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Jamia Fathia (1875–2008): A Historical Study of Pluralism in a Madrasa in Lahore

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Abstract

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This article examines the history of Jamia Fathia, Lahore, from its establishment in 1875 to the death of its third *muhtamim*, Mian Muhammad Salman, in 2008. It uses Jamia Fathia as a historical case to problematize generalized portrayals of madrasas in Pakistan as institutions defined mainly by sectarian rigidity, radicalism, and politicization. Drawing on institutional histories, biographical writings, oral interviews, and relevant secondary scholarship, the article traces the madrasa's foundation, leadership, system of instruction, library, teachers, and students. It argues that flexibility in sectarian boundaries remained an important feature of the institution. Jamia Fathia maintained connections with scholars and institutions belonging to different scholarly and Sufi traditions, while its students later followed diverse paths in teaching, writing, spiritual guidance, religious service, and political activity. At the same time, the article recognizes the firm religious and political commitments of some members of its founding family, including their association with Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam and anti-Ahmadi campaigns. The case therefore shows that such commitments could exist alongside scholarly exchange and interaction across different intellectual and sectarian boundaries.

Keywords: Jamia Fathia, Lahore, madrasa history, religious pluralism, Deoband

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1. INTRODUCTION

Madrasas in Pakistan have received considerable scholarly attention in relation to sectarianism, radicalism, militancy, and political violence. This tendency became more visible after the Afghan war of the 1980s and the subsequent attacks of 11 September 2001 (Abbas, 2005; Jan, 2019; Rahman, 2008; Syed et al., 2016). This scholarship has made an important contribution to understanding the political transformation of religious institutions in Pakistan. However, its findings are sometimes applied too broadly to the madrasa tradition as a whole. This is particularly the case in media and public discourse. Consequently, gaps remain in the scholarship on madrasas as historical institutions of scholarship, religious learning, local authority, and intellectual formation.

The history of Jamia Fathia, established in Ichhra (Lahore) in 1875, provides an important case through which these generalizations can be reconsidered. Its founders, teachers, students, curriculum, scholarly networks, and institutional development show that madrasa spaces were not always shaped by rigid sectarian affiliations. Jamia Fathia maintained connections with scholars and institutions belonging to different scholarly and Sufi traditions. Its students also followed diverse paths in religious scholarship, teaching, writing, spiritual guidance, and political activity.
This article examines a history of Jamia Fathia from its establishment in 1875 to the death of its third *muhtamim*, Mian Muhammad Salman, in 2008. It argues that the case of Jamia Fathia problematizes the radicalism-centred reading of madrasas by showing an institution in which scholarship and flexible sectarian boundaries were central to its history. The study uses the institution as a historical case to demonstrate that later frameworks of sectarianism and militancy should not be applied uniformly to all madrasas and all historical periods.

The study begins with the historical examination of the foundation and institutional development of Jamia Fathia. It then examines its curriculum, scholarly networks, library, faculty, and the diverse paths followed by its students. It concludes with a discussion of what these aspects of the institution reveal about its pluralism and flexible sectarian boundaries.

Jamia Fathia became a centre of religious and spiritual guidance soon after its establishment in 1875. Scholars and spiritual leaders from various sectarian backgrounds continued to visit Jamia Fathia. Among them were the sheikhs of Naqshbandi lineage associated with the founders, including Shah Abdul Rasool Kasuri, Khwaja Mahboob Alam Tawakali, and their mentor, Sain Tawakkul Shah Anbalvi. Similarly, Maulvi Noor Alam of the Qadri Sufi tradition contributed to the development of the seminary. Among their contemporaries, Mian Sher Muhammad Sharaqpuri often visited Jamia Fathia. Prominent Deobandi scholars such as Obaidullah Sindhi, Hussain Ahmad Madni, Ahmed Ali Lahori, Anwar Shah Kashimiri, Ezaz Ali, Attaullah Shah Bukhari and many others visited Jamia Fathia on different occasions (Affan, 2024, pp. 65).

2. THE FOUNDATION OF JAMIA FATHIA[3]

Jamia Fathia was established in 1875 by Mian Imam Deen (1810–1906) in an abandoned mosque in Ichhra, Lahore. Mian Imam Deen was born in the house of Mian Muhammad Pannu in Ichhra. He was a sufi disciple of Shah Abdul Rasool Kasuri (d. 1877) and later became one of his sufi successors (khalifa). He named the institution "Jamia Fathia" after his son, Hafiz Fateh Muhammad. Mian Imam Deen's brother, Mian Fazal (d. 1912), held the position of *Zaildar* (a local administrative official) in Lahore. This *Zaildar* family had deep ties to Lahore's local

[3] For the preparation of this history of Jamia Fathia, Dr Zia-ul-Haq Qamar provided important historical information and directed the author to key sources, particularly during an interview conducted at Jamia Fathia on 16 March 2023. Dr. Zia-ul-Haq is an alumnus of Jamia Fathia and maintains historical records and library at Jamia Fathia.

