

`Abd al-Bari and the events of January 1926

Oh however let the winds of passion blow
Oh let the springs of action flow,
Let me work, let me strive,
Let every shaikh be like `Abd al-Bari.ⁱ

In the early afternoon of 17 January 1926 the young Jamal Mian was enjoying his tricycle. He was riding round and round the courtyard of the Mahalsera, the inner courtyard of the Farangi Mahall in Lucknow. He could hear his father, the great Mawlana `Abd al-Bari, pacing backwards and forwards in a nearby room. The mawlana's bags were packed. He was about to take the train for Ajmere, where a conference was to be held in support of Sharif Husain of Mecca who in the previous month had been driven out of the Hijaz by `Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud of the Najd.

Emotionally it was an intensely fraught time for `Abd al-Bari. Over the previous year he had been leading those in India who supported Sharif Husain and was deeply concerned at what `Abd al-Aziz and his Wahhabi followers might do to the tombs of the heroes of Islam in Mecca and Medina. This had led to a bitter quarrel with one of his leading spiritual followers, the nationalist leader Mawlana Muhammad `Ali who, on the grounds that `Abd al-Aziz, unlike Sharif Husain, was anti-British, led the

faction that supported him. On several occasions Muhammad `Ali had come to speak in Lucknow or the surrounding districts and had found himself shouted down. He had given up staying at Farangi Mahall, making it clear that `Abd al-Bari might be his spiritual adviser but in this matter the mawlana needed guidance from him. On 13 January news of two momentous events had been received: `Abd al-Aziz had declared himself king of Arabia; Muhammad `Ali in his newspaper Hamdard had publicly renounced his spiritual allegiance to `Abd al-Bari.

Suddenly Jamal Mian heard a groan. His father had collapsed. The mawlana had had a stroke and was paralysed down his left side. He was treated by allopathic and western doctors, including the civil surgeon of Lucknow. His nephew and spiritual successor, Qutb al-Din `Abd al-Wali, who had gone on ahead to Ajmere was recalled by telegram. Qutb al-Din arrived to find Mumtaz Ahmad Razzaqi, the sajjadanashin ['one who sits upon the prayer carpet' i.e. the successor to the leadership of a shrine] of Bansa Sharif, sitting by the mawlana's bed. `Abd al-Bari was barely conscious. Mumtaz Ahmad said loudly that Qutb al-Din has arrived. The mawlana struggled to embrace him, patting him on the back. Then, the young children of Farangi Mahall, including Jamal Mian, were brought in to be made disciples of the mawlana in the presence of his successor. At 11.10 pm on 19 January `Abd al-Bari died.

On the following day `Abd al-Bari was buried in the family graveyard, Bagh Mawlana Anwar. Later the grave was covered by an elegant maqbara in the Awadhi style; it bore the verse in praise of the mawlana by the contemporary satirist, Akbar Allahabadi,

which stands the head of this essay. Thousands of Lucknawis followed the funeral procession. The vegetable market was closed. Muslims were excused attendance at the courts. All Shia and Sunni institutions shut, with one exception. The madrasas of rival schools in Bareilly, Badaun and Deoband were closed and readings of the Qur`an given instead. Messages of condolence were received from princes, taluqdars, nationalist leaders, including Gandhi who had stayed in the Mahalsera several times, as well as Muslims abroad in Africa, and even in France. Princes and landowners made donations in memory of `Abd al-Bari to support the continuation of his work of teaching and scholarship.

On the 21st January Muhammad `Ali reached Lucknow from Delhi. We are fortunate in having eyewitness accounts of his behaviour from three who were present at the time. Mufti Raza Ansari of Farangi Mahall, who was a lad of nine, `Abd al-Majid Daryabadi, who was close both to Farangi Mahall and Muhammad `Ali, and Muhammad Shafi of Farangi Mahall, pupil and close associate of the deceased over the previous ten years. On reaching Lucknow Muhammad `Ali went straight to Bagh Mawlana Anwar where, according to Daryabadi, he threw himself on `Abd al-Bari's grave crying `If I cannot come to your funeral, let me come to your grave'. Then he went on to Farangi Mahall. Raza remembers him entering the main gate with a white handkerchief, wiping tears from his eyes. It was 9 am and `Abd al-Bari's will was being read. The reader, Mawlana Salamat Allah, had reached the point when the deceased was asking forgiveness from all those to whom he might unwittingly have done wrong. At the end the disciples of `Abd al-Bari who were present were asked to make

gifts of respect to his successor, Qutb al-Din. Muhammad `Ali was so overcome that he was unable to stand up; he gave his gift of respect in a sitting position. He stayed on at Farangi Mahall for three days.

For far too long `ulama have been treated as cardboard figures, caricatures of Muslim men of God. The reasons are several: colonial administrators, and subsequently scholars, have rarely known enough to treat them as more than such; western-educated Muslims, who have discovered new forms of authority, have often been concerned both to mock and to distance themselves from the mediators of religious authority; and the followers of `ulama have been concerned to impose upon them an image of an ideal teacher and scholar at the cost of concealing aspects of their character, personality and behaviour. Some recent biographers of ulama, however, have begun to penetrate beneath the surface of their subjects. There is, for instance, Ian Henderson Douglas's fine study of Abu'l Kalam Azad, Vali Reza Nasr's life of Mawlana Mawdudi, an `alim in all senses but for the lack of an early madrasa training, and Baqer Moin's sensitive exploration of the life of Ayat Allah Khomeini. For `Abd al-Bari much evidence still exists, though probably less than for these three remarkable men. The narrative above makes it pertinent to ask what kind of man it was for whom the victory of a wahhabi-inspired leader in Arabia and the rejection of his spiritual leadership by a prominent disciple would appear to have precipitated the stroke which led to his death.

`Abd al-Bari was the leading Farangi Mahalli of his day.

This made him the leading representative of a widely admired tradition of scholarship and teaching which his family had pursued in Lucknow and spread throughout India. Tracing their ancestry back through the eleventh-century sufi `Abd Allah Ansari of Herat through to Ayyub Ansari, the host of the Prophet at Medina, his family had been established in Awadh since the fourteenth century. In 1691 one of his most distinguished ancestors, Mulla Qutb al-Din Sihalwi, a great scholar in the rational sciences, was murdered in a squabble over land and his library burned. In recompense, the emperor Awrangzeb granted the family the sequestered property of a European merchant in Lucknow and from 1695 this became the family's base. The family was famed for its contributions to all aspects of Islamic learning, but especially in the rational sciences; it was also famed for its Dars-i Nizamiyya curriculum and method of teaching which from the eighteenth century had come to be widely adopted throughout India.

`Abd al-Bari belonged to one of the most notable lineages in Farangi Mahall. His father, `Abd al-Wahhab, had led a typical life of teaching, writing and spiritual leadership, until his death from the plague in 1903. `Abd al-Bari's paternal grandfather, `Abd al-Razzaq, was more remarkable. A leading sufi and scholar of his time, he was closer than most Farangi Mahallis to the Wali Allahi reforming tradition. He had played a leading role in the Hanumangarhi jihad to defend the Babri Masjid in 1855; he presented his turban to be used as a banner by the Indian forces fighting the British at Lucknow in 1857-58; he always made a point of distancing himself from British people and

British things; and in the late 1870s had been the clear forerunner of his grandson in founding the Majlis Muid al-Islam to support the Ottoman Empire in its war against Russia and in touring India to raise funds for that purpose.

`Abd al-Razzaq's father and paternal grandfather, Jamal al-Din and Ala al-Din both found their fortunes and scholars and teachers in the service of the Walajahi nawabs of the Carnatic, who hailed from the gasbah of Gopa Maw to the west of Lucknow. Jamal al-Din was hot-headed, like his great-grandson, and a noted bibliophile; several volumes from the Mughal imperial library, with their prices marked inside, formed part of his collection. Ala al-Din was the favoured pupil and son-in-law of the great Farangi Mahalli scholar of the eighteenth century, `Abd al-`Ali Bahr al-`Ulum. After his father-in-law died he sustained the Farangi Mahalli traditions of teaching in Madras. Both he and Jamal al-Din are buried alongside Bahr al-`Ulum and the Nawabs of the Carnatic in the Walajahi mosque in Madras.

