

- Manṣūrpūrī, Muḥammad Sulaimān. *Tabligh al-Islām*. Simla: Army Press, 1928.
- Masud, Muhammad Khalid, ed. *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighī Jamā'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 2000. Analyzing the historical and social growth of this movement, its transnational transformation, the development of its ideology, personal communication and conversion, and its organization, this volume also offers focused studies of its activities in India, Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Canada, Morocco, and South Africa.
- Rāghib al-Isfahānī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-. *Al-mufradāt fi gharīb al-Qur'ān*. Cairo, 1961.
- Stackhouse, Max L. "Missionary Activity." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade, vol. 9, pp. 563-570. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.
- Zakariyā, Muḥammad. *Faḡā'il-i A'māl*. Revised edition of *Tablighī Niṣāb (Islamic Teachings)*. Lahore, 1987. As a part of the instructional readings of the Jamā'at, the book provides its teachings about the concept, merits, and methods of *tabligh*.
- Zuḥaylī, Wahbah al-. *Al-fiqh al-Islāmī wa-adillatuh*. Damascus, 1989.

MUHAMMAD KHALID MASUD

TABLIḤĪ JAMĀ'AT. The Tablighī Jamā'at of the South Asian subcontinent, also variously called the Jamā'at (Party), Taḥrīk (Movement), Niṣām (System), Tanẓīm (Organization), and Taḥrīk-i Imān (Faith Movement), is one of the most important grassroots Islamic movements in the contemporary Muslim world. From a modest beginning in 1926 with missionary (*da'wah*) work in Mewat near Delhi under the leadership of the Islamic scholar Maulānā Muḥammad Ilyās (1885-1944), the Jamā'at today has an estimated 12 to 15 million followers throughout the Muslim world and the West. Its global headquarters is in Delhi (Niṣāmuddīn). Its three major annual congregations (*ijtimā'*) in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are regularly attended by one to two million Muslims each, mainly from South Asia, with a growing number of foreign participants from around the world. Tablighī elders claim that these meetings are the second largest religious congregation of the Muslim world, after the *hajj*. Such conferences are part of a regular roster of meetings in every region and locality where the Tablighī Jamā'at is represented. Its annual congregations in

North America and Europe attract several thousand followers; thus it is one of the largest gatherings of Muslims in the West.

Development of the Tablighī Jamā'at. The emergence of the Tablighī Jamā'at as a movement for the reawakening of faith and reaffirmation of Muslim religio-cultural identity can be seen as a continuation of the broader trend of Islamic revival in North India in the context of British colonial and cultural domination. One manifestation of this trend was the rapid growth of the *madrasahs* (religious educational institutions) that sought to reassert the authority of Islam and reconnect ordinary Muslims with Islamic institutions. The reformist intentions of the Tablighī Jamā'at, along with its pietistic and devotional aspects, owe their inspiration to South Asian Islamic thinkers and activists such as Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1624), Shāh Walī Allāh (d. 1762), and the founder of the Mujāhidīn movement, Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd (d. 1831). The Tablighī Jamā'at has been described as a reinvigorated form of Islamic orthodoxy and as a reformed Sufism. Since the 1930s its activities have been generally associated with the reformist teachings of the orthodox Deobandī seminary, which seeks to establish "true" Islam and correct Islamic practices according to its interpretation. For this, the Tablighīs have been criticized by their doctrinal adversaries, the Barelwīs, who represent organized forms of Ṣūfī Islam in South Asia. Yet Ṣūfī rituals such as *dhikr*, or emphasis on character and good intentions (*niyāt*), are still important for emotional bonding among Tablighī Jamā'at followers.

The appearance of the Tablighī Jamā'at was a direct response to the rise of Hindu proselytizing movements such as the Shuddhi (Purification) and Sangathan (Consolidation), which launched massive efforts in the early twentieth century to "reclaim" Muslims whose ancestors had converted from Hinduism and retained some of its customs. Initially the Tablighīs were concerned with Mewat, a Gangetic plateau in North India inhabited by Rajput tribes known as Meos. Islamic reformers believed the Meos were Muslims in name only. Maulānā Ilyās established a network of mosque-based religious schools to educate local Muslims about correct Islamic beliefs and practices. But he became disillusioned with this approach, realizing that these institutions produced "religious functionaries" but not preachers. Maulānā

Ilyās resigned from his teaching position at Madrasah Mazharul ‘Ulūm in Saharanpur and moved to Bastī Nizāmuddīn in the old quarters of Delhi to begin his missionary work through itinerant preaching.

