THE IMPACT OF IBN TAIMIYYA ON SOUTH ASIA

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Ibn Taimiyya (661–728/1263–1327) is one of the most dynamic and seminal personalities in the history of Islam. Born in an age which, to use Toynbee’s words, was characterized by ‘schism of the soul’ and ‘schism of the body politic’, he struggled hard to revive Muslim society through inward animation and re-interpretation of its values in the light of a new spirit of *ijtihad* (interpretation of law) based on direct recourse to the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. He therefore reacted most forcefully to the political decadence and social chaos which followed the irruption of the Mongols. He was born five years after Hulagü’s sack of Baghdad and was in his teens when the Mongol storm inundated the eastern world of Islam. He struggled hard to turn the tide. When he breathed his last in 1327, Muslim and Mongol principalities existed side by side in Central Asia, the Ilkhans had stabilized their position in Persia and the Mongol tribes were converting to Islam. Much of this had been due to the efforts of Ibn Taimiyya. He came to be hailed as the *mujaddid*1 of his age.2 His thought influenced not only his contemporaries in the Muslim heartlands but reached far beyond: Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325–1351) the Sultan of Delhi, for example, became an ardent advocate of his ideology and sought to restructure political institutions in its light; many Muslim reform movements in the 18th and 19th centuries drew some degree of inspiration from him; in recent history his thought supplied *élan* to the movements for political liberation in South Asia. Surprisingly, no attempt has so far been made to assess the impact of his ideology on South Asia.

1 The word *mujaddid* means ‘reformer’ or ‘regenerator’. A tradition of the Prophet cited by Abū Dawūd says: ‘God will, on the eve of every century, raise a person in this ummat who would renew Islam.’ See also Shah Wālī Allah, *Isalat al-Khafa an Khilafat al-Khulafa*, (Bareilly, AH 1286), 271, for a discussion about *mujaddids* of different periods.
LIFE OF IBN TAIMIYYA

Ibn Taimiyya was born at Harran (near Damascus) on 22 January 1263, in a family known for academic attainment. The nature and reach of his reformist activity—both at the political and ideological level—can only be appreciated in the context of the Mongol invasions which had brought down the medieval Muslim state-system and torn up the fabric of Muslim civilization. Against that background of Mongol threat Ibn Taimiyya’s father decided, sometime in 1268, to leave Harran and settle in Damascus. A decade earlier Baghdad had been sacked by Hulagu and Muslim political prestige touched its nadir. A few small states clung to a melancholy existence but with destruction imminent. The sheer number of Ibn Taimiyya’s teachers (some 200) reflects the unstable conditions in which he had to complete his education. Significantly, one of those teachers was a learned lady called Zainab. At the age of seventeen he started instructing students, giving legal verdicts (fatāwā) and writing books. He remained a celibate throughout his life. In 1282, on the death of his father, he was appointed professor in Hanbali law. His soul was stirred to its depths at the spectacle of the loss of Muslim political power, and he took it upon himself to mobilize Muslims for jihād against the Mongols. He found the Muslim society of his day demoralised, superstitious, and indolent, and commended the strictest measures to revitalise it. Some of his views brought him into conflict with the ‘ulamā’ and the mystics of his day. He went to Cairo to muster support for his anti-Mongol movement. He was imprisoned several times—in Damascus, Cairo, Alexandria and other places—for his views, but nothing could dampen his spirit. He criticised vehemently the un-Islamic accretions and attitudes of sects as well as individuals. He returned to Damascus after some eight years in Cairo, some of which were spent in an underground prison cell. A letter written to his mother from Cairo shows the depth of his commitment to his cause. A prolific writer, he


2 Shibli, Maqālat-i Shibli, v, 64.

3 Ibn Taimiyya’s political ideas appear in detail in the two works, Minhāj al-Sunnah (Bulaq, AH 1322) and Sīyasat al-Sharī‘ah (Egypt, AH 1322). See also H. Laoust, Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques d’Ibn Tamiya (Cairo, 1939).

4 He participated personally in some of the campaigns against the Mongols. He fought the battle of Shaqhab, near Damascus.

produced numerous books and brochures in defence of his views, even when in prison. In utter desperation his opponents had him deprived of pen and ink. Disarmed and dismayed, he tried to write something in coal. However, he was unable to long survive the cruel order which denied to his revolutionary zeal the outlet it needed in writing. Within twenty days, he breathed his last in the prison on 20 Dhū l-Qa‘dā 728/1327. His funeral prayer was read several times in Damascus and in absentia at a number of places in different parts of the Muslim world, even China. Ibn Taimiyya’s movement did not die with him. It became a force thereafter and was carried to different regions by his admirers and followers. It provided a prop to political systems, sustained freedom movements and activated the spirit of fresh interpretation of religious law. Jihād at the political and ijtihad at the intellectual level became the inspiring motives of his movement for the regeneration of Muslim society.

**IBN TAIMIYYA’S THOUGHT**

It is not necessary to discuss here all aspects of Ibn Taimiyya’s thought, but reference may be made to some of his ideological positions in order to follow their impact in South Asia:

(a) Ibn Taimiyya believed in ijtihad (fresh interpretation of religious law) and considered himself mujtahid fi al-madhab. His Majmu‘at al-Rasa’il al-Kubra reflects his views on ijma‘ (consensus of Muslim learned opinion), qiyas (analogical inference) etc.

(b) He interpreted Qur’anic verses with an anthropomorphic reference literally.

(c) He opposed innovations in religious matters (bid‘at). This brought him into conflict with a number of sects, like Ash‘arīs,
Isma‘īlis, Kharajīs, Ṭahfīs, Qadīrīs, Mu‘tazīlīs, Jahmīs, Karrāmīs and others.\(^{12}\)

(d) He criticized many practices prevalent among the mystics of his day as un-Islamic accretions.

e) He criticized Shaikh Muhī al-Dīn Ibn al-‘Arabī for his doctrine of \( \text{wahdat al-wujūd} \) (unity of the noumenal and the phenomenal).

(f) He considered illegal all journeys undertaken to visit shrines.

g) He considered admissible the levy of taxes by the state over and above those laid down by God. However, he exempted those who paid such taxes from payment of \( \text{zakāt} \).

(h) He believed that it was imperative to have an \( \text{imām} \) to regulate and direct the life of the community and give it cohesion, unity and discipline, even when political power was in non-Muslim hands.

(i) He believed in unified and integrated community life without any separation between religion and politics.

Whether in prison or in \text{madrasah}, Ibn Taimiyya’s sole concern was to awaken Muslim masses from their stupor, to remove their confusion of mind, inspire them with the spirit of \text{ijtihād} to meet the challenge of the time, and to take them to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah as the safest guides in moments of trial and turmoil. A reformer determined to rejuvenate a whole society could not but come into conflict with a number of elements that obstructed his progress. Ibn Taimiyya refused to accept the Sufis’ stance to the effect that, as state and religion had different paths, they could have nothing to do with politics. Such an approach would render his whole mission fruitless. He had to mobilize all the talents of all the community in order to deal with its social, ideological and political problems. Anxious to strengthen mosques as the lynch-pin of Muslim community-life, he criticized the construction of \text{khanqāhs}, \text{zāwiyahs} and \text{jam‘at khānāhs} as innovations.

**EARLY SIGNS OF IMPACT ON SOUTH ASIA**

Circumstantial evidence shows that even during the early phase of Ibn Taimiyya’s career, India did not remain ignorant of the religious trends initiated by him, though their actual application was varied and sporadic. During the time of Ibn Taimiyya’s struggle against the Mongols, Balban (1266–1287), ‘Ala’ al-Dīn Khaljī (1296–1316) and Muḥammad

\(^{12}\) See Marʿī, \text{al-Kawākīb}, 165; Abū Zahra, \text{Shaikh al-Īslām Ibn Taimiyya}, 170 f. In 1303 he fought against the people of Jabal Kasrawan in \text{Syria}, including Isma‘īlīs, Hākimīs, etc. He wrote a pamphlet against the \text{Ittihādiya}. 