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community, particularly in the *Bhatti* and *Ichhra* localities. Family members operated various businesses and they funded Jamia Fathia with their own resources (Chisti, 2021, pp. 256–262).

Hafiz Fateh Muhammad (1835–1917) was born in 1835 in Ichhra, Lahore. He began his education with the recitation of the Quran and then enrolled in a local school. After passing the third grade, he commenced memorizing the Quran. Upon completing his memorization, he turned his attention to Islamic studies. However, after some time, he contracted smallpox, which led to the loss of his eyesight. Despite this, he became highly proficient in Punjabi, Arabic, and Persian, and he authored writings in these languages.

Hafiz Fateh Muhammad was a Sufi disciple of Shah Abdul Rasool Kasuri in both the Naqshbandi and Qadri traditions and later received Sufi authority (khilafat) from him later. After Shah Abdul Rasool's death, he became a disciple of Khwaja Mahboob Alam Tawakali, the successor of Saiyyan Tawakkal Shah Anbalvi. Recognizing his capabilities, Khwaja Mahboob Alam also conferred *khilafat* upon him. In the Qadri order, he was among the successors of Maulvi Noor Alam. Fateh Muhammad became the first teacher at Jamia Fathia, while Mian Imam Din administered the institution.

One prominent challenge of his time was the *Fitna Inkar-e-Hadith* (Denial of Authenticity of Hadith), spearheaded by Ghulam Nabi, also known as Abdullah Chakralvi (d. 1915)[4]. In 1905, Abdullah Chakralvi authored a book titled *Burhan al-Furqan fi al-Salat al-Quran*, in which he propagated his beliefs and opposed the traditional Ahle-Sunnah method of prayer (salat). Hafiz Fateh Muhammad was at the forefront of refuting such ideas. He wrote several treatises countering these notions, including two well-known works:

1. *Radd-e-Chakralvi*
2. *Salat al-Quran ba Ma'na Baeena Habib al-Rahman* (This book was written at the request of his uncle, Mian Fazaluddin, who passed away in 1911).

After the death of Jamia's founder Mian Imam Deen, Mian Qamaruddin (Mian Imam Deen's maternal grandson) became the first *muhtamin* (principal). After his death, Mian Aslam Jan, and subsequently, Mian Muhammad Salman assumed responsibility for the madrasa and shaped its educational, scholarly, and public activities in different periods.

The *muhtamims* of Jamia Fathia and members of their family maintained close relations with Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam and its Khatm-e-Nubuwwat program, particularly Mian Qamaruddin (the first principal of Jamia Fathia), Mian Aslam Jan (the second principal), and Babu Pir Bakhsh Lahori[5]. Mian Qamaruddin and Mian Muhammad Aslam Jan, along with Syed Amir Ali Gilani, contributed to the establishment and administration of a Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam centre in Qadian (Rashidi, 2018).

Having discussed the foundation of the institution, the section now examines the lives of its *muhtamims* (principals) who assumed responsibility for the institution after the death of its founder. This discussion is important because the institutional development of Jamia Fathia resulted from the collective efforts of successive members of its founding family.

[4] For a historical study of Abdullah Chakralvi and the Ahl al-Quran movements in the Punjab, see Qasmi (2011, pp. 125–145).

[5] Babu Pir Bakhsh Lahori (1852–1927) was a prominent member of this family. The founders of Jamia Fathia shared a close relationship with Babu Pir Muhammad Bakhsh, which was not limited to familial ties but extended to their collective efforts in upholding religious values. When Mian Qamaruddin and Mian Muhammad Aslam Jan took a stand against the Qadiani movement, Babu Pir Bakhsh Lahori fully supported them. However, he was not directly associated with the institution. Babu Pir Bakhsh wrote numerous books on the topic of refuting Qadianiat, many of which were published with the collaboration of Mian Qamaruddin. For details see, Khaliq (2020).

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Mian Qamaruddin (1868–1952) became the first muhtamim of Jamia Fathia after the death of Mian Imam Deen in 1906. He was born in 1868 in Ichhra (Lahore) to Mian Muhammad Ismail, a member of one of the city's prominent landowning families. His maternal grandfather, Mian Imam Deen, and his maternal uncle, Hafiz Fateh Muhammad, were disciples of Shah Abdul Rasool Kasuri. His younger maternal uncle, Hafiz Mian Muhammad Akram, served as the imam of congregational prayers at Jamia Fathia until the end of his life. Mian Qamaruddin was also married to the eldest daughter of Hafiz Fateh Muhammad.