Physically frail and intellectually unassuming, Maulānā Ilyās was not an outstanding religious scholar, public speaker, or charismatic leader. Yet he was persistent in what he described as “the mission of the prophets”—calling people to “the path of God.” He wanted to make Muslims better Muslims. For this purpose he organized units or groups of ten people and sent them to various localities.

Ideology of the Tablighī Jamā‘at. These Tablighī units, known as *jamā‘āt* (groups), would invite the local Muslims to assemble in the mosque or some other meeting place, and present their message in the form of six directives. First, every Muslim must be able to recite the introductory formula to Islam, the *shahādah* (“There is no God but Allāh and Muḥammad is His Prophet”) correctly in Arabic and know its meaning; this is interpreted as asserting the unity of God, rejecting all other deities, and emphasizing obedience to the Prophet Muḥammad. Second, a Muslim must learn how to say and perform the obligatory ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*) correctly and in accordance with its prescribed rituals; this emphasizes external aspects as well as the complete internal submission by prostration before God in humility and God-consciousness. Third, a Muslim must be knowledgeable about the fundamental beliefs and practices of Islam and perform ritual remembrance of God (*dhikr*) regularly. For basic religious knowledge, Tablighī workers are required to read essays written by Maulānā Muḥammad Zakariyā (1898–1982), a nephew of Ilyās, a co-founder of the movement, and a scholar of *ḥadīth* at the Saharanpur *madrasah*. These essays were compiled in a single edition, first under the title *Tablighī niṣāb* (Tablighī Curriculum), later known as *Faḍā‘il-i A‘māl* (Virtues of Good Deeds). It discusses life stories the companions of the Prophet, and the virtues of *ṣalāt*, *dhikr*, charity, *ḥajj*, ritual salutation to the Prophet, and the Qur’ān. Written in plain Urdu and based mostly on inspirational but historically questionable traditions and anecdotes, these essays also constitute, with little change, the basic source material for the formulaic speeches delivered by the Tablighī missionaries throughout the world. In addition, every Muslim is encouraged to

learn how to read the Qur’ān in Arabic, with correct pronunciation. Fourth, every Muslim should be respectful and polite towards fellow Muslims and show deference toward them. This idea of respect for Muslims (*ikrām-i Muslim*) is considered not only a religious obligation but also a basic prerequisite for effective *da‘wah* work. Included in this principle is an obligation to recognize and respect the rights of others with special emphasis on the elders, the young, the poor, neighbors, and even adversaries. Fifth, a Muslim must always be honest and sincere with pure intention (*niyāt*). Everything is to be done for the sake of God, and not for any worldly benefit. The final directive calls on Muslims to spend time preaching with the Tablighī groups. For Maulānā Ilyās, preaching is not only the work of the professional ‘*ulamā*’; it is the duty of every Muslim.

These six principles are the cornerstone of the Tablighī Jamā‘at ideology and should be strictly observed by all members. For the guidance of new members on their preaching tours, further sets of rules have been compiled. They include the four things to do more frequently (preaching, worship, education, and service), to do less (eating, sleeping, spending time out of the mosque, and talking idly), not to do (question, desire, spend, and take from others without express permission), and to avoid (rejection of others, criticism, competition, and pride).

People are asked to volunteer for preaching tours of varying duration. Over the years these have evolved into a fixed roster of goals and obligations, regarded as cumulative. Those who go for three days per month on preaching tours are considered regulars. They are encouraged to take on additional tours of forty days, known as *chillā* (retreat), preferably once a year, and a grand *chillā* (equivalent to three *chillās*). Maulānā Ilyās believed that this preaching would prepare people to endure hardships and strengthen their moral and spiritual qualities. The longer tours are advised for the advanced or senior Tablighis. They can extend up to seven or even twelve months, and are recommended to be undertaken at least once during a member’s lifetime. Foreign tours have become another regular feature and attraction. In addition, a “local mosque” scheme (*masjidwār jamā‘at*) has evolved where followers meet a regular set of five daily duties (five ‘*amāl*) related to preaching in their localities. These activities are complemented by an expansive

schedule of congregations (*ijtimā'*) that are held weekly in every locality (usually on Thursday night, *shab-i jum'a*), monthly, and annually. Particularly in South Asia, specialized meetings address students, teachers, entrepreneurs, or even landholders.