bin Tughluq (1325–1351) were on the throne of Delhi and all of them were carrying on a determined struggle against the Mongols. There is direct evidence of Muḥammad bin Tughluq’s admiration for Ibn Taimiya’s ideas; and indirect, circumstantial evidence of the impact of those ideas on others. Given the nature of political and intellectual contacts between South Asia and (as it is now called) the Middle East, it is improbable that these Sultāns did not know of the defence strategies evolved in other Muslim lands which had suffered from the Mongols. Balban gave shelter to many scholars who had been hunted out of their homelands by the Mongols. He named fifteen quarters in the capital after these refugees. Among his favourite ‘ulamā’ were pupils of Imām Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, Maulānā Burhān al-Dīn Marghinānī (author of Hidāya), and Maulānā Rāzī al-Dīn Hasan Saghānī (author of Mashāriq al-Amwār). In such circumstances Delhi could hardly have remained ignorant of attempts being made in the contemporary Muslim world to meet the Mongol threat. During the reign of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī, South Asia could boast of having sheltered many eminent scholars of Central Asia and Persia. Referring to the intellectual achievements of the age of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Khaljī, Barānī says that books written outside India were accepted as authoritative only when the scholars of Delhi approved them. The Sultan had diplomatic relations with the Ikhāns and had welcomed Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍl Allah, the famous historian and scholar of the age. Despite all his shortcomings, ‘Alā’ al-Dīn had established an efficient administration of the Muslim institution of hisba (control of public standards of morality, law and order). According to Barānī, the Emperor would say: ‘If I punish a thief or an adulterer or a drunkard, it is not because he has done any wrong to me, but because I follow the path of the Prophets.’ He dealt with the Ibāḥatīs (who had legalized certain immoral practices) in the same religious spirit. During his reign Maulānā Shams al-Dīn Tūrk came to Multān from Egypt and brought with him four hundred books on ahādīth eager to establish the science of their study in South Asia. Some writers think that he was no other

14 See K. A. Nizāmī, Salāṭīn-i-Dehli kay Madhabī Ruhānī (Delhī, 1958), 182.
15 Ferishta, Tarikhi-Ferishta (Nawal Kishore, AH 1281), i, 75.
16 Barānī, Tarikhi-Firūz Shāhī (Calcutta, 1860), 46.
18 ibid.
19 Barānī, Tarikhi-Firūz Shāhī, 355.
22 Barānī, Tarikhi-Firūz Shāhī, 296.
24 Barānī, Tarikhi-Firūz Shāhī, 297.
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than Maulānā Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Hawerī who had been a qādī in Egypt but dismissed from office on account of his commitment to Ibn Taimiyya’s views.24

Contact with the Islamic world intensified during the Tughluq period. Some identical trends in religious thought in South Asia and the Middle East illustrate the extent of that contact.

While discussing the legality of music in a mabzar meeting convened by Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Tughluq (1320–1325), the well-known Chishtī saint Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyā quoted a hadīth of the Prophet, but the ‘ulama’ of Delhi refused to listen to him and said: ‘We want the verdict of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, not a tradition of the Prophet’. The Shaikh, distressed, remarked that a city in which the ‘ulama’ refuse to listen to the traditions of the Prophet, is doomed.25 Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyā may have arrived at his belief in ijtiḥād entirely independently, but it is interesting that he should have come to a line of religious thinking so similar to the one that had inspired Ibn Taimiyya. This led Nawāb Siddīq Hasan Khān, the most ardent South Asian advocate of Ibn Taimiyya’s views in recent years, to suggest that there was an identity of approach between Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyā and Ibn Taimiyya. He writes: ‘In this matter Shaikh al-Islām Ibn Taimiyya agrees with Nizām[al-Dīn] Auliyā.’26

One of the scholars who supported Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliyā at the mabzar meeting was Maulānā ‘Alam al-Dīn, a grandson of Shaikh Bahā al-Dīn Zakariyyā of Multān, who was known for his extensive travels in Muslim lands.27 Some later writers consider him an advocate of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideology,28 but contemporary records contain nothing on this point.

Influence on Muhammad bin Tughluq

With the accession to power of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325–1351) positive historical evidence does become available about the influence of Ibn Taimiyya in South Asia. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ardabālī, a pupil of the Shaikh al-Islām, visited the court of the Sultan. According to Ibn

25 Mir Khurd, Simār al-Auliyyā (Delhi, AH 1302), 531.
28 See Urdu translator’s preface to Abū Zahra’s Hayāt-i Shaikh al-Islām, 5.
Battuta, Muhammad bin Tughluq was so impressed by his views that he kissed his feet in the open durbar.30 If Ibn Battuta had not informed us about ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Ardbail’s visit to, and his reception at, the court of Muhammad bin Tughluq, we would have remained in the dark about the motive that inspired the Sultan’s religious and political activities. Of all the Sultans of Delhi, Muhammad bin Tughluq had the most intimate knowledge of the political and ideological developments in the Islamic world beyond Indian frontiers. His responses to these developments were quite in accord with the views of Ibn Taimiya—the following actions, in particular, bear the unmistakable stamp of Ibn Taimiya’s thought:

(1) The Sultan’s declaration—‘State and Religion are twins’,31 clearly echoes Ibn Taimiya’s ideas. The Sultan firmly rejected any separation between state and religion, as advocated by the mystics. This is exemplified in the correspondence he had with foreign powers: for example, Sultan Abū Sa‘īd to Sultan Muḥammad bin Tughluq, obviously wanting to demonstrate his commitment to the same ideology, writes:

According to [the maxim] ‘Religion and State are twins’, [I] have always considered state essential for religion, and religion the cause of the permanence of the state.32

The Chishti saints had given wide berth to the government of the day and warned their senior disciples against consorting with kings, accepting their endowments or indulging in *shughl* (government service).33 They believed that after the Khilāfat-i Rāshda the paths of religion and state had separated, and serving the state was no longer identical with serving the religion.

Muhammad bin Tughluq opposed this ideological stance of the mystics and forced them to make their services available to the state. He extricated many younger saints of distinguished mystic families from the *khānqāhs* and obliged them to serve the state. Shaikh Mui’zz al-Dīn and Shaikh ‘Alam al-Dīn who belonged to the renowned mystic house of Ajodhan, were entrusted with administrative responsibilities. Shaikh Mui’zz al-Dīn was sent to Gujarat but failed to control the situation

30 Ibn Battuta, *Rehla* (Cairo, 1928), ii, 44.
32 Bayāzī-‘Tāj al-Dīn Ṭāhir Wazīr, ed. Iraj Afshar and Murtaza Taimuri (University of Isfahan Publication, Chapkhana Bahman, AH 1353), 410.
33 For a detailed discussion of the ideological and other considerations that prompted the Chishti saints to adopt this attitude towards the government of the day, see K. A. Nizami’s article ‘Early Indo-Muslim mystics and their attitude towards the State’, *Islamic Culture* xxii–xxiv (Oct. 1948, Jan. 1950).
there and was killed by the rebels. Shaikh ‘Alam al-Dīn was appointed Shaikh al-Islām with the responsibility of looking after the religious classes. While the Chishtīs joined government service under duress, the mystics of the Suhrwardī order did so of their free will. To break the isolationist attitude of the Chishti mystics the Sultān married his daughter into a well-known Sufi family of Nagaur. Inspired by the ideas of Ibn Taimiyya, he was anxious to return to an integrated approach to religion and state as had developed under the Pious Caliphs. His views were, however, distorted by others and his motivations became subject to doubt and distrust. The following two instances illustrate the nature of the misrepresentation:

(a) Ibn Batūta writes:

When Sultān Muhammad became the ruler, he adopted the practice of assigning khidmat to jurists, saints and pious people, and in support of this practice cited the rulers of the first century [khulāfā-i Rāshidin] who never assigned any work to one who was not a scholar or a wise man.

The significance of the word khidmat was missed by later writers who twisted it to mean that the Sultān expected ‘personal’ services, like those of attendants, keepers of royal wardrobes, etc. However, reference to ‘the rulers of the first century’ makes it clear that the service meant was to the state not to an individual, and that the Sultān regarded this as a return to the practice that prevailed during the time of the khulāfā-i Rāshidin.

(b) The Jawāmi‘ al-Kalīm informs us that the Sultān would say: ‘What have Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī done which we cannot do?’ This was not vain bluster, rather assertion of an ideological aspiration.

34 Mir Khurd, Sīyār al-Auliyya, 196.
35 ibid., 196–7.
36 If it be accepted, though no contemporary evidence on this point is available, that Shaikh ‘Alām al-Dīn, grandson of Shaikh Bāḥa al-Dīn Zakānīyya of Multān, had come under the influence of the teachings of Ibn Taimiyya, the relations of the Suhrwardī saints with Sultān Muhammad bin Tughluq can be very neatly explained. Shaikh Rūkn al-Dīn Multāni’s support to the Sultān in his various measures, his acceptance of the title of Shaikh al-Islām etc, indicate his close association with the Sultān in the implementation of his policies. For a detailed discussion, see the author’s article ‘The Suhrwardī Silsila and its influence on Medieval Indian Politics’ Medieval India Quarterly (Aligarh, July–Oct 1957), iii, 109–49.
38 Ibn Battūta Rehla, ii, 54.
39 e.g. Mir ‘Abd al-Wāhid Bilgrāmī, Saba’ Sanabil (Kanpur, AH 1299), 64–5; Tariḥ-i Ferhshā, ii, 399; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Chishti, Murat al-Aṣrār (MS): Muhammad Bulaq Chishti declared all such stones a tissue of lies. See his Matlūb al-Tālībīn (MS).
The Sultan wished to emphasize that it was taking the wrong attitude to say that we cannot do what the Pious Caliphs had done and sit back helpless. Their ideals should be followed as active principles of life. No claim of equality was implied in the Sultan's assertion, rather a desire to emulate them as models of conduct.

