

Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanvi: Turkish Facets of his Life and Work

*Syed Tanvir Wasti **

Apart from the erudite religious works by Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanvi¹ himself, which have been published in Arabic, Persian and Urdu and also translated into English, Turkish and other languages, there is a vast amount of published material on the life, career and importance of Maulana Kairanvi. Born in the small town of Kairana in the District of Muzaffarnagar in the Northwestern Provinces of British India in 1818 CE,² Rahmatullah Kairanvi died in Mecca in 1891 CE,³ and came from an illustrious family of religious scholars that ultimately traced its ancestry⁴ back to the 3rd Caliph Osman.⁵

Avril Ann Powell⁶ has been one of the first historians to investigate and present, in lucid and elegant English, the Muslim-Christian polemics of the 19th century with special relevance to the environment of the South Asian subcontinent when political power and cultural hegemony were swiftly passing into the hands of the British rulers. Two important publications by Seema Alavi⁷ partly complement the work of Powell in that Rahmatullah Kairanvi plays a major role in what Alavi terms the Muslim ‘transnational network’.

Furthermore, two exhaustive sources in Urdu which deal mainly with Rahmatullah Kairanvi’s life and work, while also offering details dealing with the historical characters as well as the cultural milieu of the time, also need to be mentioned here.⁸ Lastly, there are papers in German and English by Christine Schirrmacher⁹ dealing with the Pfander-Kairanvi Agra debate of 1854 based on the material of her dissertation.¹⁰

OVERVIEW OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF MAULANA KAIRANVI
Rahmatullah Kairanvi’s life may be divided into four unequal parts. The first three phases cover the period from his birth in 1818 to 1858 which comprise Kairanvi’s life in India. The fourth phase, from 1858 till his

* Professor Emeritus, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey

death in 1891 covers his activities in the Ottoman Empire, whether in the Hijaz or in the Ottoman capital city of Istanbul.

1) The formative years of religious education and studies

Starting with the teachings of his father Maulvi Khalilullah in Kairana and with memorizing the text of the Quran by the age of twelve, Rahmatullah's development continued with later instruction in Arabic and Persian at the feet of other scholars in Delhi, Lucknow and elsewhere. Powell gives details of this period including the names of the associated scholars till the return of Kairanvi to his ancestral home some time before 1853 where, after the deaths of his son, wife and father, he established a *madrasa* in Kairana.¹¹

2) The years of public debate as well as the 'war of the pen' against Protestant missionary activity

Especially in Northern India, the process of trying to convert the 'natives' to Christianity had gained strength after the conquest in 1803 by the British of the cities of Delhi and Agra, which were steeped in history and regarded as the embodiment of many centuries of Muslim political and architectural achievement. In retrospect, it is baffling just how much proselytizing effort, coming from Britain, the United States of America and even some countries of Europe, was expended over the period of more than a century in trying, quite unsuccessfully, to convert the teeming masses of South Asia to the religion of the Protestant conquerors. A thesis by Bi illustrates in detail the *zeitgeist* of that forgotten age in Northern India.¹² On the same topic Powell also writes, *inter alia*:¹³

Viewed from the evangelical perspective, contemporary events, and in particular the political decline of the Ottoman empire, seemed to confirm the millenarian conviction that the entire Muslim world was on the point of turning towards Christianity. The spread of British power in India seemed to be yet another manifestation of this tendency.

A very active German Pietist called Carl Gottlieb Pfander¹⁴ set foot in India in 1839, with the Persian translation of a book in defence of Christianity which he had put together earlier while conducting missionary work in Shusha. Although Persian had officially been replaced by English by the East India Company in that decade, it was still the language most widely used by educated Indians, especially Muslims.

Although trodden underfoot, the Muslims had not been conquered, and the *'ulama*, who were mainly Muslim religious scholars, felt the need to defend both themselves, and the Muslim masses who looked towards them for spiritual guidance, against the onslaughts of the missionaries by organizing public discussions, producing pamphlets and aiming towards some level of political mobilization.¹⁵ One of the first persons to engage in religious discussions by correspondence with Carl Pfander was Maulana Al-i Hasan, a *munsif* or junior judge, whose career has been dealt with sympathetically by Powell.¹⁶ The book *Asar-i Rahmat* by Imdad Sabri, mentioned in Endnote No. 8, is dedicated to Maulana Al-i Hasan Sahib Mohani along with a 16 page essay.¹⁷ Al-i Hasan's 800 page book titled *Kitab-i Istifsar* [The Book of Questions] was published in Lucknow in 1845 partly in refutation of Pfander's book *Mizan ul Hakk* and partly to provide answers to issues that emerged in his written discussions with Pfander.¹⁸

Rahmatullah Kairanvi also took up his pen against the missionary onslaught. In his thesis, Mohd. Asrar gives a list of 11 publications by Maulana Kairanvi in Arabic, 2 in Persian and 3 in Urdu. Alavi points out that Kairanvi wrote 18 books that were published from Delhi, Agra and Istanbul.¹⁹ Imdad Sabri, referred to above, also has a chapter dealing with the published works of Maulana Kairanvi. Most of Rahmatullah Kairanvi's books have been translated into several languages. Among his earlier works are the books *Ibtal al-Taslis* [The Refutation of the Trinity], written in 1854 but first published in Delhi in 1875, and *Ijaz-i 'Iswi* [The miracle of Jesus] published in Agra in 1854. Kairanvi's most important and well-known work is the book titled *Izhar al Haqq* [The Demonstration of the Truth] which, as will be shown subsequently, was first published in Arabic in Istanbul in 1864.

