

INDIAN 'ULAMĀ'S VIEWS ON POPULAR CULTURE

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Documents of early Islam show that from the very beginning Muslims hesitated between a flat rejection and a tacitly glossing over of certain harmless looking features of popular culture and religion. So we possess the record of Muḥammad's vehement condemnation of the worship of tombs with these words: "Do not make my grave a place of festivity" (Abū Dā'ūd, *Manāsir* 96), as well as his somewhat reluctant concession: "I forbade you to visit graves, but you may now visit them" (Mu. *Ġanā'iz* 108).

It is a truism to establish that common people in the whole wide world, whatever persuasion they might adhere, always try to draw the heaven to the earth as near as possible. And if this rule holds good for any region where Muslims dwell, it is certainly for the Indo-Pakistani Subcontinent, exposed as people over there are to the alluring Hindu rituals and festivities.

'*Ulamā*', who *qualitate qua* have to watch over faith and practice of the believers, are put in an awkward position. The iconoclastic message of the Qur'ān demands a resolute coming to grips with abuses having an unmistakable smack of *širk* (synthetism), whereas at the same time they may care for finding sufficient favour with the people entrusted to them. As a result of it, some of them conduct nevertheless a rigorous crusade against all forms of popular culture, while others try hard to tolerate as much as they think possible without harming the essential elements of Muslim creed.

In our paper we confine ourselves to views expressed in works dating from the last two centuries. The authors discussed are:

- 1) Šāh 'Abdal'azīz (1746-1824), the eldest son of the famous divine Šāh Walillāh Dihlawī. In his *fatāwā*, published in two volumes, also opinions are enunciated on the admissibility and non-admissibility of local social customs.

- 2) Šāh Ismā'īl Šahīd (1781-1831), grandson of Šāh Walillāh. He is called *šahīd* (martyr), as he was slain in a *ḡihād* against the Sikhs in the Panḡāb. In his polemical writings *Taqwiyat al-īmān*, *Tadkīr al-iḥwān* and *Širāt al-mustaqīm* he reveals himself as an uncompromising puritanical revivalist.
- 3) The anonymous writers of the treatises *al-Balāḡ al-mubīn* and *Tuḥfat al-muwahḥidīn*, probably composed in the first half of the 19th century. Both essays are spuriously attributed to Šāh Walillāh.
- 4) Representatives of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. These followers of the Prophetic tradition proudly proclaim that they constitute the most ancient *madhhab*. Compared with them, the four orthodox *madhabs* are 'newcomers'. They are typically intellectuals who declare that an unscientific approach of religion leads to bigotry. Emphasis is laid on the reassertion of *tawḥīd* and the denial of occult powers to any of God's creatures.
- 5) Teachers and adepts of the Dār al-'Ulūm in Deoband (Uttar Pradesh). Barbara Daly Metcalf characterizes the Deobandi school as "reformist in outlook and populist in orientation"¹. A sure thing, indeed, is that they proceed with caution when judging manifestations of popular culture.
- 6) Barelwī 'ulamā' (Barēlī is a district town in Uttar Pradesh). Of all groups and individuals mentioned the Barelwīs appear the most adaptive to the cults of local religion, and also the most intolerant of dissenters. In their opinion, it is a great sin to shake hands with Wahhābīs like the Deobandī Rašīd Aḥmad Gangōhī (1828-1905), who contends that the knowledge of Muḥammad was so limited that he was not even aware of what happened behind a wall, and to associate with *gayr muqallids* (nonconformists; meant are the *ahl al-ḥadīth*), who have an undisguised contempt for folk-customs². Studying the *Taqwiyat al-īmān*, written by Ismā'īl Šahīd, is,

¹ B. D. Metcalf, *The Reformist 'Ulama*, University of California 1974, p. 131.

