Introduction

The disintegration of the Mughal Empire after Aurangzeb (d. 1707) generated a sense of worry among the South Asian Muslims in general and nobility in particular. Among others, the religious elite were faced with multifaceted problems. Their concern was not only the breakdown of the Muslim rule but also losing their position in the setup which was erected by the Marathas, Sikhs and English East India Company. Among such people Shah Wali Ullah (d. 1763) appealed to the Ahmad Shah Abdali, ruler of Afghanistan and Muslim nobility of India to restore their lost glory. However, Sayyid Ahmad Barailvi (1786-1831), a disciple of Shah Abdul Aziz, did not rely on nobility and initiated a movement, aimed at reforming the Indian Muslim society according to his understanding of Islam and revival of Muslim rule in India through *jihad*. The strategy he adopted included preaching tours, initiating his disciples and appointing them for preaching to other people. The *khulafa*—representatives, he appointed in different areas before his migration to the Frontier who carried on the mission according to his directions. After his migration to the North-West Frontier, he sent his trusted associates to important places like Bombay, Madras, Haiderabad and Bengal. They included Sayyid Ali Rampuri, Wilayat Ali, Inayat Ali, Qutb-ud-Din, Sayyid Aulad Hasan Qanoji, Sayyid Hamid-ud-Din and Sayyid Abul Qasim. The network, Sayyid Ahmad had established, worked for some time but with the passage of time it lost its vitality. It needed a complete overhauling after the Balakot episode (1831).

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The Ali Brothers strengthened the organization, produced a well-knitted training center at Patna with a number of subordinate zones and circles throughout Bengal, Bihar and Deccan and assigned duties to local missionaries in each respective zone. The local missionaries preached in their respective zones and circles, circulated pamphlets, collected zakat and other financial support and passed on it to center at Patna for further transmission to the North-West Frontier. This system worked well till the uprising of 1857 despite the company’s efforts to eliminate the network. We are trying to comprehend the theme in the following pages.

Central Organization of the Movement

In the aftermath of Balakot episode, Patna, the home of Ali brothers, was converted into center of the movement for organizational works. Due to their organizational ability and passion, the two lieutenants of Sayyid Ahmad gave Patna the status which Delhi had during his lifetime. The famous building in annals of the Movement known as qafila for the Mujahidin and karwan sarai for the British authorities served as the headquarters of the Movement. The basic aim of the organization was to impress upon the spirit of jihad among the Muslims and the supply of men and money to the Mujahidin at Sithana and Malka.

The organizational headquarter of the Movement was situated in the Sadiqpur lane of Azimabad, Patna, consisted of a group of buildings, with an adequate frontage including the prominent edifice of the Sadiqpur Masjid with a plain interior in which public prayers were held five times a day and the Friday sermon delivered regularly. The Friday sermon used to preach Faith and Spirituality. It also condemned the prevailing cumbrous customs in prayers, the endless mummeries, bowings and genufluxions of the masajid around and severely criticized those who by practice have rendered the written words of no effect. The eloquence of the preachers of the Sadiqpur Masjid has been acknowledged by their opponents and custodians of the other local mosques and they used to denounce them as rejecters of their rites and rituals. Around the mosque were the dwelling quarters for the families of the preachers. There existed a small college for theology students, a guest house for students belonging to far off areas and travelers and several graves of the renowned saints.

Volunteers of the movement from all over the country used to visit and stay at qafila for receiving relevant education and training. Students with high level intellect and social status were further
educated in basic tenets of Islam. The students with low capacity were hastily trained in the basic doctrines of Islam and sent forthwith to the Frontier. Volunteers with still lower order were received with more kindness and put under the charge of the bursar Abdul Ghaffar who used to address them about the attraction and requirement of fighting for the cause of Islam. In these cases only an effective training for fighting was enough before sending them to the field. Skillful training and teaching of the cause used to result in obsessively leaving their homes. Hunter contends that the zeal of the ‘fanatics’ for their religion and their hatred for the Sikhs and the English, was so great that recruits and money flowed abundantly into Sithana from British India for decades after the death of Sayed Ahmed. Bellew asserts that the Mujahidin at the Frontier were strengthened by the receipt of generous funds and numerous accessions from India.

It is pertinent to note that all activities were supervised and controlled by the local chief called khalifa. Muhammad Hussain, Wilayat Ali (1790/91-1852) and Mazbar Ali were the Patna khulafa—representative, directly appointed by Sayyid Ahmad. Each khalifa was helped by a committee of counselors, a Minister of war and in charge of Finance. The details of the khulafa who managed the central administration at Patna, is available in the private papers of the Abdul Ghaffar, the bursar of qafila.

