

**Sectarianism and Peace-Building Process:
A Case Study of Sayyid Muhammad Ashraf
Kachhochhawi (Part- II)**

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Threat to Secularism

Madanjeet Singh, a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and founder of the South Asia Foundation welcomed warmly the Sufi Maha Panchayat at Moradabad. He was too happy that “someone has had the courage to frankly articulate the suppressed hopes and fears of mainstream Muslims in India”. Politics is the ban of all religions. But unlike other faiths, “the Wahabis have enormous petro-dollars at their disposal, funded by the so-called Saudi charities that have wrought havoc worldwide.”

Ancestors of Mr. Singh hailed from Kashmir: he lived in the state of Travancore and went to school in Trivandrum; then he joined the Hindu University in Banaras and finally graduated from the Government College in Lahore. The writer has travelled back to Kashmir, Kerala, Lahore and Indonesia of some decades ago to get a measure of the tragic and vicious effects – and hopes resilient multilayered secular cultures will be able to fight back. To him the Wahhabis are “tearing apart Kashmir’s synergetic Sufi – Bhakti-Rishi culture, Kerala’s unique matrilineal society, Pakistan’s Sufi Islam and Indonesia’s indigenous *Kebatinan* culture.”¹⁷

To Madanjeet Singh, no group or individual was so effective in 1948 in promoting secular culture at the grassroots as the ‘coolie poet’ ‘Aasi. He was amazed to see him standing in the middle of Srinagar’s Lal Chowk surrounded by crowds listening to the oral poetry of this illiterate labourer. He was a devotee of the Kashmir’s patron Sufi saint, Hazrat Nuruddin

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Nurani, known as Nund Rishi like the legendary Hindu sages. 'Aasi was a true interpolator of Kashmir's Sufi-Bhakti-Rishi culture.

In Kerala, the experience of the writer was too interesting. His mother, Sumitra Kaur found in Travancore two Malayali women wearing traditional *mundus* and blouses in search of job. They had recently returned from the United States, having graduated from Harvard University. The two women, a Hindu and her Muslim friend, told Ranjeeta the sister of the writer that even though they were not Christians, the Anglican missionaries had offered them the scholarships. They gave his sister the address of the missionary school in case she wanted to apply for a scholarship to study abroad.

Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the Pakistani poet and his senior at Lahore's Government College, visited Paris in 1983, a few months before he died. Madanjeet Singh had invited a number of his Indian and Pakistani Urdu-speaking friends to a reception in his honour. He was sitting next to the writer and noticed tears rolling down his cheeks as he recited poignant compositions of Faiz. As he was leaving, the great poet put his hand on the knee of Mr. Singh and said: "India's Partition was a British plot to divide and rule the subcontinent that succeeded in Pakistan because of the nexus between the military dictators and the jihadists."

Mr. Madanjeet Singh had married Dhayanawati, called Kiki, daughter of the Indonesian ambassador in Sweden in 1963 while he was posted as a first secretary at the Indian Embassy in Stockholm. He was greatly impressed by the unique multi-layered syncretic culture of Indonesia with the largest Muslim population in the world. It was amazing to see in a visit to Bali common people performing the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* by the roadside and the marvelous *Wayang Kulit* puppet shows depicting the Indian epics.

Showing these secular images of Kashmir, Kerala, Pakistan and Indonesia, Madanjeet Singh is fearful of Saudi Wahhabis who are trying to damage this multilayered secularism by spending millions of petro-dollars on the

construction of hundreds of Wahhabi mosques and thousands of madrasas everywhere.¹⁸

The writer accuses the Saudi Wahhabis of the terror attacks plotted in Kashmir, Pakistan and Indonesia, and of Islamic revival being made in different parts of the world – an accusation that is based entirely on the rhetorics and myths, and is frequently repeated by most of the western writers and analysts. Sayyid Muhammad Ashrf Kachhochhawi's speech and the declaration of Sufi Maha Panchayat at Moradabad encouraged these writers to reverberate their theorization of 'Wahhabi extremism'. This was publicly voiced in a ceremonial function held at New Delhi few years back in 2009 by a distinguished Indian lawyer, Ram Jethmalani. Kachhochhawi's statement now reminded Jethmalani in this regard.