² Aḥmad Ridā' Ḥān, *Fatāwā-yi ridāwiyya*, Lyallpur 1908, I, pp. 207 ff.

according to them, worse than *zinā* (fornication) and wine-drinking³. When staying in the Hiḡāz in 1906, the founder of this movement Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān (1856-1921) tried to elicit from the 'ulamā' over there an anathema on the school of Deoband.

For a smooth fitting of popular culture with the Islamic system, by some of the above-mentioned *muftī*s references are made to the notions of 'ādāt and 'urf which – as Šāh 'Abdal'azīz explains – are in the view of *fiqh* scholars generally acknowledged principles, and come into play as soon as in a matter ambiguity has arisen about the actual relevance of *šarī'a* rules to a case at issue⁴. Hence, so the Barelwī adept Aḥmad Yār Hān (1942-82) points out, for a proper discharge of one's duties as a *muftī* also acquaintance is required with the speech, usages and customs of a district for which his *fatwās* are designed⁵. "‘Urf", Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān observes, "is different in the various Muslim countries... There exists not only no consensus of any 'urf among the Muslims, but it is also, even with the modern means of communication, impossible to reach a consensus on an 'urf"⁶. Besides, so he continues, 'urf may offer a fine opportunity to render rules flexible, often needed because of changed conditions or requirements of a locality. Thus the veil, originally not worn in Muslim countries, has gradually been introduced as a compulsory dress. The same applies to the legal requirement of compliance with distinguishing marks. In India nowadays the long tunic with the cut to the right side – a dress never obligatory in the country of our Lawgiver Muḥammad – is imperative; and it is absolutely forbidden to change it in a cut to the left side as worn by Hindus⁷.

³ Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān, *al-‘Atāyā n-nabawiyya fī l-fatāwā r-riḍāwiyya*, Karachi 1985, VI, p. 183.

⁴ Šāh 'Abdal'azīz, *Fatāwā-yi 'Azīzī*, Deoband n.d., II, p. 132.

⁵ Aḥmad Yār Hān Barelwī, *al-‘Atāyā l-aḥmadiyya fī fatāwā na'imiyya*, Lahore 1976, II, pp. 476 f.

⁶ Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān, *al-‘Atāyā n-nabawiyya*, Karachi n.d., XI, pp. 41 & 43 f.

⁷ Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān, *Rasā'il riḍāwiyya*, Lahore 1976, II, pp. 216 ff.

Surveying the rich variety of local customs there is – in spite of the sometimes found willingness to overlook unfamiliar aspects of them – still a category of rituals denounced by everybody, including the Barelwī ‘*ulamā*’. Thus also Aḥmad Riḍā’ Ḥān considers a serious sin allowing a Hindu servant to blow on a *nāqūs*, i.e. a kind of shell blown by Hindus in divine worship⁸. Further, in his opinion a specimen of stupidity is the adoption of certain Hindu customs by disciples of a *pīr*, such as retaining a lock of hair on the top of the head, the rest being shaven off and dedicated to saints, and having a cord called *ḍorī* tied round the arm or wrist⁹. Putting a *tikā* (sectarian mark) on the forehead, as Muslim leaders did in the years 1920-22 for the promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, is, according to the Barelwī scholar in fact a badge of *kufr*, incompatible with Islam. Equally *ḥarām* for Muslims is participating in the festival of Dasahrā (held on the birthday of Gangā) in order to give shape to the national unity¹⁰.

However, to become properly acquainted with the whole scale of fateful abuses the Muslim masses are enticed to in the Hindu environment we should make enquiries from Ismā‘īl Šahīd, the fighter *par excellence* of prevalent phenomena of *širk*. In his long lists of perverse habits current among the Indian Muslim population we note: Consulting Brahmins for good and bad omens, practising horoscope (to fix lucky days for a marriage), revering Sītālā (goddess presiding over small-pox), calling the assistance of Hanūmān (the monkey-god), Lonā Čamārīn (a Hindu witch of the low shoe-maker caste) and Kalwā-bīr (spirit whose aid is invoked by conjurers and jugglers)¹¹. *Širk* met in ‘*ādāt*, Ismā‘īl Šahīd continues, is *inter alia* invoking prophets, saints, *imāms*, martyrs, malignant spirits and fairies in trying times, or naming children after them, calling them ‘Abdannabī, Imām Baḥš, Pīr Baḥš,

⁸ Aḥmad Riḍā’ Ḥān, *al-‘Atāyā n-nabawīyya* Lahore 1986, X, 1, p. 169.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 210 f.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Karachi 1985, VI, pp. 82 & 149.