The Influence of Tablighī Jamā'at. The new movement met with spectacular success in a relatively short period. Thousands of Muslims joined Maulānā Ilyās to propagate the message of Islam throughout Mewat. Many new mosques and *madrasahs* were established. People began to observe the obligatory rituals of Islam. The most visible change was in dress and in the customs associated with birth, marriage, and burial rituals. By the time Maulānā Ilyās died in 1944, Mewat had come to be seen as a symbol of this new approach to Islamic preaching. The Jamā'at then extended its activities into other parts of India. Since the Tablighī method of preaching did not require any degree of religious scholarship, formal training, or lengthy preparation, everyone who joined the Jamā'at became an instant preacher (on the basis of his familiarity with the six simple principles of *da'wah*). Thus the number of itinerant preachers multiplied quickly, and the Jamā'at was able to send its Tablighī missions all over northern India, from Peshawar in the Northwest Frontier Province to Noakhali in East Bengal.

After the death of Maulānā Ilyās, his son Maulānā Yūsuf was selected by the elders of the Jamā'at as his successor. Maulānā Yūsuf was a strong organizer and an untiring worker. He extended the movement's operations beyond the northern provinces and mobilized thousands of groups to tour all over India. It was during his tenure that the Jamā'at's activities reached Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and North America. After Maulānā Yūsuf's death in 1965 and until 1995, Maulānā In'āmul Ḥasan led the movement. Under his leadership the movement further expanded and consolidated its international operations, and established independent national organizations in many countries. The migrant family networks of Gujarati trading groups were on the back of much of this global expansion. Ḥasan's tenure was followed by a collective leadership, which is dominated by Maulānās Ṣa'd (b. 1965) and Zubair (b. 1950).

International Activities. The Jamā'at has become a truly global Islamic movement. Since the 1980s its influence has grown significantly, and has extended beyond

its original constituency of South Asian immigrants. In many countries in West Africa, North Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and parts of Europe, for example, local adherents have become prominent. The movement has been less successful among Arabic-speaking Muslims of the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula, although it is active in Palestinian territory and even in Israel. Saudi Arabia has strictly regulated its movements in that country, although it sympathizes with its efforts elsewhere.

In Europe and North America the Tablighī Jamā'at has been working among the immigrant Muslim communities, especially among Muslims of South Asian origin, and has, over more than three decades, established a large following among them. In addition to the propagation of its standard six-point program, the Jamā'at in the West has also been concerned with the preservation of the religious and cultural identity of Muslims in a non-Islamic environment. Thus it has been active in building mosques and Islamic centers, establishing Islamic Sunday schools for Muslim children and adults, providing *dhabīḥah* (ritually slaughtered) meat to Muslim families, and organizing Islamic training camps and retreats for Muslim youth. In Europe its headquarters, complete with a *madrasah*, are operating in Dewsbury (Yorkshire), with further centers in London, Glasgow, Leicester, and Birmingham. In France, the Jamā'at has been able to attract a significant following among Muslims of Arabian and African extraction. Its activity is concentrated in the larger Paris region. In Spain it operates from Barcelona among a quickly growing number of Muslim migrants.

South Africa constitutes a significant bridge between the West and the East for the movement. The Jamā'at is firmly established in big cities there, but also in Deobandī schools up-country. In North America, the Jamā'at has met with some success in gaining converts among African-Americans and Caribbean immigrants. Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Atlanta, New York, and Washington, D.C., are the major centers of the Jamā'at's activities in the United States. While the Jamā'at consistently and primarily addresses itself to fellow Muslims, it encourages inquiries from potential converts, particularly in the West, where they are invited to learn about the movement through participation in its preaching tours.

