10

Young Man Sayyid: Dreams and Biographical Texts

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> *It was when he was very little, a beardless youth, that he saw some prisoners in jail uniforms, shackles on their feet, tangled hair on their heads. They were at work, building a road. That night he dreamed that he was coming from outside into the women's quarters. When he got to the threshold of the passageway, there stood an extremely dark monster with huge teeth, hair standing on end, and shackles on his feet. The monster came out of the corner and lifting both hands grabbed the boy up over his head and smashed him down to the ground. He woke from the dream, but his heart kept pounding for several hours. For a long time after that he was afraid to pass through the passageway at night unless he had a man to accompany him.*[1]

When you have a bad dream like that, you are supposed to recite a prayer seeking God's protection from Satan, turn left, and spit three times—*thu thu thu kar dena*, as Sayyid Ahmad Khan put it in his translation of Shah Waliullah, who in turn was citing a well-known saying of the

[1] Hali, Altaf Husain, "Sir Sayyid ke cand khwab", *Hayat-i Javid* (Kanpur: Nami Press, 1901 [1st ed., British Library Rare Books and Mss. 14109.bbb.7], Appendix [separate pagination], pp. 7–14. Later editions omitted this text, but it was reprinted in Muhammad Ismai`il Panipati, ed., *Maqalat-i Sir Sayyid* (Lahore, 1963), Vol. 15, pp. 171–81. The present chapter is based on the Panipati reprint, but the dreams were not numbered in the original text. Elsewhere in this chapter, I will refer to HJ, a reprint edition of *Hayat-i Javid* (Lahore: Ashrat Publishing House, 1965). I am indebted to Muzaffar Alam for suggesting that I look at Sir Sayyid's dreams. I am also grateful to Nasir Ilahi, a psychoanalyst in New York—and a direct descendant of Maulvi Samiullah Khan—for his insightful suggestions. My thanks also to Barbara Metcalf, Sandy Freitag, C. M. Naim, and Ruby Lal for their suggestions.

Prophet.[2] Ashraf ‘Ali Thanawi added that you should not tell anyone about such a dream,[3] but we have the text of this one and 11 others because Sayyid Ahmad Khan wrote them down and passed them on to his biographer Altaf Husayn Hali. Hali found no way to incorporate these dreams into the biography but he included them as an appendix to the first edition with the explanation that Sayyid Ahmad had recorded these dreams in preparation for his commentary on the 12th sura of the Holy Qur’an—the one about Hazrat Yusuf, the interpreter of dreams.[4] According to Hali, Sayyid Ahmad’s purpose in recording his dreams, all in the third person, was to examine them for insights into the nature of dreaming itself, which was a rich, various and much studied tradition in Islamicate civilization.[5] Muslims have made much of dreams as a medium

[2] Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Tafsir al-qur¼an: va huva al-hady valfurqan* (Lahore: Matba»-i Nawal Kishor, n.d.), Vol. 5, p. 57; (lithograph) as reproduced in *Sir Sayyid ki tafsir-i Qur¼an,* Part 2 (Patna: Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1995); also available at http://www.aboutquran.com/ba/bio/sirsyed_ahmed_khan/tqss_vol_05.djvu Originally published in moveable type by the Aligarh Institute Press, Aligarh, 1309/ 1892 (available in British Library Rare Books and Mss. System number 013164090). See also SAK to Mawlawi Sharfuddin, 20 February 1893, in Panipati, ed., *Maktubat-i Sir Sayyid*, 2nd edn (Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqi-i Adab, 1976), Vol. 1, p. 305. The essay is reproduced without indicating its source and context and without the Quranic text as “Haqiqat al-ruya” in Muhammad Ismai`il Panipati, *Maqalat-i Sir Sayyid,* Vol. 13, pp.222–44. For the hadith in Bukhari, see Vol. 9, Book 87 (Interpretation of Dreams) Number 115, available at http://darulislam.info/Hadith_Bukhari-index-action-viewcat-cat-87.html

[3] Metcalf, Barbara Daly, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf ‘Ali Thanawi’s Bihishti Zewar* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 186.

[4] Note by Panipati, *Maqalat-i Sir Sayyid*, Vol. 15, pp. 171–72.

[5] See Fahd, T., and H. Daiber, “Ru¾y”, in P. Bearman et al., eds, *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd edn (Brill, 2009), Hossein, “Al-Suhrawardi, Shihab al-Din Yahya b. Habash b. Amirak, Abu ‘l-Futuh”, in P. Bearman et al., eds, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill, 2008), available at http://www.brillonline.nl; Hermansen, Marcia K., “Dreams and Dreaming in Islam”, in Kelly Bulkeley, ed., *Dreams: A Reader on the Religious, Cultural, and Psychological Dimensions of Dreaming* (New York: Palgrave 2001), pp. 73–92; Green, Nile, “The Religious and Cultural Roles of Dreams and Visions in Islam”, *JRAS*, *Series 3*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2003), pp. 287–313; Ewing, Katherine P., “The Dream of Spiritual Initiation and the Organization of Self Representations among Pakistani Sufis”, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (February 1990), pp. 56–74; Grunebaum, Gustave E. von, and Roger Caillois, *The Dream and Human Societies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); Shulman, David, and Guy G.

for divine revelation—or satanic deception. One's dreams and the ability to interpret the dreams of others can establish one's spiritual aptitude and authority, often in the context of specific social institutions such as Sufi shrines. Dreams can reveal truths about everyday life, predict the future and open the gates of mystical experience. The theological, philosophical, and mystical traditions of Islam have looked to dreams to learn about the nature of perception, memory, imagination, emotion, the boundaries of the self and the experience of love. And it is likely that all these cultural traditions have fed back into the content of what people dream and what they do when they wake up.