¹¹ Ismā‘īl Šahīd, *Taqwīyat al-īmān*, Lahore 1956, p. 65.

instead of 'Abdallāh, 'Abdarrahmān, Hudā Bah¹². Customs on the occasion of the birth of a son, such as sacrificing a he-goat, discharging a musket (in order to inject courage into him), celebrating the sixth day (originally a Hindu practice; then the house undergoes a thorough cleaning, the mid-wife receives her present, the mother and child are bathed); usages of mourning adopted from the Hindus, such as not sewing clothes, not sleeping on a bedstead, not cooking *baryān* (small lumps of pulse), fennel and *pakwān* (cakes)¹³.

Although with their extensive web of relations the Deobandīs try hard to exercise considerable influence on the common people, they do not hesitate to battle against superstitious habits. In answer to the question put to him in 1973 whether the *šarī'a* permits the slaughter of a he-goat in order to throw its meat on the clothes of a sick person, Rašīd Aḥmad Deobandī (b. 1922) states that it is a magic practice adopted from the Hindus, and therefore a great sin¹⁴. Similarly, this *muftī* remarks that it is a sign of *širk* to utter the charm: "I have the disposal of the Chosen Five (i.e. Muḥammad, 'Alī, Fāṭima, and their two sons), because of which the heat of a pernicious and infectious disease could be extinguished¹⁵. In the *Fatāwā-yi Dār al-'Ulūm*, Deoband 1962, III, 11 we read: "A woman who dies in childbirth is a *šahīd*; but it is not right to ascribe this calamity to the agency of a *čurayl* (ghost of a woman who dies in the state of pregnancy)". On page 259 of the same *fatwā* collection the reader is warned not to shake hands with someone who makes flags which are taken out in the name of the saint 'Abdal-qādir Ġilānī when a plague epidemic is raging. Such a man is a person of a low character (*fāsiq*) and a heretic. A funeral rite condemned by the *ahl al-ḥadīth* is writing the *šahāda* on the grave-clothes of a dead to enable him to look at these notes during the interrogation by the two

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹³ Ismā'īl Šahīd, *Tadkīr al-iḥwān*, Karachi n. d., pp. 81 f.

¹⁴ Rašīd Aḥmad, *Aḥsan al-fatāwā*, Karachi 1984-85, I, pp. 66 f.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 48.

angels in the tomb. "Moreover", it is observed, "what would be the use of this stupid trick for an illiterate"¹⁶?

Yet, certainly not at all times the upholders of orthodox religion display an aversion for rituals pertaining to popular belief. Šāh ʿAbdal-ʿazīz, notwithstanding the fact that by his biographer Sayyid Aṭar ʿAbbās Rizwī¹⁷ he is referred to as a "puritan", recommends when asked for an opinion concerning permitted means of warding off disasters caused by the enchantment or shadow of *ġinn*: A way of action profitable for somebody met with adversities is to put mustard-oil in a vessel of copper, to recite 14 time the *āyat al-qutb* (Q. III, 154: "Then He sent down upon you, after grief, security"), and to blow every time on this oil... God willing, in the end the calamity might be averted¹⁸. Albeit that the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, as a rule, are anxious to combat sundry manifestations of local religion, they make an exception for amulets and charmed cords. In the opinion of Ṭanā'allāh al-Amritsarī (1870-1948) they are permissible means if provided with the Most Beautiful Names of God, verses of the Qur'ān, or supplications handed down from the Prophet¹⁹. A similar forbearance towards popular belief is shown by ʿAbdal-ḥayy al-Laḥnawī (1848-86), who as a prominent member of the Farangi Maḥall family also emphasized the necessity of going back to the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. He postulates: "It is admissible to work spells on the scorpion's and serpent's poison by means of a Qur'ānic verse or an imprecation found in a *ḥadīth*. Unallowable, however, are Persian words or expressions, of which the meaning is not understood since they may pre-suppose *kufr*. Equally, it is permitted to honour and derive blessings from the salutary hairs, being an indication of utmost love of the Prophet; but inadmissible is to be concerned with such relics in