When the Sultan put forward these views, he was grossly misunderstood and fiercely maligned. The contemporary historian Barani charged him with tabakkumāt-i mujaddiyya (innovatory injunctions) and said that 'he wanted to combine kingship with prophethood'. Nothing could be further from the truth. What the Sultan had aimed at was bridging the gulf between religion and politics as advised by Ibn Taimiyya.

(2) Ibn Taimiyya had mobilized opinion against the Mongols and preached jihād against them. From Damascus to Alexandria he had created a powerful resistance movement against the Mongol occupation of Muslim lands. Muhammad bin Tughluq implemented that policy in South Asia. He called himself Abū al-Mujāhid, and exhorted people for jihād against the Mongols. Mir Khurd informs us:

In those days he [Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq] wanted to control the lands of Turkistān and Khurāsān and overthrow the descendants of Chengiz Khān. All the elite and elders of Delhi and those living in adjoining areas were asked to be present. A huge tent was put up and under it a pulpit was placed. He sat on this pulpit and persuaded people to prepare for jihād ... and said: I want to overthrow the descendants of Chengiz Khān. You should cooperate with me in this struggle.

The correspondence between Sultān Abū Sa‘īd and Sultān Muhammad bin Tughluq, as available in Bāyāzī Tāj al-Dīn Wazīr, shows that both were anxious to evolve a common strategy for meeting the Mongol menace.

(3) The Sultan strictly enforced the ihtisāb regulations as enjoined by the Shari‘a law and as insisted upon by Ibn Taimiyya. Himself punctilious in the performance of obligatory prayers and in observing fast, he

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41 Barani, Tārikh-i Fīrūz Shāhī, 457.
42 K. A. Nizami, ‘Some Documents of Sultān Muhammad bin Tughluq’ in Medieval India, 1, 308; Badr-i-Chach, Qasī‘īd Badr-i-Chach (Nawal Kishore, AH 1279), 2, 20, etc. Also Bāyāzī Tāj al-Dīn Ahmad Wazīr, 41, wherein Sultān Abū Sa‘īd addresses him as Sultān-i Azam Mujāhid-i ‘Ādil.
43 Eminent saints of Delhi, like Shaikh Nāṣir al-Dīn Chirāgh, Maulānā Fakhhr al-Dīn Zarrā‘ī, and Maulānā Shams al-Dīn Yahyā were present at this meeting.
44 Mir Khurd, Syār al-Auliyyā, 271–2.
46 Barani, Tārikh-i Fīrūz Shāhī, 460. See also K. A. Nizami, ‘Ṣalāṭīn-i Dehli kay Madhabī Rujhanāt, 329.
banned wine and issued prohibitionary orders.* Whoever disregarded
Shari'a laws in this regard, whether noble or a commoner, was taken to
task. People were asked to be regular in the performance of their
obligatory prayers. Those found loitering in the bazar after the call for
prayers (adhan), were punished. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa informs us:
The Sultan's order was that everybody should learn namaz and essentials of
faith. So people were found committing to memory namaz in the bazars and
getting these written on papers.**

When the Sultan entered the women's quarters, all women with whom
Shari'a law prescribes seclusion, were removed from his sight.

(4) Muhammad bin Tughluq's concept of khilāfa was also deeply
influenced by the views of Ibn Taimiyya. He considered recognition of
authority by the khilāfa an essential and indispensable legal require-
ment. Those who failed to obtain this recognition were 'usurpers' in his
opinion. So, pending caliphal recognition of his authority, he stopped
Friday and 'Id prayers in his realms. Not realizing the significance of
this order people considered it an interference in religion. In the same
spirit, the Sultan stopped inscribing his own name on the coins and
inscribed on them only the name of the khilāfa. When the farman was
received from the Caliph in Cairo, the Sultan took bay't (oath of fealty)
from people with the Qur'an and the Mashāriq al-Anwār placed
before him.

(5) Many of Muhammad bin Tughluq's actions, like those of Ibn
Taimiyya, reflected an anxiety to revive the traditions of the Prophet in
every walk of life. He was quite aware of this role: his coins pronounced
him as Muḥā-i-Sunan-i-Khātim al-Nabīyyīn (reviver of the traditions
and practices of the last of the Prophets).

(6) One working under the influence of Ibn Taimiyya's ideas could not
help coming into direct conflict with the ideology and institutions of the

* AI-Qalqashandi, Subh al A'shā. English translation by Otto Spies: An Arab Account
of India (Aligarh, n.d.) 64; Shihāb al-Dīn al-'Umārī, Masālik al-Aḥsār fi Mamālik al-
Amsār, chapter dealing with India translated into English by Otto Spies, S. A. Rashid and
S. Moin al-Haq (Lahore, 1943), 52.
** It may be pointed out that the Qur'ān enjoins upon a Muslim ruler to ensure regular
30 Barani, Tarikh-i Fīruz Shāhī, 306. 31 ibid., 491.
32 Isāmī, Futūh al-Salātīn (Madras, 1948), 515.
33 H. N. Wright, The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi (Delhi, 1936),
34 Muhammad bin Tughluq celebrated the event with great éclat and enthusiasm. The
qasā'id (panegyrics) on this occasion reveal the Sultan's sentiments of respect and
devotion for the khilāfa: Qasā'id Badr-i-Chach, 15.
35 Barani, Tarikh-i Fīruz Shāhī, 495. 36 H. N. Wright, Coinage and Metrology, 120.
mystics. In his early years Muḥammad bin Tughluq had shown great respect to contemporary saints, but under the influence of Ibn Taimiyya his attitude changed. At his request Shaikh Sharaf al-Dīn Yahyā of Maner wrote two volumes elucidating the principles and practices of mysticism but the Sultan remained unconvinced. He asked for more elucidation but the Shaikh declined, commenting: 'he who is deprived of the real mystical norm will never known anything.'

Significantly enough this letter opens with the Qur'ānic verse:

> It may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knoweth, ye know not. [2: 216]

The Sultan clashed with the Sufis on the following issues: (a) their concept of walāya (b) their disassociation from government service, (c) their dress and demeanour, and (d) their khānqāh life. The concept of walāya rendered it obligatory on mystics to remain rooted to the place assigned to them by their spiritual mentors. Muḥammad bin Tughluq asked them to move to different parts of the country according to his directions. He sent the Sufis resident in Delhi to the distant Deccan, brought the Muslim élite in from adjoining areas to Delhi and settled them there. He asked Maulānā Shams al-Dīn Yahyā to move to Kashmir.

Two eminent mystic houses of the time, Ajodhan and Nagaur, also felt the impact of the Sultan's policy. Only Shaikh Naṣīr al-Dīn Chirāgh, successor of Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya, refused to move out of Delhi and bore all the hardships and punishments inflicted on him by the Sultan.

The mystics' principle of abjuring government service was also assailed by Muḥammad bin Tughluq and Sufis were made to accept
government assignments in different parts of the country. The *khānqāh* life in South Asia suffered a set-back as a result of this policy. Baranī informs us that when Muḥammad bin Tughluq died and Firūz Shah succeeded him:

The *khānqāhs* of the city and its environs, and of towns within four or five *karohs* of the city, and, in fact the whole empire, had been lying in ruins for years, no bird flew there and no thirsty man got any water there. Owing to Firūz Shah’s royal favours, the keepers of *khānqāhs*, the sufs, the devotees, the *galandārs*, the *Haideris*, the travellers and the indigent became prosperous and satisfied.65

According to Mīr Khurd, the Sultan was opposed to mystic dress and forced the sufs to give it up. If anybody showed respect to his spiritual mentor the Sultan angrily admonished him: ‘Give up these beliefs involving heresy.’66

(7) Ibn Taimiyya believed in just and generous treatment of all non-Muslims (*dhimmis*) living in a Muslim state. In a letter to the Christian ruler of Cyprus he wrote:

We people seek the welfare of all. We wish that God may bless you with the good of this and the next world, because it is the duty of one who has faith in God to wish well of His creation. The Christians will themselves bear witness to what I am saying. When I approached the Tartars for the release of the prisoners of war, their ruler Ghazān released only the Muslims and told me that they had Christians also as prisoners whom they had brought from there. ‘These [Christians] will not be set free’ [he said]. I told him: ‘No. Besides Muslims, you should set free the Jews and the Christians also as they are our *dhimmis*. We cannot tolerate their remaining in prison, neither in the hands of Muslims, nor non-Muslims.’ So we got the Christians also liberated.67

Muḥammad bin Tughluq’s extraordinarily good treatment of the non-Muslims clearly recalls Ibn Taimiyya’s line. The Sultan gave full religious freedom to the Hindus and treated them generously. Ibn Batūṭa informs us that once a Hindu noble lodged a complaint with the *qādī* against the Sultan that he had killed his [the plaintiff’s] brother without reason. The Sultan was summoned by the *qādī*, and appeared in the court without arms and, accepting the verdict of the *qādī*, conciliated with the Hindu noble.68 This was an unprecedented event in the history of India at this time.