Sayyid Ahmad's commentary starts off by saying that much has been written about dreams but only now has research made significant progress in studies of "physiology" and "psychology" that cast new light on the origin and meaning of dreams. He proceeds to a discussion of the brain, the nervous system and the way perceptions are processed into images and memories. He then moves on to examine selective quotations (in Arabic with Urdu translations) from Ibn Sina, Al-Razi and Shah Wali Allah, all in support of his general proposition that whatever one dreams must be based on prior experience. Following Shah Wali Allah, he argues that some people are particularly perceptive and able to make more of their dreams. If Hazrat Yusuf, for example, was able to predict famine and plenty, it was because he understood the nature of Egyptian agriculture and the flood patterns of the Nile River.

Notably absent from this discussion is any mention of his own dreams. He may have written them in preparation for the *Tafsir*, but when he sent them on to Hali, he presumably considered them relevant to his biography. The dozen dreams are mostly arranged chronologically according to a sequence of periods in his life and the places he lived— Delhi, Bijnor, Moradabad and Aligarh. They might be construed as an autobiographical fragment, a narrative history of Sayyid Ahmad's inner life. Hali, however, didn't know what to do with them; he confined them to an appendix in the first edition, and dropped them from the second. In a more traditional biographical account there would probably have been a place for them. Recording and recounting one's dreams was a well-established practice for sultans as well as saints, who wanted to tell their life stories. Such dreams had their own conventions, most significantly the appearance of sacred personalities, prophets, and saints, as genuinely

spiritual interventions. The dreamer and perhaps a wider audience could interpret such dreams as divine validation.

Using dreams as a way of uncovering retrospectively the fears and desires of childhood and recapitulating the developing self does not appear to have been a feature of an Islamic "dream culture"; it suggests a different idea about the changes an individual's personality undergoes over time. But if such a suggestion is warranted, it was not one that either Sayyid Ahmad or Hali were prepared to pursue. In earlier periods of Sayyid Ahmad's life he had edited and produced a handwritten copy (1846) and later a printed version (1862) of Jahangir's memoirs, a text notable for the vivid dreams it recounts and the paintings that they inspired.[6] If Sayyid Ahmad's own dream collection can be read as a legitimate autobiographical text, how do they relate to a South Asian Muslim "dream culture", the tradition of dreaming and dream interpretation that he knew so well? And where do they stand as a reflection of his own self-understanding and what he might be prepared to present to his significantly large public following and opposition in the modern world that he had done so much to come to grips with?

Sayyid Ahmad published his commentary on Sura Yusuf in 1892, when he was about 75 years old; it was included in the fifth volume in the

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Stroumsa, eds., *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[6] Sachau, Ed, and Hermann Ethne, eds., *Catalogue of the Persian, Turkish, Hindustani, and Pushtu Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library*, Part I: Persian Manuscripts (Oxford at the Clarendon Press 1889], [No. 221, p. 118 [Elliot 406]; *Toozuk-i Jehangeeree* (Allygurh: Private Press, 1863). For the significance of Jahangir's dreams and fantasies, see in this volume, A. Azfar Moin, "Painted Rituals: The Sacred Art of Jahangir". See also Husain, Mahmud, trans., *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, n.d.); Alam, Muzaffar, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Envisioning Power: The Political Thought of a Late Eighteenth-Century Mughal Prince", *Indian Economic Social History Review*, Vol. 43 (2006), pp. 151–53. Dream accounts are mentioned throughout Metcalf, Barbara Daly, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860– 1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). For an interesting and possibly relevant discussion of the "autobiographical" aspects of an older sufi text, see Ernst, Carl W., *RûzbihânBaqlî: Mysticism and the Rhetoric of Sainthood in Persian Sufism* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1996), pp. 80–93; and several essays in Marlow, Louise, ed., *Dreaming across Boundaries: The Interpretation of Dreams in Islamic Lands* (Boston, Mass.: Ilex Foundation, 2008).

series that had started 10 years earlier. That indicates that he probably wrote down his dreams in the previous year or two, even though the dream about the *div* is presented as one he remembered from early childhood. Did prisoners in Delhi wear uniforms (*jail khane ke kapre*) in the early 1820s? Probably not; at least in British India there were none till the 1850s.[7] This suggests that the dream, filtered through the many intervening years, tells us at least as much about the old man as the young one. We have to read this and the other dreams from the perspectives of the time they were written down, as well as the time when they supposedly took place.

The lifetime of Sayyid Ahmad Khan spans great transformations, the penetration into India of new technologies and economies of social relationships under the aegis of the British imperial state. British military and industrial power, political institutions, and systems of knowledge overthrew longstanding practices and beliefs, including those associated with the Mughal dynasty, whose shadowy presence was violently erased midway in Sayyid Ahmad's long life in 1857. Sayyid Ahmad's creative engagement with these transformations from publications, organizations, educational institutions, and the formulation of intellectual discourses about history, politics, science, and religion all taken together came to embody an Indian Muslim version of the "modern". With respect to religion, this would-be modernity made the claim that the fundamental principles of the Qur'an were consistent with, and even constitutive of, contemporary natural science and systematic analysis otherwise associated with Europe. In order to make this argument, however, it was necessary to call into question established sources of religious authority— the texts and textual practices associated with the `ulama— by resorting to historical evidence and independent reasoning, Though viewed by his critics as derivative and apologetic, Sayyid Ahmad's ideas and activities, as they developed over the course of his lifetime, represent new and enduring formulations of subjectivity and group identity among Indian Muslims.[8]

[7] Anderson, Clare, *Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality, and Colonialism in South Asia* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2004), p. 107.

