Siyāda and Imamate in Eighteenth-Century India

The Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Khālīṣa and the Sunnī–Shīʿī Sectarian Conflict

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During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, when the central authority of the Indian Mughal Empire was gradually replaced by multiple centres of power and culture, the long-standing debates between the different denominations such as the Sunnis and the Shīʿīs over their contested Islamic traditions thrived again. Shīʿī rulers of the newly emerging centres patronised their religious scholars (*ulamāʾ*) and seminaries and helped disseminating Shīʿī practices and rituals. In response to this development, Sunnis began to reconsider their relationship with Shīʿism and produced a considerable number of polemical texts. Sunnī religious revivalists in South Asia even made the discussions about Shīʿism part of their reform agendas. Outstanding reformers such as Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762), Maḥzar Jān-i Jānān (d. 1780), Muḥammad Nāṣir ʿAndalīb (d. 1758), Khwāja Mīr Dard (d. 1785), and Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (d. 1824) engaged with the issue in different ways and for various aims, which ranged from uniting the main Islamic denominations to rebutting the Shīʿī position altogether.

Among these revivalists, the Sufi reformer Mīr Dard, the theoretician of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Khālīṣa* (“Pure Muḥammadan Path”) founded by his father, ʿAndalīb, paid specific attention to denominational polemics. He propounded the notion of *ṭarīqa wāthīqa* (“trustworthy path”) as a framework for the reconstruction and reinvigoration of the doctrines of *siyāda* (“blood affiliation with the Prophet”) and of the imamate. This was presented by him as a solution for the sectarian and theological conflicts between the Shīʿīs and the Sunnis. It was also supposed to support his and his father’s authority as descendants of the Prophet and as inheritors of the knowledge transmitted by his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭalīb.

This attempt came at a time when the decline of the imperial power created a dispute over moral and religious authority among different Islamic groups. Focusing on Dard’s texts and employing both conceptual-semantic and contextual-historical methods of analysis, this chapter explores the role of *siyāda* and *imāma* (leadership) in Dard’s philosophy of *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*. It searches for the reason behind his insistence to be recognised as a member

of the Prophetic family and his preference for the titles *sayyid* and imam instead of other honorifics such as *walī*, *shaykh*, Sufi, or *‘ālim*. Moreover, it deals with Dard’s prioritising of the principles of *siyāda* and imamate over companionship (*ṣuḥba*) and caliphate (*khilāfa*), since this seems counter-intuitive to his own Sunnī background and Mujaddidī affiliation. Contextualising Dard’s discussions of *siyāda* and imamate within the framework of his *ṭarīqa wāthīqa*, it brings out why his position must be regarded as a considerable change in the Sunnī discourse for the sake of a reconciliation with the Shī’a in early modern India.

5.1 Shī’ī Social and Political Dynamics

With its doctrinal focus on the household of the Prophet and his offspring, and its belief in their infallibility and merit and their right to both worldly leadership and spiritual guidance of the Muslim community (*umma*), the Shī’a gained considerable influence in India during the eighteenth century. In the early 1700s, the emperor Bahādur Shāh’s (r. 1707–12) decision to introduce Shī’ī practices into his court at Delhi signalled a turn of fortunes for the Shī’ī community.¹ As the central authority of the Mughal Empire weakened, Shī’ī notables founded and ruled significant successor states and new centres of power. Bengal was almost independently ruled by Shī’ī governors (known as *nawwābs*), who were appointed by the Mughals from 1701 until the British takeover of 1757. The state of Awadh, whose rulers themselves belonged to a *sayyid* (pl. *sādāt*) family originating from Nishapur, the ancient capital of Khorasan in Iran, made the greatest impact on the development of Shī’ism in the subcontinent.² Hyderabad, the largest princely state in south India, although hardly comparable in this respect with Bengal and Awadh, also had its fair share of Persian and Shī’ī *sayyid* nobles, courtiers, scribes, and poets who were active on the political and cultural scene and at the court alike.

In these new centres of Shī’ī power and culture, sectarian antagonism between the different Islamic currents gained a renewed momentum. This included opposition between Sunnī and Shī’ī communities but also between the traditionalist *akhbārī* and rationalist *uṣūlī* schools among the Shī’īs

¹ Nasr, *The Shī’a Revival*, 98.

² Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, 1–3. See also Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shī’ism*, 36–42. Before the eighteenth century, India witnessed Shī’ī-led principalities such as the Bahmanids in Deccan (r. 1347–1526), the Adilshahis in Bijapur until 1686, the Nizamshahis of Ahmadnagar (r. 1490–1633), and Qutbshahis (r. 1512–1687) (Ālemī, “Mulūk-i bahmani”).

themselves.³ Shī'ī rulers promoted their understanding of Islam to legitimise their authority and patronised both the culture and scholarship of the Shī'a learned classes. They encouraged 'ulamā' to challenge their Sunnī counterparts, founded seminaries, and helped to disseminate rituals such as 'Āshūrā' (commemorating the death of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī).⁴ Even under the Āsaf Jāhīs (r. 1724–1948), the Sunnī successors to the Quṭb Shāhīs (r. 1591–1687 in Hyderabad), ministers of the state gave public support to the great Shī'ī shrines and patronised Muḥarram religious festivals.⁵

The *sādāt* rulers of Awadh (1722–1856) were devout Shī'īs who spent huge sums for the construction of mosques and *imāmbārgās*, the latter being congregation halls for the commemoration ceremonies especially during Muḥarram. They were also great patrons of an 'ulamā' class following the rationalist school of jurisprudence and insisting on holding Friday congregational prayers in Lucknow and Faizabad, which spread from there to other towns. Moreover, Iranian merchants in Awadh and their descendants in towns like Murshidabad designated endowments for the promotion of 'azādārī (mourning and lamentation). These measures also attracted many Shī'ī scholars and literati from both India and Iran to these regions. In 1775, Nawab Asaf al-Daula (d. 1797), who initiated the construction of a number of religious buildings like the Asafī Imāmbāra and the Jāmi' Masjid in Lucknow, invited a large number of Shī'ī 'ulamā' to the Awadh court.⁶ Against this backdrop, the leading Shī'ī 'ulamā' of Lucknow grew immensely wealthy as a result of official salaries and the collection and redistribution of *khums* (the religious obligation of paying one-fifth of the wealth acquired from certain sources) and *zakāt* (annual payment according to Islamic law on certain kinds of property). They reached the peak of their influence with the establishment of a Shī'ī judiciary and a large Shī'ī seminary later under Amjad 'Alī Shāh (r. 1842–74).⁷

3 The correspondence between the Akhbārī scholar Mīr Yūsuf 'Alī Astarābādī (d. seventeenth century) and the *uṣūlī* Qāzī Nūr Allāh Shūshtarī (d. 1610) is regarded as an indication of the Akhbārī–*uṣūlī* schism in the Indian context. For the correspondence, see Ja'fariyān, "Mukātibat", 2–15. For details on Akhbārī–*uṣūlī* thought and historical development, see Newman, "The Nature of Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute, Part 1"; Newman, "The Nature of Akhbārī/Uṣūlī Dispute, Part 2"; Böwering, "Introduction", 14; Mavani, *Religious Authority*, 12–13, 130; Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam*, 177–90.