Jethmalani on Wahhabism

The former Union Law Minister and senior lawyer, Ram Jethmalani, caused a flutter at an international conference on terrorism in New Delhi on November 21, 2009 by alleging that Wahhabism was responsible for terrorism, provoking a walkout by Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to India, Faisal Hassan al-Trad.

In his address, Mr. Jethmalani, who was president of the All India Senior Advocates Association, said: "Unfortunately in the 17th century, they produced an evil man in Saudi Arabia by the name of Wahhab, who was concerned about the decline of the Muslim world, but he hit upon a wrong remedy".

He alleged that the Wahhabi terrorism instilled rubbish in the minds of young people to carry out terrorist attacks". When he said, "India had friendly relations with a country that supported Wahhabi terrorism", Saudi Arabia's Ambassador Faisal al-Trad was seen walking out of the conference held at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi.

Adish C. Aggarwala, chairman, All India Bar Association and joint organizer of the conference, said the Ambassador returned after Union Law Minister M. Veerappa Moily clarified that Mr. Jethmalani's views were not those of the government.

Mr. Jethmalani said: “It was unfortunate that entire Islam as a religion was being blamed for terrorism. There are also Hindu terrorists and Buddhist terrorists”. He said he was a student of all religions, including Islam, and had the highest respect for the Prophet (peace be on him), who, he said, was a man of peace.

Describing the Non-Aligned Movement and Panchsheel as evil, he said India should align with the forces of good to combat evil forces. “India and its Foreign Ministers must learn to reassess the doctrines of the past. India’s foreign policy establishment should be courageous to shun the country’s relations with its enemies”.

Taking exception to Mr. Jethmalani’s remarks, Mr. Moily said:

India’s commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement would not be shaken by any country or any individual. The views expressed by my senior colleague Mr. Jethmalani are not the views of the government”. He said: “Terrorism cannot be attributed to any particular religion, as no religion teaches terrorism. The government was against any attempt to link terrorism to a particular religious community, but it stood for “inclusive development” of all.

Justice Awn S. Al-Khasawneh, judge of the International Court of Justice, asked Mr. Jethmalani not to make sweeping statements. He decried any attempt to link terrorism to any religion, thus creating a fear psychosis: “The message from this conference must not be fear-mongering, but tackling terrorism within the framework of law. Combat it with methods such as combination of cooperation among countries by preaching the message of law and peace rather than fear-mongering.”¹⁹

Ahl-i-Hadith Response

In response to Jethmalani’s statement, and more importantly to remove misunderstandings and combat propaganda war against the reformatory efforts and teachings of Shaykh al-Islam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab (1115-1206 AH/1703-1792), a seminar on January 02, 2010 / Muharram 15, 1431 AH was

organized in the premises of Jamia Salafia Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, a big centre of religious education run by the Ahl-i-Hadith Ulama and scholars. A dozen papers on the “Wahhabi Movement – Facts and Misunderstandings”, the central theme of the seminar, were presented alongwith the healthy discussions. The seminar was presided over by Maulana Abdullah Saud, rector of Jamia Salafia, and was graced by Asghar Ali Imam Mahdi Salafi, the general secretary of Jamiat Ahl-i-Hadith India as the chief guest, while Maulana Abdul Wahhab Hijazi conducted the entire sessions.

Abdullah Saud, the president of the seminar, addressing the audience was proud of being titled ‘Wahhabi’. Though the title was, historically, given by the opponents, he wholeheartedly accepted it, since there was too significance in being attributed to it because the title is ascribed to *Wahhab*, an attribute of Allah, and thus the speaker turned the title into a reverent one as opposed to one that had been disgraced by the opponents. The speaker pointed out the sugar-coated colonial strategy plotted in Asia to defame Islam and the Muslims and highlighted the main features of the Wahhabi movement of India and that how the opponents were involved in media war against it.²⁰

Maulana Muhammad Azmi, former Shaykhul Jamia, Jamia Alia Mau, responded academically to the accusations already made by Ram Jethmalani in his Delhi’s statement. This paper was read on the dias by Asad Azmi. The speaker condemned the leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party who had been spreading the poisonous communalism since the 20th century excluding Atal Bihari Vajpai, the senior respectable leader who is increasingly serious and soft-spoken.²¹

