

Appendix C

FATWĀ OF RASHĪD GANGOHĪ

Maulvi Rashīd Aḥmed Gangohī (1244-1323/1829-1905) was one of the founders of the Deoband school.³⁷⁰ Even though his teachers and shuyukh were Sunnis and approved of ideas and practices which are now labeled as 'Barelwi,' at some juncture, he and his friend Maulvi Qasim Nānotwī became admirers of Ismāyīl Dihlawī and Indian Wahābism, which they propagated and advocated in the seminary they founded at Deoband.

This dispute was not merely about certain practices – like celebrating the birthday of the Prophet ﷺ or donating reward to the deceased; but rather in fundamental articles of faith itself. The concept *imkān al-kadhib* or the possibility of falsehood in the Divine Speech of Allāh was first instigated by Ismāyīl Dihlawī in India. Gangohī and his students³⁷¹ not only validated it, but wrote books and further compounded the mistake by making wild comparisons and conjuring egregious analogies. Alahazrat and other ūlamā refuted this (see *Sub'ḥān as-Subbūḥ*) but withheld from ruling them *kāfir* as this could be due to the misunderstanding of a *kalām* concept. Thereafter Gangohī was asked about a person who claims 'occurrence of falsehood' and Gangohī replied in a written fatwā that such a person remains a Sunni Muslim. This fatwā of *wuqūū* – or occurrence – was handed to Sunni ūlamā who ruled Gangohī *kāfir* because of this fatwā which was in Gangohī's hand and upon which his seal is imprinted; Alahazrat presented photocopies of

³⁷⁰ Founded in 1283/1866.

³⁷¹ Notably, Khalīl Aḥmed Sahāranpūrī [1269-1346/1852-1927]; and Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan Deobandi [1268-1339/1851-1920] in his *Juḥd al-Muqill*.

this fatwā in *ĥaramayn*, and it was preserved in the library of Madinah in his time. It is said that the fatwā is present even to this day in a library in Moradabad in India. Allāh tāālā knows best. Deobandis claim that this fatwā was forged by Sunni scholars to malign Gangohī. Alahazrat refuted this claim and explained that this denial was never made in Gangohī's own lifetime in spite of the fact that this fatwā was published with refutations for 15 years until his death in 1323. Alahazrat says³⁷² concerning this fatwā:

This unclean fatwā was published together with a refutation in the booklet *Siyānatu'n Nās* in 1308 by Ĥadiqatu'l Ūlūm Publishers, Meerut. It was published again by Gulzār-e-Ĥasanī Publishers, Bombay, in 1318 along with a more detailed refutation. Thereafter, in 1320 it was published once again with another refutation by *Tuĥfah-e-Ĥanafīyyah* Publishers, Azīmābād-Patna. The person who gave this fatwā died in Jumādā al-Akhīrah 1323, and remained silent until his last breath. Neither did he deny that it was his own fatwā, even though disowning this fatwā was easier than disowning a published book. Nor did he say: 'the meaning of my words is not what the scholars of Ahl as-Sunnah describe; rather, I meant something else.' Was it an ordinary thing to be attributed with such an explicit kufr, that he did not bother about it? A fatwā by Zayd, that carries his seal is being circulated openly in his lifetime and his being in good health – and such a fatwā is certainly and absolutely kufr – and this is repeatedly published for years; and people have published refutations of this fatwā; and declare Zayd to be a kāfir on account of this fatwā; Zayd lives for fifteen more years; and Zayd sees and hears all of this – and Zayd does not publish a denial or disavowal concerning that fatwā; and keeps silent with bated breath until his breath has abated – can any sane person imagine that Zayd had denied that the fatwā was his? Or that he meant something else?

Some apologists may attempt to seize the moral high ground and cite the following alibi: "A Sufi does not reply to attacks on his person; even if people slander him or circulate lies about him. It is difficult to answer every libellous charge. Anybody can publish anything; it is impossible to answer everything. For example, forgeries abound on the internet and one cannot refute every

³⁷² *Tamhīd e Īmān*

forgery – so also, Gangohī kept quiet. His silence cannot be considered as proof of culpability”.