Tablighī Jamā‘at Followers. Most followers of the Tablighī Jamā‘at come from the lower middle class, have minimum exposure to modern Western education, and are from semi-urban areas. Recently it has attracted a growing following among lower-level government employees, professionals, and schoolteachers. In South Asia, its influence on college and university campuses, where it concentrates in particular in scientific and technical institutes, has visibly increased.

In Malaysia and Indonesia the social bases of the Jamā‘at’s support are more diverse than in South Asia. Its initial followers in these countries were immigrant Muslims from South Asia, but during the past two decades it has penetrated the Malay Muslim community, especially in rural areas. Today the bulk of its support comes from urban-based, well-educated youth. In Indonesia, where the Jamā‘at has worked in close collaboration with such nonpolitical Islamic reform movements as the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdatul Ulama, its activities have focused on converting *abangan* (syncretic, Indic-oriented) Muslims into *santri* (purist) Muslims. Thus the Tablighī Jamā‘at in Indonesia, unlike India and Pakistan, has been associated both with the ‘*ulamā*’ and with urban-based, modern, educated Muslim youth. With the growing affluence of migrant trading communities, the Tablighī following has grown more middle-class in South Africa, and also in some communities in the West.

The success of the Jamā‘at owes much to the dedicated missionary work of its members and followers, its simple message, and its direct, personal appeal to and contacts with individual Muslims. Jamā‘at members go from door to door and invite people to join their ranks and spread the word of God. Their program of asking Muslims to leave their families, jobs, and home towns for a time and join in a system of communal learning, worship, preaching, and other devotional activities has proved very effective in building a community type of structure with close personal relationships and mutual moral and psychological support.

This close bonding also produces strong pressure to comply, particularly for newcomers. Critics argue that ardent followers sometimes neglect families and businesses. In response, Tablighī elders have introduced a system of background checks on prospective preachers. Because the basic message of the Jamā‘at is simple

enough to be imparted by anyone willing to volunteer, it is ideally suited for ordinary Muslims with little or no previous Islamic education. The Jamā‘at’s reliance on lay preachers, rather than on ‘*ulamā*’, has helped it to reach and attract the Muslim masses in rural communities and small towns. Their propagation efforts have mainly been conducted by word of mouth, keeping alive the time-honored oral tradition of Islamic preaching. However, over the years, a substantial body of informal religious literature has emerged, mainly in Urdu and English. It helps to induct new followers into the movement and satisfies the demands of *madrasah* students close to the Jamā‘at.

Younger followers have also delved into the new media. Tablighī leaders are reconciled with their speeches being widely distributed on cassettes and CDs. Enthusiasts discuss moral issues and organizational matters in Internet forums, and provide related reading material at sympathetic Internet sites. They also confront critical interventions at social networking sites such as YouTube and MySpace.

The Modern Movement. The Tablighī Jamā‘at can now be considered part of the Muslim mainstream. This development has spawned several consequences. Internally, the movement developed a strong policy of leadership and guidance. In what used to be a highly egalitarian movement, the administration, although largely obscured from ordinary followers, has become more elaborate, bureaucratic, and hierarchical. Tablighī elders have become an elite of sorts and the Jamā‘at now offers career opportunities for spiritual and leadership advancement within the movement. The leaders (*amīr*) of country organizations hold life tenures. They regularly meet for coordination during the annual congregations (*ijtimā‘*) in South Asia. On such occasions (as in general), most issues are discussed in council (*mashwarah*), but it is the voices of the more revered elders that carry decisive weight. Questioning the decisions and even intentions of elders is strongly discouraged. Appointments of senior leaders and council members, and plans for ordinary work such as the repair or extension of facilities at Tablighī centers worldwide, are submitted for approval to the global headquarters in Delhi or to the Pakistan center in Raiwind.

Externally, the impact of the movement is felt in the re-Islamization of Muslims in diverse settings—urban

milieus in Pakistan, the Indian-ruled Kashmir valley, city districts of South Asian migrants in Britain, South Africa, and Muslim youth groups in Gambia and Uganda. The Tablighī movement has also left its mark on social attitudes in the South Asia subcontinent, where regular followers give up movies, television, Western dress, mixing with the opposite sex, and lavish weddings. The Tablighī congregations began celebrating mass marriages (*nikkāh*), devoid of the excessive expenditure that generally characterizes South Asian wedding ceremonies.