(8) Muhammad bin Tughluq insisted on being called Sultān al-‘Ādil\(^{69}\) (the just ruler). One of Ibn Taimiyya’s three essential conditions for legitimate exercise of political authority was that a ruler should be Imām-i ‘Ādil\(^{70}\) and Muhammad bin Tughluq was anxious to fulfil this condition.

(9) Ibn Taimiyya’s interest in jurisprudence and emphasis on ijtihat inspired the same in Muhammad bin Tughluq. He knew the Qurān by heart and for all practical purposes the Hidayah was on the tip of his tongue.\(^{71}\) He believed in fresh interpretation according to the exigencies of the situation and had a group of ‘ulamā‘ always around him. With them he discussed and debated every matter; he never issued orders for the execution of anybody unless these ‘ulamā‘ concurred with his judgment.\(^{72}\) If he failed to convince them he would immediately set free the person held in custody. He told the jurists that if anybody was unjustly executed, they would be responsible for shedding innocent blood.\(^{73}\) Never before in the history of the Delhi Sultanate were intended executions thus discussed with the ‘ulamā‘ in the light of the Shari‘a.

(10) A deep religious conviction seems to have motivated many of the Sultan’s actions. He called Deogir, the second administrative city of the Empire, Qubba-i Din-i Islam\(^{74}\) (‘vault of the Islamic religion’). This was not without significance. He asked Maulānā Fakhr al-Dīn Zarradī to go to Kashmir in order to sit in the idol houses and preach Islam there.\(^{75}\) His claim to be the ‘reviver of the traditions of the last of the Prophets’, read alongside these remarks, provides an insight into the working of his mind.

(11) Ibn Taimiyya considered rebellion against established Muslim authority injurious to public well-being. When Muhammad bin Tughluq’s various projects provoked strong reaction and the religious classes justified rebellion against him,\(^{76}\) Muḥammad bin Tughluq must have derived moral support from the ideology of Ibn Taimiyya. For the first time in Indian history, coins were used to advocate loyalty to the Sultan. The inscriptions on Muḥammad bin Tughluq’s coins referred to the

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\(^{69}\) Badaoni, Muntakhab al-Tawārikh (Biblioteca Indica, Calcutta, 1864), i., 225. His coins and buildings also pronounce him as such, see Lane-Poole, The Coins of the Sultans of Delhi in the British Museum (London, 1884), Nos. 280–282. His fortress in Delhi was called ‘Adilabad.

\(^{70}\) Minhāj al-Sunnah, ii, 85.

\(^{71}\) Shihāb al-Dīn al-‘Umari, Masālik al-Aḥār, 37; Ibn Hajar Asqalānī, al-Durrar al-Kāminah (Hyderabad, AH 1348), lii, 460.

\(^{72}\) Yahya Sirhindī, Tarikh-i Muḥarrak Shāhī (Calcutta, 1931), 115-6.

\(^{73}\) Ibid., Badaoni, Muntakhab al-Tawārikh, 239.

\(^{74}\) E. Thomas, Chronicles, 209.

\(^{75}\) ‘Isami, Futūḥ al-Salāṭīn, 536.
people's religious obligations in this respect: ‘Whoever obeys the Sultan, obeys God’ and ‘Obey God, obey the Prophet and obey those with authority amongst you.’

(12) Muhammad bin Tughluq rejected all medieval concepts of the nobility of birth—something whose significance in the religious context Baranî failed to appreciate. That low born people—e.g. vinters, gardeners, weavers, etc.—could rise to eminence in the state was a positive contribution of the Sultan to Indian polity of this period. Historians have attributed the germination of this approach to the influence of philosophy on the Sultan. Considered in its proper context it had its roots in the Islamic principles of equal treatment for all, as propounded by Ibn Taimiyya.

(13) Though practically all Arab writers of the period, the authors of al-Durrār al-Kāminah, Ṣubb al-A’shā, al-A’yān al-‘Āṣr etc., have paid eloquent tribute to Muḥammad bin Tughluq’s erudition and generosity, the account of the Sultan in Masālik al-‘Aṣār has a special significance. Its author Shihāb ad-Dīn al-‘Umarî, a resident of Damascus, was a follower of Ibn Taimiyya. His appreciation of the Sultan’s religious attitude and behaviour is, in fact, an appraisal of him in the light of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideology. He expressly observes of the Sultan: ‘He is one who does not permit the prohibited actions, nor lets anyone [have] of forbidden things and none dare commit openly in the country unlawful acts and most sternly he forbids the use of wine.’ Discussing the Sultan’s various measures he says: ‘the beacon of Shari’a is shining on account of him’. He praises his dispensation of justice most eloquently: ‘Everyone who wants to approach him can reach him. Neither the greatness of the chamberlains nor their curtains can keep him back.’ Summing up, Shihāb ad-Dīn writes: ‘he fears God in secret and in public, and does not commit a prohibited thing and does not yield to it.’

Zia ad-Dīn Barani, who seems to have been ignorant of the intellectual scene in the Islamic world at that time and known nothing about the ideology of Ibn Taimiyya, attributed Muḥammad bin Tughluq’s religious attitudes and policies to the local influence of contemporary Indian philosophers, like Sa’d Manṭaqī, ‘Ubaid, Najm Intashār and ‘Alîm al-Dīn.

Under Muḥammad bin Tughluq, the state espoused the ideology of Ibn Taimiyya. Firūz Shāh Tughluq, his successor, though deeply interested in

77 H. N. Wright, Cornage and Metrology, 143; E. Thomas, Chronicles, 243–50.
78 Barani, Tarikh-i Firūz Shāh, p. 505.
79 Shihāb ad-Dīn al-‘Umarî, Masālik al-‘Aṣār, 38.
80 ibid., 44.
81 ibid., 50.
82 See K. A. Nizami, Salatin-i-Dehli kay Madhabi Ruhānī, 327 f.
religion and strongly opposed to heretical movements and ideas, had little in common with Muhammad bin Tughluq’s views and indeed opposed some of them. The state never again came under the influence of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideology whose impact turned slowly and gradually into purely religious channels.

EARLY RESPONSE TO IBN TAIMIYYA’S IDEAS

Perhaps the most outstanding religious figure of the period who responded, reacted or modified mystic attitudes in the light of the situation created by the dissemination of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideas, was Shaikh Naṣīr al-Dīn Chirāgh of Delhi (d. 1356). He resolutely affirmed:

The ways of a spiritual mentor cannot be cited as justification for any action. One can justify his action only on the basis of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet.88

and rescued the mystic movement from criticism. He stopped the practice of prostration before a spiritual master89 and forbade reverence at graves.90

Certain Qur’ānic verses with anthropomorphic references were the subject of bitter controversy in those days. Ibn Taimiyya who had expressed his views on this subject in his Tafsīr-i Sūrah-i Ikhlās91 was criticised on that count. A visitor once tried to draw Shaikh Naṣīr al-Dīn Chirāgh into that controversy but the Shaikh confined himself to a very brief reply and changed the subject.92

Shaikh Naṣīr al-Dīn’s views about the vision of God are clearly stated in the Khair al-Majalis.93 The Shaikh believed that the vision of God is possible in this world. ‘Had it not been so, Moses would not have prayed to God for it,’ argues the Shaikh. Ibn Taimiyya had criticised all those who believed in such a possibility.94

The fact that Shaikh Naṣīr al-Dīn was known as Abū Ḥanīfa Thānī can either be interpreted to mean that he adhered strictly to the Ḥanafi school of law or that he used the same intelligence in dealing with religious issues as was characteristic of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa. The latter

90 ibid.; Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn al-Bukhārī Makhdūm-i Jahāniyān (d. 1384) also condemned kissing of graves and scattering of rose petals on them: Husain, Srīrājl-Hidāyā, ed. Qadi Sajjad Husain (Delhi, 1983).
92 ibid., 194–5, 239.
93 Al-Wasilah, Urdu translation by Malihābādī (Lahore, A.H. 1342), 41.
interpretation seems more probable because his spiritual mentor Shaikh Niẓām al-Dīn Auliya had advocated direct recourse to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth for tackling religious issues.

