

History of the Da'udi Bohra Tayyibis in Modern Times: The *Da'is*, the *Da'wat* and the Community

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The Tayyibi *da'wat* – so-called after the 21st Fatimid Musta'lian Ismaili Imam al-Tayyib b. al-Amir who went into seclusion or *satr* in 524/1130 – has been led by an uninterrupted series of *da'i al-mutlaqs*, initially based in Yemen and then shifting to India in 946/1539, where the community's roots go back to the 5th/11th century. Despite a fairly turbulent history, the Indian community has survived and flourished, and gradually expanded to comprise a worldwide diaspora. My aim here is a historical rather than an anthropological or ethnological analysis of the main body of Tayyibi Musta'lian Ismailis, the Da'udi Bohras. The Bohras have a profile unique among Muslim denominations. This historical analysis will highlight the way the Bohras have managed to retain their cohesion and vibrancy as a community characterized by a distinctive traditional orthopractic culture and a compatible positive modernization; it will also illustrate how their leaders, the *da'is*, have been the driving force in guiding the destiny of the community and shaping its evolution in changing times.

The 19th century marked the beginning of a new chapter in Bohra history. It ushered in a period of relative peace for the *da'wat*, mainly due to the establishment of British supremacy in India, after long years of persecution by Sunni rulers. After some unsettled years, a new centre, Surat, had just been established as the headquarters of the *da'wat*. Surat, a trading post in Gujarat directly controlled by the British East India Company, offered not only protection from religious persecution but increased financial opportunity. Also extremely significant in terms of *da'wat* history, the reins of *da'i*-ship had been taken up by Sayyidna 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din, whose dynamism and long-lasting reforms earned him the epithet of 'rejuvenator' (*mujaddid*), who laid down a refurbished and enduring

infrastructure for the *da'wat*, and revitalized it in all spheres, whether religious, administrative, cultural or literary. His legacy was perpetuated by his successors. A hundred years and seven *da'is* later, another Sayf al-Din, a new 'rejuvenator', assumed the reins of the *da'wat* early in the 20th century.¹ Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din transferred the *da'wat* headquarters to the developing metropolis of Bombay (now Mumbai). His astute response to the new realities of the 20th century included the best of what the new ideas and advances had to offer while reaffirming the community's traditional roots, thereby providing security from the bewildered confusion that beset certain other religious denominations. His far-sighted and proactive leadership set the course of the *da'wat* for the new century.

While several major political and cultural factors informed the fortunes of the Bohra community during the modern period, the *da'is'* far-reaching authority over the direction of the *da'wat* and in shaping the community's history is also unmistakably noticeable. The *da'wat* is conceived in Bohra doctrine as a spiritual kingdom; in the Imam's absence the *da'i al-mutlaq* – vicegerent and sole representative of the concealed Imam – is the *de facto* head, empowered with the absolute authority vested in the Imam. He is aided in his mission by two other dignitaries of high rank (*rutba*), the *ma'dhun* and the *mukasir*. Belief in the unbreakable chain of *da'is* and in the veracity and authority of the appointed *da'i* is the basic criterion for membership in the Tayyibi Da'wat and the Bohra community. The Bohras refer to themselves as 'children of the *da'wat*'. The *da'i's* unique role as father figure and supreme leader commanding absolute loyalty is inspired by a deep and personal adoration; the personal charisma and centrality of the *da'i* in the formulation of the solidarity and very identity of the Bohra community has been remarked upon by other, non-Bohra, scholars.² In the context of Islam as a 'way of life', the *da'i's* concern and influence regarding the spiritual well-being of his followers extends to all facets of life. Hence he not only firmly regulates those aspects dealing with purely religious matters but takes an active and effective interest in the social and educational welfare of the community, and is intimately involved in the personal lives of his followers. While the Bohras naturally experience historical developments as part of the society and time in which they live, the manner and extent of their engagement with such developments is intrinsically influenced by the *da'i's* guidance.

In the modern period, Bohras as citizens of India have been affected by changing political situations and new ideological trends, including the British presence in India, Indian independence, the partition of India,

governments led by different political parties, the revolutionizing technological advances of modernization, ideological movements like the women's liberation movement, wider educational opportunities and new arenas and techniques of business. The community's response, the impact of and interaction with these external influences, was governed by the *da'is*. In general a self-confident openness to positive external developments and a policy of tolerance and diplomacy can be seen in the *da'wat*'s relations with others and its adjustment to new and possibly antagonistic ideological, political and social forces, which paved the way for dealing with new challenges thrown up by the modern world with a considerable degree of success.

An in-depth study of the Bohras reveals that their unique interpretation of Islamic law as essentially applicable to all ages, their reason-based philosophy and ethic of broad-mindedness, their tradition of business, and finally their *da'i*-centred organizational structure and cohesion, have all facilitated a unique adaptation of modernity. A business-oriented livelihood and outlook have encouraged interaction with other cultures and the adoption of the dictates of progress. Implicit belief in Fatimid-Ismaili doctrine – which holds that reason and religion are fundamentally compatible and interdependent, and which preaches that 'wisdom' should be grasped wherever it is found – has enabled them to embrace all the practical accomplishments of modern science and technology which do not explicitly contradict Islamic ideals. The role of the *da'i* in monitoring the community's response to modernity without deviation from religious ideals – inevitable variation of the degree of conformity in different sectors within the community apart – is crucial in the reinforcement of traditional orthopraxy, in directing and endorsing the incorporation of modern innovations, in setting the authoritative standard for change and continuity, and, not least, in providing a potent focus for spiritual loyalty and cultural cohesion.