¹⁶ Muḥammad Ismā'īl as-Salafi, *Fatāwā-yi salafiyya*, Lahore 1987, p. 35.

¹⁷ Sayyid Aṭar ʿAbbās Rizwī, *Šāh ʿAbdal-ʿazīz, Puritanism, Sectarian Polemics and Ġihād*, Canberra 1982, p. 475.

¹⁸ Šāh ʿAbdal-ʿazīz, *Fatāwā-yi ʿAzīzī*, I, pp. 27 f.

¹⁹ Ṭanā'allāh al-Amritsarī, *Fatāwā-yi ṭanā'īyya*, Lahore 1972, II, p. 154.

case their identity is not known for certain²⁰. The Barelwī leader Aḥmad Riḍā Ḥān explicates without a blush: "From the time of the Companions up to this very day gaining blessings from the relics of the Prophet is ... recommended by the consensus of the Muslims. People are enjoined to kiss them. They are used as a means for adverting diseases and accomplishing desires"²¹.

The proposition advanced by L. Dumont: "chaque Musulmane... a à quelque degré un Hindu en lui-même"²² is also vindicated by the deliberations of 'ulamā' on the lines of conduct to be adopted in view of threatening contamination by impure fellow-countrymen. In answer to the question whether *wudū'* can be performed with water touched by Hindus, Aḥmad Riḍā' Ḥān declares that one should avoid that which has been touched by unbelievers and thereby is defiled. However, if no other water is available and it is not firmly established that it has been polluted by the mouth of a Hindu, it can be used for the performance of *wudū'*²³. Enjoying sweets made by Hindus is allowed, but refraining from it is preferable²⁴. However, it is disapproved, if not condemned, to accept sweets touched by the hands of Christians, or betel-leaves moistened by them, even if it happened with water from a Muslim²⁵. It is, of course, forbidden to eat bread of a *bhangī* (individual of a low caste consisting of scavengers and sweepers), for according to the prudent purpose of the *ṣarī'a* everything which fills a Muslim with disgust is prohibited. The Messenger of God once stated: "Give glad tidings

²⁰ *Mağmū'a-i fatāwā-yi 'Abdalḥayy*, Karachi 1989, II, pp. 269f; III, pp. 173, 179.

²¹ Aḥmad Riḍā' Ḥān, *al-ʿAtāyā n-nabawiyya*, X, 1, p. 92.

²² L. Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus*, Paris 1966, p. 267.

²³ Aḥmad Riḍā' Ḥān, *al-ʿAtāyā n-nabawiyya*, Fayṣalābād 1980, II, p. 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, XI, p. 63.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 110 f.

(of divine favour in this world and the Hereafter), but do not create aversion" (Mu. *Ġihād* 5)²⁶.

In this matter the views of the Deobandīs appear more liberal. According to their *fatwās*, water drawn by an idolater is not impure, and it is permitted to perform *wuḍū'* with water from a well built with "forbidden money", i.e. interest²⁷. Also lawful is water originating from wells used by *bhangīs*²⁸.