4 Rizvi, "Faith Deployed", 12–14; Nasr, *The Shī'a Revival*, 99.

5 Pinault, *The Shi'ites*, 78.

6 Rezavi, "The State, Shi'as and Shi'ism", 44.

7 Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, 3.

5.2 Sunnī–Shīʿī Conflicts and Polemics

The domination of Shīʿī *ʿulamāʾ*, landholders, and state officials in cities such as Awadh coincided with a decline of the fortunes of the Sunnī noble class and religious institutions. Sunnī religious leaders saw the Shīʿī ascendancy, among other factors, as a manifestation of Islam's decline, and hence their demand for Islamic revival and reform included the refutation of Shīʿism.⁸ Disputes and conflicts between Sunnī and Shīʿī factions at the court and in society at large became a recurrent feature of India's Muslim society during this period.⁹ Bahādur Shāh's demonstration of pro-Shīʿī tendencies, for instance, led to sectarian conflicts in Lahore. In 1711, his order to add the title *waṣī* ("heir, legatee, or the executor of the will of Muḥammad") to the epithets for Imam ʿAlī during mosque sermons ignited riots provoked by Sunnī theologians.¹⁰ These riots multiplied in Delhi and other north Indian towns throughout the eighteenth century and tensions further intensified following the invasions of Nādir Shāh Afshār (1739–40) and Aḥmad Shāh Durrānī (six times between 1748 and 1762). Similar tensions had already arisen in India since the sixteenth century. Before Bahādur Shāh, his father, Aurangzeb (r. 1658–1707), had held strict orthodox Sunnī views and fought against Shīʿī religious practices. Although he heavily relied on the services of Iranians and other Shīʿīs for military campaigns as well as official and administrative duties, during his reign, Muḥarram processions had been banned and the Shīʿī kingdoms in the Deccan subjugated. The compendium of Ḥanafī Islamic law prepared by Sunnī *ʿulamāʾ* on his orders, the *Fatāwā-yi ʿālamgīriyya* (Alamgir's fatwas), even proclaimed those Shīʿīs who cursed the first two caliphs as heretics.¹¹

With the resurgence of Shīʿism, and with the rise of the Shīʿī *sayyids* of Bārha, who had become kingmakers during the first phase of Mughal decline, strong anti-Shīʿī polemics emerged in northern India.¹² The major controversial issues between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, such as the true successorship of the Prophet, were actively debated among both communities with Sunnī religious leaders condemning Shīʿī practices such as Muḥarram processions as excessive. An outstanding example is Shāh Walī Allāh, the erudite Naqshbandī Sufi and scholar, who attempted to develop his own reformulation of Sufism in

8 Nasr, *The Shīʿa Revival*, 99.

9 Rizvi, "Faith Deployed", 13.

10 Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 130–2.

11 Rieck, *The Shias of Pakistan*, 2–6.

12 The name of Bārha applied, from Akbar's reign onwards, to a community of *sayyids* in possession of a particular group of twelve villages in the Dōʿāb (Muḥaffarnagar district, UP) (see Rizvi, "Bārha Sayyids").

the context of a broader reform agenda that involved Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'ānic exegesis, *ḥadīth* studies, and theology.¹³

Walī Allāh's preoccupation with the theory of the caliphate, one of the most striking eighteenth-century discussions that challenged the Shī'ī concept of the imamate under the Prophet's progeny, clearly reflects the level of anti-Shī'a polemics among Naqshbandīs at that time. Walī Allāh divides the historical caliphates into three categories: (a) the "special" caliphate (*khilāfa khāṣṣa*), which included the rule of the rightly guided caliphs (632–61), with the addition of the eighth Umayyad caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 720) as an ideal ruler; (b) the "general" caliphate (*'amma*), in which Walī Allāh follows the classical theory of the Shāfi'ī reforming jurist Abū l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 1058) and regards Mu'āwiya, the first Umayyad caliph, as rightful; and (c) the "tyrannical" caliphate (*jābira*), which cannot be accepted as rightful at all. Walī Allāh believed that the first form of caliphate collapsed because of *fitna* (strife, sedition), which led to the division of the Muslim community under the fourth caliph, 'Alī (d. 660), and to the cessation of *jihād* after the murder of the third caliph, 'Uthmān (d. 656). According to him, the murder of 'Uthmān was the dividing line between the ideal age and the age of anarchy that followed.¹⁴ He declares that Shī'ī Imams cannot be regarded as special caliphs because they did not perform *hijra* (the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina) and were not among the first companions to accept Islam. Furthermore, they did not have actual power and authority over the Muslim community as the four caliphs did.¹⁵

Walī Allāh's attempts to reconcile the divergent positions among Muslims barely took the Shī'ī doctrine into account. He was steadfast in his defence of the Sunnī positions and his repudiation of Shī'ī views of caliphal succession. In a letter to the king and nobles of his time, he stresses that

strict orders should be issued in all Islamic towns forbidding religious ceremonies publicly practiced by infidels ... On the tenth of Muharram, the Shī'īs should not be allowed to go beyond the bounds of moderation, neither should they be rude nor repeat stupid things [i.e., reciting *tabarrā*].¹⁶

13 Hermansen, trans., *The Conclusive Argument*, xxix; Voll, *Islam*, 58–61; For Shāh Walī Allāh's religious and reformist thought, see Baljon, *Religion and Thought*; Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah*; Dallal, "The Origins and Objectives".

14 Ahmad, "An Eighteenth-Century Theory of the Caliphate", 135–40.

15 The requirements of the special caliphate and the description of the *fitna* are elaborated in detail in Walī Allāh, *Izālat al-khafā'*, 85–234, 487–586.

16 Quoted in Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah*, 294.

Tabarrā often means the shouting of curses on Satan, but in the Shī'ī context, it refers to the widespread ritualised practice of condemning the first three successors of the Prophet and other figures such as his wife 'Ā'isha and the first Umayyad caliph, Mu'āwiya. Aiming at the dissociation from the enemies of the *ahl-i bayt* (household of the Prophet), this ritual is sometimes followed by the public burning of those figures' effigies in the streets and the bazaar. It is highly resented by many Sunnīs and has time and again provoked sectarian riots and spontaneous violence between Sunnīs and Shī'īs in South Asia.¹⁷

The Naqshbandī reformist Maḏhar Jān-i Jānān, the head of the central Naqshbandī convent (*khānaqāh*) in Delhi from 1747 until his death and the founder of the Shamsiyya-Mazhariyya branch of this order, sought to reduce conflict both among the Sunnī legal schools (*madhāhib*) and between Sunnīs and Shī'īs. Born into a noble family of Afghan origin which served in the Mughal administration, Maḏhar had attended several masters of different brotherhoods but was mostly attracted to the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya. He considered the respect for the companions of the Prophet not as an essential part of faith, and advocated the inclusion of Shī'īs within the fold of Islam due to their confession (*shahāda*) of the unity of God.¹⁸ However, with the renewed prominence of Shī'īs in the court in 1781, Maḏhar, too, allegedly made some derogatory remarks against the public mourning ceremonies for the death of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī and was apparently assassinated by Shī'ī zealots.¹⁹