Women have come to play an increasingly important role in the movement. They have developed their own format of preaching, and do so accompanied by a male guardian (*maḥram*). Tablighī women also meet for Islamic education (*ta'lim*) by reading and discussing the Zakariyā volume. As Tablighī adherents diversified, some followers started pursuing worldly goals through the movement such as commercial contacts, student travel, and Islamist political networking, which was not encouraged but sometimes condoned by Tablighī elders.

In matters of religious beliefs and practices, the Tablighī Jamā'at consistently follow the orthodox Deoband tradition and emphasize *taqlīd* (following the established schools of Islamic law) over *ijtihād* (independent reasoning). It rejects such popular expressions of religion as the veneration of saints, visiting shrines, and observing the syncretic rituals associated with popular Sufism. Jamā'at workers are rigid in following orthodox rituals and practices and in observing the rules of the *shari'ah*. Unlike modernists and neo-fundamentalists, Tablighī workers emphasize both the form and the spirit of religious rules and practices. While Tablighī elders claim their message is not controversial or sectarian, the Deobandī affiliation has led them to apply sectarian distinctions as well, albeit in an unassuming manner. Followers are not questioned about their sectarian preferences, but are thoroughly educated in the benefits of the Deobandī interpretation of Islam. Those few followers of the rival Sūfi-oriented Barelwī tradition or those from a Shī'i background who join the movement eventually submit themselves to Deobandī doctrine. Like other Sunnī groups the Tablighīs shun the members of sects seen as heretical, such as the Aḥmadiyah.

The success of the Jamā'at has transferred to similar networks and institutions, both those associated with it

and those competing for influence. Most notable among them are the Deobandī *madrasahs* run by the disciples (*khulafā'*) of Muḥammad Zakariyā, the cofounder of the movement. The most prominent of those are in Britain (Bury, Holcombe) and South Africa (Azadville, Zakariyya Park in Lenasia). As a Sūfi *shaykh* of repute he left behind a worldwide network of disciples. Their schools emphasise devotional spirituality along with the reformist curriculum.

Deobandī students are generally obliged to take full part in the Jamā'at's preaching. Tablighī activists also participate in youth conferences (*tarbiyāt*), which have become a regular feature not only at Islamic centers in the West, but also in universities in Pakistan, Malaysia, and South Africa. Based on Sūfi and school networks, some Tablighī elders and associates pursue their own preaching ministries inspired by the movements. The *ḥadīth* scholar Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-Makkī is one of them. He is based in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, but regularly tours Pakistan to meet with his followers. Maulānā Ṭāriq Jamil, running a *madrasah* in Faisalabad, Pakistan, is a regular speaker at Tablighī congregations around the world. He has generated an enormous following, as is reflected in the many reproductions of his speeches on CDs and on the Internet, where fan sites in his name have appeared. The Tablighī model has also been successfully copied by its doctrinal adversaries from the Barelwī camp. Muḥammad Ilyās Qadrī founded the movement Da'wat-e Islāmī on roughly similar lines in 1981.

The Tablighī Jamā'at and Politics. When the Tablighī Jamā'at was founded, its leaders sought to stay away from politics and political controversies. Maulānā Ilyās believed that the Jamā'at would not be able to achieve its goals if it got embroiled in partisan politics. The reform of individual Muslims was, for him, more important than reforming social and political institutions—a process that he believed could gradually come about as more people joined his movement and became good Muslims. His later years coincided with a great schism in the Indian Muslim religious circles: most of the Deoband *'ulamā'* opposed the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims and supported the All-India National Congress in calling for a united India; other *'ulamā'* joined with the Muslim League in its demand for Pakistan. Maulānā Ilyās asked his followers not to

take sides with either camp and to continue their essentially nonpolitical *da'wah* work among Muslims of all political persuasions.

Tablighī elders in South Asia have tried to maintain this nonpolitical posture, but the Jamā'at's involvement in politics has become ambiguous. While the Jamā'at's leaders have refused to take public positions on political issues, they have allowed politics to seep into the movement, particularly in Pakistan, but also in other countries. Leading politicians started attending their congregations looking for religious sanction and legitimacy. Security and military agencies have cooperated with them in organizing their events. Stalwart supporters of the movement have been elected to local bodies. Sectarian and radical Islamists occasionally seek refuge in their preaching tours.