Mian Qamaruddin received formal education up to the middle level but developed a strong interest in reading. Islamic history, Sufism, and religious polemics were among his main areas of interest. His reading of Islamic history strengthened his concern for the wider Muslim community and encouraged his involvement in anti-colonial and religious movements. He also attended the intellectual discussions that took place when Maulana Talib Ali, the chronicler of the Maharaja of Patiala, visited Mian Imam Deen.

These interests gradually brought Mian Qamaruddin into political activity. He participated in religious and national movements of his time, including the Khilafat Movement. Through these activities, he developed a close association with Syed Ataullah Shah Bukhari and Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (Khadim, 2021, p. 75).

When Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (MAI) was established in December 1929, Mian Qamaruddin became one of its founding members. He contributed financial support to its religious preaching and polemical activities, and Syed Ataullah Shah Bukhari reportedly referred to him as the "bank" of MAI. Mian Qamaruddin also headed its preaching department in Qadian (Chisti, 2021, p. 257; Mirza, 1970, Vol. 3, p. 171). He supported authors who wrote against Ahmadi beliefs and financed the publication of a number of such works.

Political involvement was also found among other members of his family. His younger brother, Mian Muhammad Rafiq (d. 1975), was elected to the Punjab Legislative Assembly from Lahore on the ticket of Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam in the 1946 elections (Khadim, 2021, p. 75)[6].

After the demise of Mian Qamaruddin in 1952, the leadership of Jamia Fathia passed to Mian Aslam Jan, a grandson of Mian Imam Deen. Born in 1910, he was the son of Hafiz Mian Akram, who was a disciple and spiritual successor of Mulla Shor Bazaar and served as the imam of congregational prayers at Jamia Fathia.

Mian Aslam Jan began his education with the Quran. He memorized it under the supervision of his uncle, Hafiz Mian Fateh Muhammad, who also taught him Persian texts. After completing his initial Quranic and Persian studies, he enrolled in a local school and passed the primary examination with distinction.

He then turned to religious education at Jamia Fathia, where he studied under Maulana Muhammad Chiragh, Maulana Syed Doran Shah, Maulana Mehr Muhammad, and other scholars. He belonged to the first class at Jamia Fathia to receive certificates after completing Dora-e-Hadith. His classmates included Maulana Inayatullah Chishti, Maulana Pir Kamran, and Maulana Noor-ul-Ilahi.

While still a student, Mian Aslam Jan began teaching elementary classes. After completing his studies, he gradually assumed the educational and administrative responsibilities previously carried out by his uncle, Hafiz Mian Fateh Muhammad. His career therefore represents the continuation of scholarly leadership within the founding family of Jamia Fathia.

Mian Aslam Jan maintained contact with several luminaries of his time, including Abul Kalam Azad, Hussain Ahmad Madani, Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Ataullah Shah Bukhari, Chaudhry Afzal

[6] For more biographical details, see Arif (2020, pp. 114–116).

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Haq, Abul A'la Mawdudi, Agha Shorish Kashmiri, and Maulana Muhammad Nafi. Scholars frequently visited him for intellectual and literary discussions. Weekly scholarly gatherings with Maulana Abdul Rasheed Khaliq, the Sheikh-ul-Hadith of Jamia Fathia, and Maulana Ghulam Shafi continued until the final years of his life.

He also established a scholarly and research institution named *Dar-ul-Muallifeen* for the promotion of Islamic learning and writing. Following his family's tradition of public engagement, he participated in various religious and national movements and became a formal member of Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam.

After the creation of Pakistan, Mian Aslam Jan served as a trustee of the Lahore Improvement Trust. When Maulana Mawdudi moved to Lahore, Mian Aslam Jan provided him with accommodation and office space for Jamaat-e-Islami, allowing payments to be made in installments (Khadim, 2021, pp. 76–78; Z. Qamar, personal communication, March 16, 2023). This reflects his personal and institutional contacts with scholars belonging to different political and intellectual orientations.

After the death of Mian Aslam Jan in 1999, the leadership of Jamia Fathia passed to his son, Mian Muhammad Salman (1941 – 2008). Born in 1941 in Ichhra, Lahore, he began his education by learning the recitation of the Quran under the guidance of his grandfather, Hafiz Muhammad Akram. He later studied foundational Islamic texts at Jamia Fathia under the supervision of his father.

Alongside his religious education, Mian Muhammad Salman attended Government N.D. Islamia High School in Ichhra. After completing his matriculation in 1963, he studied at Government Islamia College, Civil Lines, and later completed an M.A. in Arabic at Oriental College, Lahore. His education therefore combined studies at Jamia Fathia with modern school, college, and university education.

Mian Muhammad Salman was also associated with the Naqshbandi Sufi tradition. He took bayt with Maulana Ghulam Rabbani, who later granted him khilafat after recognizing his spiritual abilities.