Sayyid Muhammad Hussain (1236-1276 A.H) belonged to Azimabad, Patna. He was appointed by Sayyid Ahmad as his khalifa in Patna where he worked incessantly for propagating his mission, recruiting thousands to the cause. He made spacious mosque named Nanmohia. His regular Friday sermons were attended by numerous people including ladies. He was also a poet with the pen name of Hashmi. He was a proficient swords and horseman. He was assisted by a committee composed of Akbar Ali, Fayaz Ali, Yahya Ali, Waizul Haq and Maqsood Ali. On the other hand Wilayat Ali (1790/91-1852) was helped by Inayat Ali (1794-1858) as War Minister and Farhat Hussain as manager for finances and recruitment.

Farhat Husain (1226-74 A.H) was a khalifa and close associate of Wilayat Ali who also travelled into Afghanistan along him. Apart from preaching religion and his mission, he used to deal important problems of the Movement. He supervised the committee of Amir Yahya Ali, Ahmadullah and Abdul Rahim.
Yahya Ali was a khalifa of Farhat Husain and appointed by Sayyid Ahmad in Patna. His marvelous contributions to the Movement made him a life prisoner by the Government. He not only managed the whole affairs at Patna but also dealt finance and the matters of recruits and their trainings. According to Hunter, he did everything ‘with perfect sincerity of heart.’ Amir Abdur Rahim was his finance incharge and Ahmad Ullah served as his counselor.

Ahmad Ullah Azimabadi (1223-1298 AH) was the son of Ilahi Baksh and younger brother of Yahya Ali. He was a great scholar, experienced administrator and influential person of Patna. His sagacity was greatly valued by the government in all spheres of administrative machinery. He lost his previous prestigious position in the Blaire governmental circles due to his assistance to the Mujahidin in 1864 and detained in Port Blaire Andaman Island till his death. He was also appointed as a Patna caliph. Mubarak Ali was incharge of finance and Iradat Hussain was his counselor. Mubarak Ali was assisted by Muhammad Hassan in finance. Muhammad Hassan Rampuri was a learned and trusted associate of Sayyid Ahmad, also served as khalifa at Patna but we could not find any name for his assistants. Abdul Rahim was assisted by Muhammad Ibrahim, Abdullah of Ghazipur and Abdul Aziz Rahim Abadi.

The affairs of the movement were conducted in such a secret manner to avoid suspicion of the Government. They did not try to write the detailed proceedings, rules and regulations rather the system worked on the principle of tacit understanding. All the members of the organizing committees were the incarnation of spirit and sacrifice. The head was promoted on the merit of the seniority in service for the Movement rather than age or rank. The duties of the khalifa used to be public care in the respective mosque, teaching to the students about the basic doctrine of faith, keeping correspondence with the other centers of the district, checking those arms forwarded to Frontier, and personally organizing the complex system of drafts by which large amounts of money were secretly transferred. During the period of revival under Ali Brothers, Yahya Ali was the khalifa at Patna. He organized a system which sufficiently met the requirements of the Movement and he was notably assisted by Abdul Ghaffar in dealing the boarding and lodging of the volunteers. Hunter pays him tribute in these words, ‘Yahya Ali, Chief Priest and Khalifa, ruled over the propaganda with a firm but gentle hand.’ Yahya Ali was one of the accused of the Ambala trial and Herbart Edward commented:
It has been proved against Yahya Ali that he was the main spring of the great treason which this trial has laid bare... He has enlisted subordinate agents to collect money and preach Muslim Jihad. He has deluded hundreds of thousands of his countrymen into treason and rebellion. He has plunged the Government of British India by his intrigues into a Frontier war which has cost hundreds of lives... What he has done he has done with forethought, resolution and the bitterest treason. He belongs to a hereditarily disloyal and fanatical family.

Roving Preachers

Apart from the permanently settled khalifa at Patna centre, there were full time moving preachers of the Jihad Movement. They carried two objectives: first, they remained busy in spreading the message of ‘reform and revival’ of Islam. Second, they devised such a mechanism to collect funds to keep the movement alive. The already existing system of the wandering jógis and sánýásís helped them getting support from the locals. They used to seek shelter to avoid the severity of the climate and usually they were welcomed for the time being, a time which was quite enough to spread their message. Usually they belonged to far off lands and their appearance was a symbol of indifferent lonely wanderers causing much attraction to the simple villagers to gather around them for a little time. Some times in favourable circumstances they settle down as village teachers, marry among the locals and recruiting many into their fold. At some suitable time transferring their duties to a most capable trainee among locals and leaving for another place to serve the same job there. The roving preachers produced a classified organization in those districts where they worked in favorable circumstances. These centers were mostly founded in Bengal and at many other places in India. They were organized by the most experienced preacher of the mission assisted by other trustworthy subordinates.