During the 1840's Rahmatullah Kairanvi paid a visit to Agra where he met and became a friend of Dr Muhammad Wazir Khan.²⁰ Wazir Khan had studied at the Calcutta Medical College and there are suggestions in some sources²¹ that he had travelled to, or pursued higher studies in, England. Dr Wazir Khan comes across as a well-read man and a stout-hearted Muslim, who collected books relating to Bible scholarship in the 19th century, when many thoughtful Christian commentators all over Europe were addressing the question of textual corruption in the Bible, whether done willfully or otherwise.

Starting in 1852, Rahmatullah Kairanvi was invited by the *'ulama* to address the missionary challenge. He returned to Agra to participate in an open debate with Carl Gottlieb Pfander, who by that time had become the leading Protestant missionary of the time in India, in 1854. A full account of the debate [held on 10 and 11 April 1854 and attended by British civil servants as well as hundreds of Indians of all religions] is given in the paper by Powell titled "Muslim Christian Controversy". Pfander was assisted by the Reverend Thomas Valpy French, an Oxford graduate who later became Bishop of Lahore, and Rahmatullah was joined by Dr Wazir Khan. Powell writes about the overall outcome of the debate:²²

On the Muslim side the debate received wide publicity. It was indeed the first occasion in British India that the Christian padres and, by implication, also the Christian government which had its representatives there, albeit in a private capacity, had suffered defeat in open forum.

Powell continues:²³

The new elements in Wazir Khan's assertion were the emphasis on questions of textual integrity and the weight he attached to evidence from more than thirty published works of criticism by European (and some American) scholars. His sources ranged from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century rationalists (Spinoza, Paine and Voltaire) to Biblical commentaries by orthodox Anglican clergymen (the works of Henry and Scott, D'Oyly and Mant, and, most heavily used, the four-volume commentary of T. H. Horne, first published in 1818).

In the aftermath of the Agra debate, the Church Missionary Society [CMS] decided to transfer Pfander to Peshawar. After some two years there, he asked for a transfer on the grounds of his family's ill health, and was posted by the CMS to Istanbul in 1858.

3) The few but important years of the first Indian revolt against British rule in India

When the 1857 uprising against the British [described in British textbooks as the 'Indian Mutiny of 1857' and in Indian or Pakistani books usually as the 'First War of Independence'] spread throughout the Northwestern Provinces and calls for *jihad* were made, Maulana Kairanvi was in his home town of Kairana and certainly took part in the organization of the volunteer Muslim fighters. Both Alavi²⁴ and Powell²⁵ refer to the rallying cry [in Urdu] of the *mujahids*:

‘The country belongs to God, and command belongs to Maulvi Rahmatullah.’

The part played in this war by Rahmatullah Kairanvi, Dr Wazir Khan and others is described in a chapter of the book by Sabri.²⁶ All evidence indicates that Rahmatullah Kairanvi and his cohorts participated in the war from beginning to end, though they were on the losing side. An excellent sub-chapter by Powell²⁷ titled ‘The Muslim disputants in the risings of 1857-8’ gives an account of events after the failure of the revolt against the British. The British brought their artillery and soldiery to Kairana to apprehend the Maulana. By pretending to be a grass cutter in a field, Maulana Kairanvi was able to evade arrest. The British announced a reward of Rs 1,000 for his capture and, after his departure from India, confiscated and auctioned the large family estates in Kairana and Panipat.

4) Rahmatullah Kairanvi’s escape to the Caliph’s dominions after the events of 1857-58

Available information about this last phase of Maulana Rahmatullah’s life will now be presented, dealing with his residence till his death in 1891 in Mecca, then part of the Ottoman Empire, which included long stays in the Ottoman capital of Istanbul.

There was no option left for Rahmatullah Kairanvi after the suppression of Muslim resistance by the British in 1858 but to escape India undetected. Marked out as a ‘rebel’ with a price on his head, he had to travel in disguise, taking the name Muslihuddin, walking to Delhi and then proceeding via the deserts of Rajasthan to the port of Surat. Here he had to wait till the very occasional sailing ship that crossed the Arabian Sea could take him to Arabia, with Mecca as his final destination.²⁸ A similar fate awaited Dr Muhammad Wazir Khan, who had partnered Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanvi in the ‘Great Agra Debate’ of 1854. Wazir Khan had also played an active part fighting against the British in the war of 1857, even serving for a time as Governor of Agra. He too separately chose to emigrate to Mecca.²⁹ Powell further writes:³⁰

The risings in India in 1857 were the cause of the transmission of Maulana Rahmat Allah’s reputation as a debater to the heart of the Muslim world. The enforced *hijrat*, in the expectation of British vengeance, of Haji Imdad Allah,³¹ Rahmat Allah, Wazir Khan and some other leading Muslims from north India, carried their resentment against the missionaries and disillusion with British

rule to the Arabian Peninsula where reverberations from European expansion in Africa and pressure on the Ottoman Empire were also being felt.