Maulana Azmi criticized Ram Jethmalani “who has produced himself as a new figure of Muslim enmity perhaps because BJP was lagged behind due to its continuous failure in the elections and the decline of BJP-ruled states. He observed that Ajmal Qassab, an unknown figure, could gain the name and fame with a reference to terrorism, so he must plan to highlight the “Wahhabi terrorism” in order to gain a status of champion in a world already hostile to Islam and Muslims, and by his legal expertise and proficiency in the constitutional issues may revive

the oft-quoted dead charge that “every Muslim is not a terrorist, but every terrorist remains a Muslim”.²²

To Maulana Azmi, the word ‘Wahhabi’ is not objectionable both in the letter and meaning, but the opponents have been using this word as a synonymous to traitor and for abusing the right-minded Muslims: “Soon as anyone denounces the paganism and the religious heresies, or initiates jihad for the freedom of the country, he is without any delay titled a Wahhabi. Historically, the first Islamic movement, launched by Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi and Shah Mohammad Ismail to carry out the socio-religious reforms and to get the country free from foreign domination, was disgraced by the opponents and those loyal to English, as Wahhabis. They had been convincing the British government that this constituted the movement of rebels and traitors. This movement then could not escape the arrests, trials, life imprisonments and death punishments. Ram Jethmalani, however, preceded these opponents too far after having coined a new term of ‘Wahhabi terrorism’.²³

Jethmalani coined this term, further says Maulana Azmi, in order to divert people’s attention from “Hindu terrorism” which is now being proved by the legal and intelligence agencies in the country.²⁴ The learned speaker also criticized Jethmalani’s statement on the country’s association with the Non-Aligned Movement. To Maulana Azmi, “Jethmalani should alienate himself from alignment, bias and false statement and following the objectivity and truthfulness he should do research and then state the findings in the legal terminology”.²⁵

Asghar Ali Imam Mahdi Salafi, speaking of the great personality of the founder of the Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia as admired by the historians and Islamic scholars all over the world, denounced the opponents who charged the Shaykh al-Islam with being a heretic; whose teaching and mission was as opposed to the basic sources of Islam and the thoughts of the founding scholars of the four Islamic sects; whose movement charged the Muslims of unbelief, and did not respect the holy Prophets. The movement was also accused of not acknowledging the intercession on the Day of Judgement (*shafa‘at*), not recognizing the pious slaves of God (*awliya*),

forbidding the visiting of the grave of the Prophet (peace be on him) in Madinah, and historically having shed the blood of the people for his own interests casually and having bombarded the holy grave of the Prophet in Madinah etc. Such accusations are still being charged with his movement, argues the speaker: “The statement given few days back by the former Cabinet Minister and famous lawyer (Ram Jethmalani) was badly influenced with that unholy campaign against the movement. The mission of Shaykh al-Islam, adversely, was a mission of prosperous humanity, a guarantee of human rights, and a call to pure and true Islam and that was recognized by both the believers and unbelievers”.²⁶

Salafis on Violence

Azizur Rahman Salafi,²⁷ a participant of the Varanasi seminar and a teacher also in Jamia Salafia, defined categorically that a person is not an Ahl-i- Hadith who does not follow the Islamic principles stated in the Qur’an and the Hadith, and contradictorily deviates from the Qur’anic abhorrence of mischief and disorder (*fasad fi al-ard*). He quotes in abundance the Islamic texts that strictly forbid the lawlessness, socio-political anarchy and the bloodshed. The Qur’an clearly bans all the undue killings and murders:

Nor take life- which God Has made sacred – except For just cause. And if Anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir Authority (to demand *Qisas* Or to forgive) : but let him Not exceed bound in the matter Of taking life; for he Is helped (by the Law).²⁸

Those who invoke not, With God, any other god, Nor slay such life as God Has made sacred, except For just cause, nor commit Fornication; - and any that does This (Not only) meets punishment (But) the Penalty on the Day Of Judgement will be doubled To him, and he will dwell Therein in ignominy.²⁹

Those who decline the commandments of God and His Apostle and commit the mischief (*fasad fi al-ard*) are pronounced to be

severely punished by the court of law, and if died unrepentant would be liable to the divine wrath on the Day of Judgement, the learned scholar argues. He cites the following verse:

The punishment of those Who wage war against Go
And His Apostle, and strive With might and main For
mischief through the Land Is: execution, or
crucifixion, Or the cutting off of hands And feet from
opposite sides, Or exile from the land That is their
disgrace In this world, and A heavy punishment is
theirs In the Hereafter.³⁰