Some Answers, and Some More Questions:

1. It is important to keep the context of the age in perspective. It was not like today’s internet age where anybody is a published author. Back then, anything had to be published through a press. Certain publishers – even as in our time – had a reputation. This fatwā was published in books/pamphlets from well-known publishers. Self-respecting people will not sit idle, if, for example, Penguin or McGraw Hill publishes an article of kufr and attribute it to them. The least a person can do is deny the authorship of such a thing.

2. *Kufr* is not an ordinary accusation to ignore. Particularly, when one is a muftī and a leader of a prominent school, and when he is well known, when his fatāwā are solicited and he issues them regularly. Shouldn’t a muftī worry about safeguarding his reputation? If a fraud can forge one fatwā, then what stops him from making more fatāwā?

3. Those who republished the *fatwā* and refutations were also well-known *ulamā*. Gangohī replied to letters³⁷³ by Alahazrat and the compiler of *Fatāwā Rashīdiyyah* included some fatāwā of Alahazrat for illustration.³⁷⁴ So it is clearly evident that Alahazrat was considered as a prominent personality.

³⁷³ See *Dafā e Zaygh e Zāgh*, an exchange between Alahazrat and Gangohī on the issue of the domestic crow, which indicates there was correspondence between them. Rashīd Gangohī in his fatwā says that it is permissible to eat the domestic crow (*Tazkiratu’r Rashīd*, 1/180).

³⁷⁴ The compiler adds a note that the fatwā has been included only to emphasise that even the leader of the other camp – i.e. Alahazrat – was in agreement with Gangohī on this issue; see *Fatāwā Rashīdiyyah*, p172.

Which scholar in his right mind will keep quiet when a prominent personality forges a fatwā and circulates it in his name? The least he could do is deny it.

4. A Sufi like Imām Ābd al-Wahhāb al-Shaārānī³⁷⁵ notes that forgeries were inserted in his books and denies them; so it is not against being a Sufi to clear one's name. But, we do not find any denial by Rashīd Gangohī himself in any of his books or in his sayings reported by his close disciple and biographer, Aāshiq Ilāhī Meerutī.³⁷⁶

5. In the *Fatāwā Rashīdiyyah*, the author mentions and attests that he believes in *imkān al-kadhib*. There is even a letter purported to be written by Hāji Imdādullāh that says: “*nobody claims wuqūū.*” This was an excellent opportunity for him to add a note that: “A forged fatwā is being circulated in my name and I categorically deny it – it is not my fatwā”.

6. It is also incorrect, that Gangohī's disposition was against argument or debate. Apart from the book *Barāhīn-e-Qāṭiāh*, which was written ‘by his command,’³⁷⁷ there are a number of fatāwā that indicate that he was an active participant in the discourse and a lengthy fatwā criticising Nazeer Husain Dihlawī accusing him of being a closet *lā-madh’habi* which has been reproduced by his biographer.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁵ Famous Shāfiyī jurist and author, Abi'l Mawāhib Ābd al-Wahhāb Shaārānī [d.973 AH].

³⁷⁶ *Tazkiratu'r Rashīd*, Āshiq Ilāhī Meerutī.

³⁷⁷ Thus, it is on the cover of *Barāhīn al-Qāṭiāh*. It would not be surprising if modern Deobandis claim that Gangohī did not know of this and even Khalil was unaware – and that the printer put it of his own accord or even deny that Khalil Aḥmed ever wrote a book like it! *Barāhīn* received a second reprint in the lifetime of Gangohī; the purported letter by Hāji Sahib is included in it.

³⁷⁸ *Tazkiratu'r Rashīd*, Āshiq Ilāhī Meerutī, 1/180.

7. The book, *Fatāwā Rashīdiyyah*, was published much later than this fatwā of *wuqūū* which was issued in 1308. In the published *Fatāwā*, one can find letters that are dated as late as 1322. So there was ample chance to include a statement or a saying (because the compiled *Fatāwā* has sections that are oral fatāwā or the *Malfūz*) that: “a fatwā of wuqūū is being circulated in my name; I have nothing to do with it, and it is false.”³⁷⁹

8. When Deobandis made false charges and concocted books attributing it to Alahazrat’s forebears, he refuted them. When they forged a seal attributing it to his father, he pointed out that his father had passed away prior to the date mentioned on the purported seal, thus exposing the slanderers and forgerers; his nephew published his clarification, in spite of a tampering by the copyists (in the issue of statements attributed to Mawlānā Ḥasanayn Razā in his compilation of Alahazrat’s *Waṣayā*);³⁸⁰ Mawlānā Maḥbūb Ālī did the same when he published the third volume of *Ḥadāyiq* posthumously, without due diligence. When there was an uproar and Deobandis clamored “Sacrilege!” he retracted and published his statement of repentance. All Gangohī had to do was repudiate the fatwā.