[8] For recent discussions in an extensive literature on Sayyid Ahmad Khan and "Islamic modernism", see Devji, Faisal, "Apologetic Modernity", *Modern Intellectual History*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2007), pp. 61–76; Moaddel, Mansoor, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism,*

Barbara Metcalf has set a formidable standard for a biographical study of a figure like Sayyid Ahmad Khan: that it "stretch our sense of human possibility", that it eschew "the unfolding linear story", "the canonical form of male biography and autobiography that emerged in Europe" and be grounded instead in an awareness of "the distinctive Indo-Persian cultural and literary tradition with its own conventions of writing and thinking about life histories".[9] It would not do, for example, to follow the hint in my title by trying to fit Sayyid Ahmad Khan into Erik Erickson's biographical model, sensitive as it may have been to cultural context, with its stages of life and identity crises.[10] To be clear: I have no interest in comparing Sayyid Ahmad Khan with Martin Luther or the quest for an Islamic protestant reformation. Hali, however, made a conscious effort to introduce a new approach to biographical writing that shared something of the linear metanarrative of the modern west. The purpose of a "biography," he said, was to reveal the moral qualities (*akhlaq*) and thoughts of its "hero" but that requires an effort to show how they developed.[11] Unlike the exemplary life stories that Metcalf has studied, however, Hali organized his book as a chronological account of individual development and social change. In this sense he partakes of the larger project that a writer like Erikson theorized and practiced a half century later in his classic studies of Luther and Gandhi: to interpret how the struggles and transformations of an individual's life are intertwined with intimate social relations and the wider contexts of history, and how they may occasionally emerge into new ways of understanding and living that are meaningful to the wider society. At the same time,

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and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[9] Metcalf, Barbara Daly, "Narrating Lives: A Mughal Empress, a French Nabob, a Nationalist Muslim Intellectual", *Islamic Contestations: Essays on Muslims in India and Pakistan* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 340–43. See also Metcalf, "The Past in the Present: Instruction, Pleasure, and Blessing in Maulana Muhammad Zakariyya's *Aap Biitii*", in David Arnold and Stuart Blackburn, eds., *Telling Lives in India: Biography, Autobiography, and Life History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), pp. 116–43.

[10] Erikson, Erik H., *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: Norton, 1958).

[11] *HJ*, p. 55. I have used quotation marks to show that Hali uses the English words.

however, Hali held on to other features that Metcalf identifies with South Asian Muslim traditions. As David Mathews pointed out, *Hayat-i Javid* is structured somewhat like the biographical accounts in a tazkira, dividing the life from the work and deploying anecdotes to draw relevant lessons.[12] The overall purpose of the book was to use Sayyid Ahmad's "life" as a model (*namuna*) for Muslims, as in the tradition, but it is now addressed to a newly conceived Muslim qaum, an ethnic collectivity, in the face of foreign rule and new cultural challenges.[13]

Here is the second dream in the series:

> *He would have been ten years old or perhaps a bit more. He dreamed that he was going from the house where he stayed to his maternal grandfather's house, which was just across the street. There in front stood a very large elephant; sitting on top, someone was beating it to make it run. He hurried across, pushing into his grandfather's house. A little after that he went into a garden house above the bazaar or street to see if the elephant had gone away so that he could go home. The elephant happened to be standing just below. It wrapped him in its trunk and threw him on to the cushion on its back. On the cushion there was a man, who laid him out and began to cut his throat with a knife. But it didn't cut. The elephant driver said, "He's a Sayyid. You can't cut the neck from the front. Cut it from the side." He turned him over and put the knife in his neck. At that moment Sayyid said the full kalima. That cruel man couldn't make the knife go in. Then there appeared from the direction of the qibla [toward Mecca] a person dressed in green and carrying a green staff in his hand. He struck the cruel man forcefully with his staff. Along with the elephant, he was annihilated. Sayyid, as it were, fell from its back on to the ground and woke up. If really that cruel man had killed [him], what a good death that would have been.*

If Sayyid Ahmad was 10 when he had this dream, or at least if the dream reaches back as a memory of that time, it would have been close to the death of his 80-year old *nânâ*, maternal grandfather, Khwaja Fariduddin Ahmad, on July 27, 1828.[14] Khwaja Farid and the residence in

[12] Mathews, David J., "Translator's Preface" to Altaf Husayn Hali, *Hayat-i-Javed (A Biography of Sir Sayyid*), David J. Mathews, trans. (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1994), pp. xv–xvi.

[13] *HJ*, p. 29.

[14] His date of birth is given as 1747. Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, in Panipati, *Maqalat*, Vol. 16, pp. 636, 667 [hereafter *SF*]; Zein-ool-Abudeen to F. Hawkins, Acting Resident, 3 April

which he lived loomed larger in Sayyid Ahmad's dreams and received greater recognition in his writings than anything to do with his own father, Sayyid Muhammad Mutaqqi Khan.[15] When he was just 20 years old, he wrote an account of his family background as a preface to *Jâm-i Jam* (The Cup of Jamshed), a tabular summary of the Timurid dynasty.[16] In the final volume of *The History of India, As Told by Its Own Historians,* H.M. Elliot offered some characteristically arch comments about the author's "pride of ancestry" but it is notable that Sayyid Ahmad was more concerned to claim Mughal connections than a religious lineage; his account goes into detail only about Khwaja Farid as a widely traveled, learned man notable for his British friendships.[17]

Although later references to his genealogy emphasize the religious significance of his more distant Sayyid ancestors in the form of a *nasab nama* (pedigree) that ultimately was inscribed over his grave,[18] it is his Kashmiri maternal grandfather who continues to draw his devoted attention. In 1844, he published an Urdu translation of Khwaja Farid's Persian treatise on the geometrical compass, with an introduction about his grandfather's travels and European associations.[19] Three years later,

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1830, Political Consultations [IOR/F/4/1268/50911?], 16 April, 1830 in Jatindra Kumar Majumdar, *Raja Rammohun Roy and the Last Moghuls: A Selection from Official Records, 1803–1859* (Calcutta: Art Press, 1939), pp. 333–34.