Maulana Salafi admits that the Qur'an mentions the law of *Qisas* and human nature of taking revenge from the killer³¹ but no individual is entitled to take the law of land in his hand. Only the government has the right to implement the Islamic criminal law after having met the due legal process.³²

Historically, it was the Wahhabi movement that declared a war against the British for the first time in the country, argues Maulana Salafi, and launched the very national movement 80-85 years before the others, and sacrificed their lives in the historic Balakot War in 1831 AD under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad of Bareilly and Shah Muhammad Ismail. Among those who were killed in the freedom struggle of 1857 the huge majority of them belonged to Wahhabis. They were hanged till death because of being Wahhabis in British India and are still disgraced with the title of "Wahhabi terrorists" though they denounce terrorism publicly.

Maulana Azizur Rahman Salafi categorically pronounced that the Salafis or Ahl-i-Hadith Muslims did not adhere to violence; they rather constituted peace-loving and tolerant. They publicly denounced all those who were involved in any act of terror and played with the blood of innocents, and violate the sanctity of public places like hotels, markets, offices and even of the mosques. Maulana Salafi declared such elements of neither being Ahl-i-Hadith nor Muslim. He surprisingly recited the following Urdu couplet:

Jurm to Koi kare, nam ho Kis ta badnam
Hai yeh Aap Ka Ghamza hai, yeh Andaz, yeh Naz !

(A person commits a crime and becomes infamous
someone else!
Alas! It is your tactics, your style and your method!)³³

Saudi Wahhabis

Maulana Rafiq Ahmad Rais Salafi, an Aligarh-based Ahl-i-Hadith scholar and orator in his presentation in the Varanasi seminar, speaking on the “Wahhabi Movement – Facts and Implications” quoted Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi (1884-1953) an authority on Indian Islam, who had written a detailed account on the “Ideology of the Kings in Najd” in 1924. To Nadwi, main features of the Wahhabi teachings in Najd were as follows:

1. All the attributes of God are espezificated to Him alone and none shares with Him.
2. We should believe in the texts of the Qur’an and Hadith relating to the Divine Existence and Attributes without any interpretation otherwise as the words apparently require a meaning and should not insist pursuing their implications and inner meanings.
3. All the Apostles are human being and lack the Divine Attributes.
4. The pious and venerable dignitaries of Islam (*awliya*) should not be given so highly respect and affection that are espezificated to the Apostles or to God.
5. The graves and shrines should not be sanctified so as to be worshipped.
6. All that in possession and authority of God should not be sought from anyone except God, nor those who are dead should be prayed for help and assistance.
7. The graves should not be decorated with any tomb, dome or building because the Prophet of Islam (peace be on him) has strictly forbidden it and this generally causes the idol worship which is opposed to monotheism.³⁴

To Maulana Nadwi, Shaykh al-Islam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab devoted his life to the preaching of these teachings of Islam in the eighteenth century Najd, Hijaz. Among those who welcomed his mission was Muhammad Ibn Saud, a tribal chief in Najd who united under his banner all the tribes of

Najd and increasingly posed a threat to all the Turks, British and Sharif of Makkah. They attacked the Turkish Iraq on the one side, and occupied on the other the coastal areas and towns of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf that suited before the British trade and military objectives. The Wahhabis annoyed Sharif of Makkah also because they intended to rule the area of the Two Holy Mosques (*Haramayn Sharifayn*). From Turkish Empire the Egyptian Khadev Muhammad Ali Pasha was deputed to crush the Wahhabis of Najd. The Egyptian army was joined by the English and French officers and also by some from the East India Company the Wahhabis of Najd were thus jointly fought against. Due to these political and strategic reasons mainly the Wahhabis were targeted in India, Egypt and Turkey and were defamed.

In India the Mujahidin were organized few years later under the leadership of Shah Muhammad Ismail and they fought against the Sikhs. The mission and objectives of the Mujahidin in India were the same as that of the Najdi Wahhabis, and since the Britishers were in immense need to disgrace the freedom fighters, they disrespectfully called them the 'Wahhabis' and that title was treated as synonymous to the traitor, as wellknown in the history.³⁵

Playing with Islamic History

Maulana Sayyid Arshad Madani, president of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, while staying at Madinah to perform the hajj at that time, responded to Ram Jethmalani's statement on the Wahhabi movement, terrorism and the holy Qur'an and said that "it not only reflected the lack of information or a controversial statement but that was the result of extremely dark and negative thinking. Jethmalani was exposed in having opened a new front in war against Islam and Muslims in which these elements came to day light by distorting the historical facts".