In 1999, Mian Muhammad Salman became the third *muhtamim* of Jamia Fathia. During his tenure, he restored the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, which had been replaced by the Fazil Arabic programme during the 1980s. He also established a department for Tajwid and Qira'at (Khadim, 2021, p. 78). These measures marked a renewed emphasis on the traditional religious curriculum and specialized Quranic education.

To sum up, the *muhtamims* of Jamia Fathia not only ensured its institutional continuity but also played a decisive role in shaping its educational direction. To fully appreciate their contributions, it is therefore necessary to turn from their individual lives to the broader structures they developed, namely, the system of instruction, curricular changes, examination practices, and the scholarly networks through which the madrasa expanded and sustained its influence.

3. THE SYSTEM OF INSTRUCTION AND SCHOLARLY NETWORKS

As stated earlier, Jamia Fathia was connected to a wider network of religious scholars and educational institutions from its inception. Its system of instruction developed gradually and included the teaching of rational sciences, oral examinations, student movement between different madrasas, and later changes in the curriculum. Although scholars from Darul Uloom Deoband were an important part of this network, Jamia Fathia maintained links with several other scholars and institutions.

Jamia Fathia attracted students not only from the Indian subcontinent but also from Afghanistan, Burma, and Iran. The institution became known for the teaching of rational sciences

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(*ma'qulat*). Initially, oral examinations were conducted instead of written ones. Renowned scholars from Darul Uloom Deoband, including the distinguished *Sheikh-ul-Adab* Maulana Aizaz Ali, visited Jamia Fathia to conduct these oral examinations. Maulana Aizaz Ali's involvement allowed him to thoroughly assess the students' capabilities. Generally, students who completed the *Moquf Alaih* at any institution and later sought admission to Darul Uloom Deoband for Dora-e-Hadith, had to pass an entrance examination. However, Jamia Fathia student whose abilities had already been assessed by Maulana Aizaz Ali during his visits were admitted without taking the examination.

These examination links were not limited to scholars from *Darul Uloom* Deoband. Scholars such as Maulana Rasul Khan, Maulana Ghulam Muhammad Ghotvi (d. 1948), the vice chancellor of Jamia Abbasiya Bahawalpur, Maulana Abu Alhassnat and Maulana Ahmad Ali Lahori also occasionally visited Jamia Fathia to conduct examinations (Chisti, 2021, p. 262; Khadim, 2021, p. 66).

These scholarly connections were accompanied by the gradual development of Jamia Fathia's own system of instruction. The institution did not initially possess formal departments, and its curriculum changed over time in response to the educational needs of its students. Until 1929, the usual practice for students was to study up to the *Moqoof Alaihi* level at Jamia Fathia and then proceed to institutions like Darul Uloom Deoband, Mazahir Uloom Saharanpur, or Jamia Islamia Dabhel (Gujarat) for their Dora-e-Hadith (final year of Hadith studies).

During Hafiz Fatah Muhammad's tenure, students were also provided with basic education in medicine (Tib) and taught bookbinding skills. Later, the focus shifted from medicine to *Kitabat* (decorative handwriting and calligraphy). Over time, as circumstances evolved, vocational training was replaced with contemporary school education for students. In 2009, a school system was integrated into the madrasa's Hifz department as well.

An important development took place in 1929, when a group of students, including Maulana Inayatullah Chishti, completed their studies up to the Moquf Alaih level. They requested Maulana Mehr Muhammad, the *Sadr Mudarris* (head teacher), to begin Dora-e-Hadith at Jamia Fathia itself. Maulana Mehr Muhammad presented the proposal to Mian Qamaruddin, the first muhtamim, who approved it. As a result, the first Dora-e-Hadith class was held at Jamia Fathia in 1930 (Khadim, 2021, p. 67).

A further curricular change occurred in the 1980s, when government efforts to introduce the teaching of the Quran and Arabic in schools and colleges increased the demand for Arabic teachers. At that time, Jamia Rahimiya in Neela Gumbad, Lahore, offered a Fazil Arabic course, but its capacity was limited. In response, Mian Muhammad Aslam Jan, the second muhtamim of Jamia Fathia, introduced a four-year Fazil Arabic course in consultation with Maulana Abdul Rasheed Khaliq. It was later revised into a three-year program. However, after the introduction of this course, the traditional Dars-e-Nizami curriculum at Jamia Fathia remained suspended for almost two decades (Khadim, 2021, p. 67).

The institutional development of Jamia Fathia also included a well-established library, which grew through donations from scholars and individuals connected with Lahore's intellectual circles. The founding family of Jamia Fathia maintained close relations with Maulana Talib, the *Waqai Nigar* and secretary of Maharaja Patiala. He donated his library to the institution. Similarly, Munshi Tahiruddin, the secretary of Muhammad Iqbal, also donated his library here.