Tablighī elders tacitly accept encouragement from governments in countries such as Pakistan, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, which seek to promote the Jamā'at as an antidote to militant Islam. But Tablighī leaders have repeatedly rebuffed attempts by political Islamists to get the movement involved in political controversies. At the same time it is assumed that Tablighī activism has indirectly helped to consolidate the vote banks of religious political parties and groups in South, Southeast, and West Asia in particular. In Pakistan followers have consistently voted for the orthodox, Deobandī-oriented Jam'iyatul 'Ulamā'-i Islām. In Malaysia, Tablighī Jamā'at followers have been a major source of support for the 'ulamā'-based Partai Islam Se-Malaysia in federal and provincial elections. Because of its declared nonpolitical orientation, it has been easy for the Tablighī Jamā'at to spread its message in the armed forces of Pakistan, where it has a considerable following among noncommissioned personnel. In the 1980s, the Jamā'at received a great boost during the government of President Zia ul-Haq, who was concerned to develop Islamic spirit among the Pakistani military; in addition, an active member of the Jamā'at rose to the sensitive position of chief of Pakistan's military intelligence (from 1991 to 1993), and reportedly directed Pakistan's Afghan operation both through conventional intelligence techniques and by holding *dhikr* assemblies. High-ranking government and military officers continue to attend its activities today.

[See also Ahmadiyah; Jam'iyatul 'Ulamā'-i Islām; Muhammadiyah; Nahdatul Ulama; and Partai Islam Se-Malaysia.]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Research on the Tablighī Jamā'at has attracted increasing attention, particularly in connection with its global expansion. Some scholars of South Asian and Southeast Asian Islam have studied the ideology and program of the Jamā'at in the context of a contemporary Islamic revival. The available literature on Tablighī Jamā'at is mostly in Urdu, and consists mainly of devotional writings. There are also several polemical tracts written by opponents belonging to the Barelwī school of thought. Few analytical studies look beyond the ritual practice of the movement to capture its internal culture and sociological dynamics. More fieldwork, also on its global dimensions, is still required, though it is made difficult by the leadership's aversion to talking to researchers and the media.

- Ahmad, Mumtāz. "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat." In *Fundamentalisms Observed*, edited by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, pp. 457–530. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. Discusses the specific circumstances of the Jamā'at's origin and growth, the nature and methodology of its work, and the religio-political consequences of its ideology.
- Masud, Muhammad Khalid, ed. *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighī Jamā'at as a Transnational Islamic Movement for Faith Renewal*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2000. Most comprehensive study available, touching upon a variety of aspects such as ideology, history, and international expansion. Somewhat dated, based on a 1990 conference.
- Mayaram, Shail. *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory, and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity*. Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. Insightful study of the Meo people and the Mewat region; it addresses their princely rule and Tablighī activism, to understand how these tribes came to identify themselves and to be identified by others as Muslims.
- Nadvī, Abulḥasan 'Alī. *Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Muḥammad Ilyās aur unki dīnī da'wat*. Lucknow: Tanvīr Press, 1964 (1946). Translated by M. A. Kidwai as *Life and Mission of Maulana Mohammad Ilyas*. Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, 1979. Very sympathetic, insightful description of the life and work of Maulānā Ilyās by an ardent admirer.
- Qādirī, Arshadul. *Tablighī Jamā'at: Ḥaqā'iq wa ma'lumāt*. Lahore: Maktaba Nabwiya, n.d. (1969). Critique of the Jamā'at by a Barelwī polemicist alleging that the real purpose of the Jamā'at is not to preach Islam but to propagate Deobandī sectarianism.