Maulana Arshad Madani said: "Jethmalani was in a similar state when he attributed knowingly the events of history to the holy Qur'an and made a condemnable attempt to defame the movement of Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab that was

launched against British imperialism and not against non-Muslims.

According to the press release issued by the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, Jethmalani was not ignorant of the political history. He instead utilizing the history, based his theorization, in order to express his negative thinking, on the propaganda wrongly-composed having coloured with religion by those exiled from Saudi State after the successful efforts made by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab in strengthening the State.

Arshad Madani further clarified, that this was the time when Makkah was ruled by Sharif, the ally of British. As the struggle against colonialism was launched in India, the Wahhabis were in clash with Sharif of Makkah who had arrested in 1816 AD Shaykhul Hind Mahmud Hasan (1851-1920), the freedom fighter and handed him over to the British in Hijaz. He said, as the freedom struggle against British in India may not be titled a terrorism, the Saudi struggle against British under whose patronage Sharif was ruling in Makkah may also not be categorized as the terrorist one.

Arshad Madani further said, Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, after the great success in his efforts against British, established therein the rule of Aal-i-Saud and confined his movement to the very religious issues. This proved convincingly that he had no lust of power. These historical events had no link to the religion, but these were being coloured with religion by the propaganda war. Ram Jethmalani should turn to the real history so that the younger generation remains safe from all the misleadings about the lives and contributions of the great ancestors, he concluded.³⁶

Wider Condemnation

Asghar Ali Imam Mahdi Salafi, the general secretary of Jamiat Ahl-i-Hadith said in a written communication that “the pleader’s words have no doubt hurt billions of admirers of the great reformer Imam Shaykh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab. Such speech was not expected of a lawyer hailing from India, a country that presents unparalleled example of civilization, learning and culture, and certainly not from a high level stage

shared by the President of India”. Emphasising that terrorism is condemnable, JAH general secretary said, “Since anyone can be a terrorist, this is wrong to associate any particular religion, community or country with it. The religion of Islam is biggest flag-bearer of peace and harmony”. Stressing that the Qur’an and the hadith constitute perennially beneficial guidance for mankind, he said: “These are the two bases on which Saudi government is founded and Imam Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab was one of its initial architects”.

Maulana Sayyid Kalb-e-Jawwad, a Shi‘ite scholar and distinguished orator said in a telephonic conversation, “Whether he is Ram Jethmalani or any other, this is incorrect for him to link any terror with any community”. He further said, “Terrorist class is actually a pluralistic community that deems every sect than itself infidel and liable to murder. Even Wahhabi sect is not pleased with their practices”.

Expressing regret over Ram Jethmalani’s nonsensical chatter, Maulana Syed Nizamuddin, Ameer-e-Shariat, Bihar and Orissa and general secretary of All India Muslim Personal Law Board said, “Chain of allegations against Muslims made by separatist mentality is an old one”. His secretary Maulana Anisur Rahman Qasmi said, “Muslims should ignore it and march ahead”. He told, “Recently 2 ton load of explosive was recovered in Patna and Gaya from those linked with extremism. The purpose of Jethmalani’s statement is to disturb investigations going on in right direction.

Imam, Shahi Masjid Fatahpuri, New Delhi Dr. Mufti Mukarram Ahmad said, “This is only an accusation made under some conspiracy. How he must have been feeling by heart can be judged from his party affiliation”. Maulana Abdul Wahab Khilji, the leader of Indian Islahi Movement said, “People like Jethmalani give boost to terrorism. Ignorance of the man can be judged from the fact that he does not know the correct name of Wahhabi reform movement”.³⁷

Dilemma for the Muslims

Faisal Hassan Trad, the Saudi envoy to India expressed his deep concern to anti-Islam remarks of Ram Jethmalani for whom it is

a closed chapter but Muslims have a long way to go and work hard to rid their faith of the Islamic terror stigma: “Despite all the humanistic teachings of the religion, Islam is still linked with terrorism. It is an irony. It has turned out to be a global phenomenon and is a dilemma for the Muslim world”, Trad told IANS in an interview.

I believe it is a long way and we have to work hard to rid our faith of this stigma. I agree terrorists have hijacked Islam, but Islam is not what they propagate and what they are killing for. In fact, it is all un-Islamic, he said, days after he staged a walkout following Jethmalani’s comments.