Ala al-Din's father and paternal grandfather, Anwar al-Haq and Ahmad `Abd al-Haq both lived their lives in Lucknow as men of strong sufi habits. Ahmad `Abd al-Haq's father, Mulla Said was one of the four sons of Qutb al-Din Sihalwi. He had been educated by his father, taught in his father's madrasa, and was wounded in the affray in which his father was killed. He had been the family member who went to Awrangzeb with the statement of witnesses describing how local zamindars had surrounded the madrasa of Qutb al-Din, whom the emperor supported with a madad-i ma`ash grant, and killed the scholar with several of his pupils. It was he who received the farman granting haveli Farangi Mahall,

and he who in 1695 had brought his family from Sihali to the safer haven of Lucknow. According to family tradition he was one of the compilers of the Fatawa Alamgiriyya and was killed on the battlefield in the Deccan whilst praying.

On his mother's side `Abd al-Bari was descended from another distinguished Farangi Mahalli line descending from Mulla Said through Ahmed `Abd al-Haq's eldest son, Muhibb Allah, a soldier and his son, Mubin, a scholar of distinction, to Malik al-`Ulama Mulla Haidar, another distinguished scholar, but also a public servant, who made his fortune at the court of the Nizam and established a major Farangi Mahall presence in Hyderabad. `Abd al-Bari's mother was the grand-daughter of Mulla Haider, through Zahur Hasan. She came from a background of wealth unknown to the Lucknawi Farangi Mahallis. Her half-sister, the daughter of Zahur Hasan's first wife, was the mother of Mawlana `Abd al-Hai (d. 1886), the most gifted Farangi Mahalli scholar of the nineteenth century, whose major works of scholarship, for instance, his glosses on key works in the Dars-i Nizamiyya and his collection of fatawa are still in print.

`Abd al-Bari was born in 1878, the same year as Mawlana Muhammad `Ali. Their circumstances, however, were different. Muhammad `Ali was one of six children of the widow of a courtier of the Rampur Nawabs; large debts and straitened circumstances meant that his young life was not easy. `Abd al-Bari was born into the comfort of his maternal grandfather's house in Hyderabad. From it, he and his relatives brought to Farangi Mahall a taste for large-scale entertaining and parties.

`Abd al-Bari received the usual education of a boy of his

background of Qur`an and Dars-i Nizami. He was quick and clever, but also very assiduous in his studying; his biographer tells us that when his first wife died he missed not a moment of study! In his childhood he also revealed his taste for worldly affairs, playing games in which he would make himself a king, appointing qazis and kotwals, and planning invasions of other countries. In 1891 he went with his parents on pilgrimage to Mecca. In 1901 he completed the Dars-i Nizami and in 1903, after the death of his father, went on a second pilgrimage with his mother and brother to Mecca, Medina and the holy cities of Iraq. On this pilgrimage he came to know the politically important Gilani family of Baghdad and taught in Medina. Indeed, he wanted to stay in Medina but was told by his father's friends that he had to do the work of God and that would be more usefully done in India. Then the death of his father in 1903 and his elder brother in 1904 meant that in his mid-twenties, he found himself with sole responsibility for his family.

Soon after returning from pilgrimage, in 1905 `Abd al-Bari played the leading role in founding the Madrasa-i `Aliya Nizamiyya in Farangi Mahall. Teaching had always taken place in the many houses that went to form the Farangi Mahall muhalla, but the formation of a formal madrasa was a considered response to the rapidly changing world beyond the muhalla. `Abd al-Bari formed this response with open obeisance to the past. Its name was a deliberate reflection both of the famed madrasa in eleventh-century Baghdad, at which al-Ghazzali had taught, and of the name of Mulla Nizam al-Din, who had founded the teaching tradition in Farangi Mahall. Moreover, the madrasa was actually

opened on 9 Rabi al-Awal, the day of the `urs of Mulla Nizam al-Din, the celebrations of when the great teacher had been united with God. But in making this obeisance `Abd al-Bari was also responding to new ideas about the content and form of education.

He was responding to the Islamic reformist ideas of Deoband and the Nadwat al-`Ulama; in the late 1890s the latter had commissioned a major report on the inadequacies of the Dars-i Nizamiyya. He was also responding to the western education supplied by missionaries and the government. Thus, he made arithmetic, algebra, geometry and geography compulsory, as they were in government schools; English was made part of the syllabus for the higher classes. There was a timetable, regular inspections by distinguished teachers from outside, regular examinations, and from 1911 the award of sanads of mawlwi and mawlana to mark different levels of attainment. During these early years of the madrasa, while `Abd al-Bari was most certainly interested in politics, as his biographer states, and as the inspection reports of the madrasa suggest, his first concern was teaching.

As he entered his early thirties, and as the Muslim world in general and that of Lucknow in particular became politically both more aware and increasingly active, `Abd al-Bari began to be drawn towards public life. In 1909 he gave his support to the great Muslim campaign to establish separate electorates in the Morely-Minto Council reforms. In 1910, responding in part perhaps to the establishment of the headquarters of the Muslim League in Lucknow in that year and in part to a growing sense of great change pervading the Muslim world, he presided over the re-

founding of the Majlis Muid al-Islam, which his grandfather, father and `Abd al-Hai had founded in the late 1870s. The Majlis was to enable the `ulama of Farangi Mahall to work with other `ulama `to help Muslims attain progress in worldly matters, while keeping in mind the injunctions of the shariat.' Some of `Abd al-Bari's understanding of politics, we are told by his biographer, was derived from a family friend, Asghar `Ali, who worked in the CID department. Subsequently, Asghar `Ali gained a post in Ottoman service and became involved in Anwar Pasha's Young Turk movement. He corresponded regularly with `Abd al-Bari and in 1911-12 visited India, staying at Farangi Mahall.

In 1912, `Abd al-Bari went on this third pilgrimage. He experienced the twilight moments of the Ottoman empire with all the fears and expectations that they aroused. In addition to Mecca, he visited Damascus, Beirut, Alexandria and Cairo, and through the good offices of Asghar `Ali was able to meet Sharif Husain, who was to raise the flag of Arab revolt in August 1916, and was also to be an occasional correspondent of `Abd al-Bari's for the rest of his life. There is every reason to believe that this experience helped to sharpen both `Abd al-Bari's awareness of the impact of British imperialism in the Islamic world and his engagement with the affairs of the Ottoman Empire and the Arabian peninsula that was to dominate the remaining years of his life.

On his return to India in 1913 `Abd al-Bari immediately became active in public affairs, and in the five years that followed he moved from relative obscurity to national prominence.

In the same year, with his spiritual disciple Mushir Husain Qidwa'i, he developed the idea for the Anjuman-i Khuddam-i

Ka`aba, which was to help defend Arabia's holy places of Islam. In doing so he became involved with the `Young Party' Muslims of the All-India Muslim League, in particular with the brothers Shawkat and Muhammad `Ali. At a public level there began that alliance between `ulama and young western-educated Muslim politicians which was to dominate politics for the next decade. `Abd al-Bari now supported Muhammad `Ali's special campaigns, such as the Red Crescent Fund, in support of which Farangi Mahall madrasa students were sent out into the Awadh countryside to raise funds, and the Cawnpore Mosque protest, in which the maulana was substantially involved right down to the making of the settlement. At a personal level there began that special relationship between `Abd al-Bari and Muhammad `Ali, which was to last for the rest of the Farangi Mahalli's life. `I was so repelled by them [the `Ali Brothers]', wrote `Abd al-Bari reflecting on his first encounters with them, `that once when I met Shawkat Ali I did not feel like saying salam to him. However, in spite of my repulsion, I was attracted to them through constant meeting and was impressed by their sincerity.' His biographer signifies the importance of the relationship by, most unusually, recording the precise date on which Muhammad `Ali first visited Farangi Mahall - 31 December 1913.