Seema Alavi, in an upbeat evaluation, sums up Maulana Kairanvi's new life as follows:³²

Kairanwi's cosmopolitanism was exemplified in the discursive space that he carved out between empires, a space that showcased Muslims as a civilizational force. He grafted this cosmopolitanism onto the imperial networks that were a feature of his new location in the Hijaz and Istanbul.

There are several articles³³ as well as a few theses³⁴ in Turkish dealing with the life of Maulana Kairanvi in the Ottoman domains after his arrival in 1858 as well as with the earlier phases of his life. The entry for Maulana Kairanvi [authored by Abdülhamit Birişik³⁵] in the Turkish Religious Foundation Islam Encyclopaedia³⁶ covers over one and a half pages. In addition, Rank Scott completed a doctoral thesis³⁷ dealing with Christian-Muslim polemics covering the period 1861-1915 in Istanbul which is also relevant to the themes of the present paper.

A book in Turkish by Azmi Özcan,³⁸ based on his doctoral dissertation accepted by the University of London in 1990,³⁹ covers over a half-century of relations in the relatively recent past, between the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire and those Muslims who, after the collapse of the Mughal Empire in India, had to live under British rule. Referring in an introductory chapter to the situation of the Indian Muslims after the war of 1857-58, Özcan writes:⁴⁰

Even worse, there were no *'ulama* left who could provide guidance to the population. This occurred because the *'ulama* were considered more responsible than others for the war against the British and had literally been disbanded. The situation had become so critical that a large group of the *'ulama*, in search of security and a new centre, left India to establish themselves in Mecca. Among the most important among them were Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanvi (1818 – 1891), Haji Imdadullah (1817 – 1899) [see Endnote No. 30], Abdul Ghani (died 1878), Muhammad Yaqub (born 1832) and Khairuddin (1831 – 1900).⁴¹ Some of these scholars also paid visits to Istanbul.

Thus it was that after a long and dangerous journey, Maulana Kairanvi finally found himself in Mecca, where he caught up with his old friend Haji Imdadullah. The *shaikh al 'ulama* in Mecca at the time was Sayyid Ahmad Zeyni Dahlan, and the Emir of Mecca was Abdullah bin Aun. Kairanvi also began to attend the lectures given within the precincts of the Haram area in Mecca, especially those by Sayyid Dahlan. In a lecture on some topic, Dahlan argued that the Shaf 'i sect [to which he belonged] offered a better choice than the Hanafi sect. At the end of the lecture, Rahmatullah Kairanvi went up to Dahlan in the guise of a seeker of knowledge to obtain clarification on the point made by him. Within a few minutes, Sayyid Dahlan realized that Rahmatullah was no ordinary listener, and he invited both Rahmatullah Kairanvi and Haji Imdadullah to his own house the next day. There Rahmatullah Kairanvi narrated to Dahlan in detail the events of 1857-58 and also the efforts of Muslim 'ulama such as himself against the confrontational Christian missionaries in India. He included a full account of the 1854 Agra debate. Sayyid Dahlan was so impressed with this encounter that he invited Kairanvi to serve as a lecturer in the Haram mosque, and entered his name in the register of appointed lecturers there. Dahlan also insisted with Rahmatullah Kairanvi that it would be extremely valuable to produce a written version of his arguments in the Agra debate with the Reverend Carl Pfander.

By coincidence, the same Carl Pfander had been transferred by the Church Missionary Society to Istanbul in 1858 after almost 20 years in India. He continued his attempts to convert Muslims to Christianity in Istanbul for some years, till news of his activities eventually reached the ears of the Ottoman sultan Abdülaziz in his palace on the Bosphorus. Both the sultan Abdülaziz [reigned between 1861 and 1876] and the sultan Abdülhamid [who became sultan after an interval of a few months in 1876 during which Murad V was sultan, and reigned till 1909] attached importance to their positions as Caliphs and generally adopted a helpful policy of Pan-Islamism in their relations with Muslim communities inside and outside the Ottoman domains.⁴² Cemil Aydın sets the scene for the next stage.⁴³

Before the 1857 rebellion, Rahmatullah Kairanwi was well known for a debate held in Delhi⁴⁴ with the German evangelical missionary Carl Gottlieb Pfander. Relying in part on modern European biblical criticism, Kairanwi challenged the authenticity of Christian scriptures and reiterated Muslim rejection of the Trinity. The debate lasted two days, with each side claiming victory. Pfander later traveled to Istanbul, where he again bragged of the outcome.

Ottoman sultan Abdulaziz was disturbed by Pfander's boast and wanted to know Kairanvi's version of events.⁴⁵ The sultan invited him to Istanbul and funded the publication of his book, *Izharul Haq*, in which he clarified his arguments about the singular truth of Islam. Published in Arabic in 1864, *Izharul Haq* was widely circulated.