9. The fatwā carries the seal and signature of Gangohī. The seal was, and is, a method of authentication and non-repudiation. True, a possibility of forgery exists, but the only way to address that shortcoming is by a denial when such a spurious document is brought to the notice of the author. In one fatwā, Gangohī permits even the use of telegrams (wire) to confirm news

³⁷⁹ Such a statement is not found anywhere.

³⁸⁰ See the English translation of *Al-Wasaya* with notes titled, ‘The Noble Bequests’ published by Ridawī Press. <http://www.ridawipress.org/wp-content/uploads/wasaya.pdf>

of the new moon³⁸¹ for Ramaḍān and based it on the ‘common practice and that it is generally considered to be trustworthy.’ When a fatwā attributed to him, in his hand, carrying his seal is circulated, surely people would consider it authentic and trust it even more than a cablegram? If this fatwā was a forgery, then, why did he not refute it?

TRANSLATION OF THE ISTIFTĀ AND THE FATWĀ OF GANGOHĪ

Bismillāhi’r Raḥmāni’r Raḥīm

Question: May Allāh have mercy on you, please give us your opinion in the following matter: Two people were talking about the falsehood of the Creator.³⁸² A third man said in the favor of one of the two:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ

Verily Allāh shall not forgive ascribing partners to Him;
and shall forgive anything other than that³⁸³

“The particle *mā* is generic, which also includes the sin of murdering a believer. Thus, it is understood from the above verse that Allāh tāālā will forgive a believer who has deliberately murdered [another believer]. And in another verse it is said:

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا

And for he who murders a believer intentionally,
his punishment is [in] Hell forever³⁸⁴

³⁸¹ *Tazkiratu’r Rashīd*, Āshiq Ilāhī Meerutī, 1/174.

³⁸² *kizb e Bārī*

³⁸³ Sūrah Nisā’a, 4:48; also 4:116.

³⁸⁴ Sūrah Nisā’a, 4:93.

In this verse, the particle *man* is also generic which includes believers who commit deliberate murder. This means, a believer who has committed a pre-meditated murder will not be forgiven.”

The opponent of the third man said: “Your argument would then prove occurrence of falsehood [in the Divine Speech of] Allāh. Because, the verse says: *shall* forgive; not will *possibly* forgive.”³⁸⁵ Upon this the third man said: “When did I say that I do not accept the occurrence of falsehood in Divine Speech?”³⁸⁶ The same person³⁸⁷ has also said: “Falsehood is not ugly and naturally despicable³⁸⁸ in general; Allāh táālā has permitted falsehood in certain situations. And in certain situations half-truths³⁸⁹ and plain lies are both preferable [to truth] – not just half-truths.

Concerning this third person:

- a) Does he remain a Muslim or has he become a kāfir?
- b) If he is a Muslim, is he a heretic and astray,³⁹⁰ or remains in the Ahl as-Sunnah wa’l Jamāāh in spite of his saying the above concerning falsehood in [the Speech] of Allāh táālā.

Please clarify, may Allāh táālā reward you.

³⁸⁵ *yaghfir*, not *yumkin an yaghfir*

³⁸⁶ *maiñ ne kab kaha hai ke wuqūú e kazib ka qāyil nahīñ hūñ?*

³⁸⁷ The third person.