The library's old books section contains more than three thousand printed books and around four hundred handwritten manuscripts (Haider et al., 2025, p. 10). Most of the printed books date from the nineteenth century (thirteenth century Hijri). Among the old printed books, Muhammad

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Husain Burhan's Burhan-e-Qaati (printed 1826), Safarnama-e-Ibn Battuta (printed 1829, English), Jawaher-e-Ubqariya (printed 1836), etc. are noteworthy.

The manuscript collection includes ten handwritten copies of the Quran in different scripts. One particularly valuable manuscript was written in gold ink in 725 A.H. in Ishbiliyah, Spain. It is identified as the third volume of Allama Zamakhshari's *Tafsir Kashshaf*. According to the institutional account, the manuscript travelled through Yemen and the Hijaz and later became part of royal libraries in the subcontinent before entering the collection of Jamia Fathia.

The library also contains two books from the personal collection of Muhammad Iqbal: Armaan-e-Hasan Warsi's *Mashkoot-e-Haqaniyat almaruf Ma'arif-e-Warsiya* and Hasan Birni's *Al-Biruni*. Both works were presented to Iqbal by their respective authors (Affan, 2024, pp. 71; Khadim, 2021, p. 70).

Although the library formed an important part of Jamia Fathia's scholarly environment, the intellectual character of the institution was shaped mainly by its teachers and students. Its pluralistic tendency is reflected in the diversity of its teachers, who belonged to different schools of thought and scholarly traditions. Similarly, the varied paths followed by its students suggest that the institution did not direct them towards a single intellectual, religious, or political orientation. The following discussion examines the backgrounds of these teachers and the later careers of their students.

4. TEACHERS AND STUDENTS OF JAMIA FATHIA

The teachers of Jamia Fathia came from different scholarly and Sufi backgrounds. Their affiliations connected Jamia Fathia with the Khairabadi tradition, Deoband, Golra, Khair-ul-Madaris, and other centres of religious learning. Their biographies therefore help explain how the intellectual character of Jamia Fathia developed through more than one scholarly or spiritual tradition. The discussion in this section first examines some prominent teachers before turning to the diverse careers of Jamia Fathia's students.

An important figure in this regard was Maulana Mehr Muhammad Achhravi (1896–1954). He studied Persian under Maulana Sultan Mahmood in Bandial, a renowned Persian language teacher of his time. He later studied under Maulana Ghulam Hussain and Maulana Ghulam Muhammad Ghotvi, who also served as the first Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Abbasia, Bahawalpur. During his studies in Ghota, Maulana Mehr Muhammad took bayt with Pir Mehr Ali Shah Golravi.

After completing his education, Maulana Mehr Muhammad was appointed as head teacher at Jamia Fathia. He became known as an important teacher of logic, philosophy, and theology within the Khairabadi tradition (Z. Qamar, personal communication, March 16, 2023). Although he taught briefly at other institutions, he returned to Jamia Fathia at the request of its first muhtamim, Mian Qamaruddin, and remained there for the rest of his teaching career.

Maulana Mehr Muhammad taught both rational and traditional sciences, and students from different scholarly backgrounds benefited from his teaching. Among his notable students were Maulana Ata Muhammad Bandialvi, Maulana Ghulam Rasool, Maulana Ghulam Mehr Ali Golravi, Maulana Muhammad Mehruddin, Maulana Inayatullah Chishti, and Maulana Abdul Haq (Khadim, 2021, p. 83). His position at Jamia Fathia strengthened the institution's connections with both the Khairabadi scholarly tradition and the spiritual circle of Golra.

Jamia Fathia's connection with Darul Uloom Deoband is evident in the career of Qazi Habib ur Rehman (1915–1992). Born in Khalabat, District Haripur, he received his early education from Qazi Abdul Subhan and later studied under Maulana Qutbuddin Ghor Ghoshtvi in Attock. In 1935, he enrolled at Darul Uloom Deoband, where he studied Hadith under Hussain Ahmad Madani. The

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following year, he studied literature and inheritance under Maulana E'jaz Ali and Maulana Muhammad Yasin. He later appeared for the Molvi Fazil examinations in Lahore.

After serving in several institutions, Qazi Habib ur Rehman was appointed head teacher and khatib at Jamia Fathia in 1947. He remained there for nearly twelve years before continuing his teaching and religious services at other institutions. His appointment brought a scholar trained at Deoband into the teaching environment of Jamia Fathia (Khadim, 2021, p. 83).

The educational journey of Maulana Qari Syed Hassan Shah Bukhari (1927–1994) reflects connections with an even wider range of institutions. Born in Dana, Mansehra, he completed the Nazirah recitation of the Quran and received his primary education in his native area. He later passed middle school from Bandhi Dhondan School.