5) Rahmatullah Kairanvi's official trips to Istanbul from the Hijaz

Rahmatullah Kairanvi's first trip to Istanbul was at the invitation of sultan Abdülaziz in 1864. He was treated as a special guest, and was able to convey to the sultan and his ministers [in special meetings often held after the last prayer of the day] first-hand accounts both of the 1857 war and the activities of the Christian missionaries in India.⁴⁶ Among those present in Istanbul on his frequent trips from Tunisia was Hayreddin Pasha of Tunis⁴⁷ who, along with sultan Abdülaziz, also encouraged Rahmatullah Kairanvi to prepare a text in Arabic of the arguments he had used in his Agra debate with Carl Pfander. Using a period of about 6 months in Istanbul in 1864, Maulana Kairanvi prepared the Arabic text of what is now regarded as his most celebrated book, *Izharul Haq*, and in his Introduction credited the *shaikh al 'ulema* Sayyid Ahmad Zeyni Dahlan with the idea for the book. When Hayreddin Pasha asked him why he had not mentioned the name of the Caliph of Islam, Maulana Kairanvi answered:⁴⁸

No worldly considerations should enter the fulfilment of a purely religious duty; even while I was in Mecca the *shaikh al 'ulema* had requested me to write down this account, and secondly, he was the real reason for the production of this book because, had he not introduced me to the Emir of Mecca, I would hardly have been able to reach these exalted circles and get the opportunity of completing this service.

The Arabic edition of *Izharul Haq* was first published in book form Istanbul in 1867-68. Later, Sultan Abdülhamid arranged for a Turkish translation by Nüzhet Efendi and Ömer Fehmi in 1876 under the title *İbrâz-ül Hak* [The Presentation of the Truth]. In many languages and translations, *Izharul Haq* has always remained in print and, even today, at least a couple of recent Turkish renderings of the book are available in Turkey.⁴⁹ Furthermore, after its appearance, the book encouraged Turkish scholars to write and publish rebuttals of anti-Islamic tracts by missionaries and others, of which one of the most famous is *Diya ü'l Kulûb* [The Light from the Hearts] by Harputlu İshak Efendi (1803 – 1892), which has, as a subtitle, *Cevap Veremedi* [Failed to Answer].

Maulana Kairanvi returned to Mecca, and continued both his teaching and research. In 1873, a pious and wealthy lady from Calcutta, Saulatun Nisa⁵⁰ by name, came for the Haj pilgrimage with her daughter and son-in-law. The family conferred with Rahmatullah Kairanvi as they wished to endow a hospice for visiting pilgrims in Mecca. Maulana Kairanvi told the son-in-law that there was no shortage of hospices in the area but, as it happened, there was a dire need for the establishment of a suitable *madrasa* where Islamic instruction and education might be provided. The idea also appealed to Saulatun Nisa who, with benevolence, made available funds for the purchase of a suitable plot of land and also followed the construction of the *madrasa* with great interest. The educational institution, named the Saulatiya Madrasa, exists till this day.⁵¹

Rahmatullah Kairanvi's second trip to Istanbul took place in late 1883 or early 1884. This was partly because his growing fame and influence attracted the attention not only of the British consulate in Jeddah but also, occasionally of the Ottomans. Thus, around 1881 when Osman Nuri Pasha (1840 – 1898) was appointed Governor of the Hijaz, he was not happy to learn from rumour-mongers that the Saulatiya Madrasa was run by and for 'foreigners'.⁵² Sooner or later, all news, whether genuine or fake, inevitably reached the palace of the sultan Abdülhamid, and Maulana Kairanvi was asked to present himself at the sultan's palace in Istanbul. Almost 20 years after his first trip to the Ottoman capital, Maulana Kairanvi arrived in Istanbul accompanied by his own brother, Maulana Badrul Islam and the head of the Saulatiya Madrasa, Maulvi Noor. The far-sighted sultan Abdülhamid treated this delegation with the utmost hospitality and grace, conferring monetary gifts, robes of honour and conferring titles. The delegation enjoyed these favours for several months till it was time for Maulvi Kairanvi to return to Mecca. The day after Maulana Kairanvi had taken leave of the sultan, Hayreddin Pasha along with an A.D.C. of the sultan, Mustafa Vehbi by name, came to the Maulana and, as another token of the sultan's regard, presented him with a beautiful sword, encrusted with precious stones, and conveyed this message from sultan Abdülhamid: 'Arms are the adornment for those who conduct *jihad* in the way of Allah'. Maulana Kairanvi's brother, however, received an offer from the sultan to take up a position as one of the librarians of the Royal Library [called the Hamîdiye Library], which contained many ancient and precious books belonging to the Ottoman royal family over the generations. Maulana Kairanvi was deeply impressed by the sultan's kindness and thanked him effusively. Maulana Badrul

Islam stayed behind and lived in Istanbul and, according to Asrar,⁵³ in the sad days of 1909 surrounding the abdication of sultan Abdülhamîd at the Yildiz palace, Badrul Islam was one of three palace retainers who remained with the sultan. He returned to India only much later.⁵⁴

After his return to Mecca and to his duties at the Madrasa Saulatiya, Rahmatullah Kairanvi maintained his contacts with Istanbul by conducting a correspondence with the many friends he had made during his stay as a guest there. Time passed, and by 1885, Maulana Kairanvi developed a weakness in his eyesight due to the onset of cataract. When the news reached sultan Abdülhamid, the sultan generously invited Maulana Kairanvi to Istanbul for possible treatment. This resulted in Kairanvi travelling with his student and helper Maulvi Abdullah to Istanbul in 1887, arriving in the month of Ramadan. He was able to meet the sultan twice even on the day of his arrival, to break his fast at the palace and to join in the prayers afterwards. The sultan arranged for a team of five specialists to examine Maulana Kairanvi's eyes the very next day. They recommended the use of medicines for two months, to be followed by an operation which, in those days, was a rather risky and complicated matter. However, Maulana Kairanvi preferred not to prolong his stay in Istanbul, and returned to Mecca some weeks later.