Šafi al-Dīn al-Hindī’s debates in Damascus

Šafi al-Dīn al-Hindī (1246–1315), born and brought up in Delhi, settled in Damascus. He was looked upon as the leader of the Shafi’ite and Ash’arite scholars of his day. Hüfiz Ibn Qayyim, a distinguished follower of Ibn Taimiyya, was his pupil and had lived with him till his death. Šafi al-Dīn challenged Ibn Taimiyya’s views on anthropomorphism and had public debates with him in Damascus. Some of these debates were arranged by the government of Syria, and had official support. Notwithstanding Šafi al-Dīn’s eminence as a scholar and jurist, he could not stop the impact of forces which Ibn Taimiyya had released. How Šafi al-Dīn al-Hindī’s views were received in India is not known.

After Muhammad bin Tughluq

Though Ibn Taimiyya is not explicitly mentioned in the religious literature of early medieval India, his impact is discernible in some of the trends of the period. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī (1564–1624), popularly known as Mujaddid-i Alī Thānī, makes no reference to Ibn Taimiyya in his writings but his criticism of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s wahdat al-wujūd (unity of the noumenal and the phenomenal) established his intellectual identity with Ibn Taimiyya. Perhaps confronted by similar situations, Ibn Taimiyya and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī regarded wahdat al-wujūd, as a source of confusion in religious thought. Of course, Shaikh Ahmad’s faith in mysticism as a means to invigorate spiritual life remained strong. Nevertheless, he made the Shari’a the main prop of his spiritual discipline and openly criticised Sufis who strayed from it. This adaptation, conscious or unconscious, of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideology to the South Asian situation, had far-reaching effects on subsequent religious developments in the region. Ibn al-‘Arabī’s thought was rejected, mystic discipline strengthened, and the erratic behaviour of the pseudo-mystics condemned.

* He was born in Delhi in 1246 and educated there. He left India at the age of 23 and after visiting several Muslim countries settled in Damascus. His Indian accent in pronunciation continued till the last. For his life: Ibn Taqi al-Dīn Subki, Tābaqāt al-Shafi’ya al-Kubra (Cairo, AH 1324), Ibn Hajar Asqalānī, al-Durrat al-Kāminah (Hyderabad, 2nd ed., 1982). A detailed account appeared in Urdu in Ma‘ārif (Azamgarh, March 1943), 165–180.
It was in the eighteenth century, when Shah Wali Allah (1702–1763) was prominent on the South Asian intellectual scene, and Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab in the Arab world, that Ibn Taimiya's thought came to be seriously studied in academic circles. Shah Wali Allah's stay in Hijaz afforded him thorough insight into the thought of Ibn Taimiya of which his teacher, Shaikh Abū Tahir Kurdi of Madina, was an ardent advocate. But the latter was an admirer of Ibn al-'Arabī as well as Ibn Taimiya. Shah Wālī Allah imbibed this approach of evaluating conflicting ideological positions in an objective and dispassionate manner.

Ibn Taimiya's impact on Shah Wali Allah's thought is clearly discernible in some of his writings. His discussion of khilāfa and khilāfa al-Rashida in Izālat al-Khifa and Qurrat al-'Aynayn echo the ideas propounded in Ibn Taimiya's Minhāj al-Sunnah; while some of his discussions in Hujjat Allah al-Baligha seem inspired by Ibn Taimiya's Fatāwa. Similarly, Shah Wālī Allah's campaign against bid'at, emphasis on ijtihād and involvement in the political struggles of the time are not unrelated to Ibn Taimiya's teaching on these questions.

Makhdūm Muhammad Mu'īn Sindhi, author of Darāsat al-Labāb, wrote to Shah Wali Allah, seeking his opinion about some of the views of Ibn Taimiya. Shah Wālī Allah wrote in reply:

My approach about all Muslim religious thinkers is that they are 'udūl, that is, they possess correct faith and proper conduct. This is as the Prophet has said: 'In every age people with piety and faith will represent [interpret] the religion.' They may believe in certain things on which there may not be unanimity, but if such matters of their belief are not against the clear Qur'ānic injunctions, the sunnah of the Prophet and the consensus of the community (ijmā'), [criticism of them is not justified]. Our assessment of Ibn Taimiya after full investigation is that he was a scholar of the ‘Book of God’ and had full command over its etymological and juristic implications. He remembered by heart the traditions of the Prophet and accounts of elders (salaf) and understood well their etymological and juristic purpose and meaning. He was a recognized scholar of syntax (nahw) and semantics (lughat). He was an authority on the Hanbalite jurisprudence and its principles and branches. He excelled in intelligence and brilliance. He argued in defence of ahl al-Sunnah with great eloquence and force. No innovation or irreligious act is reported about him. Only certain matters on which he was harassed by his contemporaries have been reported to us. But there is not a single matter on which he is without his defence based on the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. So it is difficult to find a man in the whole world who possesses the qualities of Ibn Taimiya. No one can come anywhere near him in

91 Compare, for instance: Minhāj al-Sunnah, (134–40) and Qurrat al-'Aynayn, (236–46).

92 See Shah Wali Allah kay Siyasi Maktubat, ed. K. A. Nizami, (Delhi, 1969).
the force of his speech and writing. People who harassed him [and got him thrown in prison] did not possess even one-tenth of his scholarly excellence ... In this matter the differences of the ‘ulamā’ resemble the differences of the Companions of the Prophet and it is necessary to abstain from making any comments on such matters.4

Shah Wālī Allah then referred item by item to objections against Ibn Taimiyya—his anthropomorphic ideas, his views about visiting the tomb of the Prophet, his position vis-à-vis Qūṭb, Ghawth, Khīṭr, etc, and his assessment of the Caliph ‘Alī—and showed that, though one might disagree, Ibn Taimiyya could not be charged with blasphemy or heresy on that account. He concluded: ‘I exhort Muslims in the name of God, against maligning him as ‘ālim and mujtahid on such matters of difference of opinion.’

This defence of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideological position had an impact on contemporary religious thought in South Asia. As his seminary, Madrasah-i-Rahimya, was the hub of intellectual life in the country, ideas adumbrated there quickly flowed to wider academic circles. Shāh Wālī Allah’s son, Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, seems to have been impressed by Ibn Taimiyya’s commentary on Surat al-Nūr in his Bustān al-Muhaddithān, but in Fatāwā-i ‘Azīzī, he appears critical of some of his views.

IMPACT OF IBN TAIMIYYA’S IDEAS ON CERTAIN REFORMIST MOVEMENTS

The Fara‘īḍī and the Mujāhidīn movements which arose in India during the 18th–19th centuries held certain positions inspired by the teachings of Ibn Taimiyya. Local conditions and individual preferences accentuated one or the other aspect of his thought, but in their emphasis on the doctrine of ta‘wīl and the spirit of jihād, these movements stood on the same ground as, and drew inspiration from, Ibn Taimiyya.

The Fara‘īḍī movement, whatever its genesis, came under the influence of Wahhābī ideology when its leaders went to the Hijāz and came into

* Maktūbāt Shāh Wālī Allah (Ahmadi Press, Delhi), 26–9.

* During the British period—particularly soon after 1857—the word Wahhābī came to be regarded as synonymous with ‘rebel’ and ‘mutineer’. (See W. W. Hunter, The Indian Musalmans (London, 1872). Sir Syed Ahmad Khān had to use much ingenuity to save the Wahhābī movement in India from British fury. He divested it of its political trappings and emphasized its religious objectives and ideals, particularly the spirit of ijtihād. The literature produced in South Asia during the nineteenth century on the subject of jihād provides an interesting insight into the currents and cross-currents of ideological conflict.
contact with eminent religious figures of Arabia. Haji Sharafuddin stayed in Arabia for 20 years (1799–1818) and received his education there. He could not but be influenced by Wahhabi ideas about adherence to the monothestic ideal of Islam and stern rejection of bid'at. But the Farahi, who professed strict adherence to the Hanafi school of law, and did not reject mysticism as a source of spiritual enlightenment.

The views of Sayyid Ahmad Shahed (1786–1831) leader of the Mujahidin movement, are carefully collected in Sirat-i Mustaqim, compiled by Shah Muhammad Isma’il and Maulana Abd al-Hayy. It contains a powerful denunciation of bid’at, and criticises many Sufi practices. An effort to recover the true spirit of ahlasn is made by laying down the basic principles of the Tariqa-i Muhammadiya, shaking off the unauthorized accretions in mystic life, and adhering to spiritual disciplines closer to the spirit of the Sunnah.

Among the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Shahed were men who had received their education in the Hijaz under Wahhabi scholars. Maulvi Walayat ‘Ali ‘Azimabadi had learnt Hadith with Qadi Shaukani, a well-known Wahhabi scholar. Unlike the Farahi, who were deeply attached to the Hanafi school, the Mujahidin renounced taqlid. In sum, while all these reformist movements were influenced one way or another by the ideas of Ibn Taimiyah, none adopted Ibn Taimiyah’s approach towards mysticism. Rather, in securing their position all adopted mystic practices of initiation (bay’t), khilafa and spiritual training.