The most efficacious breeding-ground for the flourishing of local religion, however, is the hanker of the common man to get out of the drag of daily life so dominant in a farming community. Consequently, the main target of the '*ulamā*'s battle against symptoms of *širk* are the various occasions of festivity and the beloved pilgrimages to shrines of saints. Official Islam is in essence austere. The number of authorized festivals is restricted to two only, whereas the Hindus enjoy a continuous celebration of holy days. The Indian Subcontinent abounds in innumerable places of pilgrimage, frequented by Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, but the *šarī'a* legalizes merely one venture of this kind, to wit the *ḥaġġ* to the *Ḥiġāz*. First of all, the *muftīs* aim at what they regard unsound excrescences of wedding parties. In reply to the question whether music and merriment, looking at something comic, fire-works, ornament and decoration during marriage-feasts are allowed, Sayyid Naḍīr Ḥusayn (d. 1902), a well-known leader of the *ahl al-ḥadīth*, cites the tradition in which is recorded that for a man in Paradise all pleasures are prohibited with the exception of archery, domestication of horses, and love-play (Ibn Māġa, *Ġihād* 19)²⁹. A bit more lenient is the opinion of Aḥmad Riḍā' Ḥān, who says that although dancing and in-

²⁶ *Ibid.*, X, 1, p. 227.

²⁷ *Fatāwā-yi Dār al-'Ulūm*, Deoband 1962, I, p. 181.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 197.

²⁹ Sayyid Naḍīr Ḥusayn, *Fatāwā-yi naḍīriyya*, Lahore 1971, I, pp. 22 ff.

strumental music are forbidden by the *šarī'a*, they do not fall under the scope of *kuf'r* and do not render a marriage invalidated³⁰.

A more serious point of difference is the institute of *mīlād*, the commemoration of Muḥammad's birth. By a member of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* the whole issue is dismissed with the ironic comment: "They who are fond of meat and sweets come into their own when they keep up the observance of *mīlād*"³¹. Another exponent of this movement notes: "Not the birthday of the Prophet as such is a beneficial event for the world. Salutary has been proved what happened forty years afterwards, t.w. the effects of his mission. In the Qur'ān we do not read: 'We have not created thee', but 'we have not sent thee, save as a mercy unto all beings' (Q. XXI, 107)" (Tanā'allāh al-Amritsarī, *Fatāwā-yi tanā'īyya*, I, p. 118). The Deobandīs, at least at present, seem more favourably disposed to it, admitting that a meeting convened for a *mīlād* might be a cause of blessing, provided that

- a) no belief is entertained that the Prophet honours the session with his actual presence; and
- b) it is not held obligatory to distribute sweets, and the like³².

In former days, however, the Deobandīs were quite critical of this usage. On the occasion of *mīlād*, so they pointed out, at times ceremonies are celebrated comparable with rituals observed by Hindus at the birthday of Kṛṣṇa, as, for instance, recounting fictitious events. Rising up during the *mīlād* service in order to suggest that the *rūḥ* of the Prophet descends from the spiritual into the phenomenal world is a stupid error, similar to the conviction of Hindus who believe that Kṛṣṇa is born every year anew³³.

Again also in respect of the celebration of *mīlād* of all 'ulamā' the Barelwīs appear the most willing to satisfy the cravings and fantasies of

³⁰ Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān, *al-Atāyā n-nabawīyya*, V, p. 37.

³¹ Muḥammad Ismā'il as-Salafī, *Fatāwā-yi salafīyya*, p. 13.

³² Rašīd Aḥmad, *Aḥsan al-fatāwā*, Karachi 1986-87, II, pp. 347 ff.