He studied at Jamia Fathia on two occasions. After first joining the institution in 1941, he continued part of his education in Chakwal, where he studied the translation of the Quran under Maulvi Karamuddin Dabir and Kafiyah under Maulana Muhammad Abid Nahwi. He later returned to Jamia Fathia and studied under Maulana Mehr Muhammad and other teachers. During this period, he also memorized the Quran.

After completing Dora-e-Hadith at Jamia Fathia in 1953, he studied *Riwayat Hafs* (Quranic recitation style) under Qari Abdul Malik at Darul Uloom Islamia, Old Anarkali, Lahore. In 1954, while studying Qira'at al-Sab'ah (Seven Quranic recitation styles), he also attended the Dora-e-Hadith class at Jamia Ashrafia, where he studied under Mufti Muhammad Hassan, Maulana Muhammad Rasool Khan, and Maulana Muhammad Idris Kandhlawi. In 1955, he received a certificate in Qira'at al-Sab'ah from Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyib, the muhtamim of Darul Uloom Deoband, at Darul Uloom Islamia. He later served as a teacher at Jamia Fathia for two years before continuing his teaching career at other institutions (Khadim, 2021, p. 85).

The development of Quranic instruction at Jamia Fathia was closely associated with Qari Muhammad Yousaf (1934–1997), who served as head instructor of its *Hifz* department. He completed Dora-e-Hadith at Khair-ul-Madaris, Multan, and later studied Tajwid and Qira'at (in 1960) under Qari Muhammad Sharif at Darul Qurra, Model Town, Lahore. His interest in medicine also led him to study at Tibbiya College.

In 1961, Mian Muhammad Aslam Jan arranged for Qari Muhammad Yousaf to join Jamia Fathia through Qari Muhammad Sharif. He remained at the institution until his death and played an important role in organizing the departments of Hifz, Tajwid, and Qira'at. During his career, he taught thousands of students.

Qari Muhammad Yousaf also had strong Sufi connections. In 1960, he took bayt with Maulana Ahmad Ali Lahori. After Maulana Lahori's death, he became a disciple of Khwaja Khan Muhammad. He devoted thirty-six years of his life to teaching and passed away in 1997 (Khadim, 2021, pp. 86–87).

The backgrounds of these teachers show that Jamia Fathia drew upon different scholarly, institutional, and Sufi traditions. Their education and affiliations connected the madrasa with Deoband, Khair-ul-Madaris, the Khairabadi tradition, Golra, and other centres of religious learning. This diversity suggests that the institution's scholarly environment was not confined to a single educational or spiritual network.

Furthermore, the pluralistic tendencies of Jamia Fathia were not limited to the scholars who taught there. They can also be seen in the lives of its students, who later pursued different paths according to their interests, affiliations, and convictions. Their careers in teaching, religious scholarship, writing, spiritual guidance, political activism, and social service provide further insight into the intellectual diversity of the madrasa.

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One key example was Maulana Inayatullah Chishti (1901–1993). Born in Mianwali, he studied rational sciences (*maqulat*) in Gujrat and learned from teachers in several other regions before joining Jamia Fathia in 1926. It was upon his request that the first Dora-e-Hadith class was introduced at the institution in 1930, making him a member of its first graduating class.

Later, he became associated with Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam (MAI) from its beginning and was appointed head of its preaching department. When MAI established a preaching centre in Qadian, Maulana Inayatullah Chishti became the first preacher of the Majlis Khatam-e-Nabuwat movement there (Chisti, 2021; Khadim, 2021, p. 109).

On the other hand, a prominent student of Jamia was Muhammad Nabi Bakhsh Halwai (1860 – 1944) who followed a scholarly and literary path. Muhammad Nabi Bakhsh Halwai was born in Lahore into an Arain family traditionally associated with agriculture. During his childhood, he worked as an apprentice to a *halwai* (sweet-maker). In 1877, he joined Jamia Fathia to study under Hafiz Fateh Muhammad, from whom he also took bayt.

Nabi Bakhsh later became known for his Punjabi poetic commentary on the Quran, *Tafsir-e-Nabawi*. He began the work in 1906 and spent almost forty years completing this extensive Tafsir. This work illustrates Jamia Fathia's contribution to religious writing in the Punjabi language (Khadim, 2021, pp. 98–100).

The life of Hakim Hafiz Fath Muhammad, also known as Baba Attar, reflects another direction taken by the institution's students. Born in the 1870s in the household of Ahmed Bakhsh, he was introduced to Hafiz Mian Fateh Muhammad through his elder brother, Ghulam Qadir, who was already among his distinguished disciples. Under Hafiz Fateh Muhammad's guidance, Baba Attar memorized the Quran, pursued religious studies, and later graduated from Jamia Fathia. He also took bayt with his teacher and eventually received spiritual succession.