In 1914, together with the Raja of Mahmudabad, `Abd al-Bari tried to dissuade the Turkish Sultan from bringing the Ottoman Empire into World War One on the side of Germany. In 1915 he strongly endorsed the principle that the fate of that empire was a religious concern of Muslims. In 1916 he condemned his friend, Sharif Husain, for raising the flag of Arab revolt. In 1917 he

led the Muid al-Islam in making an address to Secretary of State Montagu, who was gathering evidence for the preparation of the next stage of reforms to the legislative councils, which government described as 'a nakedly impracticable demand for the predomination of priestly influence'. In 1918 he led a group of `ulama to the Delhi sessions of the Muslim League. Here for the first time `ulama sat with western-educated politicians in an organisation that was in no way devoted to their religious ends.

They heard Dr Ansari and Fazl al-Haq make major speeches voicing Muslim concerns regarding the defeat of the Ottoman empire.

The years 1919 and 1920 saw the zenith of `Abd al-Bari's political influence. Soon after the Delhi Muslim League conference he issued a fatwa enjoining jihad if there was any danger of infidels controlling either the Turkish caliph or the holy places of Islam. At the same time he set about raising support in the UP countryside and established a newspaper, Akhuwat, to focus on Islamic issues. More important, in terms of the growth of his influence, he set about wooing Gandhi, who came to say in Farangi Mahall in March 1919, to the Khilafat cause, and within six months he had succeeded. In September 1919 he held an all-India conference in Lucknow which led to the foundation of the All-India Central Khilafat Committee. `Abd al-Bari and his Farangi Mahall relatives, with the help of the lawyer Chaudhri Khaliquzzaman, drew up the constitution. The organisation however, came to be established in Bombay, because that was where the wealthy merchants, who funded it, were based. In November, at the Delhi Khilafat conference, he took the first steps towards getting non-co-operation with the British adopted as policy and

began the process of cutting a public deal with Gandhi. In December at Amritsar he presided over the first sessions of the Jam'iat al-`Ulama-i Hind. This organisation, which exists down to the present in both India and Pakistan, was the fulfilment of what he and his family had been trying to create through the Majlis Muid al-Islam - an all-India organisation of `ulama to make their voice heard in public affairs.

The Khilafat organisation, however, was to have the more immediate impact on politics. The first test for `Abd al-Bari was to ensure that the organisation's policies reflected the urgent concerns of Muslims about developments in West Asia rather than the caution of merchants who feared they had much to lose from crossing Britain's imperial will. He was helped in this by the release from internment of Abu'l Kalam Azad, who was able to bring intellectual leadership to the formulation of policies of non-co-operation, and the `Ali Brothers, who were able to bring their gifts in organising the politics of protest to his campaign. Between February and June `Abd al-Bari devoted enormous effort first to persuading the Khilafat Committee to adopt non-co-operation as a policy and second, at the Allahabad meetings in June, to persuading the Committee to accept Gandhi as chair of the group which was to put non-co-operation into action. From then until September `Abd al-Bari devoted his energies to ensuring, along with other radical Khilafatists, that there was a vast Muslim presence at the Calcutta Special Congress which enabled Gandhi and their non-co-operation agenda to capture the organisation of Indian nationalism. `Abd al-Bari did not attend the Special Congress because of the death of his daughter.

Nevertheless, his contribution to driving forward the strategy, which led to the extraordinary outcome of that Congress, is demonstrated in his dynamic activity and in the hundreds of letters and telegrams in his private papers.

The years 1921-22 saw a decline in `Abd al-Bari's influence.

This was in part because, over the previous two years, he and his followers had been the main political players, but now large number of `ulama were mobilised and, not least among them, the Deobandis. It was in part because of the rise of Abu'l Kalam Azad. Press speculation made Azad the people's favourite for the post of Shaikh al-Islam for India, while his statesmanlike outlook and piercing intellect enabled him to move with ease at the highest levels of politics. It was in part, too, because the passage of events steadily opened up the faultlines which lay between `Abd al-Bari's essentially religious purpose to protect the Khilafat and the Holy Places of Islam and the political purposes of Congress and Muslim politicians, who were primarily concerned about a struggle for power with the British in India. As `Abd al-Bari's religious concerns remained unsatisfied he increasingly strove to drive non-cooperation towards civil disobedience, and then towards violence. Matters came to a head in February 1922 when, increasingly worried by the signs of a major breakdown of law and order, Gandhi called off the civil disobedience campaign. A week later `Abd al-Bari in his closing speech as president of the Jam'iat al-`Ulama-i Hind conference at Ajmere attacked non-violence and the ending of civil disobedience. `Mahatma Gandhi', he said, `had exhausted all the items of his programme and no arrow was now left in his quiver.

The Mussalmans would not remain silent like a woman but need some forward programme for the achievement of their aims ... he was ready to commit violence by hand, teeth and by all the implements available.' This speech marked the end of `Abd al-Bari's presence at the summit of national politics.

From 1923, as the brief moment of Hindu-Muslim unity in politics came to be replaced by communal tension and communal riots, and as nationalist politicians began to see real benefit in entering the new Councils created by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, `Abd al-Bari moved away from the centre of affairs. Early in the year the Arya Samaj launched a campaign to reconvert the Meos of Mewat, south of Delhi, to Islam. Some Meos appealed to him for help. The Jam'iat al-`Ulama launched a counter-propaganda campaign and sent missionaries into the region. When communal riots broke out in the cities of northern India from the summer of 1923 onwards, `Abd al-Bari sent members of his sufi organisation, the Bazm-i Sufia-i Hind, to help Muslims who had suffered. He spoke uncompromisingly in defence of Muslim interests: `if the commandments of the shari`a are to be trampled under foot then it will be the same to us whether the decision is arrived at on the plains of Delhi or the hilltops of Simla. We are determined to non-co-operate with every enemy of Islam, whether he be in Anatolia or Arabia or at Agra or in Benares.'

From late 1923, until his death just over two years later, `Abd al-Bari's public life was dominated by developments in the Hijaz. To begin with he was concerned that the British might take control of the holy places of the faith. In 1924, after Ataturk's abolition of the caliphate, he supported the

candidature of Sharif Husain of Mecca as the new caliph. Then, as `Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud's Wahhabi supporters began to invade the Hijaz, he became increasingly concerned about Sa'udi control of the region. `It is not a question of Khilafat or Swarajya', he wrote, `but of danger to the land of the Hijaz and its desecration. Nor are we concerned about whether Sharif Husain stays or not. There can be no hope of dignity and respect for the holy places under the rule of Amir-i Najd.' By August 1925 the worst had happened. Ibn Sa'ud's forces had invaded the Hijaz, had destroyed the tombs of many of the heroes of Islam, and, it was rumoured, threatened the tomb of the Prophet in Medina. Muslim India divided. `Abd al-Bari led the supporters of Sharif Husain. Muhammad `Ali led the camp in favour of Ibn Sa'ud. The scene was set for a series of dramatic confrontations in the press in general and in Lucknow in particular, which were only brought to an end by the death of the mawlana.

Such are the bare facts of `Abd al-Bari's background and life. He was the product of a family which had been responsible for India's greatest continuous family tradition of Islamic scholarship. He was a member of a generation which was conscious, both of powerful challenges from reformist groups to their Islamic understandings, and of great threats to Islam in the world from the onward march of European imperialism. Such a background and such threats make it unremarkable that he should have burst into Indian politics in 1913. What was remarkable was that for nearly thirteen years he should have had so much influence over the development of politics and over some of its leading figures. He was, however, much more than a learned man

who found his way into public life. He was also a teacher and a spiritual leader. His concerns in both these areas bring further explanation to why the success of `Abd al-Aziz and his rejection by Muhammad `Ali should have had such an impact upon him.