Fiscal Affairs of the Movement

The Mujahidin in the North-West Frontier financially depended on their Muslim brethren in Punjab, Bengal and Bihar. For this purpose they had drawn a simple and complete system of organization. It was based on classifying the villages into financial zones, each led by a Din ke Sardar—fund collector. His responsibility was to appoint a collector for each village of the zone. The chief collector was authorized to check the collections and their transmission to the center. According to the rules of the system, there was a collector of funds in every village but in case of more populated areas the
collector was assisted by the chief Imam whose duties included leading the prayers and collection of funds. _Dunya ke Sardar_—a sort of General Manager to deal the rest of the worldly problems and _Dak ke Sardar_—an officer who used to provide messengers for carrying important letters and messages and the funds collected for the far flung areas.\(^{37}\)

The local fund collectors were accountable to the chief collector of their locality who used to hold meetings with them annually. The record of receipts of all transmission was retained at Patna.\(^{38}\) The financial help was received both in cash and kind. Since Sayyid Ahmad time, the income system persisted for more than a hundred years due to the devotion and ideological commitment.\(^{39}\) The chief sources were _zakat, ushar, Alms, fitarana, Muthia_ or a handful of rice, fines for repenting some of the religious transgressions or omissions of the orders of Islam. These donations were further aided by the charity on special occasions like marriage, annual festivals and mourning and casual _sadaqat_—alms and large amounts donated by wealthy Muslim nobles, merchants and traders.\(^{40}\) The preachers used to emphasize the need of financial help for the Movement consistently and the blessings of Allah Almighty in return led to the production of large amounts of sums. There might be some negligence in using these funds but we could not find a single case of the financial embezzlement. That is the reason that as long as these funds flowed down to the Frontier the Movement never ceased to perform its role in a struggle against the Sikhs and British.\(^{41}\) Although we could not find the details of all those who were the active organizers of this system of collection but some of the important relevant persons were Abdul Aziz Rahim Abadi of Bihar, Abdullah Ghazipuri, Abdul Qadir Qasuri, Wali Muhammad of Fatuhi and Kaka Omar of Madras.\(^{42}\)

The transmission of money to the Frontier was by no means an easy task for the organizers. The administrative genius of Ali Brothers and Yahya Ali refined the already existing system.\(^{43}\) A series of halting places at suitable lengths were established along the Grand Trunk Road to the Frontier which was apparently divided in three parts. Each halting place was assigned to seasoned disciples who used to be men of high character and trust. They had no fear of arrest or molestation and just silently kept on working for assuring the secret agents to pass through their areas safe and sound. As the secret agents had to cross about two thousand miles to reach their destination they were exposed to any query or situation on their way.\(^{44}\) Accordingly they excelled in hiding their identity. They used to follow the religious and social norms.
of the areas they were passing through, kept their secrets to themselves only, usually travelled in the disguise of some pious people or students, spoke the local language of the area rather posed as being dumb, travelled mostly through night and halting during day time. Before departing to Frontier they used to visit Madras, Manglor, Calcutta, Ratlam, Bengal, Bihar, United Provinces, Central Provinces, Delhi, Bombay and Punjab for fund collection from the local chief collectors. Their route to Frontier was through Haripur and Hazara or through Punjab to Peshawar and thus entering the other places. Usually their duty started from Patna with the cash. For reducing the weight of cash, it was converted into mohars or Guineas and sewn in shoes or jackets or on the other parts of the body of these preachers. The exchange of cash with gold Guineas was mostly done with the famous hide merchant of Patna Amir Khan through his agency in Calcutta. Services of some money agents in Delhi were also sought. During the time of Sayyid Ahmad, Ishaq of Delhi was the main dealer for exchanging cash for gold. After his demise the center changed to Patna and the transmission was carried through Thanesar and Rawalpindi. The agents mostly travelled in groups along with other and larger caravans and informally unaccompanied and disguised. Mostly they travelled with great caution but sometimes they were traced and dealt brutally by the authorities like the one Pir Muhammad who was going to Frontier from Delhi with a draft of 3000 Rupees and 1000 gold mohars in cash during the time of Sayyid Ahmad. He was arrested and tortured by Ranjit Singh, confiscating the amount. He was later released by the intervention of Begam Samroo, the widow of a famous German soldier William Reinhardt.