15 Hali calls him Mir Mutaqqi, but see Iftikhar Alam Khan, Sar Sayyid, darun-i khanah (Aligarh: Ejukeshanal Buk Ha¼us, 2006), pp. 16–17. I have benefitted greatly from this book and from Professor Iftikhar's generous friendship and extensive research on all matters concerning Sir Sayyid and the early history of the Aligarh movement. Panipati,

16 Muhammad Isma'il, ed., *Maqalat-i Sir Sayyid* (Lahore: Majlis-i Taraqqi-i Adab, 1965), Vol. 16, pp. 18–20. Cf. Elliot, H. M., and John Dowson, *The History of India, as Told by Its Own Historians: The Muhammadan Period* (London: Trübner and Co., 1877), Vol. 8, pp. 430–31. For the manuscript of this text, perhaps in SAK's own hand, see Rieu, Charles, *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, (London: British Museum, 1966), Vol. 1, Or. 145, pp. 284–85. (Thanks to C.M. Naim.) One year after

17 *Jam-i Jam*, Sayyid Muhammad, Sayyid Ahmad's elder brother, made a handsomely illuminated manuscript copy of the *Tuzuk-i Jahangiri,* which includes a colophon with the similar genealogical information about the family's history (India Office mss. Eth , No. 2833); see also the colophon at pp. 762–4/folios 406–407 of Sayyid Ahmad's own manuscript of the same text, completed in 1846, loc. cit., Sachau and Ethé, *Catalogue* I: No. 221, p. 118 [Elliot 406]. See Appendix No. 1 to *HJ*, p. 737.

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19 *Fawa'id al-af kar fi I'mal al farjar*, in Panipati, *Maqalat*, Vol. 15, pp. 98–99. Specifically,

he included his grandfather's name and titles, along with his own and those of his father, in an elaborate medallion design on the cover of his book about Delhi, *Asar us-sanadid* (1847), his ambitious description of the city of Delhi and its environs.[20] Accounts of his maternal grandfather were repeated in all later autobiographical statements, such as *The Loyal Muhammadans of India* (1860), written in the wake of the Great Rebellion.[21]

In 1885, his friend Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. I. Graham of the Indian Police published an English biography of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, based on years of conversation and the compilation of published materials. The book starts off with an account of Khwaja Farid's sojourn in Calcutta, his service to the East India Company in Persia and Burma, his "eight or nine years" as "prime minister" at the Mughal court, and his friendship with David Ochterlony. If some of the information was a bit distorted, such as the length of time Khwaja Farid served the Mughal court, it isn't clear who is responsible. Sayyid Ahmad was pleased and arranged to have the book translated into Urdu.[22] About this time he began making his own inquiries about the precise date of his grandfather's death and the details of his career.[23] Finally, in 1896, almost 80, Sayyid Ahmad published a small, handsomely lithographed book about Khwaja Fariduddin.[24] Hali used this material, along with Sayyid Ahmad's notes

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Sayyid Ahmad mentions Claude Martin, John Baillie, and Gore Ouseley, among others.

[20] Facsimile edition (Aligarh: Sir Syed Academy, Aligarh Muslim University, 2007). I am indebted to Professor Asghar Abbas for providing me with a copy of this publication.

[21] *An account of the loyal Mahomedans of India*, Part I (Meerut: Printed by J. A. Gibbons, Mofussilite Press, 1860), p. 11.

[22] Correspondence between SAK and Graham from 1885–88 in the 2nd edn, *The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909), pp. 268–74. I have not seen the translation by Haji Isma'il Khan Sherwani that Sayyid Ahmad mentions in his letters.

[23] SAK to Hakim Ahmad uddin, 6 December 1884; he also asks for the date of his father's death. *Maktubât*, Vol. 1, p. 10; see footnote by Panipati. Also SAK to Graham, December 1888, 2nd edn of *The Life and Work*, p. 273, referring to relevant papers of William Linnaeus Gardner (one of William Dalrymple's "white Mughals").

[24] Khan, Sayyid Ahmad, *Sirat-i Faridiyah* (Agra: Matba»-i Mufid-i »Am, 1896). The production of this book is in notable contrast to the less aesthetically motivated publications of the Aligarh Institute Press. References in this paper are to *SF* (the

as well as interviews for his own biographical account of his subject's early years, published in 1901, three years after Sir Sayyid's death.

Sayyid Ahmad had included his grandfather's *haveli* among the notable buildings of Delhi in the first edition of *Asar us-sanadid*. The former residence of an earlier Mughal official, more recently purchased by Khwaja Farid, it was located on the side of the broad Faiz Bazaar, second only to Chandni Chowk as the most impressive avenue in the city.[25] In a note at the beginning of the biography, Hali explains that this was a large complex of buildings; like the nearby *qila-i mu'alla* of the Mughals it included a *divan khana* (hall of audience), horse and elephant stables, along with other structures and open spaces. When Sayyid Mutaqqi married Khwaya Farid's daughter, he moved from a dilapidated residence at the edge of the Jama Masjid into a building in this complex.[26] This indicates that his maternal grandfather was very much the head of the extended household in which Sayyid Ahmad was raised.[27]

Sayyid Ahmad Khan represents Khwaja Farid as the exemplification of adab, possessing cultivated manners, aesthetic and intellectual adeptness.[28] He presided over the morning meal in the *ni'mat khana,* the dining room (literally, the abode of luxury), in the women's quarters with all the sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. As Sayyid Ahmad recalled, there were some 14 or 15 close relatives, his brother Sayyid Muhammad, six years older, and the children of his mother's brothers and sisters.[29] Khwaja Farid took his evening meals outside in the divan khana, turning it into a *zenana* so that Sayyid Ahmad's mother and her sister could serve him. In the evening, after the candles

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Panipati ed., *Maqalat*, Vol. 16, pp. 627–96). I have also consulted the edition edited by Mahmud Ahmad Barkati (Karachi: PakAcademy, 1964), which has some useful notes along with much hostile commentary. See also the English translation by Christopher Shackle in *Islamic Culture*, Vol. 46 (1972), pp. 307–36. The most careful summary of information about Sir Sayyid's family is to be found in Khan, Iftikhar »Alam, *Sar Sayyid, darun-i khana.*

[25] 1847 edn, Part III, p. 31 [marked as p. 371 in the facsimile edition].