Once `Abd al-Bari became caught up in politics, he had much less time for teaching. But, there is plenty of evidence that he continued to teach, and that he enjoyed teaching: `I was unable to write to you earlier', he declared to `Abd Allah Harun, `because of my preoccupations with teaching which I enjoy a lot.'

He was, moreover, supremely conscious, as the walls of Farangi Mahall and the people of Lucknow would never permit him to forget, that he came from a long line of teachers and scholars. It was a background which he and his family were never slow to point out: `there is no theologian who is my peer', he told a Lucknow audience in 1920, `because a long line of my predecessors have all been theologians. We have been theologians for a hundred generations, but others cannot put forward this claim. They are raw youths....'

`Abd al-Bari had clear views on education and teaching. Amongst the maxims he laid down in a memorandum on the re-establishment of the Farangi Mahall madrasa in 1905 were the following: the object of learning was not to gain knowledge for the sake of praise but for the benefit of humanity; education should be rounded, covering all aspects, and not confined to one or a few arts; it was important to know literary as well as useful languages; it was useful to know history and geography; maths and physical sciences should be given preference over

rhetoric and argument.

Significantly, given the role of rote-learning in much classical madrasa teaching, he emphasised that 'we consider it very bad to memorize without understanding [the subject]'. Further advice stressed that teaching; should move from the simple to the complex, from facts to abstraction; should concentrate on understanding the spirit of the laws of science and explain with examples; and should underscore the value of brevity and beauty in explanation.

In the same way, `Abd al-Bari had a clear view of the significance of different subjects in the curriculum and the contribution which the various classical texts might make to them. In his instructions to the teachers of the madrasa issued in the following year he gave a series of fascinating cameos of subjects and their books.

So, for instance, he offered an extensive discussion of the teaching of logic, a subject to which Farangi Mahallis, and the world of north Indian scholarship, had made major contributions. Many does and don'ts are offered to those teaching the subject plus guidance on the specific relationship to be expected between the study of certain texts and the development of student abilities:

In teaching Qutbi and Mir minute study is necessary. The teacher should also monitor how the mental faculties are developing through the states of Sughra, Sharh-i Tahzib and Qutbi. If the students are not able to give a comparative picture then the desired mental development has not happened. The reasons for this should be analysed.

Of Qur'an commentary and its principles, `Abd al-Bari says: 'the object of this art is the understanding of the meaning of

the Qur'an as far as humanly possible.' This is, of course, what we always thought, but it is good to have it so baldly stated. Again it is no less good to hear him say `that all the knowledge we are trying to impart [in all subjects] is with the aim of the greater understanding of the Qur'an.' For this he says no books are recommended for teaching the subject except Baidawi. And he rationalises this in a manner typical of this family of `ulama intellectuals `because of its toughness so that the student may be able to understand other commentaries as he understands this one.'

Turning to the principles of jurisprudence, he lays down the importance of the discipline in a way that would have made his cousin `Abd al-Hai, the master fatwa-writer of the nineteenth century proud:

There are four things: the Qur'an, Hadiths, Qiyas, Ijma. With these four things religious problems should be solved in the light of shari'a. This is a very important subject nowadays; new problems are constantly arising. It is all the more necessary to find answers to these problems with the help of fiqh. I do not mean that such activities should lead to an upsetting of the old shari'a law, or halal should be haram, or haram should become halal, or that shari'a should be changed in areas of recent development. What I mean is that with new problems, which did not exist before, an answer should be had according to Muslim law. These four principles are enough to solve new problems.

A striking reflection of the polemical nature of his times is the prominence `Abd al-Bari gives munazirah, or face to face discussion, which was not part of the classical curriculum. More emphasis should be laid on this skill than logic; it is a `practical logic'. The best way for the subject to be taught was that the students should be divided into two groups, given a subject, and then set to debating it. The teacher should assess

the debate. 'It is good', he declares 'to discuss the current topics of the day so that you can debate as though you were debating with the Arya Samajists. There should be good behaviour and no anger...' which was not a precept that the mawlana himself was always able to maintain.

At points where classical Islamic learning had been superceded, as in astronomy, 'Abd al-Bari insisted that the latest ideas should be taught:

For this purpose the books published in Beirut on modern astronomy should be sufficient. Not much of Sharh-i Chaghmini [a classic thirteenth-century text] need be taught, but modern developments in astronomy should be emphasised. As far as possible a globe should be used for teaching and maps.

And, according to the recollection of his former pupil, the mawlana was as good as his word, a globe bought from Oxford was one of his main teaching props, in addition to a spherical astrolabe.

Then, as we might expect from an enthusiastic teacher of modern science, he insisted that there was no clash between shari'a, the object of which is to correct human conduct, and the material sciences and modern philosophy:

It is quite wrong to assume that the study of ancient or modern philosophy promotes atheism. It is bad society that does this. Most of those with atheistic leanings are quite ignorant of ancient or modern philosophy or metaphysics. It has now been definitely proved that the idea that study of the material sciences and metaphysics promotes atheism is ill-founded and quite wrong.

Speaking of the Hadiths 'Abd al-Bari stated his position as boldly as he did in the case of the Qur'an: 'the purpose of the traditions is to know about the life of the Prophet and his words in order to enable you to live well in this life and in the next.' During the process of religious revival and reform in the

nineteenth century, the subject had been studied with fresh intensity, even amongst the Farangi Mahallis, and in 1916 `Abd al-Bari, himself, had established a special area in the Farangi Mahall madrasa for the teaching of Hadiths, a Dar al-Hadiths, funded by the Rani of Jahangirabad. Mishkat, the fourteenth-century anthology derived from six authoritative collections of Hadiths was the text taught. This had to be read alongside the commentaries of Mulla `Ali Qari (dates?) and Shah `Abd al-Haq Muhhadiths of Delhi (d. 1642), otherwise there was a danger of not understanding the Hanafi approach (maslak). There was, too, the further danger of being `non conformists' (ghair muqallidis) as so many reformers had been in the previous century, in particular the Ahl-i Hadiths.

Finally, we should note `Abd al-Bari's discussion of theology (`ilm-i kalam). The subject, declared, had two functions: sustaining true faith and defending the faith. He surveyed current threats to the faith from atheists, Jews, Christians and misguided Muslims. The modern descendants of the mutazilites, the followers of the teachings of Saiyid Ahmad Khan, were seen to be a threat; students were encouraged to read both the works of the Saiyid and those of his opponents `to guard against atheism'. The Christians were a big problem because they had power and working hard to proselytise; students were recommended to read the works of Rahmat Allah Kairanawi and Ale Hasan Mohani, the former student of Farangi Mahall, who in the mid-nineteenth century established the modern Islamic critique of Christian claims. Parsis and Hindus were not seen as a problem because they did not proselytise. The Arya Samajists were; they

professed the oneness of God and were always ready to debate. Amongst the Muslims most arguments took place with the Shi'i and the Qadianis, and amongst those who followed the central traditions of Islam, the Ahl-i Sunnat, the Wahhabiya, the followers of Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab of Najd (dates) were 'the furthest from the truth'.

In addition to his wideranging commentary on the curriculum `Abd al-Bari had advice for students and teachers. Writing to a fellow scholar in the early 1920s he advised that students, first and foremost, must show respect for their teachers; speak only when spoken to; follow instructions to the letter; do so happily even when contrary to their opinion; and should not give the slightest hint that they think themselves cleverer than their teachers. Moreover, they should befriend the wise and avoid the stupid, keep the company of the courteous and remember that it is a cardinal virtue to keep their tempers under control. They should avoid the company of the unchaste, the greedy, and the speakers of lies. They should be trustworthy, speak only good of their fellows and avoid exaggeration. Indeed, they should respect all individuals, but remember in doing so that especial respect and honour was due to teachers, and that to respect the rich and the worldly because of their wealth was against the honour of teachers. It will cause the death of the soul; 'before God the world is a very contemptible thing....'