Small drafts were also made and used for transmitting money to the Frontier. It was done through the reliable bankers in Delhi and Peshawar by paying twelve percent commission. Cash and drafts were sent to the Frontier after deducting the required amount to the volunteers in India. The travelling expenses of the agents were also separately paid and they never tried to use the entrusted amount in case of any unexpected emergency on their way like ailment, detention or delay rather they tried to mend the affairs by doing strange manual works.

Ahmad Ullah the chief khalifa at Patna maintained a register with the record of proceeds from different areas at different occasions. Abdul Ghaffar was the in charge of the register and Ilahi Bakhsh was entrusted the task of buying the gold mohars and getting hundi—cash draft prepared. Most of the work of exchanging money was done
through the firms of Hindu bankers like Ram Kishan Fatah Chand and Manohar Das (Patna), Juggernath and Mukoon Lal (Delhi), Lal Chand Kurram Singh (Benares), Samunt Rai and Sheo Bakhsh, and Santu and Moti (Munara, Swabi). During the Ambella Campaign, one lakh rupees were transmitted to Frontier from Patna through Manohar Ram only. We can assume from these facts that large sums of money were transmitted during the vital course of the Movement.49

The transferred money was used for different purposes like in dealing with the tribes, maintenance of the Mujahidin and purchase of their weapons. The money was spent through mutual consultation and as a result no one ever demanded for an audit of the transferred amounts. After the Ambella Campaign the British Government bent upon dismantling the long existing network of the fund transmission. Those, found involved were punished with severe penalties like life detentions in far flung and unhealthy places like Andaman Islands, confiscation of their properties and demolishing of their homes. They carried on this policy for about eight to ten years but surprisingly the system survived by the enrolment of fresh workers who kept on working silently for years to come.50

Symbols and Code Messages

The system of conveying men and money needed great secrecy and care so that the relay of men money and messages along with their sources could not be disclosed. For this purpose a complex system of secret messages, aliases and for admitting the receipts of money through ciphers and codes was developed right from the time of Sayyid Ahmad. Mostly the codes were taken from the Muslim History for numbers, names and events. Moreover the letters were written in Arabic and casually in Persian, the letters did not mention a clear cut name of the writer and to whom it was addressed, the receipt of money used to be written in such coded words that no other than the sender of money could understand it.51 A cipher code found in a document and seized by the British authorities during the Hyderabad Conspiracy Case is yet to be decoded. As they avoid writing their real names with their messages so aliases were used instead. The reorganization process of the system under the Patna khulafa also improved this system. In fact it was the life of the process of conveying recruits and money. The British officers from time and again drew the government attention towards a system of relay of men and money from India to the Frontier. The Deputy Commissioner of Hazara informed the Board of Administration, Punjab in the early 1849 about the, ‘existence of a remarkable nest of Emigrants from Hindoostan who bring with them
their own arms and means of subsistence and sit down at Sithana’ a rallying post for all those expecting to “see a successful Ghazwa.” He also mentioned the secret running by these emigrants of ‘gold on their person and letters in bamboo canes.’

Some of the examples of the codes and aliases were e.g Patna was called the small store and Frontier was big store, war was the *muqadimah* or law suit, Allah Almighty was the Law Agent, gold *mohars* were called the red diamond, the big golden shoes of Delhi, the big red animals, big sparrows, and the process of handing over the *mohars* was called the red beads *tasbih*. All the cash and transit matters were discussed under the code of books and other merchandise while *hundi* and money orders were termed as white stone and their amount as the beads of *tasbih*. Mujahidin were termed as *jihadi*, *khidmatgar* or servants, money as books and the rate of other merchandise along with a frequent use of aliases. Some of the examples of these aliases are Ahmad Ullah as Ahmad Ali, Muhammad Ali, Ahmad Khan; Abd Ullah as Babu Sahib, Babu Jan, Khan Sahib, Babu Mian Jan; Fayaz Ali as Basir-ud-Din or Fayaz Alim; Essa as Rooh Ullah; Hafiz Abdul Majeed as Hafiz Sahib, Abdul Rahim, Mirza Rahim Baig; Yahya Ali as Mohiud Din, Abdul Kareem, Kareem Bakhsh; Muhammad Shafi as Shafat Ali, Qazi Mian Jan, Qazi Muhammad Shakoor or Abdul Rahman. They remained loyal in all circumstances even during their detention by the British authorities. They never disclosed the names of the involved members of the Movement for the system.