Sir Syed and rejection of taqlid

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) founder of the ‘Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College’, ‘the first modernist organization in Islam’, later to develop into the Aligarh Muslim University, imbibed many traits of Ibn Taimiyah’s thought. His Rah-i Sunnat wa Radd-i Bid’at gives an idea of his religious approach from the very beginning. He rejected taqlid in favour of ijtihad according to the needs of the time. He even spoke of the need for a new ‘ilm al-kalâm to meet the exigencies of the situation. He called himself an ‘inveterate Wahhabi.’ He rejected all concepts of turk-i duniya (renunciation of the world), emphasized the need of a mujtahid in every age, and declared fictitious and fabricated all ahadith about the Mahdi. One cannot fail to discern the influence of

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96 Al-Wasilah (Urdu trans.), 41.
99 ibid., 169.
101 ibid., 376.
Maulāna Isma'il Shahīd so far as his attitude towards taqlīd and bidʿāt is concerned. His attitude towards taqlīd finds a very cogent exposition in Chirāgh 'Alī’s Proposed political, legal and social reforms under Muslim rule.

**Nawāb Muḥammad Šiddīq Hasan Khan**

After Shāh Wālī Allāh, the most powerful advocate of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideology was Nawāb Sayyid Muḥammad Šiddīq Hasan Khān (1832–1890), a veteran scholar and prolific writer from Bhopal. His teacher, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith of Benares, was a pupil of Qādī Shaukānī. He strove hard to propagate Ibn Taimiyya’s ideas and, moreover, to remove misunderstandings by presenting them in their proper historical perspective. His Itāhaf al-Nūbalā, Abjad al-ʿUlam, Taqsīr, and al-Taʿāj al-Mukallāl contain eloquent tributes to Ibn Taimiyya’s contribution to Islamic thought. He considered him and his pupil Ḥāfīẓ Ibn Qayyīm as the mujaddids of the seventh century AH:

The mujaddids for the seventh century are Shaikh al-İslām Ibn Taimiyya and Ḥāfīẓ Ibn Qayyīm. The efforts of these two elders towards reform and resurrection have no equal among the preceding or the following generations. A vast number of Islamic literary works, particularly historical and biographical, are full of references to him [Ibn Taimiyya].

Nawāb Šiddīq Hasan Khān had Nuʿmān Alūsī’s Jalāʾ al-ʿAynayn published in Cairo. He strengthened the ideological prominence of Ibn Taimiyya by undertaking the publication of a number of works which either elucidated his thought or provided ideological arguments for defending his religious views. But the circumstances of Šiddīq Hasan Khān’s life did not admit of any application of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideas in the political sphere; he concentrated his attention on rejection of taqlīd, return to the Qur’ān and Hadīth as sources of law, and rejection of bidʿāt. He was in touch with the ʿulamāʾ of Ḥadīth in Yemen and

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103 See Hali, Hayat-i Jawāid (Kanpur, 1901).
104 For detailed account of his life, see Maʿāthir-i Šiddīq (Nawal Kishore, Lucknow, 1924–5, 4 vols.) by his son, Nawāb Muḥammad Šiddīq Hasan Khān.
105 Sayyid Muḥammad Šiddīq Hasan Khān, Itāhaf al-Nūbalā (Kanpur, 1288/1871).
106 Sayyid Muḥammad Šiddīq Hasan Khān, Abjad al-ʿUlam (Bhopal, AH 1295).
107 Sayyid Muḥammad Šiddīq Hasan Khān, Taqsīr (Bhopal, AH 1298).
108 Sayyid Muḥammad Šiddīq Hasan Khān, al-Taʿāj al-mukallāl (Bhopal, AH 1299).
through them kept himself fully informed of the numerous works of Ibn Taimiyya and his distinguished followers.

Amritsar: A centre for the study of Ibn Taimiyya

Almost at the same time when Šiddīq Hasan Khān was busy popularizing Ibn Taimiyya’s works in Bhopal, Amritsar came into prominence as another centre of studies pertaining to Ibn Taimiyya. It attracted the attention of scholars like Maulānā Muhammad, Maulānā ‘Abd al-Jabbār, Maulānā ‘Abd al-Rahmān, and Maulānā ‘Abd al-Wāḥīd. All of them belonged to what is known as the Ghaznawi school. They established contact with the ‘ulamā’ of Najd through some Bombay merchants and kept themselves informed of the works of the Shaikh al-Islām. They had some of them published, began to give instruction in them and generally applied themselves to the zealous propagation of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideology. They evaded the element of jihād in Ibn Taimiyya’s thought but stressed the importance of Ḥadīth in articulating the spirit of 'iḥād.

Maulānā Nādhīr Ḥusain Muhaddith

Maulānā Nādhīr Ḥusain (d. 1902) who taught in Delhi for more than half a century, was a pupil of Shāh Muḥammad Ishāq, grandson of Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, and was considered leader of the Aḥl al-Ḥadīth in India. Influenced by Wahhābi ideology, he nevertheless, in his attitude towards Ibn al-‘Arabī, followed the tradition of Shāh Wālī Allāh. It is difficult to say if the Ambala sedition case against him (1864–5) was based on mere suspicion as he had contact with the ‘ulamā’ of Sadiqpur or if he had actually been involved in jihād. However, in his later years—after the Ambala case—he was mainly concerned with rejection of taqlīd and recourse to Qur‘ān and Ḥadīth as primary sources of Muslim law.

Significantly, all admirers of Ibn Taimiyya in India during the post-1857 period presented his views purely in terms of 'iḥād and said nothing about his ideas regarding jihād.

Shibli on Ibn Taimiyya

In 1908 Maulānā Shibli (d. 1914) wrote an article in al-Nadwa under the caption: ‘Allāma Ibn Taimiyya Harrānī as a mujāddid of his century’. He indicated three essential qualifications for a mujāddid:

110 For his role in Aḥl al-Ḥadīth movement, see Muhammad İbrahim Mîr Siyâlkoştî, Tarîkh-i Aḥl-i Ḥadīth, (Lahore, 1953), 425–35.
1. He should bring about a purposeful revolution in religion, or in learning or in politics.

2. His reformist ideas should be the outcome of *ijtihad*, not *taqlid*.

3. He should have endured physical suffering in the pursuit of his ideal.

Shibli found all these qualities in Ibn Taimiyya and considered him superior to many outstanding figures in the history of Islam. Shibli was the first to study Ibn Taimiyya’s political role. This was a departure from the trend represented by Sir Syed, Nawâb Şüdîq Hasan, and Maulâna Nâdîr Husain who had presented Ibn Taimiyya primarily as a religious reformer. Shibli wished to include Ibn Taimiyya in his *Heroes of Islam Series* but was unable to undertake further work on him.

**Influence on Maulâna Azad**

Emphasis on *Hadîth* studies and rejection of *taqlid* continued to be considered the only aims of Ibn Taimiyya’s movement until Maulâna Abül Kâlâm Azâd (1888–1958) appeared on the Indian intellectual scene and looked to Ibn Taimiyya for inspiration to restore to the Muslims in India the mettle necessary for a struggle against foreign domination.

Perhaps no Indian scholar understood the role of Ibn Taimiyya in the history of Islam with such clarity and conviction as did Maulâna Azâd. In his struggle against British rule, he drew inspiration from Ibn Taimiyya who had guided the Muslims of his day when political power had passed out of their hands. Apart from his own independent study of Ibn Taimiyya’s works, Maulâna Azâd’s contact with the Alûsî family of Baghdad, whose advocacy of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideology was of long standing, confirmed him in his views. Nu’mân al-Alûsî (d. 1899) had written, *Jala’ al-‘Aynayn* which defends Ibn Taimiyya against charges of unorthodoxy. Besides, Shaikh Shihâb al-Dîn Mahmûd Alûsî’s *tafsîr, Rûh al-Ma’âni*, bore the unmistakable imprint of Ibn Taimiyya’s views. Maulâna Azâd’s father, Maulâna Khair al-Dîn had criticised Alûsî for his views and written a critique of his commentary. He particularly criticised Alûsî’s denial (following Ibn Taimiyya) of the existence of the Prophet Khîzr. Maulâna Azâd abandoned his father’s

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111 Maqâlât-i Shibli, v, 62–76.
112 Cairo, 1298/1880–81.
113 Albert Hourani considers it ‘a sign of the influence which such ideas were now beginning to exercise over educated Muslims of different traditions.’ *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (Cambridge, 1983), 222.
stance in favour of Alusis’s view in respect of Ibn Taimiya. This surprised even the Alusis, and established Maulana Azad as an independent thinker unfettered by family traditions.