³⁸⁸ *kazib ālā’l úmūm qabīh ba mánā munāfir li’t ṭabā nahīñ hai*

³⁸⁹ *tawriyah o áyn kazib*

³⁹⁰ *bidātī, zāll*

Answer:

Even though the third person has committed a mistake in the interpretation of the verses, one should not call him a *kāfir* or a heretic or a misguided person.³⁹¹ Because a great number of scholars and elders accept occurrence of the repealing of the threat of punishment.³⁹² Thus, Maulavi Aḥmed Ḥasan has described this in his monograph *Tanzīh ar-Raḥmān*. Apart from this, those who consider that occurrence of repealing of the threat of punishment as possible,³⁹³ they also believe that such a repealing can occur. It is also clear that *khulf-wayīd*³⁹⁴ is a specific case and falsehood is a generic case.³⁹⁵ Because falsehood means: that which is contrary to what has [really] occurred. And that which can be contrary can be either in the case of the threat of punishment or promise of reward or any information;³⁹⁶ and all of these³⁹⁷ are categories of falsehood. And the existence of the sub-category necessitates the existence of the main class.³⁹⁸ If one is a human, then certainly he will also be an animal.³⁹⁹

³⁹¹ *magar tā-ham usko kāfir kahnā yā bidātī zall nahiñ kahna chāhiye*

³⁹² *wuqūū e khulf e wayīd*

³⁹³ *mujawwizīn*

³⁹⁴ Foregoing the threat of punishment

³⁹⁵ That is, *khulf-wayīd* is a subset of *kazib*.

³⁹⁶ *gāh e wayīd, gāh e waád, gāh e khabar*

³⁹⁷ If one acts contrary to carry out the threat [wayīd] or contrary to the promise of reward [waád] or gives information contrary to the occurrence [khabar]; all these are kinds of falsehood.

³⁹⁸ *wujūd e naú ka wujūd e jins ko mustalzam hai*

³⁹⁹ Animal is the main class and human is a sub-category and one among kinds of animals.

Therefore, the meaning of occurrence of falsehood thus becomes valid,⁴⁰⁰ regardless of whom this concerns. Thus, based upon this, one should not say any harsh word to the third person, because that would necessitate takfir of elder scholars. Nevertheless, this is a weak statement. However, according to the mad'hab of the elders, it is not permissible for the person with a strong evidence to consider the person with a weak evidence as a heretic.

See, the Ḥanafīs and Shāfi'īs do not scorn each other or consider each other as a heretic on the basis of the strength of evidence. Just as saying “*in-shā'Allāh I am Mu'min*” is mentioned in books of doctrine.⁴⁰¹ Therefore, it is necessary to save this third person from being considered a heretic or a misguided person. However, it is better to explain this to him in a nice manner. However, *Power over falsehood, with the impossibility of occurrence*,⁴⁰² is an agreed-upon statement; and no one has differed upon this issue.⁴⁰³

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَا بَيْنَا كُلِّ نَفْسٍ هُدًى وَلَكِنْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ
مِنِّي لَا أُمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

And if We so Wished, We would have given every soul its guidance;
but it has been said in my Truthful promise,⁴⁰⁴
I shall fill Hell with men and jinn, all of them.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁰ *lihāzā wuqū' e kizb ke mánā durust ho gaye.*

⁴⁰¹ Upon which there is a difference between Shāfi'īs and Ḥanafīs; yet they do not consider each other heretics.

⁴⁰² *qudrah ālā al-kadhib maá imtināá al-wuqū'*

⁴⁰³ Which is another delusion and a false claim. No Sunni scholar has attested this belief; see *Sub'ḥān as-Subbūḥ* and a simplified summary in English titled: *The Truth About a Lie*.

⁴⁰⁴ In *Tafsīr Qurṭubī*: “My truthful promise that I shall punish those who disobey me.”

⁴⁰⁵ Sūrah Sajdah, 32:13.

And Allāh táālā knows best.

Written by the lowly Rashīd Aḥmed Gangohī, may he be forgiven.

SEAL:



[End of Rashīd Gangohī's Fatwā]