Another Mujaddidī Sufi thinker and fighter, Sayyid Aḥmad of Rae Bareli (d. 1831), who also called his way *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*, pursued a more radical reformist agenda and is best known for his *jihād* against the Sikhs and his advocacy of a version of Islam which was purged of Hindu influence. He also criticised Shī'ī practices, along with the Sufis' belief in the intercession of their masters (*pīrs*). He identified false Sufism, Shī'ism, and errant popular customs as the sources of religious corruption and hence declining Muslim power. According to him the refutation of Shī'ism was a necessary part of the revival of Islamic power in India and it was required for the reform campaign designed to restore Muslim belief and practice to their originally intended condition.²⁰ It should be mentioned that in this time, besides India, other parts of the Islamic world also witnessed the emergence of anti-Shī'ī reformist tendencies. The movement of Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1792)

17 Hyder, *Reliving Karbala*, 82.

18 Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 65–66; Friedmann, "Medieval Muslim Views".

19 See Dahnhardt, *Change and Continuity*, 14–41; Umar, "Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan".

20 Nasr, *The Shī'a Revival*, 99–100. For Sayyid Aḥmad's reformist thought and practice, see also Rizvi, *Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz*; Gaborieau, *Le Mahdi incompris*.

condemned Shī'ism as part of its efforts to revive and reform Islam. In 1802, Wahhābīs, who considered the veneration of shrines as a form of polytheism and viewed Muslims engaged in these acts as heretics, attacked Karbala and destroyed and plundered the shrine of Ḥusayn b. 'Alī.²¹

5.3 Polemical Literature

In the course of these political and religious tensions, polemical literature was produced in the forms of learned theological treatises, popular polemical tracts, poetic invectives, and satire by both Shī'ī and Sunnī scholars and poets. In the latter part of his life, Walī Allāh wrote two works, *Izālat al-khafā' 'an khilāfat al-khulafā'* (Removing secrecy from the issues concerning the caliphate) and *Qurrat al-'aynayn fī tafḍīl al-shaykhayn* (Delight of the eyes on the superiority of the first two caliphs), which addressed Shī'ī claims concerning the nature of the caliphate and the superiority of 'Alī. Although in his works Walī Allāh refrains from using the word *kāfir* (infidel) in referring to Shī'īs, he claims that the Shī'ī *madhhab* was *bāṭil* (false, void). According to his main argument, the belief in the *'isma* (infallibility) of the Twelve Imams is incompatible with the finality of prophethood, even though in his *Tafhīmāt al-ilāhiyya* (Divine instructions) he himself attributes a kind of *'isma* – along with the three other qualities of *ḥikma* (wisdom), *wajāha* (prestige, excellence), and *quṭbiyyat-i bāṭiniyya* (the position of a hidden spiritual pivot) – to the Imams.²² In 1731–32, Walī Allāh translated Aḥmad Sirhindī's (d. 1624) *Radd al-rawāfiḍ* (Refutation of the Shī'īs) into Arabic and added his own foreword to it; it was apparently the main text refuting Shī'ī positions in the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth centuries. Similar polemical issues can also be found in his other writings.²³

Walī Allāh's discussions of Shī'ī ideas and practices were followed by *Tuḥfa-i ithnā 'ashariyya* (The gift to the Twelver Shī'īs), which was written by his son, 'Abd al-'Azīz, in 1789–90. Divided into twelve chapters, representing the number of Shī'ī Imams, the work aims to comprehensively refute Shī'ī beliefs and practices. Aside from the origin of the Shī'ī denomination and its concepts of divinity, prophethood, and jurisprudence, it deals with themes such as the precedence of 'Alī or of the first two caliphs, the cursing of the Prophet's companions, the tradition of 'Umar's denying the Prophet's wish for pen and paper, and

21 Wynbrandt, *A Brief History*, 135.

22 Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt*, 14.

23 Umar, *Islam in Northern India*, 254.

‘Alī’s several marriages and his judiciousness.²⁴ In his *Sayf Allāh al-maslūl ‘alā mukharribī dīn al-rasūl* (The drawn sword of God against those who destroy the religion of the Prophet), Mīrzā Muḥammad Akhbārī (d. 1816), the jurist, *ḥadīth* scholar, poet, and pillar of the Akhbārī movement in India, was among the first Shī‘īs who attempted to respond to the *Tuhfa*. Then, Sayyid Dildār ‘Alī (1753–1820), the chief *mujtahid* of the state of Awadh, together with his students wrote a series of treatises in response to it, each of which was devoted to an individual chapter of the *Tuhfa*; *al-Ṣawārim al-ilāhiyya* (Divine thunderbolts) was thus written in response to its sixth chapter; *Ḥusām al-Islām* (The sword of Islam) was a rebuttal of the fifth chapter; and *Khātimat al-ṣawārim* (The end of thunderbolts) a refutation of the seventh. Sayyid Ḥāmid Ḥusayn (1830–88), a student of Dildār ‘Alī, also published eighteen volumes under the title *‘Abaqāt al-anwār fi imāmat a’immat al-aṭhār* (Fragrant blossoms on the imamate of the pure imams), taking a stance against not only ‘Abd al-‘Azīz but also other Sunnī critics of Shī‘ī positions.²⁵

Shī‘ī–Sunnī polemical texts started to be produced in India centuries before ‘Abd al-‘Azīz and Dildār ‘Alī. Sirhindī wrote his anti-Shī‘ī treatise *Radd al-rawāfiḍ* in 1008/1599–1600. In 1587, Qāḍī Nūr Allāh’s *Maṣā’ib al-nawāṣib* (Calamities of the Sunnīs) was a reply to Mīrzā Makhdūm Sharīf’s (d. 1587) *al-Nawāqiḍ fi l-radd ‘alā l-rawāfiḍ* (Nullifiers on the refutation of Shī‘īs) in Baghdad, which was soon brought to India and circulated there. Qāḍī Nūr Allāh also wrote *al-Ṣawārim al-muḥriqa* (Burning swords) in reply to the *Ṣawā’iq al-muḥriqa fi l-radd ‘alā ahl al-rafd wa-l-dalāl wa-l-zandaqa* (The burning thunderbolts in refutation of the people of refusal, error, and heresy) of Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d. 1566–67) and *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq* (Realisation of the truth) in 1605 in refutation of Faṭḥullāh Ruzbihān’s *Ibtāl al-nahj al-bāṭil* (Invalidation of the false path) (1503).

5.4 Dard and ‘Andalīb

It is within the above-explained Indian context of Sunnī–Shī‘ī relations – that is, the competition over power during the establishment of new Shī‘ī principalities, the renewed patronage of Shī‘ī rituals and seminaries by certain rulers, and the ensuing sectarian conflict and polemics – that the prominent eighteenth-century mystic of Delhi Khwāja Mīr Dard conceived a doctrine

24 See ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, *Tuhfa*, 416–537; for the polemic thought of Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, see also Rizvi, *Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz*.

