowing like a vast and deep ocean. Time is dynamic and every particle of this Universe is dynamic, and there is nothing solid, inert and static.

First know something, and then try to know Imam Ahle Sunnat Imam Ahmad Raza Khan al-Qadiri (may Allah be pleased with him), otherwise fondly remembered by his disciples as Alahazrat, is our humble suggestion. Please don't make haste in appreciating or criticizing Alahazrat. Please don't be pre-determined or prejudiced. Whatever subject you know well, ask for a book of Alahazrat on that subject. Make a discreet study. First study, then comment.

Most followers were not admirers of Alahazrat by birth. When we studied Alahazrat on Economics, we had to concede his talent in the subject. It is very easy to remark "what can Alahazrat know about Economics". But now we know what he knows. (Dr.) Sir Ziauddeen was not an admirer of Alahazrat initially but when he saw the charisma of his knowledge in the field of Mathematics, he said. "Alahazrat deserved Nobel Prize". (Dr.) Prof. Masud Ahmad was not an admirer of Alahazrat initially but when he studied Alahazrat, he called him a miracle of Holy Prophet (Allah's Grace and Peace be upon him). Prof. Mirza Nizamuddin Beg was not an admirer of Alahazrat initially.

When you are able to know Alahazrat in one subject or the other, go on studying him in more and more subjects. You will not find him short of subjects. Study him as much as you can. Study him as deep as you can. The more you study, the more you will find. But all this depends upon what you know. The more you know, the more you will find in Alahazrat. If you know nothing, you will find nothing in him as zero multiplied by any figure comes to zero. Alahazrat was a name that lived. Alahazrat is a name that lives. Alahazrat is a name to live. It is Alahazrat on whom research is being made at California University, USA, Leiden University, Holland, Columbia University, USA, Ceylon, Azhar University, Egypt, Karachi University, Sindh University, Punjab University of Pakistan. The Patna University of India has already conferred degree of Ph.D. on Dr. Hasan Riza Khan for his work on Alahazrat. It is Alahazrat whose fatwa is referred to by every Mufti of today. It is Alahazrat whose Na'at poetry is recited in every Islamic celebration. It is Alahazrat on whom about 5000 books, brochures and articles have been written so far and the number is increasing day by day, according to a Research scholar of Sindh University, Pakistan.

Men have studied Alahazrat, men are studying Alahazrat and men will study Alahazrat. Be one of them, please. The suggestion is ours but the decision is yours. Just glance over any book of Alahazrat, you will know Alahazrat at a Glance.

May God never deprive me of the Love of His Messenger
May ill luck never rob me of my hearts real pleasure!

It may be circumambulating of the Prophets grave or prostration
An infatuated lover will do anything to show his veneration

It is he, who generously forgives such serious sinners
No one else can pardon them for such blunders

All the physicians have shown their helplessness and inability
I would be a lost man, if the Prophet himself does not heal me

Where is my heart taking me away from the Prophet's City?
May God save my heart from every imminent catastrophe?

If the plea of hope for forgiveness is rejected by the Creator
What other plausible excuse can be invented by the sinner

The candle of the Prophet's love in my heart is lit
I hope the wind of lust does not blow to extinguish it

On the day of Judgement we will enjoy the Prophet's intercession
Let the disbeliever even then not pray to him for intervention

Granted that my heart is very weak and slim
It should not feel tired, at least, on my way to him

When by nature you are compassionate to everyone
He is good who is always kind to every other person

My heart longs to go near divines ecstasy's brink
Who wants to forbid me from tasting this virtuous drink?

Raza! They are all going to Madinah the Prophet's City
O God, if I do not go, it would be a real pity

By Imam Ahmad Raza Khan