Advising teachers on teaching, and their attitude to their students, just after the re-establishment of the Farangi Mahall madrasa, `Abd al-Bari recommended a teaching style which was different from normal. Whereas it was usual for student and

teacher to go through an assigned portion of text together, and for the teacher to lecture upon it, `Abd al-Bari recommended taking the text as read and moved straight to the lecture. According to his pupil, Mawlana Shafi, this is precisely what he did to the extent of being irritated by any student who asked him a question about the text: `Mian', he would say, `learn these things from studying. Why waste my time and your's?' There is, moreover, nothing in Shafi's memoir of his teacher which goes against the remainder of `Abd al-Bari's advice to teachers: they should command their students by respect not by fear; they should reform foolish and stupid students by exemplary words and deeds and not by beating and abusing them; they should be patient, forbearing, dignified and always courteous; they should avoid pride and arrogance; they should not hesitate for a moment in following the obligatory laws; and `they should not teach by teaching but by example so that they became themselves a mirror in which the student might make himself right.'

Three substantial points emerge from `Abd al-Bari's guidance on teaching. First, and in no way surprisingly, he had a keen knowledge and understanding of teaching; he surely did enjoy it, as he claimed to `Abd Allah Harun. He had, moreover, an impressive mastery of the classical madrasa curriculum and the books which supported it; according to Mawlana Shafi, aided by his extraordinary memory, he was able to teach without reference to the text. There was, furthermore, in much of his guidance that emphasis, which was part of the Dars-i Nizamiya tradition going back to Mulla Nizam al-Din, on comprehension over rote learning.

Secondly, `Abd al-Bari clearly regarded Islam, and his

centrist, pre-reformist tradition within it, as embattled. There were threats from the new knowledge being produced everyday in the West, from the Christians through the power they wielded, from the Arya Samajists with their proselytising intent, from the outcomes of the nineteenth-century Islamic reform movements in India, with particular opprobrium being reserved for the Ahl-i Hadiths, the Wahhabis. There were serious threats, too, to the authority of the `ulama. `It is our misfortune', he declared in the madrasa's twelfth annual report, `that religious teaching amongst Muslims had declined day by day' and that people learn about religion `from the books of European intellectuals' and `not from Muslim `ulama'. Indeed, the great emphasis which `Abd al-Bari placed on the respect due to the teacher from his pupils, suggests a growing insecurity, perhaps no more than subconscious, of the waning authority of the transmitters of Islam. Of course, such respect was part of the Islamic tradition, and rooted in oral systems of transmission. That he felt he had to make it so explicit indicates how colonial rule, the emergence of western-educated Muslims, and the onset of print, were undermining the authority of the `ulama.

Thirdly, `Abd al-Bari had great confidence in the capacity of his intellectual heritage to cope with the challenges of modern times. The shari'a could cope with modern philosophy. Jurisprudence and theology could cope with changing times. There was no harm in introducing new subjects into the curriculum, such as arithmetic, geometry, algebra, geography and English, providing the central core of learning was sustained. The Farangi Mahalli-trained `alim, moreover, was particularly well-prepared

for the present by the emphasis in his training on comprehension.

Mawlana Shafi recalls in his memoir a breakfast meeting between Abu'l Kalam Azad and `Abd al-Bari he attended in Calcutta. Azad expressed amazement that Shafi, who was then teaching as Azad's Madrasa Islamia, was able to lecture on European thought. `This is what the blessing of the Dars-i Nizamiya amounts to,' replied `Abd al-Bari. `Would you rather have it that students became like sheep, like the alumni of Deoband, or people whose knowledge is superficial, like those from the Nadwa since Shibli's death, or those who belong to the Ahl-i Hadiths in Delhi?'

After the fashion of the great scholars of his family, `Abd al-Bari was also a sufi, a passionate sufi. He sets out his beliefs in his account of the saint of Bansa, Saiyid Shah `Abd al-Razzaq, which was commissioned from him in 1925 by the saint's successor, Mumtaz Ahmad Razzaqi, and which was published in 1926, probably after his death. The basis of mysticism, he declares, is that `those who have received faith love God very much' and it is the duty of men to `become like those who have received faith'. The Prophet was the first of those to receive faith so it is the duty of Muslims to follow Him:

To follow the Prophet truly is to follow his habits, his behaviour, his manners, his instructions so that the life of the Muslim becomes like the life of the Holy Prophet.... This is called the true Khilafat, to lose one's identity in the being of the Prophet. [To achieve this] the discipline of mashaikh and pirs is needed. The shaikh is the spiritual physician who heals the diseases of soul and body. The pir is the gateway to absorption in the Holy Prophet. Through him we reach the congregation of the Prophet, and to reach the congregation is to become close to God Before the arrival of the Prophet, these spiritual physicians were Prophets themselves, and since the arrival of the Prophet they succeed him, wearing his cloak.

Like many mystics of his time, `Abd al-Bari was attached to several spiritual lineages. There were, however, two to which he was especially attached. He was a khalifa (successor) in the Chishti-Sabiri line, which went back through leading sufis in his branch of the family, through the founding figure of Mulla Qutb al-Din Sihlwi to Qazi Sadr al-Din, alias Ghasi Baba, of Allahabad. The Qazi was the leading khalifa of Shah Muhibb Allah of Allahabad (d. 1648) who had been largely responsible for rehabilitating the ideas of Ibn `Arabi, especially concerning wahdat al-wujud (oneness of being) amongst seventeenth-century Indian mystical circles. In addition, like all his family, he was a devotee of the Qadiri saint of Bansa, Saiyid Shah `Abd al-Razzaq. In his 1917 essay on the `urs at Bansa, which was republished by Mumtaz Ahmad Razzaqi as a tribute to the mawlana at the first Bansa `urs after his death, `Abd al-Bari declared that for all the `ulama of Farangi Mahall, however learned they had been, `attendance at this `urs has been a means of reinforcing faith'. Representatives of the holy family of Bansa were associated with many of the important occasions of `Abd al-Bari's life from the official occasions of the family madrasa down to his deathbed. To both these saintly traditions in his lifetime the mawlana made distinctive gestures which indicate the importance he attached to them. He made arrangements for a stone on a plinth to be raised over the grave of Qazi Sadr al-Din Ghasi in Hasan Manzil, Allahabad. He also took steps to ensure that the shrine in Ahmadabad of `Abd al-Samad Khudanuma, the Qadri pir who has inspired Saiyid Shah `Abd al-Razzaq of Bansa, was identified and restored.

`Abd al-Bari was the leading sufi activist of his time. He was powerfully aware that much of the energy of Islamic reform over the previous one hundred years had been directed at the cult of saints. It was the prime target of the Wahhabiyya, who were a powerful presence in Arabia. It was the thrust of Saiyid Ahmad Barelwi's Sirat al-Mustaqim and Tagwiyat al-Iman, the seminal tracts of the movement of the Mujahidin, which had electrified Delhi in the 1820s. It was the concern of the Ahl-i Hadiths and the Ahl-i Qur'an, who would permit no sufi practices. It was the concern of the Deobandis, who were opposed to any idea of intercession at saints' tombs. It was the concern of many Islamic modernists and western-educated Muslims whose increasingly materialistic understandings of the world left little room for mysticism and its practices. Indeed, `Abd al-Bari saw the sufism, which he understood and which had been the source of so much good in Islamic history, as embattled on all sides. `O followers of Islam,' he declared quoting Shah `Abd al-Aziz of Delhi (dates) as he analysed the situation, `the greatest cause of our misfortune is that our Muslim brothers spare no effort to insult and humiliate each other.'