³³ Ḥalīl Aḥmad Anbetawī, *al-Barāhīn al-qaṭī'a*, p. 141.

the masses. So they emphasize that refraining from the rising up (*qiyām*) during the *mīlād* ceremonies without a valid excuse ought to be disapproved since it implies a gross affront to the Prophet³⁴. In addition, if not done for show but merely for gaining the grace of God, it is recommendable to practise *dīker* after the *mīlād* service, and to dance inclining one's body from side to side and clapping hands in a fierce rhythm³⁵. As regards the implicit veneration of Muḥammad the Barelwī go even to the point of contending that with the exception of divinity and the prerequisites for divinity the Prophet possessed all conceivable perfection³⁶. Thus, for instance, the Messenger of God was guarded against nocturnal pollution³⁷. He did not cast a shadow. For after having cleared his body from all coarse elements, God had made him pure light³⁸. Whereas the organs of all animals, the human race, and so on are composed of earth, the organs of the noble Prophet were made up of ingredients of Paradise, on account of which his excrements were pure. So could it happen that his nurse Umm Ayman inadvertently drank his urine, having taken it for water³⁹.

Finally, we need to examine the views on festivities connected with the centres where, in particular, local religion can come to full bloom; I mean the shrines of saints. If anywhere Indian people crowd together for entertainment, it is at these sacred places. Thursday evening, and on the occasion of an *'urs*, the death celebration of saints, around the *dargāhs* drums are beaten, religious songs (*qawwalīs*) are produced by professionals, while there is a remarkable free and informal intercourse between both sexes.

³⁴ Aḥmad Ridā' Hān, *al-ʿAtāyā n-nabawiyya*, X, 1, p. 139.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, X, 1, pp. 158 f.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, p. 155.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 178.

³⁸ Aḥmad Ridā' Hān, *Maḡmūʿi rasāʿil*, Karachi 1985, p. 51.

³⁹ Aḥmad Yār Hān Barelwī, *al-ʿAtāyā l-aḥmadiyya*, I, p. 36.

The most scathing criticism of the institute of *ziyāra*, visitation of shrines, and its concomitants, is given by the anonymous author of *al-Balāḡ al-mubīn*. This reformer brackets the acts of *pīr*-worshippers with the practices of idolaters. Idolaters, he argues, clothe their idols with gowns of silk and brocade; *pīr*-worshippers put on the graves of saints silk coverings; idolaters fix a day of a solar month for a pilgrimage to the idols, and all assembled together they bring offerings of flowers, sweets and gifts in money and kind, putting their heads on the threshold (of a sanctuary) in support of their vows. In the same way, the worshippers of a *pīr* fix a day of a moon month or a pilgrimage to a tomb, and congregated in large numbers they execute the same activities as the idolaters do for their idols. In addition, they organize obscene dancing parties of harlots. Another custom of the idolaters is to take their idols in procession. Similarly, *pīr*-worshippers construct mock tombs, called *ta'ziya*, in the days of 'Āšūrā', and take them out in procession⁴⁰. The anonymous author of *Tuhfat al-muwahhidīn* charges that a *mušrik* lies if he says that he worships saints in order that he might be in a better position to approach God. In reality, he worships them in order that trials might be averted and distress relieved⁴¹.

A bit less critical comments are made by Ismā'īl Šahīd. "It is conceivable", he admits, "that the visit of graves may serve a useful purpose if it is done spontaneously, and is not bound by fixed days and organized meetings. For the sight of a tomb reminds of death and life to come, so that it removes attachment to worldly goods. However, the visit of graves for any other motive, or allowing women to do this, or putting coverings on shrines, plastering them with gypsum, having any writing on them concerning dates of men,... building a tomb higher than a *bāhišt* (= a span measured by the extended thumb and a little

⁴⁰ *al-Balāḡ al-mubīn fī aḥkām rabb al-'ālamīn*, Lahore 1962, pp. 57 ff.

⁴¹ *Tuhfat al-muwahhidīn*, Lahore 1962, pp. 35 f.

finger), using shrines for ends that are specific for mosques, carry as a result that a shrine remains no longer a shrine but becomes an idol"⁴².

As is to be expected from *ahl al-ḥadīth* their verdict is most severe. Muḥammad Ismāʿīl as-Salafī, one of their followers, states in a *fatwā*, dated 4.9.64: The custom of *ʿurs* has solely been invented by commercially minded *ṣūfīs* of later generations. We consider pampering the stomach of those "holy men" (presumably the guardians of a shrine) a sin⁴³.