Ibn Taimiya’s influence on Maulana Azad was not confined to explicitly religious matters. Azad considered Ibn Taimiya’s diagnosis of the social and political ills of Muslim society very relevant to the situation prevailing in his day. Anxious to organize the Muslims, he cited Ibn Taimiya as his ideal and urged the need for an imam to organize the community. His life during internment at Ranchi resembled, as Maulana Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi remarked, that of Ibn Taimiya and Ibn Qayyim. Addressing a meeting of the ‘ulama’, Azad said that what Ibn Taimiya had done when the Muslim society was faced with the problem of resurrecting the structure of Islamic institutions—political, religious and cultural—provided a model for modern times. He remarked:

The first thing that the ‘ulama’ of those times did was to appoint Muslim deputies over the territories which the Mongols had occupied, with the purpose of organizing the community and establishing the Shari’a law ... Shaikh-al-islam Ibn Taimiya gave a fatwa about the areas under Mongol control that the Muslims of those lands should not accept that change and should not for a moment live without an imam.

Maulana Azad strove for some years to popularise the idea of an imam as the centre of community life. He established Dār al-Irshād as a nursery for training people in those ideals. He founded an organization known as Hizb Allah, based on this concept of imamate. In Tadhkirah, published in 1919, he drew a living, vibrant picture of Ibn Taimiya, focused on the man’s sincerity and determination to revive Muslim society regardless of the opposition and hardship that he had to face.

Maulana Azad’s bold acceptance of Ibn Taimiya’s ideological position dispelled many misunderstandings about Ibn Taimiya and a new phase began in the intellectual history of Muslim India characterized by close study and numerous translations of his works in Urdu. Azad himself translated al-Wasiyat al-Kubra into Urdu, and, under his influence, Ghulam Rasul Mehr, ‘Abd al-Majid Sālik and ‘Abd al-Razzāq Malihābādi became ardent admirers of Ibn Taimiya and propagated his views through their journals, magazines and newspapers.

114 Abûl Kalâm Azad, Karawān-i Khayâl (Bijnor, 1946), 77.
115 Ma‘ârif, March 1919.
117 Tadhkirah (Lahore, 1919), 158.
118 Lahore, 1947.
Iqbal’s assessment of Ibn Taimiyya’s legal and philosophic concepts

If Azad looked to Ibn Taimiyya for the revitalization of Muslim community and its political prestige, Iqbal (d. 1938) looked to him for a reconstruction of Muslim religious thought inspired by a revived spirit of ijtihād. He assessed Ibn Taimiyya’s role from different angles, philosophic, legal, and reformist. Systematic refutation of Greek logic, Iqbal argued, was really undertaken by Ishraqi and Ibn Taimiyya, and he drew attention to the latter’s *Refutation of Logic*, in which induction is described as ‘the only form of reliable argument’.119

Referring to the destruction of Baghdad, the centre of Muslim intellectual life in the middle of the thirteenth century, and the tendency for false reverence for past history, Iqbal said:

> The tendency of over-organization by a false reverence of the past as manifested in the legists of Islam in the thirteenth century and later, was contrary to the inner impulse of Islam and consequently invoked the powerful reaction of Ibn-i Taimiyya, one of the most indefatigable writers and preachers of Islam...120

Iqbal referred approvingly to Ibn Taimiyya’s revolt against the finality of the schools of law and supported his attempt to go back to first principles in order to make a fresh start. Ibn Taimiyya rejected, writes Iqbal, the Hanafi principle of reasoning by analogy and ijma’ (consensus) as understood by the older legists, for ‘he thought agreement was the basis of all superstition.’121 Iqbal came to the conclusion that ‘considering the moral and intellectual decrepitude of his times, he was right in doing so.’

Iqbal saw the Wahhabi movement in the context of the impact of Ibn Taimiyya’s ideas. He wrote:

> ...the spirit of Ibn-i Taimiyya’s teaching found a fuller expression in a movement of immense potentialities which arose in the eighteenth century, from the sand of Nejd, described by MacDonald as the ‘cleanest spot in the decadent world of Islam’. It is really the first throb of life in modern Islam...

In *Islam and Ahmadism* Iqbal refers to Ibn Taimiyya as a critic of ‘mullah rigidity’.122 He looked upon ‘mullah-ism’, which would not allow any freedom of ijtihād, as the real cause of Muslim stagnation and remarked:

> The Wahhabi movement which was a source of inspiration to the 19th century Muslim reformers was really a revolt against the rigidity of the ‘ulamā’.123

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119 *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore, 1944), 129.
Iqbal was particularly impressed by the spirit of *ijtihad* which had characterized the approach of Ibn Taimiyya; Azad looked to him for guidance in organizing the Muslim community under the overall authority of an *imam*. The two approaches, though not divergent or conflicting, were never combined in the larger framework of any movement for the regeneration of Muslim society. Maulana Azad gave up his efforts to establish the authority of an *imam*; Iqbal's ideas about *ijtihad*, though understood by few, were acted upon by none.

**Impact on scholars of Nadwa**

From the early twentieth century, as we have noted, a number of 'ulama' became interested in the works of Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn Qayyim. Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, Maulana Shibli, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were largely responsible for creating this interest. Maulana Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi recalled that when he got hold of the works of Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn Qayyim, 'every other impression disappeared from his heart' and 'every other colour completely faded away'.124 As Director of the Shibli Academy, he was able to enthuse his pupils with admiration for the works of Ibn Taimiyya.

Maulana Sayyid 'Abd al-'Ali, Nazim of Nadwat al-'Ulama', zealously for the works of Ibn Taimiya and Ibn Qayyim, repeatedly urged his younger brother, Maulana Abul Hasan Ali, to study them closely.125 Another teacher at Nadwa, Maulana Shafi Halim 'Ata, appreciated especially the clear, cogent and powerful exposition of Islamic monotheism in the writings of Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn Qayyim. He particularly admired Ibn Taimiya's *Madarij al-Saliikin, al-Jawab al-Kaft, Zad al-Ma'ad*, and *Ida al-Sabinn*. Excepting Ibn Taimiya's views about *Ahl al-Bait*, as expressed in *Minhaj al-Sunnah*, he upheld the Imam's arguments in almost every other respect. He would advise his students that if anybody had not the time to read all the works of Ibn Taimiya, he should at least study his *Fatawa* and *Majmii'at al-Rasa'il* which contain the essence of his thought.127

Maulana Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi regards Ibn Taimiya's *Tafsir Suraat al-Nur* and Ibn Qayyim's *Jawab al-Kafi* as the best guides for young minds.128 In 1957 he wrote a comprehensive account of Ibn Taimiya in his *Tariikh-i Da'wat wa'Azimat*, stressing his efforts to revive the religious zeal of the community. He propagated Ibn Taimiya's

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125 ibid., 106.
126 ibid., 107.
127 ibid., 108.
128 ibid., 175.
129 *Tariikh-i Da'wat wa'Azimat* (Azamgarh, 1957), ii.
ideology without bringing it into clash with the religious psychology of
the Muslims in South Asia.

**Deoband and Ibn Taimiyya**

The early scholars of Deoband—Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nanautawi (d. 1880) and others—did not envoice any interest in Ibn Taimiyya’s teachings. Interest in them began only with Maulānā Anwar Shāh Kashmirī (d. 1933), who studied very carefully the works of Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn Qayyīm. Assisted by a prodigious memory, he would cite passage after passage while discoursing on the works of Ibn Taimiyya. He passed on to his pupils his own enthusiasm for and commitment to Ibn Taimiyya. This is evident in the works for example, of Maulānā Muḥammad Manzoor Nu’manī (editor al-Furqān), Maulānā Sa’īd Ahmad Akbarābādī (editor Burḥān) and others. Anwar Shāh quoted in his writings from Ibn Taimiyya’s al-Jawāb al-Ṣahīḥ and Sarīm al-Maslul ‘alā Shātim al-Rasūl and paid tribute to him as a mountain of knowledge (jabal al-‘ilm). He was, however, critical of some of the views of Ibn Taimiyya. 

Among others, Maulānā Khalīl Aḥmad of Saharanpur and Maulānā Shabbīr Ahmad Uthmānī, while not hesitating to refer to Ibn Taimiyya and Ibn Qayyīm, did not commit themselves to their ideology. Maulānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī expressed his disagreement with Ibn Taimiyya in moderate, polite language, refraining from entering into open rebuttal of his views. Maulānā Husain Ahmad Madani made no secret of his disagreement with the views of Ibn Taimiyya. Maulānā Manāẓir Ahsan Gilaṇī, an alumnus of Deoband, who later chaired the Department of Theology at the Osmānīa University of Hyderabad, was also sceptical of Ibn Taimiyya’s views. His article, Ibn Taimiyya ka Nazariya-i Makhdumi-yat is a critique of Ibn Taimiyya’s al-Nabuwat.