This said, he was well aware that sufis had to set their house in order. There were `so-called sufis' who indulged in unIslamic practices, drinking alcohol, having women outside the law, and wearing silk, gold and silver. There was a serious issue of ignorance of the law amongst sufis. It was for this reason that on 12 May 1916 at the shrine of Moin al-Din Chishti at Ajmere, the heart of Indian sufism, he took the lead in founding the Bazm-i Sufia-i Hind, which was `to make arrangements

for the teaching of sufis so that they can conform to the principles of Islam.' `Abd al-Bari proposed the founding motion, which was seconded by Shah Sulaiman of Phulwari Sharif, the leading sufi of Bihar. An organising committee of fifty seven, mainly sajjada nashins and representing a `Who's Who' of Indian lines of spiritual succession, was elected. This group, plus the membership of a smaller working committee (Mir Nisar Ahmed, mutawalli of Ajmere, `Abd al-Rahim sajjada of Kaliyar, Wilayat Husain sajjada of Allahabad, Qari Shah Muhammad sajjada of Phulwari, Hayat Allah sajjada of Rudauli, `Abd al-Qadir sajjada of Budaun, `Ali Ehsan sajjada of Marehra, the sajjada of Kalpi, `Abd al-Bari and his nephew and successor, Qutb al-Din `Abd al-Wali, indicates the respect which the mawlana was able to command in the Indian sufi community.

He had a clear vision for India's sufis. In a letter of advice to them he talks of the role of sufis in the past as defenders of the shari'a and defenders of the faith. Sufis, moreover, were a source of unity in Islam. `Once a murid has found his pir, then the laws of God and His Prophet, and the sayings of the pir, are his religion. Then he is neither Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali etc.... In fact he is a Muhammadi.' When it came to the point the Bazm-i Sufia does not appear to have achieved a great deal, although a good number of the children from shrine families did attend the Farangi Mahall madrasa, and not least among them children from the holy family of Ajmere. The organisation, however, did spring into life in 1923 when it became involved in work both to resist the reconversion of the Meos to Hinduism and to bring relief to Muslims whose lives had

been disrupted by the communal riots which were spreading through the towns of northern India.

Like several leading sufis of his family, `Abd al-Bari began as a sceptic. He was well aware of the deficiencies of contemporary sufi practice and he, himself, was much influenced by the rational sciences. After reading al-Ghazali's `Ihya `Ulum al-Din on pilgrimage in Medina in 1903, however, he came to see the point of sufism. As a sufi, he followed Shah Muhibb Allah of Allahabad whom he felt that revealed the true meaning of Ibn `Arabi's wahdat al-wujud and was grateful to Shah `Abd al-Razzaq of Bansa for revealing to his family a moderate approach to following the path of wahdat al-wujud. The `ulama who followed the Shah's guidance, he declared, `raised the standard of spiritual knowledge [Irfan].' `Abd al-Bari was quick to stamp on any form of behaviour, as the young Muhammad Shafi discovered when they visited Ajmere together, which might indicate that the devotee at a shrine worshipped the saint rather than God in the presence of the saint. With this proviso `Abd al-Bari's life was ordered so as to achieve regular worship in the company of the saints. Every Thursday and Friday he would visit the family graveyard, Bagh Mawlana Anwar, to say Fatiha. On leaving Lucknow he would first say Fatiha at Shah Mina, than at the Bagh Mawlana Anwar, and go from there to the railway station; on his return, the ritual would be performed in reverse. Every year he attended the `urs of Shah `Abd al-Razzaq at Bansa, of Shah `Abd al-Haq at Rudawli, of Shah Kazim Qalandar at Kakori, and that of Muin al-Din Chishti at Ajmere. The celebration of the `urs of other saints would be fitted in where possible. This was a life

patterned by the rituals of daily prayer, the festivals of the Islamic year, and the festivals of those Muslims who had brought special blessings of spiritual understanding to Awadh and northern India.

Of course `Abd al-Bari had disciples, who included members of his family, the Qidwa'is of Bara Banki, the Chaudhuris of Paisar, some Sherwanis of Aligarh, the Rani of Jahangirabad, the wife and sister of the Aligarh barrister, Khwaja `Abd al-Majid, and the Bombay merchant, who was so important to the Khilafat campaign, M.M. Chhotani. Among those disciples who particularly pleased him were those who had western education; it was an ambition of his to resolve the differences between the western-educated and the madrasa-educated Muslim. He was particularly delighted to have the brothers Muhammad and Shawkat `Ali as disciples:

God has given me two brothers Muhammad `Ali and Shawkat `Ali and they mean as much to me as Hazrat Ziya al-Hisam al-Din meant to Jalal al-Din Rumi. Their actions are based on truth and because of them God bestows on me high status amongst the `ulama.

This statement alone should indicate how `Abd al Bari would have been shaken by his differences with the `Ali brothers over the Sa'udi threat to the Hijaz. It is worth noting that in 1925, while the factions for and against `Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud were hurling abuse at each other, `Abd al-Bari was giving special classes on mysticism in the mahalsera of his house in Farangi Mahall. He was teaching two key texts to his nephew and spiritual successor, Qutb al-Din `Abd al-Wali, the young Muhammad Shafi, and Shafi's uncle, `Abd al-Qadir. At one point, as Shafi describes it, the pupils were having difficulty in believing in

the mystical powers attributed to saints. `Abd al- Bari demonstrated how they could see him in two places at once, the feat of the visualisation of the shaikh; the three saw him teaching and then went to another room where they saw him dressed to go out of the house wearing his black turban with an end reaching down to his shoulder. On returning to the mawlana, and telling him what they had beheld, he told them not tell anyone in his lifetime what they had seen lest there be a bodily or spiritual death. Qutb al-Din was so impressed, he broke the prohibition. `Abd al-Bari was furious. `You people', he told Qutb al-Din , `will have to suffer for this.' He recited: `We are from God and to Him do we return.' He declared that he would never recite the milad sharif again; he had been given a premonition of his imminent death. It would appear that, in many ways during the closing months of 1925, the world was closing in on `Abd al-Bari.

From the time that `Abd al-Bari returned to India from his second pilgrimage, with the exhortations of his friends in Medina, no doubt, still ringing in his ears that he should not stay in Medina but must do the work of God in India, down to his death, he was battling for his understanding of Islam. He was striving to give new life to the Farangi Mahalli tradition of teaching and scholarship which, through its emphasis on the rational sciences and on preserving the essence of prophetic guidance rather than its mere form, offered a much more flexible potential to respond to the challenges of the times than the various brands of Islamic reformism. At the same time he was

striving to preserve his sufi understanding against the attacks of the reformers; he knew that the bearers of the sufi traditions, which had brought spiritual wisdom to his family and many others down the centuries, had to be well-educated and had to avoid questionable practices if in an era of Islamic reform and western education they were to continue to be relevant.

From his return from his third pilgrimage, he threw himself into campaigns to protect Islamic interests in West Asia, the Anjuman-i Khuddam-i Ka'aba to protect the holy places of Islam from the West, the Khilafat movement to preserve the Ottoman empire, and therefore the Turkish Caliphate, from having its strength stripped from it after World War One, and of course the Anjuman-i Khuddam-i Haramain to protect the holy places of Islam in the Hijaz from falling into the hands of `Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud and his Wahhabi supporters. Then, of course, he was no less concerned to fight for Muslim interests within India. He took on his British rulers whenever the need arose; his private correspondence makes it clear that he laid the heart of India's problems at British feet. While his relationship with Gandhi was of great importance for the Hindu-Muslim non-co-operation campaign of 1920-22, he was no less quick to identify Hindus as the enemy as he did in the Shahabad riots of 1917 and in the rioting and reconversion movements of 1923 onwards. Arguably, he was continually engaged in a jihad for his faith and for his fellow believers.

`Abd al-Bari's jihad, his striving, was always with him. So, when he discovered that the authorities at MAO College, Aligarh, did not appear to require the practice of the Prophet in dress

and in eating, he immediately engaged them in a vigorous correspondence on the importance of trousers not falling below the ankle and of eating off a mat placed on the ground rather than on a table. When, during the Balkan Wars, he was asked at a Red Crescent meeting, attended amongst others by the Nawab of Rampur and government officials, to stand out of sympathy for Viceroy Hardinge, who had been seriously wounded during the previous week by a bomb, he refused. Asked by his family friend, the Raja of Jahangirabad, to stand, he replied that he could not 'as an alim sympathise with a kafir and thus insult Muslims'. When he discovered several prominent Muslims smoking cigars at a crucial Khilafat Committee meeting in early June 1920, which was also Ramadan, he lost his temper, chastised them for their kafir-like habits, and stormed out of the meeting. Indeed, given the number of recorded occasions on which `Abd al-Bari took issue with his fellow Muslims for failing to show respect for the laws and dignity of Islam, it is clear that he took these failings as a personal affront no less than a religious one. Subconsciously, perhaps consciously, he drew a parallel between the waning position of Islam in the world and in India, waning respects for the law and the dignity of Islam, and waning respect for the `ulama.