After a lifetime of service to the cause of Islam, Rahmatullah Kairanvi died in Mecca in the month of Ramadan 1891, and was laid to rest in the dust that housed hundreds of the heroes and heroines of Islamic history.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

Rahmatullah Kairanvi – especially under the name of Rahmetullah el-Hindî – is a well-known name in religious literature in Turkey as well as in the Arabic speaking countries of the Middle East. His works have provided the armour to many Muslim scholars who have had to counteract the wealth and persistence of missionaries from the West.

One of the greatest Turkish poets of the 20th century, Mehmed 'Âkif Ersoy,⁵⁶ refers to Maulana Kairanvi's robust and successful defence of Islam against the assault of the missionaries in this fashion:

Those ancient Eastern climes, thank Heaven, had produced
Wise men of Rahmatullah's stature by the crowd;
Creeds they understood, and the Quran's wisdom used –
Scholars before whom all the Western world had bowed.

ENDNOTES

My thanks are due to Engineer Khalid Mirza, a friend of many years, for bringing over several publications and references from Karachi to Ankara at my request.

- 1 In common with other names and proper nouns, spellings of the Maulana's name range from Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī to Kairanwi and also, in Turkish, to Mevlāna Raḥmetullah el-Hindī or Raḥmetullah el-Keyrānevī or even Raḥmetullah el-Dihlevī. In order to avoid diacritics, the spelling Maulana Raḥmatullah Kairanvi will be used in this article, except where quotations are made from other authors.
- 2 All years in the article conform to the Christian or Gregorian calendar.
- 3 The year of Kairanvi's death is given as 1890 or 1892 by some authorities; however, most sources use 1891.
- 4 For the ancestors of Maulana Kairanvi, see Mohd. Asrar, *Maulana Raḥmatullah Kairanvi aur unki Dini Khidmat* [Maulana Raḥmatullah Kairanvi and His Religious Services], Dissertation written in Urdu for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Sunni Theology, Aligarh Muslim University, 1995, p.88 *et seqq.*
- 5 Osman [also written Uthman or Othman, son of Affan] was born in 579 and died in 656. He succeeded the Caliph Omar and was followed by the Caliph Ali.
- 6 Avril Ann Powell is Reader Emeritus at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Among her important publications related to the present paper are the following:
 Avril Ann Powell, *Muslims & Missionaries in pre-Mutiny India* (London: Curzon Press, 1993), 339 pp. This source will be referred to as Powell, *Muslims & Missionaries*, in the text of the present article.
 Avril A. Powell, *Scottish Orientalists and India: The Muir Brothers, Religion, Education and Empire* (Martlesham, U.K.: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), 336 pp.
 A. Powell, "Maulānā Raḥmat Allāh Kairānawī and Muslim-Christian Controversy in India in the Mid-19th Century", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 1, (1976), pp. 42 – 63. In the present article, this paper will be referred to as Powell, "Muslim-Christian Controversy".
 Avril A. Powell, "Muslim-Christian Confrontation: Dr Wazir Khan in Nineteenth-century Agra" Chapter 4 of Kenneth W. Jones [Ed.], *Religious controversy in British India* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992), pp. 77 – 92. This paper will henceforth be referred to as "Dr Wazir Khan in Nineteenth-century Agra".
- 7 Seema Alavi, a professor of History in the University of Delhi, India, has the following major publications especially relevant to Raḥmatullah Kairanvi:
 Seema Alavi, 'Fugitive Mullahs and Outlawed Fanatics': Indian Muslims in nineteenth century trans-Asiatic Imperial Rivalries', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 6, 2011, pp. 1337 – 1382.
 Seema Alavi, "Raḥmatullah Kairanwi and the Muslim Cosmopolis", Chapter 3 in Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 169 – 221.
- 8 The first source is *Bible sei Quran takk* [From the Bible to the Quran], (Karachi: Maktaba Darul Ulum, 2010), being an Urdu translation, with added commentary and research, in 3 volumes [Vol. 1, 625 pp.; Vol. 2, 465 pp. and Vol. 3, 673 pp.] of Maulana Raḥmatullah Kairanvi's celebrated work *Izhar al Haqq*. The translation was done by Maulana Akbar Ali, and the commentary and research was conducted by

Mohammad Taqi Usmani under the supervision of Maulana Mufti Mohammad Shafi. This source will henceforth be referred to as *Bible sei Quran takk*.