Baba Attar became known for his eloquence, narration of folk tales, and recitation of mystical poetry. His spiritual guide later assigned him to Masjid Takia Hari Shah, where he guided people in religious and spiritual reform. He established Madrasa Baba Attar at the mosque for the education of children and continued serving there as imam and preacher until his death on 11 November 1954 (Khadim, 2021, p. 100).

The careers of Inayatullah Chishti, Nabi Bakhsh Halwai, and Baba Attar show three different paths followed by Jamia Fathia's students. Their lives suggest that the institution did not direct its graduates towards a single form of religious service.

With regard to sectarian polemics, Jamia Fathia does not appear to have developed primarily through rivalry or competition with other sects and scholarly traditions. This is reflected not only in the diversity of its faculty and students, but also in the visits of scholars from different backgrounds and their continuing contact with the madrasa administration. The following cases further illustrate the range of scholarly, spiritual, and political paths associated with the institution (Khadim, 2021, p. 100).

One example was Hafiz Syed Manzoor Hussain Shah (1910–1977), who was born in Bhon, near the village of Rana Syedan in District Chakwal. In 1932, he sought admission to Jamia Fathia, but despite two years of effort, he was unable to secure a place. He then approached Pir Mehr Ali Shah, who wrote a letter of recommendation to his close disciple, Maulana Mehr Muhammad, the head teacher of Jamia Fathia. This recommendation secured his admission, and he studied at the institution from 1932 to 1940. (Khadim, 2021, p. 106)

The connection of Jamia Fathia with different scholarly and Sufi traditions can also be seen in the educational journey of Maulana Jalaluddin Mashhadi (1915–1985). He lost his eyesight due to smallpox at the age of four but later memorized the Quran and began his Islamic education at a

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local madrasa. After completing his initial studies, he moved to Jamia Naumania in Amritsar for advanced education. In 1931, he joined Jamia Fathia, where he studied under Maulana Mehr Muhammad, Maulana Muhammad Chiragh, and other scholars. After completing the curriculum in 1936, he proceeded to Jamia Mazhar-ul-Islam, Bareilly, for Dora-e-Hadith. He later entered the Naqshbandi order through bayt with Syed Noor-ul-Haq Bukhari, a disciple of Mian Sher Muhammad Sharaqpuri. (Khadim, 2021, p. 113)

A similar connection with the Golra tradition appears in the life of Maulana Ata Muhammad Bandialvi (1916–1999). He began his education in 1933 under Maulana Yar Muhammad Bandialvi. On the advice of Maulana Mehr Muhammad, he joined Jamia Fathia in 1949 and studied there for two years. His first bayt was with Pir Mehr Ali Shah, and he later became known as a prominent teacher. These examples show how Jamia Fathia remained connected with scholars and students associated with Golra, Sharaqpur, Bareilly, and other centres of religious learning (Khadim, 2021, pp. 146–149).

The career of Maulana Haider Zaman (1907–1952), however, illustrates a different trajectory. After receiving his early education in Haripur, he enrolled at Jamia Fathia in 1924 and later completed Dora-e-Hadith at Darul Uloom Deoband in 1929. His subsequent career combined religious scholarship with anti-colonial and political activity. In 1936, he was imprisoned for eight months for delivering speeches against British imperialism.

In 1938, Haider Zaman launched the weekly publication *Paigham-e-Ittehad* from Havelian, Hazara. He became a member of the Punjab Muslim League Council and served as president of the Muslim League in District Gurdaspur. In 1946, he met Maulana Mawdudi and was influenced by the Jamaat-e-Islami movement, although he maintained scholarly disagreements with Mawdudi on some issues. After the creation of Pakistan, he formally joined Jamaat-e-Islami and later served for some time as its emir in Haripur. His writings included *Islami Nazriya-e-Ijtimah* and *Islam ka Ma'ashi Nizam* (Khadim, 2021, p. 110)[7].

The lives of these students reflect the different scholarly, spiritual, and political directions followed by those associated with Jamia Fathia. Some remained connected with Sufi and teaching traditions, while others entered publishing, anti-colonial politics, the Muslim League, or Jamaat-e-Islami. Their careers therefore reinforce the argument that Jamia Fathia did not produce a single type of scholar or direct its students towards one intellectual or political path.

Alongside these varied careers, Jamia Fathia developed more prominent educational ties with Deoband than with other religious traditions. These ties are evident in the educational journeys of students who continued their studies there. It is more important to note that not all students completed their education entirely at Jamia Fathia. A common practice was to study there up to the seventh year of the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum, known as *Darjah Sabea* or *Moquf Alaih*, and then proceed to Darul Uloom Deoband for the final year. The educational journeys of several students reflect this pattern and show the close relationship between the two institutions.