25 Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, “Mawqif al-shī‘a”, 41, 52.

which was to lead, in his view, beyond the Shī'ī and Sunnī frameworks, a path encompassing both creeds, called in his parlance *ṭarīqa jāmi'a* ("comprehensive way").²⁶

Both Mīr Dard and his father, 'Andalīb, were prominent Sufi theologians, poets, and musicians in Delhi, which was still the centre of the Mughal Empire.²⁷ Moreover, they belonged to the reformist Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī circles. Dard had studied Islamic sciences such as law and *ḥadīth*, though explicitly separating himself and his approach from the traditional '*ulamā'* and their viewpoints.²⁸ He was the theoretician and exponent of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Khālīṣa* initiated by his father, 'Andalīb, who himself was a disciple of one of Sirhindi's immediate descendants, Pīr Muḥammad Zubayr (d. 1740). 'Andalīb was the first Indian to call his Sufi path *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*, a designation which, as we have seen, was later used by Sayyid Aḥmad of Rae Bareilly.²⁹ In Dard's view, his father was among the saints of the Muslim community who had appeared to renew (*tajdīd*) and revive (*iḥyā'*) the pure religion of God, after it had become contaminated by innovations and the Muslims' deviation from the Prophet's original tradition. For him, 'Andalīb had been sent by God ultimately to proclaim the only way of salvation and the most perfect manifestation of the truth.³⁰

Dard's major contribution, among other works, is his *ʿIlm al-kitāb* (The knowledge of the book). Besides reflecting on a variety of religious and cultural themes and theological, legal, and philosophical debates of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the book contains some idiosyncrasies (such as those related to Shī'ism) which distinguish it from the reform-oriented texts of his contemporaries. Among the latter were works like *Ḥujjatullāh al-bāligha* (The conclusive argument of God) by Walī Allāh and the *Maqāmāt-i Maẓharī* (Exempla of Maẓhar) of Mīrzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān³¹ that was compiled by Shāh Ghulām 'Alī (d. 1824), who at the age of thirteen had associated with Dard in Delhi.³²

26 For details on the *ṭarīqa jāmi'a*, see Khodamoradi, "*Ṭarīqah Muḥammadiyyah*"; Khodamoradi, *Sufi Reform*, 127–62.

27 On Dard as a poet, see Dard, *Urdū dīwān*; Dard, *Dīwān-i fārsī*; Schimmel, *Pain and Grace*, 31, 49; Ziad, "I Transcend Myself".

28 Dard, *Chahār risāla*, 219.

29 Schimmel, *Pain and Grace*, 33. See also Ahmad, *Saiyid Ahmad Shahid*; Gaborieau, *Le Mahdi incompris*.

30 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 587.

31 The latter work consists of the letters and Sufi discourses (*maḥfūẓāt*) of Mīrzā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān.

32 Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1034.

As an extensive commentary on 111 *wāridāt* written in quatrains,³³ *ʿIlm al-kitāb* is a highly technical theosophical-theological text that highlights several problems of its time. These include discussions over the interpretation of holy scripture (*taʿwīl*) and the distortion of its meaning (*tahrīf*); debates on the authoritative sources of knowledge and faith; and the search for a comprehensive Islamic knowledge. The book also tackles social challenges such as the issue of religious authority, which Dard bases on blood affiliation with the Prophet (*siyāda*), in combination with a spiritual union with him. It also deals with the sectarian conflicts between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, to which the author dedicates a significant part of his theological discussions, reconstructing the theoretical bases of such denominational differences.

In *ʿIlm al-kitāb*, Dard not only reconsiders some of his forefather's influential teachings, such as Sirhindi's devaluation of the doctrine of the "unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) and his advocating the notion of the "unity of witnessing" (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*),³⁴ but also makes radical amendments to the Mujaddidī Sufi scholars' mostly hostile approach to Shīʿism. In his reconsideration of Shīʿism, he follows the goals prescribed by his father in the latter's introduction to *Nāla-yi ʿAndalīb*. *Nāla* is a voluminous book of approximately 2,000 folios written in Persian and containing an interpretation of a story that was originally narrated by ʿAndalīb in Hindi over a period of three nights in memory of Pīr Muḥammad Zubayr, who had just died. ʿAndalīb expanded upon this story, adding a number of subplots into the framework of the main narrative, and used the now extensive tale as a way to explain his Muḥammadan Path.³⁵ He also inserted Hindi *dohas* (a genre of Hindi explanatory poetry generally used in epics) into the story and referred to Hindu philosophy and customs.³⁶ In *Nāla*, ʿAndalīb explains the aim of his book as being to propose a path free from all of the uncertainties and problems found in various sects of Islam. He refers to the high curiosity among the younger generation about the truth within the Shīʿī and Sunnī branches of Islam: "Brothers of the path would ask me about issues of the path that came to mind ... Young men would often ask me about the realities of the Sunnī and Shīʿī schools."³⁷ ʿAndalīb tries to establish a plausible framework, that is, the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*, for all religious and societal strata and for every aspect of life, as a way applicable for Sunnīs and Shīʿīs, men and women, the elite and folk, with worldly and otherworldly benefits alike.³⁸

33 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 91–96, 473; Dard, *Chahār risāla*, 6.

34 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 3–5.

35 Saghaeeraj, "Muḥammad Nāṣir ʿAndalīb".

36 ʿAndalīb, *Nāla*, 1:789, 813, 882, 2:712, 900.

37 ʿAndalīb, *Nāla*, 1:3.

38 ʿAndalīb, *Nāla*, 1:4. ʿAndalīb deals with Shīʿī imamology in his *Nāla*, 2:583.

5.5 *Sīyāda* and Imamate: Solutions for the Conflict and Polemics

Following his father, Dard's addressees are all types of Muslims, be they traditionalist or rationalist, Sufi or scholar, Shī'ī or Sunnī.³⁹ In contrast to the approach of Walī Allāh, his synthetic attempt does not exclude the Shī'ī doctrine. To include Shī'ism in his own way, Dard utilises, among other subjects, the significant concept of *sīyāda* which is associated with that of the imamate. *Sīyāda* is one of the two main pillars – the second being direct mystical connection with and annihilation in the Prophet (*fanā' fī l-rasūl*) – on the basis of which Dard constructs his ultra-Sunnī-Shī'ī way of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Wāthīqa*. It is in reference to the fundamentals of *sīyāda* and the imamate that Dard called himself a *sayyid*, a member of the Prophetic family and an offspring of the Prophet's daughter Fāṭima,⁴⁰ rather than a saint or shaykh or Sufi (see already above). The first parts of his name, Khwāja and Mīr, refer to this *sayyid* origin from both maternal and paternal sides.⁴¹ In his pure Muḥammadan Path, *sīyāda* retains its function as one of the crucial sources of religious authority.