The second source is Imdad Sabri, *Asar-i Rahmat*, [literally, The Works of Mercy], (Madras: Taj Book Depot, 1966), 428 pp. A chapter of this book deals with the published works of Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanvi; refer to pp. 334 – 386.

- 9 Christine Schirrmacher (born 1962) is a Professor in Germany.
- 10 The abridged title of Schirrmacher's dissertation is as follows: *Mit den Waffen des Gegners. Christlich-Muslimische Kontroversen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* [With the Weapons of the Enemy. The Christian-Muslim controversy in the 19th and 20th centuries]. It was published in book form by Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin, 1992, 437 pp.
- 11 Refer to Powell, *Muslims & Missionaries*, pp. 221 *et seqq.* Powell also mentions the following:
By then he was deemed to have acquired the initiation into the various branches of traditional Islamic learning which was usual for a Sunni 'alim. It seems, too, that like many other Sunni 'ulama in this part of India, he had contacts with, and possibly initiation into, a number of the Sufi *khanaqas* of the region...
It may be pointed out that a few other writers [e.g. Schirrmacher, Endnote No. 9] refer to Rahmatullah Kairanvi as being a Shi'i scholar.
- 12 Nagina Bi, The impact of British Christian missionaries on Indian religious, social and cultural life between 1800 and 1857 [With particular reference to the role of missionaries in the events leading up to the 1857 Mutiny], M. Phil. Thesis, University of Bradford, U.K., 2011, pp. 249.
- 13 Powell, "Muslim-Christian Controversy", p. 42.
- 14 Carl [also written as Karl] Gottlieb Pfander (1803 – 1865) was born at Waiblingen near Stuttgart as the son of a baker. His aptitude for study led him after school to the missionary institute at Basel in Switzerland, where he graduated in 1825. He was a Pietist by denomination, a good linguist, and he spent many years [without much success] trying to convert Muslims to Christianity, in Shusha (currently in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh), in Baghdad and in Iran. After the Czarist government in 1835 allowed only missionary activities of the Greek Church, he left Shusha and travelled finally towards India, reaching Calcutta in 1839. He became a missionary of the [British] Church Missionary Society and was appointed to Agra in 1841. After the Great Debate with Maulana Kairanvi in Agra in 1854, he was posted to Peshawar from 1855 to 1857, and also stayed in Istanbul from 1858 to 1865. His death occurred while on leave in London. Pfander was twice married; first in 1834 to Sophia Reuss, a German, who died in childbed in Shusha a year later, and second, to Emily Swinburne, an Englishwoman, in Calcutta in 1841, who bore him six children. He wrote several books, of which the most well known bears [in German] the title *Mizan ul Hakk oder die Wage der Wahrheit* [The Balance of Truth]. It is an anti-Islamic tract, published first in Persian translation at Shusha in 1835, which has subsequently been published in many languages. As a result, the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time (1857) arranged for Pfander to receive the title of Doctor of Divinity.
- 15 A list of booklets and books authored by Rahmatullah Kairanvi in Arabic, Persian and Urdu is given in Mohd. Asrar [Endnote No. 4], p. 186 *et seqq.*
- 16 See Powell, *Muslims & Missionaries*, pp. 179 *et seqq.*

- 17 According to Sabri's dedicatory essay, Maulana Al-i Hasan was the maternal great-grandfather of the poet Hasrat Mohani (1878 – 1951). Al-i Hasan's date of birth is not clear, with dates given ranging from 1787 to 1801. He came from a Shi'a family of the Lucknow region but had Sufi leanings. He initially lived, married and worked in the Lucknow area but later shifted as an employee to Allahabad and then Agra. Between 1844 and 1845 he conducted a written correspondence with missionary Pfander on religious issues. There were legal cases filed against Al-i Hasan and others in Moradabad in 1850 on charges of corruption, but Al-i Hasan was finally acquitted. He spent some years on his estates, and later departed to take up residence in the Muslim state of Hyderabad, where he died in the early 1870s. Refer to Endnote No. 13 above.
- 18 Of this book, Powell [*Muslims and Missionaries*, p. 189] writes:
It was indeed a transitional work, owing much to traditional Islamic modes of conducting religious polemic, but leaning for the first time in this context, on Christian Biblical sources, and works of European learning...it would later be utilized by other North Indian 'ulama who took up the gauntlet against Pfander, after Al-i Hasan had migrated, disillusioned with both the Company and its Christian 'agents', to the Muslim state of Hyderabad.
In his M. Phil. thesis [see Endnote No. 4], Mohd. Asrar gives a list of 15 books and pamphlets authored by Al-i Hasan on religious topics.
- 19 Seema Alavi, 'Fugitive Mullahs and Outlawed Fanatics': Indian Muslims in nineteenth century trans-Asiatic Imperial Rivalries', p. 1360.
- 20 The best available account in English related to Dr Wazir Khan is Avril A. Powell's "Dr Wazir Khan in Nineteenth Century Agra", details related to which are given in Endnote No. 6.
- 21 Muhammad Mohar Ali, History of the Muslims of Bengal, Vol. II A, (Riyadh: Imam Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud University Press, 1988), p. 229.
- 22 A. A. Powell, "Muslim-Christian Controversy", p. 58.
- 23 Avril A. Powell, "Muslim-Christian Confrontation", pp. 81-82.
- 24 Seema Alavi, 'Fugitive Mullahs and Outlawed Fanatics': Indian Muslims in nineteenth century trans-Asiatic Imperial Rivalries', p. 1359. See Endnote No. 6.
- 25 A. A. Powell, "Muslim-Christian Controversy", p. 60.
- 26 Imdad Sabri, *Asar-i Rahmat*, chapter titled 'Participation in the 1857 War of Independence', pp. 217 – 252. See Endnote No. 7.
- 27 A. A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, pp. 272 et seqq.
- 28 *Bible sei Quran takk*, p.199.
- 29 See Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, pp. 275 et seqq.
- 30 See Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, pp. 291 et seqq.
- 31 Haji Imdad Allah (1817 – 1899) [better known as Haji Imdadullah Makki] was a Sufi of the Naqshbandi order who joined the *jihad* against the British in 1857 but sought refuge in Mecca before Maulana Kairanvi arrived there in 1858. There is a chapter on Haji Imdadullah in the reference: Seema Alavi, "Haji Imdadullah Makki in Mecca", Chapter 4 in Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 222 – 266.