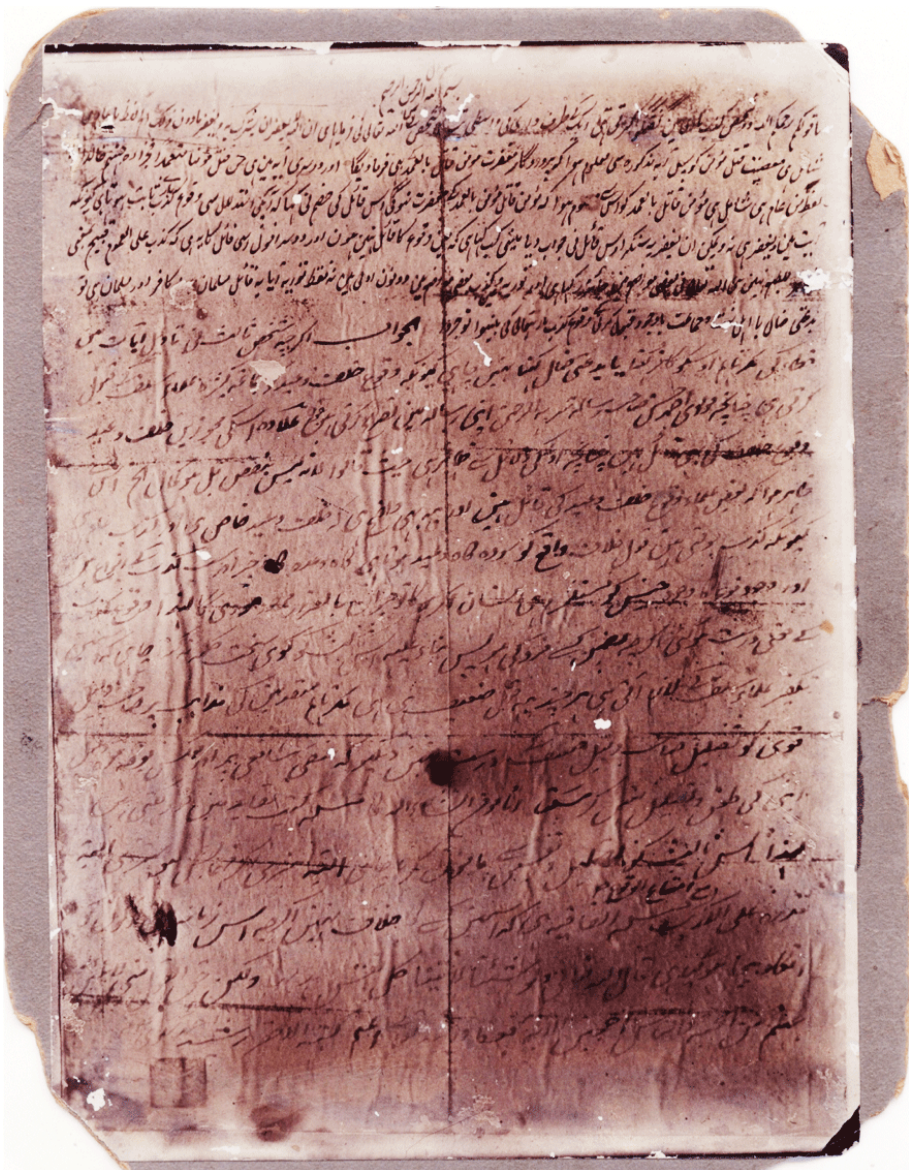
سوال

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

ما قولکم رحمہم اللہ وٹھوس کذب باری میں گفتگو کرتے تھے۔ ایک کی طرف داری کے واسطے تیسرے شخص نے کہا اللہ تعالیٰ نے فرمایا ہے ان الله لا يغفر ان يشرك به ويفقر ما دون ذلك الخ، لفظاً عام ہے شامل ہے معصیت قتل مومن کو۔ پس آیت مذکورہ سے معلوم ہوا کہ پروردگار مغفرت مومن قاتل یا لحد بھی فرماوے گا۔ اور دوسری آیت میں ہے ومن يقبل مؤمناً متعبداً فجزاؤه جهنم خالداً بالغ۔ لفظ من عام ہے شامل مومن قاتل یا لحد کو اس سے معلوم ہوا کہ قاتل مومن یا لحد کی مغفرت نہ ہوگی۔ اس قاتل کے خصم نے کہا کہ آپ کے استدلال سے وقوع کذب باری ثابت ہوتا ہے کیونکہ آیت میں ویغفرہ نہ ویمنکر۔ ان یغفرہ یمن کر اس قاتل نے جواب دیا۔ میں نے کب کہا ہے کہ میں وقوع کذب کا قائل نہیں ہوں۔ اور دوسرا قول اسی قاتل کا یہ ہے کہ کذب علی العموم قبیح بمعنی منافر للطبیع نہیں ہے اللہ تعالیٰ نے بعض مواضع میں جائز رکھا ہے اور توبہ وعین کذب بعض مواضع میں دولوں اولیٰ ہیں۔ نہ فقط توبہ، آیا یہ قاتل مسلمان ہے یا کافر؟ اور مسلمان ہے تو بدعتی ضال یا اہل سنت و جماعت باوجود قبول کرنے کے کذب باری تعالیٰ کے، بدینا و توجروا۔ **الجواب**۔ اگرچہ شخص ثالث نے تاویل آیات میں خطا کی مگر تاہم اس کو کافر کہنا یا بدعتی ضال نہیں کہنا چاہیے کیونکہ وقوع خلف وعید کو چاعت کثیرہ علماء و سلف کی قبول کرتی ہے۔ چنانچہ مولوی احمد حسن صاحب رسالہ تفسیر الرحمن اپنے رسالہ میں تصریح کرتے ہیں۔ بقول علاءہ اس کے مجوزین خلف وعید وقوع خلف کے صحیح قائل ہیں۔ چنانچہ ان کے دلائل سے ظاہر ہے حیث قالوا لانه ليس بنقص بل هو كمال الخ۔ اس سے ظاہر ہوا کہ بعض علماء خلف وعید کے قائل ہیں۔ اور یہ بھی واضح ہے کہ خلف وعید خاص ہے اور کذب عام ہے۔ کیونکہ کذب بولتے ہیں قول خلاف واقع کو۔ سو وہ گاہ وعید ہوتا ہے۔ گاہ وعیدہ گاہ خبر۔ اور سب کذب کے انواع ہیں اور وجود نوع کا وجود جنس کو مستلزم ہے، انسان اگر ہوگا تو حیوان بالضرور موجود ہووے گا۔ لہذا وقوع کذب کے معنی درست ہو گئے۔ اگرچہ بعض کئی فرد کے ہو۔ پس بنا علیہ اس ثالث کو کوئی سخت کلمہ نہ کہنا چاہیے کہ اس میں تنبیہ علماء و سلف کی لازم آتی ہے۔ ہر چند یہ قول ضعیف ہے مگر تاہم مقدمات کے مذاہب پر صاحب دلیل قوی کو تفصیل صاحب دلیل ضعیف ہے مگر تاہم مقدمات کے مذاہب پر صاحب دلیل قوی کو تفصیل صاحب دلیل ضعیف کی درست نہیں۔ چھوڑ کر ضعیفی شافعی پر اور علیس بوجہ قوت دلیل اپنی کے طعن و تفصیل نہیں کر سکتا۔ انما یؤمن انشاء اللہ کا مسئلہ کتب عقائد میں خود دیکھتے ہیں۔ لہذا اس ثالث کو تفصیل و تفسیق سے امون کرنا چاہیے۔ البتہ بڑی اگر فحاش ہو بہتر ہے۔ البتہ قدس علی الکذب مع امتناع الوقوع مسئلہ اتفاقیہ ہے اس میں کسی خلاف نہیں۔ اگرچہ اس زمانے میں لوگوں کو اعتقاد بیجا ہو گیا ہے۔ قال اللہ ولوشکت کل نفس هذا ولكن حق القول مني لا ملئ جہنم من الجنة والناس اجمعین۔ الا یہ فقط واللہ تعالیٰ اعلم۔ کہتے ہیں