Among the notable alumni of Jamia Fathia was *Maulana Muhammad Sharif Kashmiri* (d. 1990), who also served as a teacher at Darul Uloom Deoband from 1942 – 1947 and after Partition, became the *Sheikh-ul-Hadith* at Khair-ul-Madaris in Multan (Affan, 2024, p. 68).

Maulana Ghulam Rauf, originally from Mansehra, enrolled at Jamia Fathia in 1929. He later studied at Darul Uloom Deoband between 1935 and 1937, where he completed the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum. He then studied *Dora-e-Tafsir* under Maulana Ahmad Ali Lahori and later founded Madrasa Zia-ul-Uloom in Chilas (Gilgit-Baltistan) (Khadim, 2021, p. 102).

[7] For details on Haider Zaman Siddiqui's intellectual contributions, see Siddiqui (1950, 1989)

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A similar path was followed by Maulana Khalil-ur-Rahman, who joined Jamia Fathia in 1935. After studying there for several years, he completed the *Moquf Alaih* level at Jamia Arabia, Gujranwala, and then went to Darul Uloom Deoband in 1941 to complete his education. In 1943, he began teaching in Balakot and later served in several other institutions (Khadim, 2021, p. 103).

After receiving his early education from his father and studying in Gujrat, Maulana Abdul Qayyum joined Jamia Fathia in 1927 and remained there for six years. He then went to Darul Uloom Deoband in 1933 and completed the Dora-e-Hadith in 1934. Afterward, he returned to his native village, where he engaged in teaching until 1957. During this time, he also served as an imam in his ancestral mosque and delivered sermons at Jamia Masjid Nishat Camp (Tarbela) (Khadim, 2021, p. 101).

A key case in this context is that of Maulana Abdullah Ludhianvi, who was the successor of Abu Saad Khan at Khanqah Sirajia (a famous Deobandi *Khankah*). He joined Jamia Fathia in 1922 and studied there up to the *Moquf Alaih* level. He then proceeded to Darul Uloom Deoband in 1925 to complete the final year of Dars-e-Nizami, the Dora-e-Hadith. He later joined the Sufi circle of Abu Saad Khan at Khanqah Sirajia and eventually became his successor. His career thus connected Jamia Fathia, Darul Uloom Deoband, and one of the important Sufi centers of the region (Khadim, 2021, p. 120).

These educational journeys show that Jamia Fathia was part of a wider system of religious learning in which students moved between different institutions to complete various stages of their education. The continued flow of students from Jamia Fathia to *Darul Uloom* Deoband reflects the scholarly relationship between the two institutions. It further suggests that, historically, scholarly connections with the Deobandi tradition could develop without following rigid institutional boundaries.

5. SUMMING UP

The institution's pluralistic ethos reflected its commitment to knowledge and a comparatively inclusive scholarly environment. The diversity of its faculty, representing different schools of thought and scholarly traditions, highlights its openness and its refusal to remain confined within rigid sectarian boundaries. Furthermore, the varied paths followed by its students suggest that the institution did not impose a single intellectual, religious, or political orientation upon them. Its graduates contributed to different fields and movements, including teaching, religious scholarship, writing, spiritual guidance, political activism, and social service.

At the same time, this diversity should not be understood as the absence of firm religious commitments. Members of Jamia Fathia's founding family participated in Majlis-e-Ahrar and anti-Ahmadi campaigns, while some scholars associated with the institution also engaged in contemporary religious polemics. The significance of Jamia Fathia lies in the fact that such commitments existed alongside scholarly exchange, the movement of teachers and students between different institutions, and continued interaction across different sectarian and intellectual boundaries. Its history therefore shows that firm religious commitments did not necessarily produce a closed scholarly environment.

Jamia Fathia's close connections with Darul Uloom Deoband and several Deobandi scholars also have wider significance. This association sheds light on the nuanced character of the Deobandi tradition and its adaptability within broader Islamic frameworks. Although the Deobandi tradition is often perceived as rigidly sectarian, its connection with Jamia Fathia suggests that some Deobandi scholars valued collaboration and intellectual exchange across different scholarly traditions. Their participation in examinations, connections with other scholars and institutions,

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and the movement of students between different madrasas complicate portrayals of Deobandi scholarship as uniformly rigid or isolated from wider scholarly interaction.

The history of Jamia Fathia thus complicates generalized portrayals of madrasas as institutions defined mainly by sectarian rigidity, radicalism, or political violence. From its establishment in 1875, it developed through local family support, changing systems of instruction, scholarly networks, a growing library, and connections with different centres of religious learning. Jamia Fathia therefore problematizes the radicalism-centred reading of madrasas by showing an institution in which scholarship and flexible sectarian boundaries were central to its history. More broadly, the case demonstrates the need to study madrasas through their particular historical periods, local settings, leadership, curricula, faculty, and student trajectories rather than treating the madrasa tradition as a single and uniform category.

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