- 32 Seema Alavi, “Rahmatullah Kairanwi and the Muslim Cosmopolis”, Chapter 3 in Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 173.
- 33 Salih Sabri Yavuz & İbrahim Yeniçağ, Müslüman – Hıristiyan Polemiği Açısından Tahrif [Textual Corruption from the Viewpoint of Muslim-Christian Polemics], *Milel ve Nihal Journal*, Istanbul, Vol. 6, No. 1, January-April 2009, pp. 305 – 344. The authors look at the foundations and the arguments given in the Pfander-Rahmatullah debate of 1854.
- İbrahim Kaplan & Ömer Sadıker, Rahmetullah el-Hindî'nin Teslis Eleştirisi [Rahmatullah al-Hindi's Critique of the Trinity], *Journal of International Scientific Research [IBAD]*, Ankara TÜBİTAK-ULAKBİM, Vol. 3, No.2, 2018, pp. 625 – 633.
- 34 Noor Mohammad, Hindistan'da Misyoner Faaliyetleri ve Agra Tartışmaları [Missionary Activities in India and the Agra Discussions], Master's Thesis, Selçuk University, Konya, 2011, 222 pp.
- İbrahim Yeniçağ, Rahmetullah ve Pfander örneğinde İslâm-Hıristiyan polemiği [Muslim-Christian polemics as in the example of Rahmatullah and Pfander], Master's Thesis, Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, 2003, 244 pp.
- 35 Abdülhamit Birışık (born 1963) is a Professor in the Faculty of Theology at Marmara University, Istanbul.
- 36 In Turkish, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi*.
- 37 Scott Rank, *Disputing Religion, Empire and Modernity: Christian-Muslim Polemics in the Ottoman Print Sphere, 1861-1915*, Doctoral Dissertation presented to the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, 2015, 472 pp. This thesis also gives detailed information on the missionary activities of Carl Pfander after his arrival in Istanbul in 1858.
- 38 Azmi Özcan, *Pan-İslamizm: Osmanlı Devleti Hindistan Müslümanları ve İngiltere (1877 – 1914)* [Pan-Islamism: The Ottoman Empire, Indian Muslims and England (1877 – 1914)], (Istanbul: TDV İslâm Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1992), 292 pp.
- 39 Azmi Özcan, *Indian Muslims and the Ottomans (1877 – 1914), A Study of Indo-Muslim Attitudes to Pan-Islamism and Turkey*, PhD thesis, SOAS, London, 1990.
- 40 The orthography of the names has been altered from Turkish spellings.
- 41 The following information by Özcan may be given about the other names mentioned here:
 Shah Abdul Ghani Mujaddidi (1819 – 1878), a scholar of the Hadith from the Darul Uloom, Deoband. He is buried in Medina.
 Maulana Muhammad Yaqub Nanautawi (1832 – 1884) a professor at the Darul Uloom, Deoband. He performed the Haj on two occasions but is buried in Nanauta.
 Maulana Muhammad Khairuddin (1831 – 1900) was the father of Abul Kalam Azad [later Minister in India].
- 42 Refer to S. Tanvir Wasti, ‘The 1877 Ottoman Mission to Afghanistan’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.30, No.4 (1994), pp.956 -962.
- 43 Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World – A Global Intellectual History*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), p. 57.
- 44 The location of the 1854 debate was Agra, not Delhi.
- 45 According to the sources *Bible sei Quran takk* [Vol. 1, pp.201 and 202] and also *Asar-i Rahmat* [pp. 254 and 255], sultan Abdülaziz sent an official letter to Emir

Abdullah of Mecca sometime in the early 1860s to seek out from the Indian Muslims who were in Mecca, or who came for the Haj pilgrimage, information about the scholar who participated in the debate with Carl Pfander. By this time, of course, both Sayyid Dahlan and Emir Abdullah knew about Kairanwi's refuge in Mecca, where Kairanwi gave lectures and also assisted in the establishment of a religious *madrassa* called the Madrasa Saulatiya.