Referring to Jethmalani’s statement Trad said:” I found his utterances bad as he was directly blaming Islam and my country (Saudi Arabia) for terrorism. I did what I should have done as a Muslim and as a Saudi Ambassador. I walked out in protest but offered my apologies to President Pratibha Patil who was on the panel in the conference. I did not want to create an impression that I was protesting against her,” he said:

And can you believe he was speaking in his own country which has some 140 million Muslim population! He was targeting the centre of Islam. The Saudis are proud to be from the birthplace of Islam. We have a huge responsibility of serving the Muslim world, and accusing Saudi Arabia or the Muslim world of breeding terror is just unacceptable, I repeat just unacceptable.

He said this country itself – “a victim of terrorism” – has always expressed a will to wage a fight against the menace. “Saudi Arabia has even volunteered to host a centre for global fight against terror – an idea which has mooted in an international conference on counter terrorism in 2005, in which India also participated” he said.

“It is a closed chapter now, I have nothing against Ram (Jethmalani) personally.. I do not want to drag this issue on and on”, Trad said, adding the lawyer was speaking for himself and not representing India. “King Abdullah (of Saudi Arabia) has initiated a movement to start a dialogue between different faiths and civilizations. That is what Islam teaches us”, he said.

Islam is a religion of humanity. You see any great human value and belief ends up to be a part of Islamic teachings. Islam stresses on justice, transparency, love, respect and freedom for each other, love for family and women's rights," he said, while expressing concern that people "misread and misinterpret Islam."

Quoting the Qur'an Trad said: "The holy Book says who kills a person without a legal trial is like he killed the whole humanity. What more do you need to prove Islam is for brotherhood peace and love? It is a religion that does not even allow suicide. Killing your ownself is a big sin in Islam. Prophet Muhammad's wife Khadijah is the first business woman in Islamic history. The Prophet used to work for her, and even continued to work for her after getting married to her. This is an example to explain how Islam respects and ensures women's rights and freedom."

"Islam", the envoy told IANS, has no justification for terrorism. What is not humane is forbidden in Islam. Allah says "We have created mankind and given it dignity. Islam can not accept anybody in its fold who trashes human dignity", he said, adding terrorists have 'no identity, no religion and no border. You can not attribute it to Islam in any case.³⁸

Appeasing Gimmickry

Both Sayyid Muhammad Ashraf Kachhochhawi and Ram Jethmalani denounced the 'Wahhabi terrorism, differently with their own motives and objectives. Jethmalani was categorical in his statement and also expressive in implementing wisely and tactfully his political agenda to defame Islam and the Muslims as the prolonged and welculculated target of his political party's saffronizing policies. But what was the motive and objective of Maulana Kochhochhawi in delivering a sectarian speech and tarnishing the image of Muslim unity at a time when assembly elections in few states were to be scheduled? Did he aim at showing of his following and popularity in the Muslim community to the ruling party and bargain for his political interests? as some of his well-wishers predicted.

What is with Maulana Kachhochhawi that his strongest and staunchest antagonism is towards his fellow Muslims? Why,

inspite of being a part of Muslim Ummah, do some Muslims categorise and create dissonance and disharmony amongst each other? Don't these self-proclaimed 'pious' vanguards of Islam understand that "The believers are but a single brotherhood" (*Al-Hujurat* 49:10), or that "A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not oppress him, nor does he leave at the mercy of others" (*Sahih Muslim*). The answer to these questions lies in the fact that, today jealousy and envy has crept into Muslim Ummah, so much so that we are ready to abandon a fellow Muslim to appease the non-Muslims. "One such case of non-Muslims appeasing gimmick and boot licking politics was played by All India Ulama and Mashaikh Board (AIUMB), at a Maha Panchayat in Moradabad, criticizes an analyst.³⁹

'This lousy show', analysis goes on, put up by the All India Ulama and Mashaikh Board is "reprehensible" in every sense of the word. Here are a bunch of Muslims calling for the arrest of fellow Muslims, terming them 'Wahhabi extremists', urging the government to audit the funding of madrasas, and calling for a separation from their fellow Muslims? This is as worse as America's so-called 'war on terror'. They are not calling for peace, they are calling for a war on Muslims and Islam," the analysis concludes.⁴⁰