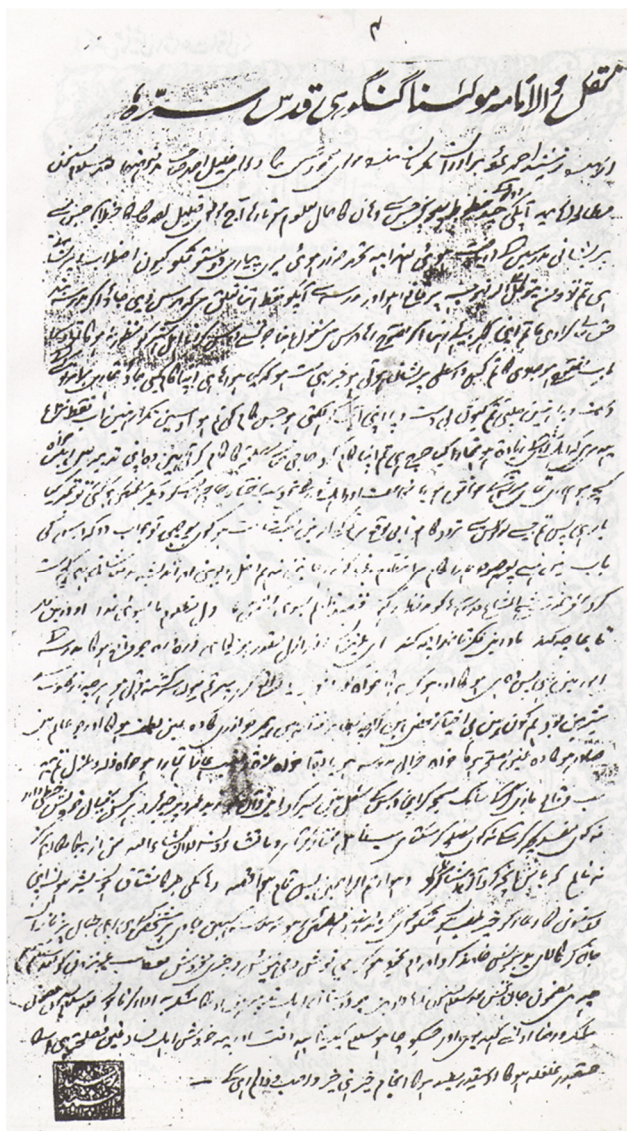
نشان مہر احمد شید

ORIGINAL FATWĀ IN GANGOHĪ'S HAND WITH SEAL



SAMPLE OF GANGOHĪ'S WRITING

This sample of Rashīd Aḥmed Gangohī's handwriting is taken from the collection of his letters, published by his disciple, Aāshiq Ilāhī Meeruti, in a volume titled: *Makātib e Rashīdiyyah*, published by Azīzu'l Maṭābiy, Meerut.



ANALYSIS

These images have been resized to fit on a smaller page size in this document. When comparing a high resolution scan at considerable magnification it can be discernably seen that both specimens are written by the same hand. Given below are comparisons – in all examples below, on the left are clips from an established specimen – the official handwriting (from *Makātīb*); and on the right are clips from the *fatwā*, whose authenticity is questioned by Deobandis. The clips of the *fatwā*, that is the clip on the right, in spite of its poor visibility, is sharper than the printed specimen because it is written by a pen. Notice the strokes of the *yā*; the placement of the dot on the *fā*; the strokes of *hā* below; the slanting of the joined *qāf-áyn*; same words used in the two specimens are identical; including Rashīd Aḥmed writing his own name. Other examples are: *alif-sīn*, *wāw-hā*, the *nun* joined with *yaa* or *hā* – the glyphs of *yahīn*, *nahīn*, *yahī* etc;

The seal is barely visible in the *fatwā* but upon adjusting the contrast it becomes somewhat legible. The *fatwā* has been untouched and Photoshop is used only to adjust the brightness-contrast, hues and mildtones to enhance visibility. Another screenshot shows the spacing of the lines. The writing is of superior quality based on Nastáliq, but it does not conform to the formal script used by calligraphers; and is therefore a semi-formal hand, similar to cursive writing in English. Calligraphy enthusiasts can notice the formation of certain glyphs, short-cuts and the natural strokes are produced by a mature hand that has been writing for years. It would be very difficult to reproduce a similar hand and with such consistency of glyphs, with the spacing and the placement of dots etc. Obviously, the *fatwā* in question was not written with a modern instrument because of the ink flow which is not consistent; it was most likely written with a reed pen, common at that time.

Notice the word *ke* which is slightly above the line and the ending *fā* or *tā*, *bā* as a *kashīdah*.⁴⁰⁶ The joined *kāf-alif* glyph is something unique to the writer and is commonly observed throughout in both specimens.

At similar sizes, when placed next to each other, one can notice the similar line spacing; similarly when we zoom out both specimens at a smaller size, the similarity is noticeable.

Allāh tǎālā knows best.

⁴⁰⁶ The lengthening of certain glyphs for adjustment or for beautification.