In the question of the cult of saints the Deobandīs again steer a middle course: "It is allowable", they concede, "to transfer the reward (for a good deed) to the soul of a respectable person⁴⁴, but it is *širk* to dedicate an animal to a saint and to sacrifice it at his tomb, for it is offering up to other than God"⁴⁵. Equally, offering a cover to be spread over the grave of a saint instills *širk*, such in contrast with the *kiswa* the Prophet himself has put on the Kaʿba. Honouring of it has not led to *širk*⁴⁶. And "it is definitely prohibited", the Deobandī spiritual director Rašīd Aḥmad Gangōhī warns, "to participate in an assembly of *ʿurs* with the habitual pandemonium so beloved by the vulgar"⁴⁷.

Even the Barelwīs, although as a rule anxious to consider the sentiments of the common believers, make some reservations in respect of the *ziyāra* rituals. Thus Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān cautiously observes: "It is permitted to put a cover on the mausoleum of saints, but not on the graves of ordinary people. It is surely allowable and laudable to light a

⁴² Ismāʿīl Šahīd, *Taḍkīr al-iḥwān*, pp. 200 f. & 210.

⁴³ Muḥammad Ismāʿīl as-Salafī, *Fatāwā-yi salafīyya*, pp. 6 & 11.

⁴⁴ Here reference is made to an episode recorded in *Miškāt al-maṣābīḥ*, book VI, ch. VII: "Saʿd ʿUbāda told God's Messenger that the mother of Saʿd had died and asked him what form of charity was best. When the Prophet replied that water was best, he dug a well and said it was for the mother of Saʿd".

⁴⁵ Rašīd Aḥmad, *Aḥsan al-fatāwā*, I, pp. 48 f.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II, p. 376.

⁴⁷ Rašīd Aḥmad Gangōhī, *Fatāwā-yi rašīdiyya*, Delhi 1363/1944, III, p. 125.

lamp in honour of the soul of a holy man when visiting his shrine; but it is a baseless custom to lay on tombs of saints shaven hair of newly born children"⁴⁸. "During the celebration of the 'urs of 'Abdalqādir al-Ġilānī reciting with sweet singing is permissible as long as no use is made of the musical mode called Rāg and no beardless youths participate in it"⁴⁹. "If a circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) of a shrine of a *pīr* is performed as a mark of honour, it is not allowed, because this is an act of homage exclusively reserved for the Ka'ba. It is advisable to refrain from kissing a shrine, but there is no harm in kissing the threshold of a shrine; and the *ṣarī'a* does not forbid to walk backwards from the shrine with hands folded behind one's back"⁵⁰.

In conclusion we can say: the mere fact that so many *fatwās* deal with the multiple implications of popular culture indicates that in spite of holding great attraction it embarrasses the average Indian Muslim believer to a great extent. The even more curious thing about it is that the religious authorities, of whom we actually expect definite answers and evidence of a reliable consensus of opinion, turn out to be altogether at variance in their views on the issues, inducing them to brand colleagues a heretic, *kāfir*, apostate, or simpleton⁵¹. In other words, the various evaluations of local religion once again reveal that although externally the 'ulamā' may constitute a mighty power group to be feared by every kind of Muslim government, they internally represent a party strongly divided within itself.

⁴⁸ Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān, *as-Saniyya al-an'iqa fī fatāwā Afrīqa*, Karachi 1977, pp. 83 & 85 f.

⁴⁹ Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān, *al-'Atāyā n-nabawiyya*, X, i, p. 189.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, IV, p. 8.

⁵¹ Thus, for instance in *fatwās* issued in 1906 in al-Ḥaramayn Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān calls Deobandī apostates (see *Husām al-Ḥaramayn*, p. 25), while the latter denounce the followers of Aḥmad Riḍā' Hān as heretics (*Fatāwā-yi Dār al-'Ulūm*, III, p. 280).