Dard reconsidered the challenging subject matters between Sunnīs and Shī'īs circulating around the importance of blood affiliation with the Prophet. In his approach to the long-term dispute over the exalted status of the family of the Prophet (*ahl-i bayt*) in Shī'ism and on that of Muḥammad's companions (*ṣaḥāba*) in Sunnī tradition, Dard, despite his Sunnī background, places the progeny of the Prophet at a higher rank than his companions. Using a simile, he likens the Prophet to a tree whose main branches are his progeny, due to their blood relationship with him, whereas the companions are branches cut from other trees and transplanted onto the Prophetic one.⁴² Elaborating on the rank of the *ahl-i bayt*, Dard adds that members of the Prophet's household are joined to Muḥammad both by virtue of being his companions and by being his offspring, therefore encompassing all exterior and interior perfections and virtues.⁴³

Dard also considers his father and himself as belonging to the main branches of the Prophetic tree due to their being *najīb al-ṭarafayn* (highborn through blood affiliation with the Prophet via both parents), thus possessing both exterior and interior perfections. He calls his father "the veritable *sayyid* and most righteous imam, who is the helper of the nation and the religion".⁴⁴

39 Khodamoradi, *Sufi Reform*, 106–9.

40 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 83, 257–58.

41 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 84.

42 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 83.

43 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 257–58.

44 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 648.

Having emphasised the superiority of Muḥammad's progeny over his companions, Dard warns his audience not to consider him as an advocate of *afḍaliyya* ("precedency"), a Shī'ī concept referring to the preference of the accomplished and learned for leadership over the unaccomplished and unlearned. *Afḍaliyya* is related to the polemical issue of the leader's required characteristics in Islamic theology. According to Shī'ī theologians, an imam has to surpass other Muslims in two aspects in order to obtain the requirements of leadership: (a) his proximity to God and in the level of divine rewards that he enjoys; and (b) the characteristics which relate to human perfection such as bravery and knowledgeability. Thus, according to this point of view, prioritising less learned Muslims over those who are more learned is impossible.⁴⁵ This argument is used in polemics over the caliphate by Shī'īs, who argue that 'Alī was more knowledgeable than the first Sunnī caliphs and therefore the true successor of the Prophet. Sunnī scholars, in turn, consider the *ḥadīth* references that form the basis for the theory of *afḍaliyya* as weak or categorise them as fabrications.⁴⁶

Dard argues that, despite his emphasis on the originality of the Prophet's progeny – and consequently the Imams – as the main branches of the tree, they are equal to the companions in terms of their function. To him, both groups, like both types of branches, provide fruit as well as pleasant shade and beauty for the Muslims, and Muslims should only be concerned with these benefits and nothing else. Emphasising that both descendants and companions, whether natural or transplanted, are after all branches of the same tree, he accentuates that the resort (*tawassul*) to each companion and Imam becomes a resort to the Prophet himself.⁴⁷ In this way, Dard stood firm on the comprehensiveness of the pure Muḥammadan Path, without being diverted from his Sunnī position regarding the value and status of the companions. This was his approach to build a bridge between the Shī'ī and Sunnī denominations, which his father had already started to construct in his *Nāla*.

Dard introduces himself as the heir of the *ahl-i bayt* and of the continuous chain of the imamate. He even attributes to himself the revolutionary title of a "missionary imam" (*imām-i dā'ī*), who invites people to the comprehensive pure Muḥammadan Path,⁴⁸ and announces the authority of his way as a hereditary power (*dawlat-i mawrūthī*).⁴⁹ Dard considers the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*

45 See Rāzī, *al-Munqidh*, 2:286; al-Ḥillī, *Kitāb al-maslak*.

46 Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, 7:515.

47 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 83, 84, 255–57.

48 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 257–58.

49 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 85.

as the continuity of the imamate and the receptor of the knowledge that has disappeared after the eleventh Imam, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskari (d. 874). This marks its differentiation from the other Mujaddidi currents such as the Mazhariyya and the followers of Walī Allāh, whose genealogy goes back to Abū Bakr and who concentrates on the caliphate rather than the imamate in his discussion of Muslim leadership. Arguing for the inclusion of Shīʿīs in his broad project of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*, Dard interprets and elaborates on a variety of *ḥadīths* such as the *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* (“*ḥadīth* of the two weighty things”), *ḥadīth al-ghadīr* (“*ḥadīth* of the pond”), and those Prophetic sayings that refer to ʿAlī as the most authentic source of knowledge,⁵⁰ *ḥadīths* that had formed the theological foundations of Shīʿī theology for centuries. Considering ʿAlī’s knowledge as of the highest order, Dard does not explicitly speak about his role as a source of Islamic law and regulations. However, his frequent uses of the set of the Qurʾān, *ḥadīths*, and the imamate gives the impression that, besides his effort to establish the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* based on the spiritual knowledge of the imamate, he also intended to give some impulses towards a reconsideration of the Sunnī sources of Islamic law. The above-mentioned *ḥadīths*, narrated frequently in Shīʿī sources and also often mentioned in Sunnī collections (though with some textual variations),⁵¹ had played a crucial role in Sunnī–Shīʿī disputes for centuries. Several scholars of both communities had continued to reconsider and reinterpret them, while continuously arguing for and against their authenticity.⁵²

One category of *ḥadīths* described by Dard is related to the friendship (*mawadda*) and love (*maḥabba*) of the household of the Prophet,⁵³ for instance: “Whoever does not love ʿAlī is a hypocrite and whoever does not hate him is faithful. And whoever is far from this threshold is far from the city.”⁵⁴ The veneration and love of the *ahl-i bayt* has always been a part of Sunnī

50 The *ḥadīth al-thaqalayn* reads thus: “I [Muḥammad] leave among you two things, and if you strictly adhere to them, you shall never go astray: The Book of Allah and the people of my house (*ahl-i bayt*). I have told you that you will reach me in heaven at the pool [of *al-kawthar*] and I will ask you about how you behaved with those two valuable relics” (Kulaynī, *al-Uṣūl*, 1:294). In the *ḥadīth al-ghadīr*, Muḥammad states: “To whomever I am master [‘friend’ in Sunnī interpretation], ʿAlī also is his master.” In volume 7 of *ʿAbaqāt al-anwār*, the author discusses this *ḥadīth* and its various narrations by Sunnī scholars. See Mīr Ḥāmid, *ʿAbaqāt*, vol. 7.

51 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 255.

52 Among the *ḥadīths* narrated by Dard which are also mentioned by Sunnī *ḥadīth* scholars are (a) “Fāṭima is a part of me, whoever harms her harms me” (Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:292–94) and (b) “Alī and I are from one light” (Ibn al-Maghāzili, *Manāqib*, 17).

53 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 259, 260.