**LITERATURE IN URDU**

A number of Ibn Taimiyya’s books and brochures were translated into Urdu and published from Lahore, Calcutta, Lyalpur and other places by

130 For his life, see: Muhammad Rizwān Allah, Maulānā Anwar Shāh Kashmirī (Aligarh, 1974); Muhammad Azhar Shāh, Ḥayāt-i Anwar (Delhi, 1955); ‘Abd al-Rahmān Kondo, Al-Nūr (Delhi, 1979).

131 e.g. Maulānā Sa’īd Ahmad Akbarābādī. See Mashāhir Aḥl-i ‘ilm ki Mohsin Kitābān, 78.

132 The word makhdūm has a technical meaning in this context. It is used for one who controls the jinn.

133 See Maqālat-i Ahsānī (Karachi, 1959), 369–91.

The titles give an idea of the main areas of interest and involvement. These translations made the Muslims of South Asia directly familiar with the basic categories of Ibn Taimiyya’s thought. Similarly, some of the works of Ibn Qayyim, who was regarded as an exponent of Ibn Taimiyya’s thought, were also translated into Urdu. His “Shifa‘ al-A‘īl was translated into Urdu and published by Maulwi Karīm Bakhsh of Lahore under the title *Kitab al-Taqīd* (no date).

A well-known Urdu scholar who popularized Ibn Taimiyya’s views and highlighted his role in the history of Islam was Maulānā Akbar Shāh Khān Najībābādī. The first comprehensive biography of Ibn Taimiyya in Urdu, published by Afzāl al-‘Ulām Muḥammad Yusūf Kokān ‘Umārī from Madras in 1959, has helped to make possible a clearer appraisal of Ibn Taimiyya’s role in Islamic history.

Maulānā Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Mawdūdī, who wrote prolifically in Urdu on different aspects of religion and politics, was influenced by Ibn Taimiyya’s approach in his interpretation of Islamic history, rejection of taqlīd, bridging the gulf between religion and politics and in his criticism of the Sufi ways of life. However, he did not, in general, explicitly indicate the sources of his inspiration.

Certain sections of ‘ulamā’ and mashaikh were bitterly critical of Ibn Taimiyya. 

134 e.g. see his *A‘ma‘-i Haqīqat Numa* (Hamdard Press, Delhi, n.d.), ii.
Taimiyya's views about mysticism and taqlid, but their polemical writings have had only limited influence.

**THE NATURE OF IBN TAIMIYYA'S IMPACT IN SOUTH ASIA**

In South Asia Ibn Taimiyya's influence can be distinguished in six distinct spheres:

(a) as a model for the resurrection of Muslim society (ihya-i millat);
(b) as an organizer of jihad movement against the Mongols;
(c) as an advocate of ijtihad, (fresh interpretation of Islamic law);
(d) as a critic of bid'at (innovations in different spheres of Muslim life);
(e) as a critic of the Sufis in general, and
(f) as a critic of Ibn al-'Arabi.

South Asia accepted Ibn Taimiyya's role as a reformer, as an advocate of ijtihad, as an uncompromising monotheist, as a critic of bid'at and as an inspiration in the struggle against foreign political domination. However, his views were diversely adopted and emphasized according to the needs of the period. Excepting the rule of Muhammad bin Tughluq, it did not prove possible to apply the whole of Ibn Taimiyya's thought at any other period.

It was as a reformer and critic of bid'at that Ibn Taimiyya's impact was most deeply felt in South Asia. Hardly any Muslim reform movement arose in India that did not owe some inspiration to him in its struggle against unauthorized accretions in Muslim society.

Ibn Taimiyya's ideas played an important role in the political sphere during the 14th, 19th, and the early 20th centuries. Muhammad bin Tughluq adopted his views as his political ideology; the Farahi, the Wahhabi and the Mujahidin movements imbibed the spirit of jihad from him, directly or indirectly. Maulana Azad was inspired by him in his struggle for independence from British rule. He sought to revitalise Muslim society by creating an effective organisational structure under an imam, as advocated by Ibn Taimiyya.

Ibn Taimiyya's criticism of Ibn Al-'Arabi's wahdat al-wujud, was echoed in Shaikh Ahmad Sirhind'i's approach towards pantheistic tendencies. Shâh Wali Allâh of Delhi, who always strongly defended Ibn Taimiyya against all types of criticism, was, however, conciliatory in

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133 e.g. see Shams al-Din Aghani's al-Jawahir al-Bahriya, a commentary on Shahr 'Aqad al-Nasa'fi.
134 See Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, *The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid* (Lahore, 1940).
this matter. His *Risāla fi Taḥqīq Wahdat al-Wujūd* (also known as *al-Maktūb al-Madani*) gave a new orientation to mystical thought in South Asia. Following the guidance of his teacher, Shaikh Abū Tāhir Kurdi of Madina, Shāh Wālī Allāh made the reformist programme of Ibn Taimiyya co-exist with Ibn al-'Arabi’s ideology. As a result even those who subscribed to Ibn Taimiyya’s thought in other spheres, accepted Ibn al-'Arabi’s lead in spiritual matters.

Ibn Taimiyya had written about innumerable problems pertaining to the religious, social, and political life of the contemporary Muslims. A reformer working in such a vast orbit could not help touching many sensitive areas and provoking many controversies. Obviously some of the controversies were of a temporary nature and of lesser significance, but the opposition they aroused clouded clear appreciation of his reformist role in the broader framework of Islamic history and the dynamic elements in his thought were not understood.

The ideology of Ibn Taimiyya vis-à-vis mysticism was restated in South Asia. However, none of its supporters—Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī Mujaddid Alf-i Thānī, Shāh Wālī Allāh, the Fara’īzīs, the Mujahīdīn, Nawāb Siddīq Ḥasan Khān, the schools of Nadwa and Deoband—were able to dispense with mystic thought or institutions. In fact, they saw in the revitalization of mystic life the seeds of regeneration for the *millat*. Nevertheless, some significant steps were taken to meet the objections of Ibn Taimiyya. (1) Sufis who did not conform to the *Shari‘a* were severely condemned by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindī and Shāh Wālī Allāh.137 (2) The mystic movement was presented as an elaboration of the spirit of *ahsān* as explained by the Prophet. (3) Ibn Taimiyya had categorised Sufis as *Auliya Allāh* (Helpers of God) or *Auliya Shaitān* (Helpers of the Devil). Careful scrutiny of the attitudes and behaviour of the eminent *auliyā* in South Asia of various affiliations reveals that Ibn Taimiyya’s criticism was not applicable to them. They adhered to *Shari‘a* norms, discouraged *ruhbāniyat* (asceticism), did not publicly discuss *wahdat al-wujūd*, and upheld the *sunnah* of the Prophet. The delinquent Sufis, who had provoked Ibn Taimiyya’s criticism were never taken seriously by the Muslim people—as is evident from the fate of Ahmad Bihārī, Mas‘ūd Bak, Sarmad, and others. (4) A readjustment and distinction of this type had taken place earlier in Muslim lands during the time of Ibn Taimiyya himself. Malik Asūr Qalādūn, an admirer of Ibn Taimiyya, did not abjure contact with the mystics138 but continued his affiliation with the mystic

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137 *Maktabat-i Imām-i Rabbānī* (Nawal Kishore, 1877).
138 He writes in his *Waspyat Nama*, (Mashī Press of Mash al-Zaman, Kanpur, n.d.), p. 3: ‘Don’t give your hand in the hand of the mystics of this age as they are involved in variety of bu‘dāt.’
order. (5) Perhaps the most significant development in this connection was the line adopted by Nawāb Siddiq Hasan Khān who took bold and sincere initiatives to propagate Ibn Taimiyya’s thought in South Asia. He invested Ibn Taimiyya with mystic attributes, suggested that there was some identity of view between Ibn Taimiyya and Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya and quoted a verse about the need of practicing ḵiṣḥād that Shaikh Nizām al-Dīn Auliya used to recite before his audience, whose meaning in English may be rendered as: ‘Though God alone provides religious guidance, yet one should also exercise ḵiṣḥād.’

With these adjustments to the different circumstances and religious sensibilities of the Muslims in India borne in mind, we may say that Ibn Taimiyya’s ideas have made a deep and far-reaching impression on religious and political developments in South Asia.

140 Taqṣīr Juyūd al-Ahrār min Taḏḵār-i Jannūd al-Abrār, (Bhopal, AH 1298), wherein he observes about Ibn Taimiyya: ‘His rank in spiritual discipline was very high. Stories about his miracles and traditions relating to his spiritual blessing are without limit.’

141 ibid., 136.

142 ibid., 67.