[26] *HJ*, pp. 39, 42. Iftikhar Alam Khan estimates that the wedding may have taken place about 1805: *Sar Sayyid, darun-i Khanah*, p. 17.

[27] My interpretation here differs from Khan, *Sar Sayyid, darun-i khana*, pp. 25–

[28] 27. Metcalf, Barbara Daly, *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[29] *HJ*, p. 57. Hali bases this information on notes that he received from Sayyid Ahmad.

had been lit, he summoned his paternal and maternal grandchildren to recite their lessons, which could be a frightening experience, not only because a mistake would result in his disapproval but also because their feet had to be especially clean so as not to smudge the clean, white cloth they sat on.[30]

At some point, however, Sayyid Ahmad's mother—not his father— had a separate haveli built across the street; from then on, as in the dream, he had to have a servant take him across.[31] It isn't clear, however, when this took place. An incident described by both Graham and Hali might have something to do with the fear that Sayyid Ahmad remembered, in his dreams about entering into his grandfather's space. Once he discovered his grandfather with General Ochterlony, who was in "full dress," sitting in European fashion on a chair. The boy, perhaps five or six years old, tried to get away, but the General called him back. When Sayyid Ahmad told the story late in life, he asked Ochterlony why he wore feathers in his hat and two rows of buttons on his coat. The General just smiled. Sayyid Ahmad liked to show a reproduction of a painting (now in the British Library) of his grandfather standing side by side with Ochterlony at a Mughal darbar.[32] Pride and amusement had overtaken any anxiety he might have felt as a young child. When Sayyid Ahmad's father, Sayyid Mutaqqi, makes an appearance in Hali's biography, he is characterized as living a life of untroubled freedom, occasionally visiting his friend Akbar II in court, leading bands of boys including Sayyid Ahmad and his brother to swim in the Jamuna, but mostly devoted to the Naqshbandi *khanqah* of Shah Ghulam `Ali.[33] Sayyid Mutaqqi had a title and received a stipend from the Mughal court; he

[30] *SF*, pp. 671–73.

[31] *HJ* [1965 edn], p. 57.

[32] Graham, 1885 edn, pp. 2–4; *Sirat-i Faridiyah*, Panipati edn, pp.662–63. Ochterlony died in 1825 when SAK was seven years old; see Coleman, A. P., "Ochterlony, Sir David, first baronet (1758–1825)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, September 2004); online edition (October 2008), available at http:/ /www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20492. See "Durbar at Delhi of Akbar II", inscribed with the names of Mughal princes, courtiers, and Sir David Ochterlony, c.1820, British Library, Prints and Drawings, Add.Or.3079; one of the figures, standing to the right of Ochterlony, is marked as "Khwaja Farid Khan"; see http:// www.imagesonline.bl.uk/results.asp?image=068074 *HJ*, pp.

[33] 41, 58–59.

occasionally brought his son there as well as to the shrine. There is virtually no mention of relatives on the father's side of Sayyid Ahmad's family.[34]

Atique Siddiqi characterized Sayyid Ahmad in his youth as a *darbari*, a courtier.[35] That is a fair enough description of Sayyid Mutaqqi, but Khwaja Farid's story is more complicated. According to Sayyid Ahmad, Khwaja Farid's grandfather came to Delhi from Kashmir as a merchant of shawls and other handicrafts and proprietor of a large silk workshop. One of seven brothers, Khwaja Farid had gone off to Lucknow around 1790 to study with a mathematician there; he had gone on to Calcutta, held various positions under the East India Company that included foreign travel and a lucrative post as tahsildar in Bundelkhand. He had a large library, including English books that bore his own annotations.[36] It may have been due to his son-in-law that he took service in the Mughal court, but fairly briefly in two stints, 1814–15, 1817–19, after which he never set foot there again, but, according his son, became a "recluse" (*darvaish*).[37] That is somewhat inconsistent with Sayyid Ahmad's memories and other sources, but one of Khwaja Farid's brothers was a prominent Rasul Shahi, a Sufi devotee of the *wahdat-i wujud* (unity of being) philosophy of Ibn al-Arabi. Sayyid Ahmad described him as intensely ascetic and antisocial; he seems to have lived among the Meos in Alwar before returning to a solitary cell (*hujra*) in Delhi. Sayyid Ahmad recalled that his grandfather late in life briefly emulated the Rasul Shahi practice of shaving the entire body.[38]

[34] Ibid., p. 41; Sayyid Ahmad's older sister appears to have married another Sayyid, who served as a tutor to the mother of Agha Mirza (Sarwar Jang); Agha Mirza's mother was the daughter of Khalil Ullah, who was married to SAK's mother's sister. *Karnama-i sarwari* (Aligarh: Matbu'a Muslim University, 1933), p. 2.

[35] Siddiqi, M. Atique, *Sar Sayyid Ahmad Khan ek siyasi mutala»ah* (Na¼i Dihle: Maktabah-yi Jami»ah, 1977), p. 14.

[36] *SF*, pp. 636–62.