54 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 255.

tradition, too, even though it never reached the centrality as in Shī'ī religiosity. In Shī'ism, by contrast, the intense love for the Imams and the household of the Prophet permeates the worldview of believers and influences the structure of their religiosity. Expressing one's love for his descendants through devotion to them, following them, and assisting and protecting them from any harm and distress are among the criteria used to determine the integrity and soundness of one's faith and actions. In other words, it has become a way in which one is able to attain salvation. Numerous *ḥadīths* in early Shī'ī writings highlight this love and list it as a criterion for the validity of one's faith whereas enmity towards the Imams is regarded as a sign of unbelief.⁵⁵ However, there is also a certain consensus among both Sunnīs and Shī'īs that love and respect for Muḥammad and his progeny are mandated by the Qur'ān and the Prophetic tradition, and several Sunnī *ḥadīth* scholars have narrated *ḥadīths* to that effect.⁵⁶ Emphasising this consensus, Dard, in line with Shī'īs, considers the love of 'Alī as the criterion of faith (*maḥakk-i īmān*), and deviation from it as the sign of hypocrisy and failure.⁵⁷ 'Alī is described by him as the owner of *faqr-i Muḥammadi* ("Muḥammadan poverty"), and a person who is united with the Prophet (*lahū nisbat al-'ayniyya bi-l-rasūl*) and his flesh and blood is the flesh and blood of the Prophet.⁵⁸ Referring to the *ḥadīth* "Fāṭima is a part of me: whoever harms her, harms me", Dard likens the relationship of the *ahl-i bayt* and *sādāt* with the Prophet to the relationship between an individual's limbs and his self. He concludes that the love of the *ahl-i bayt* and the Imams is the love of the Prophet himself, because to love the limbs or individual parts of a person is nothing but to love that person, and to hate them is to hate that person.⁵⁹ He even affirms a kind of *'isma* (infallibility) for the *ahl-i bayt* and declares that they are sublime essences (*dhawāt 'aliyyāt*) with a pure and sacred nature. They are absolutely pure in the exterior as God purified (*'aṣama*) them from all sins, and also in the interior, as He protected them from all temptations and unbidden thoughts (*wasāwis wa-hawājis*).⁶⁰

It was, most probably, this unusual attempt by Dard to strongly underline the role of the *ahl-i bayt* and the Imams in his *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* doctrine that earned him criticism from the Sunnī Muslims of his time. Even some of his own followers accused him of an unlawful innovation with his foundation

55 Mavani, *Religious Authority*, 40–1; Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad*, 13.

56 For example, see Sharif, trans., *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 1:126.

57 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 255.

58 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 257.

59 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 255.

60 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 83.

of a new way (*ṭarīqa muḥdatha*).⁶¹ They had apparently criticised him for his Shī'ī tendencies and for his sole focus on the degrees and features of the *ahl-i bayt*. In reaction, Dard admits that they are correct and sound, stating that he deals primarily with the *ahl-i bayt* and their excellence but does not dwell upon the virtues and greatness of the companions. He explains, however, that the excellence of Abū Bakr and 'Umar are clearer than the sun, that their bliss (*fuyūḍāt*) which exudes from them has covered the whole world, and that there is thus no need to explain it. Moreover, he continues, most of the Sunnī scholars had stated the greatness and perfection of the companions but had not dealt with the biography of the *ahl-i bayt* to the extent that they deserve.⁶²

I tried to deal with the subject of the *ahl-i bayt* in order to make the Sunnīs respect them and love them, too ... The Sunnīs have not written about their ranks (*maqāmāt*) as much as they deserve.... I speak about the Prophet's progeny to help Sunnīs also to benefit from the grace of proximity to the imamate (*qurb-i imāma*) ... My aim is to quell the fire of prejudice among both Shī'īs and Sunnīs and invite them to join the path of balance (*i'ttidāl*).

Dard continues that his aim is not to prefer one party over the other, as those Shī'īs who believe in precedence (*tafḍīliyān*) or prejudiced Sunnīs do.⁶³ Although Dard incorporates an important element of Shī'ī belief in his *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* doctrine, he strongly maintains his Sunnī and Ḥanafī foundations, and his definition of the *ahl-i bayt* also includes the Prophet's wives such as 'Ā'isha, a challenging personality to the Shī'ī worldview. However, he emphasises the importance of Fāṭima, 'Alī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn as the main members of the Prophetic progeny and the possessors of the highest rank among the *ahl-i bayt*, by stressing *ḥadīths* such as "Alī and I are from one light" and "the dearest among my people to me is Fāṭima and the dearest among my *ahl-i bayt* are Ḥasan and Ḥusayn".⁶⁴

Trying to establish a balance between Shī'ī tendencies and Sunnī faith, Dard asserts in his works that there is a differentiation between his own loving attachment to the Prophet's household and that of those Shī'īs whom he calls *rawāfiḍ* ("rejectors", or heretics). The latter is a derogatory term oftentimes used by Sunnīs for Shī'īs who curse the first three caliphs, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and

61 Dard, *Ilm*, 262.

62 Dard, *Ilm*, 256.

63 Dard, *Ilm*, 256.

64 Dard, *Ilm*, 255.

‘Uthmān, in order to express their rejection of them as the legitimate successors of Muḥammad.⁶⁵ The *rawāfiḍ*’s affection, according to Dard’s viewpoint, reflects the “ignorant love” of common people that damages guidance.

It is unlikely that he refers with this derogatory term to Shī’īs in general. In contrast to his Naqshbandī contemporaries Walī Allāh and his son, ‘Abdul ‘Azīz, Dard rarely criticises common Shī’īs and neither denounces nor mentions Shī’ī rituals such as the commemorations of Muḥarram or the *ta’ziya*. Thus, his use of the humiliating term *rawāfiḍ* most probably singles out only those Shī’īs who do not fit into the framework of his *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* that considers both Imams and companions of the Prophet as branches of the same tree of prophethood. His use of this term may also just be a kind of concomitance with the prevailing anti-Shī’a sentiment among Sunnīs of his time. It furthermore points to his invitation of the Shī’īs to adopt his model of the Muḥammadan individual, who has stepped beyond Sunnīs and Shī’īs. That is why he explicitly calls on Shī’īs to join the Muḥammadan Path, with *siyāda* and imamate as central pillars.

It is not only the narrative of love for the *ahl-i bayt* that was underlined by Dard. He also concentrates on the concept of the imamate while remaining in his Sunnī-Ḥanafī-Mujaddidī framework of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya*. He did so exactly at the time when Walī Allāh was constructing a theory of *khilāfa* (viceregency of the Prophet) in which the era of the first Shī’ī Imam, ‘Alī, was denounced as the age of *fitna* (rebellion). To this end, Dard focuses on other *ḥadīths* which were significant for the question of the imamate as the highest source of knowledge directly revealed from God (*‘ilm-i ladunni*), after the knowledge of prophethood (*nubuwwa*). He mentions, for instance, the *ḥadīth*: “I am the city of knowledge and ‘Alī is its threshold.”⁶⁶ With regard to this *ḥadīth*, Dard stresses the role of ‘Alī as the transmitter of knowledge within the lineage of the imamate via Fāṭima’s offspring, notably Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, and not via other sons of ‘Alī born from his other wives.⁶⁷ In this way, he differentiates between the *sādāt* of Banī Fāṭima and other ‘Alawī *sādāt* who descended from ‘Alī through his three sons, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya from Khawla bt. Ja’far al-Ḥanafīyya, ‘Abbās from Umm al-Banīn, and ‘Umar from Ṣahbā’ al-Taghlibiyya.