`Abd al-Bari's feelings, moreover, were strong, and on occasion out of control. According to his biographer, the mawlana, followed his advice to his students and never lost his temper. But this assessment wreaks strongly of family piety, and is not even fully borne out by the biography itself. 'The fact is', declared his pupil Muhammad Shafi, 'the mawlana was very hot

tempered'. Political speeches were always risky moments. Shafi recalls him getting carried away at the Calcutta Khilafat conference of 1920 and urging those present to wage war on the British and burn down the barracks of their soldiers. Government recorded his speech as President of the Ajmere session of the Jami'at al-`Ulama on 5 March 1922 as an assault on Gandhi's Bardoli resolutions and the policy of non-violence. The Muslims were not to remain silent like women but needed action to achieve their aims. He`was ready to commit violence by hand, teeth and all the implements available.' It was not surprising that Mushir Husain Qidwa'i recommended that he gave up making political speeches, and that Harcourt Butler, a governor of the province well-versed in Muslim affairs, should refer to the mawlana as his `diwana' or `mad' mulla. The last word, however, on `Abd al-Bari's strength of feeling, indeed, on his character in general, should be left with that acute student of his fellow human beings, Mahatma Gandhi:

...he is a simple child of God. I have discovered no guile in him. He often speaks without thinking and often embarrasses his best friends. But he is as quick to apologize as he is ready to say things offensive. He means all he says for the time being. He is as sincere in his anger as he is in his apology. He once flared up at Maulana Mahomed Ali without just cause. I was then his guest. He thought he had said something offensive to me also. Maulana Mahomed Ali and I were just then leaving his place to entrain for Cawnpore. After our departure, he felt he had wronged us. He had certainly wronged Mahomed Ali, not me. But he sent a deputation to us at Cawnpore asking us to forgive him. He rose in my estimation by this act. I admit, however, that the Maulana Saheb can become a dangerous friend. But my point is that he is a friend. He does not say one thing and mean another. There are no mental reservations with him. I would trust such a friend with my life, because I know that he will never stab me in the dark.

The pressure of the last months of `Abd al-Bari's life, and in particular the events of January 1926, should now be clear. The victory of `Abd al-Aziz in the Hijaz meant the victory of a man who was opposed to virtually everything which `Abd al-Bari represented as a Muslim. In the scholarly sense it meant that the Wahhabiyya, those `who are farthest from the truth' now controlled the holy places of Islam. In consequence, the reformist elements in India, who had spent much of the previous century sniping at the Farangi Mahalli tradition and its emphases on the rational sciences and its capacity to embrace change, were likely to receive a great boost. His Farangi Mahalli tradition, which it had been his life's work to revive and extol, would be that much harder to keep alive. By the same token `Abd al-Aziz's victory was also a great blow to his sufi understanding. Now Mecca and Medina were in the hands of a ruler who would give them `no dignity or respect', who would not tolerate any grave to be marked, any possibility that the oneness of God might be compromised. Again, he knew that from now on the moderate wahdat al-wujud position, which it had been the concern of his family and their spiritual associates to defend and promote for centuries, was likely to be much harder to defend.

Muhammad `Ali's public renunciation of `Abd al-Bari's spiritual leadership was no less great a blow. We have noted `Abd al-Bari's general concern through much of his life to build bridges between the western-educated and the madrasa-educated Muslims. We have noted, too, his pride in having Muhammad `Ali as a disciple. Thus, Muhammad `Ali's rejection of his spiritual leadership was a huge personal blow. It was a blow, moreover,

the effects of which were exacerbated because it was a clear rebuttal of the claims of the `ulama to play a part in public life and in guiding the future of the community. The events of 13 January 1926 were a defeat of everything for which `Abd al-Bari had fought and a rejection of everything for which he stood. It is not surprising that he should have suffered the stroke which killed him. God is merciful.

Francis Robinson

21 January 2000

i. Verse in praise of `Abd al-Bari inscribed on the maqbara above his grave in Bagh Maulana Anwar, the Firangi Mahalli graveyard in Lucknow. The verse was composed by the great satirist, Akbar Allahabadi.

Afzal Iqbal, The Life and Times of Mohamed Ali (Lahore, 1974), p. 338.

This paragraph draws on the personal reflections of Mawlana Jamal Mian; Muhammad Shafi Hujjat Allah Ansari 'Memoir', 15 August 1977, p.36 in the possession of Mawlana Jamal Miyan, Karachi; and Mawlawi `Inayat Allah, Risala-i Hasrat al-Afaq ba Wafat Majmu'at al-Akhlaq (Lucknow, 1929), pp. 39-42.

The one madrasa that did not close was the Madrasa Qadima which was run by Mawlana `Abd al-Hamid and Mawlana `Abd al-Majid from the Bahr al-`Ulumi branch of the family. This branch had differences with `Abd al-Bari's side which went back to the early nineteenth century. More recently they had had financial support from the British and the two mawlanas had both received medals of `Shams-ul-Ulama' medals from the government. They were noted for their loyalty to the British. Francis Robinson, Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims 1860-1923 (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 271-2.

`Inayat Allah, Risala, pp. 42-27.

From the diary of `Abd al-Majid Daryabadi quoted in Mufti Muhammad Raza Ansari 'Mawlana Muhammad `Ali awr Mawlana Farangi Mahall' in Jamia Mawlana Muhammad `Ali Number, Vol.

II, 77, February 1980.

Ansari, `Muhammad `Ali' and Shafi `Memoir' p.40. As it happens `Abd al-Bari's will does not ask forgiveness of those to whom he may unwittingly have done wrong. It does begin with a stern injunction: `All relatives and friends should fear God, obey and love the Prophet, his associates and seek their blessing and consider this as part of their worship. They should never avoid congregational prayers, should never compromise with their conscience. They should seek forgiveness for their sins and remember death and the day of judgement.' This may have been enough to shake Muhammad `Ali, but a later passage in which the mawlana refers to Muhammad `Ali, along with his brother Shawkat, and Altaf al-Rahman Qidwa'i, as his `especial brothers' would surely have been enough to make remorse strike home. `Abd al-Bari's Will, 29 Ramazan 1341 (1923). `Abd al-Bari Papers, Karachi.

Ian Henderson Douglas, Abul Kalam Azad: An Intellectual and Religious Biography, Gail Minault and Christian W. Troll (eds), (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr, Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996; Baqer Moin, Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah (London, 1999).

Substantial quantities of private papers covering the last fourteen years of `Abd al-Bari's life are in the keeping of his son, Jamal Mian, in Karachi. This same period is also well covered in the government record and the press. Books by and about the Mawlana are available both in Karachi and in Farangi Mahall, Lucknow.

Altaf al-Rahman Qidwa'i, Anwar-i Razzagiyya (Lucknow, n.d.).

Drawn from the entries in Mawlawi `Inayat Allah, Tazkira-i `Ulama-i Farangi Mahall (Lucknow, 1928).

`Abd al-Majid Daryabadi emphasises the scale of entertaining, see Talk on `Abd al-Bari by Daryabadi, All-India Radio, 12 January 1950. Text in the Library of Mufti Raza Ansari of Firangi Mahall. The deleterious impact of Hyderabad ways on Farangi Mahall are discussed to this day.

`Inayat Allah, Risala, p. 10.

Nur al-Hasan Ajmeri, Khadimana Guzarish (Lucknow, 1923), p. 54. Medina always remained a place of especial importance to `Abd al-Bari. In his will he mentions that he had bought a house in Medina in the `hope that I will be regarded as a citizen of Medina by God', which suggests that he subscribed to the belief that the citizens of Medina would receive especial favour on the day of judgement.