[37] Ibid., p. 657; Majumdar, *Raja Rammohun Roy and the Last Moghuls,* pp. 333–34, where Khwaja Farid is described as *mukhtar*, not *vazir*. He is also mentioned in Marchioness of Bute, ed., *The Private Journal of the Marquess of Hastings,* 3rd edn (Allahabad: Panini Office, 1907), p. 136; also see references in Pernau, Margrit, and Yunus Jaffery, *Information and the Public Sphere: Persian Newsletters from Mughal Delhi* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[38] *SF*, pp. 673–74; Sir Syed Academy ed., *.Asar us-sanadid*, pp. 464–66; see also Mayaram,

The street (*sarak*) that young Sayyid Ahmad had to cross was no doubt the one in his dream. It is also the street that his mother put him out on as a punishment for slapping a servant.[39] That raises the question of demarcating space as public or private or perhaps something else.[40] If the road had prisoners and a stranger's elephant, did that mean it was public space? Delhi was still arranged in what Narayani Gupta calls a "hierarchy of Chinese boxes," so that each mahalla had its own gate.[41] The study of social space is a matter of who can go where and what they can do in different places at different times, but it isn't clear what this meant for Sayyid Ahmad at different stages of his youth. At one side of the haveli was a broad, public boulevard, the Faiz Bazaar, a place of shops and processions, which stretched from the Red Fort to the Delhi Gate. On the other side were smaller roads that led to the nearby shrine of Shah Ghulam `Ali and the madrasa of Shah `Abdul `Aziz, both mentioned as significant to different members of the family. Mosques large and small including the Jama Masjid itself were not far away.

If Sayyid Ahmad could cross the street, even though it took a servant to accompany him, what about the women in his family? He tells us that his mother, 'Aziz un-nisa Begam, not only attended meals in her father's house but visited many other houses as well. As a favored daughter and sister, she no doubt had a higher status than a daughter-in-law might be expected to have in her husband's household. Still, there seems to have been some sort of separation, and one might expect that Sayyid Ahmad's father would have had less access to Khwaja Farid's residence.

Khwaja Farid, the grandson of a merchant from Kashmir, adventurous, learned, well-traveled and wealthy, had married his daughters to husbands who had higher religious status—so long as the

Shail, *Against History, against State: Counterperspectives from the Margins* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), p. 39.

[39] *SF*, p. 683.

[40] See Freitag, Sandria B., *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Devji, Faisal F., "Gender and the Politics of Space", in Zoya Hasan, ed., *Forging Identities* (New Delhi: Kali, 1993), pp. 22–37.

[41] Gupta, Narayani, "The Indomitable City", in Eckart Ehlers and Thomas Krafft, *Shâhjahânâbad, Old Dehli: Tradition and Colonial Change* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2003), p. 32. See also other articles in this collection.

daughter stayed at home or at least close to it.[42] Sayyid Ahmad's father had an independent income, including perhaps some property; but most of all he offered his status as a Sayyid to a family that was, it seems, of less prestigious ancestry. In all his accounts of his maternal grandfather from the age of 20, Sayyid Ahmad has nothing to say about his genealogy, the point of emphasis with respect to his paternal side. Only near the end of his life when he wrote the biography of his grandfather did he insert the claim that the maternal lineage was not in fact indigenously Kashmiri but rather a descendant of Abu Ya'aqub Hamdani from Yemen and Merv, whose descendants migrated to Kashmir.[43] He doesn't go into further detail or mention, as one might expect, any connection with Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani, the Shah-i Hamdani who is such a major figure in Kashmiri religious history. Hali passes over the matter lightly.[44] What was significant about Khwaja Farid was his own personality and achievements.

As a younger brother, a maternal grandson, living across the street, Sayyid Ahmad was treated with affection but perhaps was aware of his slightly lower status as a relative being compensated, as in his dream, by his lineage as a Sayyid. There is a hint in the account he gave to Hali of some greater tension. He remembered frequent fights. Once when a cousin was urinating, Sayyid Ahmad snuck up behind him and knocked him over, and another time he slammed down so hard on another cousin's finger that it took days to recover.[45]

After the death of his grandfather, on the other hand, he seems to have found a mentor in one of his mother's brothers, Khwaja Zain ul-Abdin Khan. This maternal uncle was a student and practitioner of astronomy and music, who made his own instruments for both and took his young nephew along to the famous if slightly risqué gatherings of Delhi musicians and dancers. He also taught him archery.[46]

[42] Khan, Iftikhar Ahmad, *Sar Sayyid, darun-i khanah*, pp. 48, 397. (See also references to the biography of Sami Ullah Khan, note 52, and the autobiography of Sarwar Jang, note 34.)
[43] *SF*, pp. 634–35.
[44] *HJ*, p. 43.
[45] Ibid., p. 58.
[46] *SF*, pp. 676–80.

There is another dream related to this period of his youth:

> *He must have been fourteen or fifteen years old, more or less, anyway the time he was learning archery. Some relatives had returned from the hajj. He saw that they had gone away to the bazaar. People said to him, you were going to go on the hajj; didn't you go? They said that there were not now many days left for the hajj. People said that three or four days were left. He said, I'm going, and he rose up high off the ground and started to fly toward Mecca. He passed over the city, got to an open field and passed over it, got to the ocean and passed over it and then came down at the gate of a mosque and went inside. It was the courtyard of a rather small mosque and in front of it there was a roof* [sa'iban] *and wooden columns and grass mats spread out on the floor. There an elder was seated, head bent down, with a black beard and a white sheet* [chadar] *flying. He didn't say anything, but he gave him three things. One was a red cornelian thumb ring* [shast] *which you put on to hold an arrow; and he gave two other things which Sayyid couldn't remember. He took these things and left. In the middle of the mosque courtyard another man was standing, tall of stature, thin body. Sayyid asked him who it was that was sitting in the mosque. He said, what, don't you know that it is Hazrat 'Ali! Sayyid turned around and ran so that he could kiss his feet, but while he was running he woke up and still in the dream the idea came to him that the person he had asked was Hazrat 'Umar.*

Sayyid Ahmad draws here on the standard conventions of a good Islamic dream, a dream designed to assure himself and others of his spiritual credentials. There is, first of all, an allusion to the Prophet's ascension, the *mir'aj*, if only by daylight. Then there is a meeting with sacred personages, Hazrat 'Ali and Hazrat 'Umar. In having such a dream, he leaves his relatives behind in the bazaar but also gains the magical assistance of Hazrat 'Ali in his quest to master the art of archery, an expertise shared by his father and his maternal uncle.