More alarming situation is the dead silence of modern-educated Muslim scholars, intellectuals and media persons who are directly or indirectly linked to Sufi circles and Khanqahs. They must come forward and criticize all those who are responsible for increasingly disunity and sectarian clashes between the various groups of Muslim community. The presence of various sects and schools in Islamic community may be ideologically seen as varying interpretations of the Islamic texts and a phenomenon that enriches the Islamic thought provided these schools observe strictly the manners and codes of difference elaborated in the Qur'an and hadith and honestly executed by our great ancestors like the founding legends of first five Islamic juristic schools as Abu Hanifa Numan bin Thabit (80-150/699-767), Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (164-241/780-855), Muhammad Ibn Idris al-Shafii (150-204/767-820), Abu Abdullah Malik bin

Anas al-Asbahi (93-179/712-795), and Jafar bin Muhammad al-Baqar al-Sadiq (80-148/699-765).

Sobriety not Sensationalism

Maulana Kachhochhawi's statement was ignored by the Urdu media but front paged by some English dailies and a number of articles and surveys were published so as to highlight him. This created rifts between various sections of Muslims and a divided community with sectarian and sectional approach can not maintain the peace and harmony in the society but more importantly can not contribute to the progress and development of the country also. This should be realized by the national media more and maintain sobriety and sensitivity in all the cases.

Mr. Hamid Ansari, the Vice-President of India called upon newspaper editors to sustain the reputation of dependability for authentic news and sober analysis that was "not tainted by sensationalism so often displayed by the electronic media".

Inaugurating the two-day World Urdu Editors Conference organized by the popular Urdu daily *Siasat* in Hyderabad on December 30, 2011 Mr. Ansari asked the editors to develop methodologies for retaining the demarcation between journalism, public interests, advertising and entertainment. Of late this demarcation had been eroded owing to availability of new media devices and commercial considerations, he said. "Each of these impacts on the role of the editor and the code of ethics observed hitherto." Quoting American journalist Walter Lippman, Mr. Ansari said media persons should avoid being captured and captivated by the company they keep, their constant exposure to power."⁴¹

Justice Markandey Katju, Chairman, Press Council of India, asserted repeatedly that, "All freedoms are subject to reasonable restrictions in the public interest, and are coupled with responsibilities". Criticizing the negative role of media he was quite categorical: "No doubt the media should provide some entertainment also to the people. But if 90 percent of their coverage is devoted to entertainment, and only 10 percent to all the socio-economic issues put together, then the sense of

priorities of the media has gone haywire. The real issues before the people are socio-economic, and the media are seeking to divert their attention to the non-issues like film stars, fashion parades, disco, pop, cricket, and so on. It is for this lack of a sense of priorities, and for showing superstitions, that I criticized the media', he clarified.

Justice Katju refers to the history of Europe especially its 16th to 19th centuries when the transition from feudalism to modern society was taking place. This period was full of turbulence, turmoil, wars, revolutions, chaos, social churning, and intellectual ferment. India is presently going through that fire. In this, role of media becomes extremely important. He quotes his favourite Firaq Gorakhpuri's couplet to make this point :

*Har zarre par ek Kaifiyat-e-neem shabi hai,
Ai saaqi-e-dauran, yeh gunahon Ki ghadi hai!*

(Every particle is in a condition of half-night; O cupbearer of the day! It is a time of sin!)⁴²

Arguing that Indians are living through a complex period of economic, social and demographic change, Justice Katju in an article in The Hindu on the media that was forerunner to his interview with Karan Thapar on CNN-IBN's Devil's Advocate programme, had cited that Urdu couplet. This also applies to the case of Sayyid Muhammad Ashraf Kachhochhawi as well.

Notes and References

¹⁷ *The Hindu*, October 31, 2011 (A Threat to Multilayered Secular Cultures).

¹⁸ *The Hindu*, October 31, 2011.