**Conclusion**

The Sadiqpur family of Azimabad Patna established a wonderful organizational network throughout the Subcontinent for the maintenance of Jihad Movement. They succeeded in spreading an orderly and consistent system of fund raising and preaching *jihad* right from Eastern Bengal to the North West Frontier. Although so widespread it was organized with utmost secrecy. They took pains in preaching their mission in such a way that no English officer ever suspected them for a long time. A remarkable sentiment of solidarity existed among the organizers of the Movement and their enthusiasm was unbounded. As a result it produced a long history of propagation and resistance. After the war of 1857 the British authorities bent upon its destruction but it took them a long time and great resources for only limiting its activities. The activities of the Mujahidin were reduced with the passage of time and the left over Mujahidin at Sithana, *smaste* lost their enthusiasm and during World War I concluded peace treaty with the British Indian government. A segment of the Mujahidin, however,
established their colony in Chamarkand and continued their activities. The Mujahidin colonies at the frontier were idealized by many Indian Muslims and they considered them trusted enough to work for the liberation of Indian subcontinent. Their strength was exposed to the Indian Muslims during the Silk Handkerchief Movement. However, the supply of men and money continued till the creation of Pakistan but the major supplier during the 20th century was not Bengal and Patna rather Punjab.

Notes and References

1 Chamarkand Colony, S. No. 271, N-W. F. P. Political Department, Civil Secretariat, 1937, Tribal Area Research Cell, Peshawar, p. 4. Henceforth Chamarkand Colony.


4 Ahmad, The Wahabi Movement, p. 139.


6 Ahmad, The Wahabi Movement, p. 140.


10 Hussain, Sayyid Ahmad, p. 250.

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16 Inayat Ali also served the movement in Frontier with extra ordinary passion and struggle and surpassed all the leaders of the movement in its organizational skills. Continued arming and drilling his men was a part of his planning for keeping their mission alive. Bellew, *Report on Yusufzais*, p. 96.


20 Yahya Ali of Sadiqpur and Muhammad Jaffar of Thanesar were the two chief organizers of the Movement during its revival under Ali Brothers. Jaffar, “The Successors of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed”, p. 373.

21 Nadvi, *Sayyid Ahmad kay Khulaifa*, p. 52. He was tried under Section 121 of the Indian Penal Code, blaming him for making attempts to wage war and aiding in waging of war against the Queen. Jaffar, “The Successors of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed”, p. 373.

22 Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, p.86.


24 Nadvi, *Sayyid Ahmad kay Khulaifa*, p. 82.


26 Hussain, *Sayyid Ahmad*, p. 237


29 Ibid.
30 Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, p. 86.
31 Mr. Herbert Edwards was the then Commissioner of Ambala and also acting as Session Judge. He held trial with the aid of six assessors, three of whom were Muslims and three Hindus. Jaffar, “The Successors of Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed”, p. 373.
33 Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, p. 68.
35 Ibid., pp. 144-47.
36 *Chamarkand Colony*, p. 11.
37 Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, p. 76.
38 Ibid., pp. 147-48.
40 Mihr, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, pp. 595-96; *Chamarkand Colony*, pp. 10-11. Zakat is the Islamic tax levied at 1/40 on all belongings exceeding a certain level. Muthia was a handful of rice, grain or flour put aside out of the daily amount of consumption and collected weekly after Friday prayers and publically sold by the local leaders. Hunter criticizes it by saying that it was an extra burden on the poor but actually it did not cost much and that is the reason that stores of grains used to be collected with the village collector. Ushar was 1/10 of the gross agricultural produce.
41 Mihr, *Jama’at-i-Mujahidin*, p. 66.
45 Mihr, *Sarguzasht-i-Mujahidin*, pp. 598-99. During the time of Ali brothers, one of the routes was Patna-Delhi-Ludhiana-Sithana. Ahmad, *Sayyid Ahmad Shahid*, p. 323. The other routes, most probably of later time were: 1. Haripur-Lawrence pur-Jehangira-Nowshera after passing through Haripur, they proceed to Tarbela when they crossed the river at Kabal and from there go on foot to asmast. It is pertinent to note that
the route contains factual errors. 2. Another route is via Haripur, Darband, Mahabara ferry from where asmast is only about 10 mile. To the south of Darband there is another ferry known as Ashara ferry which is alternative route. 3. Lawrence pur and Hazro in the Punjab and Ghazi, Hund, Bamkhel and Jhanda Boka in the NW Province. The ferries of Dal and Mohat are also occasionally used by Mujahidin wishing to escape detention. They further proceed to their destination via Nowshera-Mardan-Rustan-Ambela-Nawagai. Chamarkand Colony, p. 14.

51 Mihr, *Jama’at-i-Mujahidin*, pp. 52-55.