65 Rāzī, *I’tiqādāt*, 59.

66 Shī’īs believe that ‘Alī is the most knowledgeable person after the Prophet. Among Sunnī scholars, Ibn Taymiyya clearly states that nobody from the *ahl al-sunna* agrees with this idea and there is a strong consensus among Sunnī theologians that Abū Bakr and ‘Umar are the most knowledgeable people after the Prophet (Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, 4:5, see also 7:500–28).

67 Dard, *‘Ilm*, 259ff.

Focusing on the connection between *siyāda* and the imamate, Dard states that the chain of the imamate did not stop with the death of the eleventh Imam but continued via the *siyāda* of the Prophetic offspring which included Dard's father and himself.⁶⁸ Dard even attributes to himself the title of "son of the Imam" when he stresses his own countless titles and beautiful names, such as the knower (*ʿālim*), the light (*nūr*), the hearer (*samīʿ*), the one (*waḥīd*), and the patron (*walī*).⁶⁹

Dard's reference to himself as "son of the Imam" is partly due to his father's title, who was considered by Dard and most probably also by his other disciples as "Imam of the gnostics" (*Imām al-ʿarīfīn*). For him, ʿAndalīb was the heir of ʿAlī's knowledge (*wārith-i ʿilm-i murtaḍawī*) and manifested the lights and bounty of the imamate due to his descentance from the Prophet.⁷⁰ Dard emphasises that the imamate continues until the Day of Judgement through those carrying the blood of the Prophet and his progeny.⁷¹ According to him, each era witnesses somebody who is endowed with the grace of the imamate and honoured with the hereditary bliss⁷² that makes Muḥammad reappear through his progeny, until his final reappearance in the Mahdī (the last manifestation and representative of Muḥammad).⁷³ Because of this reappearance, the way in which people treat the *sādāt* of the Muḥammadan Path is considered as their treatment of Muḥammad himself, since the Prophet's progeny are empty of their own identity and carry the real existence of Muḥammad: "Their soul is the soul of Muḥammad; their faith is the faith of Muḥammad; their flesh and skin is the flesh and skin of Muḥammad; their home is the home of Muḥammad; and their time is the time of Muḥammad."⁷⁴

For Dard, God made the *sādāt* the owners of time and gave them his command to call Muslims to the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Khālīṣa*.⁷⁵ They enjoy the specific knowledge of the imamate,⁷⁶ the "divine Muḥammadan knowledge" (*ʿilm-i ilāhī-i muḥammadī*), and the status of the most intimate proximity

68 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 259ff.

69 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 62.

70 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 137.

71 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 259–60, 264, 611, 613.

72 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 257, 260.

73 About the finality of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Khālīṣa* in the time of the Mahdī, see Dard, *ʿIlm*, 85.

74 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 259.

75 Besides reinforcing blood kinship through propounding *siyāda* and the imamate, the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* claims its validity through ʿAndalīb's mystical vision of the second Shīʿī imam, Imam al-Ḥasan (Dard, *ʿIlm*, 85).

76 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 257, 260.

(*qurb-i akhaṣṣ al-khāṣṣ*) granted by God.⁷⁷ Elaborating on what he means by such knowledge, Dard here points to the above-mentioned *ḥadīth* that declares ‘Alī to be the gate or threshold leading to the “city of knowledge” and in this way presents him as a mediator without whom the knowledge of God cannot be achieved.⁷⁸ This *ḥadīth* has been considered by many Sunnī scholars, including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 855), Bukhārī (d. 870), Tirmidhī (d. 892), Ibn Hibban al-Bustī (d. 965), Dhahabī (d. 1348), and Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), to be either weak or fabricated both in transmission and wording.⁷⁹ Dard, however, largely bases his concept of the Muḥammadan knowledge on it, without discussing its diverging status in Sunnī and Shī‘ī theological traditions.

Dard divides knowledge (*‘ilm*) into two categories: (i) intellectual (*‘aqlī*) knowledge, which encompasses the sub-branches of theology, mathematics, and natural sciences; and (ii) divine knowledge, through revelation and inspiration (*ladunnī* or *wahbī*), which is itself divided into the following types: (a) prophecy and (divine) message (*nubuwwa wa-risāla*), both of which are mediated by the angel Gabriel (Jibra‘īl) and cause divine proximity (*taqarrub*). This knowledge is related to the reform of life in this world and in the hereafter (*umūr-i muṣliḥ-i ma‘āsh wa-ma‘ād*) and was completed and finalised by the Prophet Muḥammad; (b) knowledge of the caliphate (*khilāfa*) that was achieved through inspiration (*ilhām*), along with the rightful demand to receive allegiance (*akhdh-i bay‘a*), in the first thirty years after the time of the Prophet. It is also related to the affairs that reform life in both worlds; (c) the knowledge of the perfections of prophethood (*kamālāt-i nubuwwa*), which was again achieved through inspiration by Muslims other than the Prophet’s offspring and began thirty years after the Prophet’s death. It includes issues that reform both lives, as well; (d) the knowledge of the imamate (*imāma*), which was achieved through inspiration but only by the offspring of the Prophet, along with the right of allegiance, after thirty years had passed since the death of the Prophet and also in later times. This, too, conveys the affairs that reform life in both material and spiritual spheres; (d) the knowledge of sainthood (*wilāya*) and its sub-branches of the “unity of being” and the “unity of witnessing” (*waḥdat al-wujūd wa-waḥdat al-shuhūd*); (e) Sufism (*taṣawwuf*); and (f) religion (*dīn*).⁸⁰

77 Dard, *‘Ilm*, 610. For divine Muḥammadan knowledge, see Khodamoradi, *Sufi Reform*, 153–60.

78 Dard, *‘Ilm*, 255.

79 For the list of Sunnī scholars challenging the authenticity of this *ḥadīth*, see Bin Arḥama, *Takhrīj*, 7–8.

80 Dard, *‘Ilm*, 82.

Among these categories, the knowledge which lies in the imamate (*‘ilm-i imāmat*)⁸¹ stands out as a particular wisdom that differs from and is higher than all the others after the knowledge of prophethood. Similar to the knowledge of prophethood, of the caliphate, and of the perfections of prophethood, *‘ilm-i imāmat* pertains to matters that reform life in this world and in the hereafter and culminates in the proximity to the Divine. It shares common elements with the aforementioned types of knowledge such as inspiration and right of allegiance but differs from them through its particularity of being the prerogative of the Prophet's offspring. It also went along with their rightful demand for allegiance, which set in thirty years after the death of the Prophet with the caliphate of his grandson Ḥasan, to whom many Muslims swore the oath of allegiance after the death of his father, the fourth caliph, ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. According to Dard, allegiance to Ḥasan was the starting point for the leadership of the Muslim community by the offspring of the Prophet, that is, the Imams and descendants of Fāṭima. Rejecting the Shī‘ī narrative of *fitna* (sedition) that considers the first three caliphs as usurpers, he explicitly accepts the caliphates of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Uthmān. Only for the period after the four rightly guided caliphs Dard reserves both worldly and spiritual leadership, and the position as valid sources of knowledge, to the Imams and descendants of Fāṭima. The Muslims' allegiance to Ḥasan as the fifth caliph plays a key role in his definition of the knowledge of the imamate. Thus, in Dard's view, the blood of the Prophet and the knowledge of ‘Alī provide the framework of leadership of the Muslim community with both of them now existing in their purest form in the founders of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Khālīṣa*.