¹⁹ *The Hindu*, November 22, 200. It is interesting to note that Ranjan Roy, in his article, "Home-grown Armies of God" (*Times of India*, August 2, 2008), has linked the jihadi terror attacks to Ahl-e-Hadith and the Tablighi Jamaat of India. To him the factors for terrorism like high unemployment, social frustrations and communal alienation are not enough to trace it. "Muslim minds especially that of younger generation" are being fed an ideological diet of hatred". The authors chart graphically the radicalization of inner city mosques in South Asian neighborhoods of Britain. In 'The Islamist' Eid Hussain explains how people from the Middle East and Pakistan and ex-mujahidin from Afghanistan gained control of mosques and madrasas influencing the young minds. To the writer, "since the 9/11 attacks, ISI has moved to using local radicals, who have a below-the-radar existence, as operatives. What we failed to realize is the fertile recruitment ground created by the infiltration of the ideology of hatred in the form of Wahhabism dished out by groups such as Ahl-e-Hadees and the Tablighi "Jamat". http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2008-08-02/edit_page/279205511_terror_attacks_jihadis_soil.

²⁰ *Monthly Muhaddith Banaras*, Special Issue on the "Wahhabi Movement – Facts and Misunderstandings" (*Wahhabi Tahrik Haqiq Aur Ghalatfahmiyan*), Muharram-Rabi al-Awwal 1431 AH/January-March 2010, pp. 130-131.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Wahhabi Movement and Jethmalani, p. 7.

²² *Ibid.* Maulana Azmi argues that by nature every human being with the passage of time and after having suffered from goods and bads of life, becomes gradually serious, sensible and realistic but Bharatiya Janata Party will remain apparently unrealistic and insensible for ever. As a clear proof the scholar puts the case of Ram Jethmalani, "whose fiery statement demolished the wall of unity and integrity" to be built up in the country.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11. Maulana Muhammad Azmi has concluded his paper with the remarks that unbiased research and objective study, if made by Ram Jethmalani, will be proved fruitful in eliminating the terrorism, and gaining consequently the support and popularity in all the creeds and groups.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 14-15. The speaker has provided a list of the scholars from both the Muslim and non-Muslim circles who have acknowledged the contribution of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab in maintaining law and order and keeping peace and security in Hijaz, i.e. Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan Bhopali, Sayyid Muhammad Shukri Aalusi from Iraq, Amir Shakib Arsalan of Egypt, Abdul Muta'al al-Sa'eedi, Shaykh Rashid Rida, Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Zirikli, Sir Hamilton Gibb, Phillip K. Hitti, and Goldziher. Ibid., pp. 15-17.

²⁷ Monthly Muhaddith Banaras, January-March 2010, pp. 26-30.

²⁸ The *Qur'an*, 17: 33.

²⁹ The *Qur'an*, 25: 68-69.

³⁰ The *Qur'an*, 5: 36.

³¹ The *Qur'an*, 2: 178, 197

³² Monthly Muhaddith Banaras, January-March 2010, p. 31.

³³ Ibid., p. 31.

³⁴ For the full text of the article in Urdu, see Nadwi, Sayyid Sulaiman, The Ideology of the Kings in Najd, (*Salateen-e-Najd Ka Mazhab*), *Monthly Ma'arif*, Azamgarh, November 1924, Vol. 14, NO. 5, pp. 339-338.

³⁵ Salafi, Rafiq Ahmad Rais, Wahhabi Movement: Facts and Implications, (*Wahhabi Tahrik, Haqaiq wa Muzmarat*), *Monthly Muhaddith Banaras*, op.cit., pp. 32-36.

³⁶ *Roznama Sahafat* Delhi, Dhul Hijjah 05, 1430/November 23, 2009. www.sahafat.in 23.11.2009.

³⁷ <http://www.scribd.com/doc/23897189/jethmalani-says-%E2%80%9CWahabis-Responsible-for-Terrorism%E2%80%9D-Ulema-React-Our-Correspondent> on 7.01.12 at 10.00 am.

³⁸ <http://twocircles.net/2009nov25/muslims-have-fight-misconceptions-about-islam-saudi-envoy.html> Interview by Sarwar Kashani, IANS, may be contacted at s.kashani@iansin

³⁹ <http://alhittin.com/2011/10/18/sufi-maha-panchayat-denounces-fellow-muslims-in-india/#more-4404>

⁴⁰ Interestingly, the analyst has quoted spokesman AIUMB Syed Babar Ashraf saying that the Urdu press has boycotted them because these were controlled by the hardliners. Babar also claimed that "Wahhabi-inspired outfits like Deoband, Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind and Ahl-e-Hadith were importing a "foreign ideology" in India", and that "they are funded by petro-dollars and aimed to grab political power".

⁴¹ *The Hindu*, December 31, 2011.

⁴² *The Hindu*, November 16, 2011.