Hazrat 'Ali intervenes in the next dream as well, this time to save Sayyid Ahmad from temptation after the death of his father in 1838. With the termination of income from the Mughal court, Sayyid Ahmad had the idea that some of his mother's real estate could be sold for cash, and the cash could be loaned out for interest. In a long dream, 'Ali tells him not to swim in muddy waters, that is, not to violate the shari'a prohibition against lending money for profit.

Of the 12 dreams in the collection, the final five involve the

Naqshbandi saint Shah Ghulam ‘Ali and his successors. In a note at the end of the dream texts, Hali recalls Sayyid Ahmad telling him that he wanted his “Life”, that is, his biography to mention his strong attachment to Shah Ghulam ‘Ali. He offered as evidence a Persian treatise that he published in 1852 defending the meditative practice of *tasawwur-i shaikh,* of visualizing one’s spiritual guide. Sayyid Ahmad told Hali that Shah Ahmad Sa‘id himself, successor to Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, had approved the treatise; it was evidence that Sayyid Ahmad was among the *ahl-i hal*, the people who have achieved a mystical state. In the treatise, Sayyid Ahmad argued that one could only achieve spiritual fulfillment through companionship, that love is a condition of receiving divine inspiration, and that one can cultivate the love of God by silent meditation, *muraqaba* and visualizing one’s spiritual guide. He goes on to deny that this is an illegitimate innovation, *bid‘at*, and that it really deviates from the values of Shah Isma‘il, the great Delhi preacher from the family of Shah Wali Allah. What Sayyid Ahmad doesn’t say, is that his treatise was in fact a response to Shah Isma‘il’s condemnation of tasawwur-i shaikh, written on behalf of his own spiritual guide and fellow jihadi martyr, Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi.[47]

According to Sayyid Ahmad, his maternal relatives were predominantly associated with the madrasa of Shah ‘Abdul ‘Aziz, son of Shah Wali Allah. His father, mother and elder brother, on the other hand, were attached to the khanqah of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali.[48] Shah Ghulam ‘Ali himself presided over Sayyid Ahmad’s bismillah but he was to study with members of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s family. Both centers were near the haveli of Khwaja Farid, and both derived their ideas and practices from the renewal movement of the Naqshbandi tradition. During the early 19th century, however, there developed an increasingly strong antagonism in their interpretation of how to reconcile sufi thought and practice with

[47] Panipati, ed., *Maqalat*, Vol. 15, p. 181; Lawrence, Bruce B., “Mystical and Rational Elements in the Early Religious Writings of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan”, in Bruce B. Lawrence, ed., *The Rose and the Rock: Mystical and Rational Elements in the Intellectual History of South Asian Islam* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Programs in Comparative Studies on Southern Asia [and] Islamic and Arabian Development Studies, 1979).

[48] *SF*, p. 687.

the shari‘a.[49] This was not simply of matter of ‘ulama versus Sufis, nor was it always clear which side was more severe with respect to folk practices. Sayyid Ahmad says that his mother, like the followers of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali, objected to amulets marked with chicken blood to ward off disease; a practice supposedly associated with the family of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz that her family subscribed to.[50] In one of his dreams, set in his mid-20s, Sayyid Ahmad goes to the khanqah to receive *bay‘at*, spiritual initiation. All the saints are there, starting with Mirza Mazhar. Sayyid Ahmad says that before receiving bay‘at, he wants to be assured that it is in accordance with the shari‘a:

> *Miyan Mazhar spoke, “Look gentlemen! He is talking like a Wahhabi!” Shah Abu Sa`id sahib angrily replied, “A person wants to follow the sunnat, and you call him names and say he is talking like a Wahhabi?” After that he turned to Sayyid and said to him that there is nothing against the sunnat in the Naqshbandi tariqa, and Sayyid said, “Very good.”*

The same dream raised another anxiety:

> *Then Sayyid took out five rupees and made an offering to Shah Abu Sa‘id sahib and five rupees to Shah Ahmad Sa‘id sahib. Both gentlemen took the offering. When he gave an offering to Shah ‘Abdul Ghani sahib, he was told, “You are in British service, so I won’t take it.” Sayyid said, “This is not money from my wages; I borrowed it from a Hindu.” This also he refused to accept. Shah Abu Sa‘id sahib said, “If he doesn’t take it then send it to his mother.” After this conversation, the occasion for bay‘at did not arrive before he woke up.*

The traditional ideology of Shah Ghulam ‘Ali was hostile to wealth and ruling power, and avoided contact with British rule. The position of Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz was more ambiguous but certainly not enthusiastic about cooperating with foreign power.[51] Unless we take General Ochterlony

[49] Troll, Christian W., *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978), pp. 28–42; Fusfeld, Warren, “The Boundaries of Islam and Infidelity”, in Katherine P. Ewing, ed., *Shari»at and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 205–19; Malik, Jamal, “Islamic Institutions and Infrastructure in Shahjahanabad”, in Ehlers and Krafft, *Old Delhi,* pp. 71–92.

[50] *HJ*, p. 61; *SF*, pp. 687–88.

[51] Fusfeld, Warren Edward, “The Shaping of Sufi Leadership in Delhi: The

as Sayyid Ahmad's *div*, this is the only dream that alludes to British rule in India.