In a footnote on page 125 of the book by Christine Schirrmacher titled *The Islamic View of Major Christian Teachings*, (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008), the following is written:

al-Kairânawî fled to Mecca, and when the Ottoman sultan made his hajj to Mecca at the beginning of the 1860s, he was informed about the events in India of 1854.

However, there is no available evidence that any Ottoman sultan in the 19th century went on the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca.

- 46 *Bible sei Quran takk*, Vol. 1, p.202 *et seqq.* It is suggested in this source on p. 202 that the Reverend Pfander, on learning of the intended arrival of Maulana Kairanwi in Istanbul availed himself of leave and left for Western Europe rather than face the Maulana again. The reference called *Asar-i Rahmat* [p. 255 *et seqq.*] also mentions that the restrictions imposed by the Ottoman sultan Abdülaziz on the activities of missionaries including Carl Pfander were, at least in part, due to the information received by the sultan about their anti-Muslim activities in India. Furthermore, a proposal that Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanwi and the Reverend Carl Pfander take part in another debate in Istanbul could not be organized as Carl Pfander died on leave in London in 1865.
- 47 Hayreddin (1819 – 1890) [who signed himself Khérédine in French] was of Circassian origin and rose to the rank of Chief Minister in Tunisia. In 1868 he authored the Arabic book *Aqwam al-masalikfi ma'rifat ahwal al-mamalik*, published in Tunis, and this was subsequently published in Paris in the French edition titled *Essai sur les reformes necessaires aux Etats Musulmans* [Essay on the Reforms necessary for Muslim States]. He relocated to Istanbul and was appointed *Sadrizam* [Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire] by the sultan Abdülhamid in 1878. For more information, see S. Tanvir Wasti, "A Note on Tunuslu Hayreddin Paşa", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1, January 2000, pp. 1 – 20.
- 48 *Bible sei Quran takk*, Vol. 1, p.202 *et seqq.* See also Seema Alavi, "Rahmatullah Kairanwi and the Muslim Cosmopolis", pp. 196 – 197, which are followed by a presentation and exposition of the contents of *Izharul Haq*.
- 49 One of the most recent translations is *İzhârü'l Hak*, translated by Ali Namlı, (Istanbul: İslâm Araştırma Merkezi İSAM, 2012), 2 volumes, 480 and 394 pp. Also, *Kutsal Kitaba İlahî Çağrı* [A Divine Call to the Sacred Book], (Istanbul: Faran Yayıncılık, 2005), 2 volumes, a revised translation with an Introduction by Abdülhadi Sıddık, total 673 pp.
- 50 *Saulatun Nisa* means 'Splendid among Women'.
- 51 Refer also to the section titled 'Madrasa Saulatiya and the Making of Muslim Cosmopolitanism' in Seema Alavi's *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 191 – 197.
- 52 According to Seema Alavi, in the section titled 'Kairanwi's Cosmopolitanism at the Cusp of Empires', *ibid.*, pp.173 *et seqq.*:

Thus at one point the Governor of Hijaz Nuri Pasha - a Turkish military man who always remained suspicious of Kairanwi's *madrassa* - sent a damaging report on Kairanwi to Caliph Abd-al Hamid II (r. 1876 - 1909). He had prepared the report in consultation with the British consulate at Jeddah. Kairanwi retaliated by sending his own details to the caliph. Both for intellectual and political reasons he received a positive response from Abd-al Hamid II, who read both the reports and invited Kairanwi to visit Istanbul. He even asked the governor to arrange for Kairanwi's travel.

53 See Asrar, p. 127 *et seqq.* [Endnote No. 4].

54 Refer to *Bible sei Quran takk*, Vol. 1, p.208.

55 *Bible sei Quran takk*, Vol. 1, p.211.

56 Mehmed 'Akif Ersoy (1873 - 1936), a veterinarian by training, but a poet and professor by choice, was also the author of the Turkish National Anthem which was chosen by the Turkish Grand National Assembly by acclamation in 1921. For further information, refer to S. Tanvir Wasti, *An Introduction to Late Ottoman Turkish Poetry*, (Berkeley: Computers & Structures, International), 2011, Chapter 8.

Abstract

The article mainly deals with life and works of Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanvi whose erudite religious works were published in Arabic, Persian and Urdu and also translated into English, Turkish and other languages. There are papers in German and English by Christine Schirrmacher dealing with the Pfander-Kairanvi Agra debate of 1854 based on the material of her dissertation. Two exhaustive sources in Urdu also offering details dealing with the historical characters as well as the cultural milieu of the time. Rahmatullah Kairanvi also took up his pen against the missionary onslaught. Kairanvi wrote 18 books that were published from Delhi, Agra and Istanbul. Kairanvi's books have been translated into several languages. Among his earlier works are the books *Ibtal al-Taslis* [The Refutation of the Trinity], written in 1854 but first published in Delhi in 1875, and *'Ijaz-i 'Iswi* [The miracle of Jesus] published in Agra in 1854. Kairanvi's most important and well-known work is the book titled *Izhar al Haqq* [The Demonstration of the Truth], was first published in Arabic in Istanbul in 1864.

Keyword: Pfander-Kairanvi Agra debate of 1854, missionary onslaught.