See Shah Muhammad Husain, Bil Tanzim-i Nizam al-Ta'allum wal Ta'lim (Allahabad, n.d.).

For further details of the constitution of the Majlis see Francis Robinson, Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims 186-1923 (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 276-77. The constitution referred to in footnote 3 on page 276 contains the date of both 1328 and 8 Shawwal 1331 (September 1913). `Inayat Allah, Risala, p. 19 suggests that the Majlis was not founded until 1913. However, correspondence exists for May 1912 in which the Ottoman Consul General in Bombay thanks the Muslims of India, represented by the Majlis, for the sum of ,213-5-8 which has been sent to Constantinople. E. Jaffar, Ottoman Consul General, Bombay to Majlis Muid al-Islam, 7 May 1912. `Abd al-Bari Papers, Karachi. It would appear that the 1913 constitution may be a redrafting of an earlier one, pointing to a foundation date in 1910.

`Inayat Allah, Risala, pp. 13-14.

Ibid., pp. 15, 36. `Inayat Allah gives the dates of both 1329 and 1330 as those on which `Abd al-Bari set out for Haj. Other evidence suggests that 1330 is the correct date with a return early in 1331, as `Inayat Allah also suggests. It is unlikely that the maulana studied with Sharif Husain in Istanbul as is suggested in Robinson, Separatism, p. 419.

Message from `Abd al-Bari in the `Abd al-Bari papers Karachi. It is undated, but internal evidence and its positioning in the letter book suggest early 1919.

`Inayat Allah, Risala, p. 16.

Robinson, Separatism, pp. 282-88.

Ibid., pp 289-304.

Ibid., pp. 304-25. `Inayat Allah, Risala, p. 28.

Ibid., p. 329. `Abd al-Bari's papers contain a draft letter, addressee and date unknown, but internal evidence suggests 1921, in which he discusses the issue of an Imam for India and the relative merits of Azad Sobhani and Abu'l Kalam Azad for the post. While acknowledging the merits of Sobhani, he writes:

`The other [candidate] is Mawlana Abu'l Kalam Azad. I knew his father. He was a pious Muslim. It would not be a surprise if Mawlana Azad had benefited from his company. I regard him as equal to Farangi Mahall `ulama like `Inayat Allah etc... I look at him in the same way as his contemporary Farangi Mahall `ulama. I shall have no objection to accepting him as Imam provided the general opinion is in his favour. `Abd al-Bari papers, Karachi.

Robinson, Separatism, pp. 326-34.

Statement by `Abd al-Bari, undated but most probably September 1923, `Abd al-Bari Papers, File 24, Farangi Mahall.

Statement by `Abd al-Bari, probably a press statement as it refers to an earlier letter to Hamdam, the Farangi Mahalli newspaper, and c. December 1924. It was bound in `Abd al-Bari's letter book close a letter of `Abd al-Bari to Mawlana Kifayat Allah, Mawlana `Abd al-Majid, and others, 18 December 1924, in which he states: `after considering the views of different people, I think it proper to tell you that the majority of Muslims do not approve of Mecca remaining under the control of the Najdi Ikhwan. They consider it ever worse than the government of Sharif Husain, although they think it better than non-Muslim control. Farangi Mahall Papers, Karachi.

Shafi, `Memoir'.

`Abd al-Bari to `Abd Allah Harun, 5 Jumada II 1342, February 1924, Farangi Mahall Papers, Karachi.

[ref to `Abd al-Halim Sharar's article on Farangi Mahall]

The police report uses the term `theologian'; it is likely, however, that `Abd al-Bari used the term `alim or scholar. Speech by `Abd al-Bari, Lucknow, 15 October 1920, Police, 513 of 1920, Box 57, UP State Archives.

`Memorandum of Janab Mawlana `Abd al-Bari Sahib on the basis of which the Nizamiyya school was established in 1323' in Altaf al-Rahman Qidwa'i, Qiyam-i Nizam-i Ta'lim (Lucknow, 1924), pp. 15-16.

`Memorandum' in Qidwa'i, Qiyam, p.16.

Ibid., pp 16-17.

`Instructions of Mawlana Muhammad `Abd al-Bari Sahib to the teachers of Madrasa-i Aliya Nizamiya which were written in 1324' in Ibid., p. 29.

Ibid., p. 33.

Idem.

Idem.

Ibid., p. 35.

Ibid., pp. 36-7.

Ibid., p. 40.

Shafi, `Memoir', p. 14.

Qidwa'i, Qiyam, p. 41.

Ibid., pp. 43-45.

Ibid., p. 45; for the critique of Christian claims by Kairanawi and Mohani, and the circumstances in which it was developed, see A.A. Powell, ???

Letter of instruction from Mawlana `Abd al-Bari Sahib to Mawlana Shah Fakhr-i Alam Sahib, Bhagalpur, 1342, Qidwa'i, Qiyam, pp. 85-96.

Instructions of Mawlana Muhammad `Abd al-Bari to the teachers of Madrasa-i Aliya Nizamiya which were written in 1324, Ibid., p. 21.

Shafi, `Memoir', p. 14.

`Instructions', QIdwa'i, Qiyam, p. 21.

Ibid., pp. 96-97.

Shafi, `Memoir', pp. 13-14.

Qidwa'i, Qiyam, p. 20

12th Report of the Madras-i Aliya Nizamiya, Farangi Mahall, MS., Farangi Mahall, no pagination.

For the subsequent development of these initiatives see `Problems in the History of the Farangi Mahall Family of Learned and Holy Men', supra, pp. 00-00.

Shafi, `Memoir' p. 20.

`Abd al-Bari, Malfuz-i Razzaqi (Cawnpur, 1926), p. 4.

Ibid., p. 15.

`Abd al-Bari, `Urs-i Hazrat-i Bansa (Lucknow, n.d., but internal evidence suggests 1926), p. 10.

Information supplied by `Abd al-Rahman Sahib of Farangi Mahall, August 1977.

Shafi, `Memoir', p. 25.

Ref Barbara and Marc.

Nur al-Hasan Ajmeri, Khadimana Guzarish (Lucknow, 1923), p. 51.

Ajmeri, Khadimana, p. 39. The idea for this organisation was first put forward by `Abd al-Bari's father, along with others, in 1896.

Letter from `Abd al-Bari to the Sufis in Ajmeri, Khadimana,

p. 49.

Ajmeri, Khadimana, p. 53.

Rahman, Malfuz, p. 16

See 'The `Ulama of Farangi Mahall and their adab', supra., p. 00-00.

Ajmeri, Khadimana, p. 50.

Ibid., p. 64

There was a particular version of milad sharif especially associated with `Abd al-Bari; he would deliver it on 12th Rabi al-Awwal. By saying that he would not deliver it again he was indicating that he knew he was soon to die.

Shafi, 'Memoir', pp. 28-30.

'I can tolerate everything but cannot give up my hate of this government of Satan....' `Abd al-Bari to Dr Syed Mahmud, 26 Ramazan 1341; 'Let us first kill the most powerful enemy [the British] then we can deal with the less powerful one [the Hindus]'. `Abd al-Bari to `Abd Allah Harun, 5 Jamadi al-Akhra 1342, `Abd al-Bari Papers, Karachi.

Robinson, Separatism, pp. 284-86, 339.

Correspondence between `Abd al-Bari and Habib al-Rahman Sherwani, 1910, Farangi Mahall.

`Inayat Allah, Risala, p. 35.

Shafi, 'Memoir', p. 32.

`Inayat Allah, Risala, p. 34.

Shafi, 'Memoir', p. 33.

Ibid., p. 32.

Home Poll. File No 501 of 1922, National Archives of India.

Shafi 'Memoir', p. 33.

Ibid., p. 43.

Article on Hindu-Muslim tension by Gandhi in Young India, 29 May 1924. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, XXIV (Ahmedabad, 1967), p. 146.