Sayyid Ahmad recalled that his family opposed his wish to join British service; in the absence of family networks, he may have had some difficulty. Fortunately for him, another relative, also with a good religious pedigree who had married into Khwaja Farid's family, was already serving as a *sadr amin* (subordinate judge) in Delhi and was in a position to get the young man started.[52] It is around this time that Sayyid Ahmad married the daughter of his mother's sister, Parsa Begum. Parsa Begum's father is identified as Khwaja Naqib al-Awliya Ghulam 'Ali; in other words, the leader of the friends of Ghulam 'Ali, who appears to have been yet another religiously connected son-in-law living in or just next to the haveli of Khwaja Farid.[53] At the time of the 1857 Rebellion, Parsa Begam was living with her mother and mother-in-law on property that belonged to the three of them. Another one of Sayyid Ahmad's dreams takes place four years after that great cataclysm:

> *His wife died in Moradabad. Some days later he had a dream in which she was sitting in a very fine house, wearing a very fine green garment, and her body and face were glowing like the moon. Sayyid wanted to touch her with his hand. She said, no hand can touch this body. The body and dress are spiritual [nurani], they are not the body and dress of this world.*

No doubt Sayyid Ahmad had many other dreams, but to learn more about the women in his life one has to turn to the well-known account of his mother at the conclusion of *Sirat-i Faridiyah*, the biography of Khwaja

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Naqshbandiyya Mujaddidiyya, 1750 to 1920" (PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1981), pp. 164–66; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, pp. 5–51.

[52] *HJ*, p. 67, referring to SAK's *khalu*, mother's sister's husband, Khalil Allah Khan, who was apparently father's brother of Sami Allah Khan, a clue to this significant relationship. Cf. Khan, *Sar Sayyid, darun-i khanah*, pp. 48, 397; Z2aka¼ullah, Muhammad, *Savanih »umri Haji Muhòammad Sami»ullah Khan Bahadur, Si. Em. Ji*, reprint of 1907 original (Lakhna¼u [Lucknow]: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Akadmi, 1997), p. 8. According to Zaka Allah, Sami Allah's father, that is, Khalil Allah's brother, was closely associated with David Ochterlony.

[53] See Khan, *Sar Sayyid, darun-i khanah*, p. 47. Even after Khwaja Farid's death, the house was known by his name: see *Asar us-sanadid*, 1847 edn, Part III, p. 31 [marked as p. 371 in the facsimile edition].

Farid that Sayyid Ahmad wrote toward the end of his life. In many respects it partakes of the classic biographical conventions that Barbara Metcalf has called to our attention, an effort to set forth an exemplary personality through anecdotes and wise sayings. She is depicted as wise, independent minded, practical and caring. She had read the Qur'an and the introductory Persian texts and could be counted as one of Sayyid Ahmad's own teachers. Clearly she had a great deal of financial autonomy, setting aside five per cent of her income to assist the poor and managing her household and property. Her devotion to Shah Ghulam 'Ali meant that she did not believe in elaborate rituals, and that she overcame adversity because of a confident sense of harmony with God. As a mother she could have been a strong disciplinarian but also a wise counselor. She was willing to flout convention, as when she visited the homes of poor women including ones who for one reason or another were considered disreputable, and in providing encouragement and assistance to widows who wanted to remarry.

Such is Sayyid Ahmad's description of his mother. It ends, however, with the terrible story of her suffering after the British had retaken Delhi in 1857, when her house was ransacked and relatives were murdered. She and her sister were reduced to living in the small room that had once been provided for a poor old lady, one of the objects of her charity. They had to eat horse's grain and had no water to drink. Finally her son, Sayyid Ahmad, came to the rescue and managed to get her to Meerut, where he was stationed. She died there shortly afterwards, though happily surrounded by her son and daughter, daughters-in-law and grandchildren.[54]

Sayyid Ahmad's sentimental account of his mother reads very much like the literature of his time though she seems to me to be a stronger and more independent woman than the heroines of Nazir Ahmad's novels. Sayyid Ahmad, at least at the end of his life, was truly what Atique Siddiqi said of his younger years, a *qadamat parast*, a worshiper of the past. He was, of course, notoriously opposed to sending women to school or introducing them to public life.[55] This then is another case,

5 4 *SF*, pp. 682–95; Minault, Gail, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 14–16.

5 5 Minault, *Secluded Scholars,* pp. 18–19, 30.

now well-established, of male leaders seeking to use ideals of women's domesticity to ward off the challenges of colonial rule and modernity, while denying a voice to women themselves.[56] More specifically, it is surely an example of what Ruby Lal has called the "recuperation of respectability", the effort to retain or revive the claims of a fairly narrow social group to prestige and privilege.[57]

But this is the same Sayyid Ahmad Khan who once had so deeply disparaged the Muslim family and household and had established the college in Aligarh to rescue young men from the corruption of their homes. If in old age he looked back, with conventional nostalgia, to his youth as a better time than the present, there were also more specific reasons for his turn to the past. The dreams he recorded and the biographical projects he participated in coincide with, or at least anticipate, deep disappointments—most of all with respect to his greatest experiment, his son Sayyid Mahmud, whose forced resignation as a High Court Judge had become a public scandal.

A year after Sayyid Ahmad died, a certain Viennese physician came up with another way of thinking about dreams, as a way of uncovering unconscious conflicts, rooted in early childhood, that undermine one's sense of autonomy and ability to love and work. But that was in another land and another language, and as far as India is concerned, perhaps, part of a later history. For now, we can read Sayyid Ahmad's dreams as his way of showing himself and ultimately a wider world that he was, whatever anyone might say, a man inspired and validated by his religion and his cultural tradition in all he had attempted to do as a thinker and a leader of Indian Muslims. It was, if you like, a wish-fulfillment.

For example, see Sarkar, Tanika, *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation, Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Mani, Lata, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Lal, Ruby, "Gender and *Sharafat*: Rereading Nazir Ahmad",*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*,