- Qādrī, Muḥammad Ayyūb. *Tablighī Jamā'at kā tārikhī jā'iza*. Karachi: Maktaba-yi Mu'aviya, 1971. Historical work situating the rise of the Tablighī Jamā'at in the context of other movements of religious revival that came before it and their impact on its ideology and program.
- Reetz, Dietrich. "Keeping Busy on the Path of Allah—The Self-Organization of the Tablighī Jamā'at." In *Oriente Moderno*. Vol. 84, no.1 (2004): 295.
- Reetz, Dietrich. "Sufi Spirituality Fires Reformist Zeal: The Tablighī Jamā'at in Today's India and Pakistan." *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions* 51, no. 135 (2006): 33.
- Sikkand, Yōgindar. *The Origins and Development of the Tablighī Jamā'at, 1920–2000: A Cross Country Comparative Study*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 2002. A historical overview based on a comparison of the movement's activities in India, Bangladesh, and Great Britain.
- Winkelmann, Mareike Jule. "From Behind the Curtain: A Study of Girls' Madrasa in India." Ph.D. diss., International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005. One of the very few field studies of female activism associated with a Deobandī *madrasah* closely linked to the Tablighī movement.
- Zakariyā, Muḥammad. *Tablighī Niṣāb* (Tablighī Curriculum). Delhi, 1940. Numerous editions, later under the title: *Faḍā'il-i A'māl* (The Virtues of [Correct] Religious Practices). English edition with Iḥtishāmūl Ḥasan Kāndhlawī and Aṣhiq Ilāhī. Faza'il-e 'Amāl. New Delhi: Idara Ishaat-e-Diniyat, 1994. Compilation of Maulānā Zakariyā's seven essays on the basic teachings of Islam, which constitute the prescribed program of study for Jamā'at members and followers.

DIETRICH REETZ

Original article by MUMTAZ AHMAD

TAFSİR. Exegesis of the Qur'ān is known as *tafsīr*. The focus in this article will be on Sunnī *tafsīr*, but Shī'ī *tafsīr* will also be discussed.

The Qur'ān, regarded as the word of God, needed *tafsīr*—elucidation, explanation, interpretation, or commentary—for an obvious reason: it had to be understood clearly and fully so that its commandments could be carried out with the conviction that the will of God had been done. Equally, however, as God's word, the Qur'ān seemed to discourage attempts at *tafsīr*, for two different but complementary reasons. First, coming as it did from God, the Qur'ān must be assumed to be clear in its import, thus obviating the need for exposition. Second,

how could finite human intelligence claim to be able to discover the true meanings of the texts of a book that emanated from the possessor of infinite wisdom? The case of the Prophet Muḥammad was different: he had brought the Qur'ān, and, having been appointed by God as prophet, he could explain the sacred text authoritatively. For these reasons there was in the early years of Islam a reluctance on the part of Muslims to interpret the Qur'ān but at the same time an eagerness to know and transmit the interpretations attributed to the Prophet in the first instance and to his companions in the second—the assumption being that these latter interpretations too went back directly or indirectly to the Prophet himself.

Only a small amount of *tafsīr* is ascribed to the Prophet and his companions, and that usually in the form of brief explanations in response to questions asked. But this was hardly sufficient to satisfy the needs of a community that was not only growing rapidly in numbers but also was coming into contact with culture and traditions very different from those of Arabia. A host of new problems, both conceptual and practical, were arising. Because the Qur'ān was the fundamental text of Islam, it was natural for Muslims to look in it for answers to new problems; thus a need for more comprehensive *tafsīr* was felt.

Soon after the age of the companions, in the age of the successors (those who are said to have met the companions), the so-called schools—Meccan, Medinan, and Iraqi—of *tafsīr* came into existence. As in jurisprudence, so in *tafsīr*, Iraq, as against Mecca and Medina, came to be known for a *ra'y*-based approach, that is, an approach that relied on considered personal judgment and not simply on reports transmitted from the Prophet and his companions through dependable channels. The spread of Jewish apocryphal reports was distinctive of the age of the successors. Until then, *tafsīr* on the whole had been transmitted orally and had not been compiled and written down. Furthermore, the discipline of *tafsīr* was not yet clearly distinguishable from that of *ḥadīth* (prophetic tradition) but was rather a special domain within *ḥadīth*. In fact, it was the *muḥaddithūn* (scholars of *ḥadīth*; sg., *muḥaddith*) whose collections of *aḥādīth* (pl. of *ḥadīth*, report), which included *tafsīr* reports, paved the way for the development of an independent discipline of *tafsīr*. This development led to the emergence of major *mufasssīrūn* (pl. of *mufasssīr*, *tafsīr* scholar) and their works, a topic we shall