‘Ilm-i imāmat is a knowledge that connects the finality of the prophethood with the continuity of the imamate. According to Dard, the Prophet Muḥammad is a person who has traversed all degrees of perfection to the end, and it is only the Prophet's bliss and the manifestation of his perfections that have been continuing – and will continue – through his offspring,⁸² who, on their part, encompass all types of perfections and virtue, both exterior and interior.⁸³ Dard insists that his Muḥammadan Path is different from the Mujaddidis whom he sees in analogy to the Prophet's friends and companions. The Muḥammadīs, by contrast, represent the very limbs, hands, and feet of Muḥammad. He even asserts that the “*sādāt* of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* enjoy the ‘total unity’ (*‘ayniyyat-i tāmm*) and ‘the total annihilation’ (*fanā’-i*

81 On the imamate, see Dard, *‘Ilm*, 259.

82 Dard, *‘Ilm*, 257, 263–64.

83 Dard, *‘Ilm*, 257.

atamm) in Muḥammadness”, which is why they are considered special (*khāṣṣ*).⁸⁴ The title *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Khāṣṣa*, which Dard uses in reference to his way, illustrates the particularity which makes the mystical experience and rank of the “pure Muḥammadi” (*Muḥammadi-i khālīṣ*) the highest experience related to the Prophet Muḥammad. It differs for him from that of the “perfections of prophethood” (*kamālāt-i nubuwwa*), a significant mystical experience and rank in the Mujaddidiyya that is equal to general prophethood (*nubuwwat-i āmma*).

According to Dard, this rank of the “pure Muḥammadi” belongs to the family of the Prophet in particular, whose members are sublime essences coming into existence through the rays of Muḥammadan light and have the potentiality of Prophetic mission. But he believes that pure Muḥammadness will continue forever and that all Muslims can achieve this stage and enter this *ṭarīqa*. It exists as a potential in each and every Muslim, though its most powerful point will only be achieved in the time of the Mahdī, when the whole world will be enlightened with a unique light of pure Muḥammadness.⁸⁵

Dard declared that knowledge connected with the imamate went into hiding after al-Ḥasan al-Askarī (the eleventh Shīʿī Imam who died around 874) and was rediscovered in the eighteenth century by his father, ‘Andalīb, who passed its secrets to Dard. Dard himself continued ‘Andalīb’s call for the revitalisation of the religion by descendants of the *ahl-i bayt*.⁸⁶ His emphasis on the continuity of the Prophetic mission through the imamate, rather than the continuity of *wilāya* (sanctity and spiritual leadership) through Sufi masters, makes Dard’s approach towards the knowledge and genealogy of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* significantly different from that of established Sufism.

5.6 Conclusion

In the sociopolitical conflict and the polemical controversies between Sunnīs and Shīʿīs that were ignited in eighteenth-century India, Dard called for a unity of the two major Muslim denominations on the basis of a theosophical-mystical framework that centred on the principles of the imamate and *siyāda*. He offered a comprehensive doctrine to absorb both Sunnīs and Shīʿīs into his way of the *Muḥammadiyya Wāthīqa* and *Khātima*, “the trustworthy and final Muḥammadness”. Dard strengthened his comprehensive way by considering

84 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 88.

85 Dard, *ʿIlm*, 88, 113–14; Khodamoradi, *Sufi Reform*, 145–47.

86 Ziad, “Quest of the Nightingale”, 242.

both Shī'ī Imams and Muḥammad's companions as branches of the same Prophetic tree, no matter whether they had been "transplanted" onto it or were his real offspring. He then called upon the Muslims only to be concerned about the fruits and benefits which the tree as a whole provided for them. In his interpretation of the *ahl-i bayt* and the imamate which went against his Mujaddidi-Ḥanafī background, Dard attempted to use the widespread appreciation for descent from the Prophet (*siyāda*), a point of agreement between Shī'īs and Sunnīs, as an axis on which both denominations could construct a common Muslim identity and revise their old controversies with a fresh perspective.

Reconsidering *siyāda* and imamate, Dard affirms the right of the Imams and *sādāt* of Banī Fāṭima to lead the Muslim community and their role as the true source of knowledge that was transmitted through the imamate after the rightly guided caliphs. He considers the allegiance of Muslims to Ḥasan's caliphate as the starting point of this leadership. For him the blood of the Prophet and the knowledge of 'Alī as transmitted to the founders of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* besides the centrality of the Prophet Muhammad construct the main structure and pivotal elements of this path. His declaration of the *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya* as a hereditary power (*dawlat-i mawrūthī*) expresses its authenticity, right, and capacity for the leadership of the *umma* via *siyāda*. Furthermore, Dard's affirming of a kind of infallibility of the *ahl-i bayt*, his stress on love for them as the criterion of faith (*maḥakk-i imān*), and his focus on the knowledge of 'Alī embeds key elements of the Shī'ī narrative of the imamate into his doctrine.

Although veneration and respect of the *ahl-i bayt* has always been a part not only of Sufi but also of Sunnī tradition in general, Dard's adaptation of the theory of the imamate is a step further in that respect. He considers himself an Imam, gives priority to the knowledge connected with the imamate, accentuates the figure of 'Alī as the source of such knowledge, and affirms the right of the Imams for the leadership of the Muslim *umma*. He certainly did not have the opportunity to round his concepts and to explain more clearly and in detail how his *Ṭarīqa Muḥammadiyya Khālīṣa* could accommodate the theory of the imamate as the highest source of knowledge. But he was courageous enough to propound such an adaptation at a time when most Sunnī reformists were engaged in anti-Shī'ī polemics and controversies,⁸⁷ vis-à-vis an increasing

87 As exceptions to this, one can find some positive approaches to Shī'ī belief in general by Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān and the partial, inconspicuous compromises made by Walī Allāh in affirming *ʿisma* for Shī'ī Imams (Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt*, 14). For Maẓhar's approach, see Weismann, *The Naqshbandiyya*, 65–66; Friedmann, "Medieval Muslim Views".

prominence of the Shī'īs and a decline of Sunnī power in the waning Mughal Empire. Dard's approach clearly stands in opposition to the Sunnī – and particularly Naqshbandī-Mujaddidī – revivalism of his age. This might have been one reason for his isolation, and also for the fact that he was not mentioned in the works of influential contemporaries such as Shāh Walī Allāh and Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān.

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