Brief Survey of the *Da'is*

Sayyidna³ 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din, 43rd *da'i* (1213–1232/1798–1817)

Sayyidna 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din's forceful personality and total self-confidence, invaluable traits in his captaincy of the Bohra community, are a byword in *da'wat* tradition. With passion and skill he breathed fresh life into the spirit of the community. He was a learned scholar and prolific writer; the Jami'a Sayfiyya, formerly the Dars-i Sayfi (the primary educational institution of the *da'wat*) bears his name, as does the *da'wat*'s

central administration, the Wazarat al-Sayfiyya. He remains one of the wisest, most dynamic leaders of the *da'wat*, overcoming chronic ill health, personal tragedies and crippling disasters to invigorate every aspect of the Bohra community.

Sayyidna Muhammad 'Izz al-Din, 44th *da'i* (1232–1236/1817–1821)

A new family was introduced to lead the *da'wat*: Sayyidna Muhammad 'Izz al-Din, the relatively inconspicuous and untried son of Shaykh Jeevan-ji of Aurangabad, was groomed meticulously in utmost secrecy by the 43rd *da'i* and presented as his successor. His brief time as *da'i* saw the smooth continuation of his predecessor's legacy.

Sayyidna Tayyib Zayn al-Din, 45th *da'i* (1236–1252/1821–1837)

Also selected and trained for the rank by Sayyidna 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din, the long eventful reign of Sayyidna Tayyib Zayn al-Din – the elder brother of his predecessor – is alluded to as containing intimations of '*zuhur*', a time when an Imam exercised sovereignty among the people, due to the pomp and recognition surrounding the *da'i*'s official visits and activities, and the rare freedom enjoyed by the Bohras in practising their religion. Among his contributions to the field of education is the classification of key *da'wat* texts into a graded sequence of study still pertinent today.⁴

Sayyidna Muhammad Badr al-Din, 46th *da'i* (1252–1256/1837–1840)

Sayyidna Muhammad Badr al-Din's biographer writes his story with 'sorrowful heart and tear-filled eyes'.⁵ Except for a long felicitous sojourn in Pune, tragedy overshadowed his life: his father Sayyidna 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din died when he was seven; early in his *da'i*-ship, a devastating fire swept Surat, destroying thousands of homes and livelihoods, including almost all the *da'wat* buildings and a large number of irreplaceable *da'wat* manuscripts. He died at the young age of 30, the ninth and last *da'i* of the Badri dynasty that had begun with the 34th *da'i* Isma'il Badr al-Din (1065–1085/1655–1674).

Sayyidna 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din, 47th *da'i* (1256–1302/1840–1885)

The issue of legitimate *da'i*-ship and the *nass* controversy has tended to obscure the positive realities of Sayyidna 'Abd al-Qadir's unprecedented 47-year term in office. He was the first Indian *da'i* to carry out his decision to undertake the *hajj* pilgrimage. People from different faiths came, as they do now, to seek the *da'i*'s blessings. The *da'wat* weathered serious blows to its constitutional foundation, but he left the Bohra community a

legacy of extraordinary generosity and filial benevolence.

Sayyidna 'Abd al-Husayn Husam al-Din, 48th *da'i* (1302–1308/1885–1891)

The seasoned and tried Sayyidna 'Abd al-Husayn Husam al-Din, with a long record of dedicated service, succeeded his brother after a virtual campaign of vilification against him by his enemies had failed to have him disinherited. He was acclaimed for his oratory. Among his lasting contributions is the Fayd-i Husayni, an agency to facilitate pilgrimage travel which became the major resource for Bohra pilgrims, and the establishment of *musafirkhanas* (guest-houses) for travellers; there are now lodges for visitors in most pilgrimage sites in India and abroad.

Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din (I), 49th *da'i* (1308–1323/1891–1906)

Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din's 15-year term was divided by his son Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din into three periods – the first fraught with internal and financial difficulty, the second spent in intensive consolidation of administrative and other matters, and the latter years a time of stability, prosperity and productivity. The clearing of the prolonged debt that had burdened the *da'wat* is counted among the 49th *da'i*'s greatest achievements.

Sayyidna 'Abd Allah Badr al-Din, 50th *da'i* (1323–1333/1906–1915)

The appointment of the mild-mannered, low profile Sayyidna 'Abd Allah Badr al-Din as *da'i* was generally unexpected. His term was comparatively peaceful and stable, a reflection of the calm apparent in the world at large before the First World War.

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din, 51st *da'i* (1333–1385/1915–1965)

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din delivered the oration at the inauguration of his term like, it was said, a second 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din. He too came to be called 'Mu'ayyad-i Asghar' or the 'Second Mu'ayyad', a reference to the great Fatimid *da'i* and intellectual al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-Shirazi, for his intellectual scope and mastery of the pen and for his contribution to the perpetuation and augmentation of a rich literary heritage; his erudition elicited respect and recognition from scholars outside the community as well. He, too, firmly established the paramount authority of the *da'i*, kept the reins of *da'i*-ship firmly in his hands, and brought the same vigour and resolution as his predecessors to his task. He, too, at the commencement

of another century, breathed fresh spirit into the *da'wat*: painstakingly, through coaxing, exhortation and sheer personal dynamism, he brought cohesion and renewed vitality to a community depleted by confusion and lassitude. It was a rapidly changing world, and the 51st *da'i* ushered in a dynamic new era in the *da'wat*. Under his direction, the *da'wat*, its members and its policies progressed towards successful participation in the modern age while reaffirming and renewing allegiance to the source of their identity.

The 28-year-old Tahir Sayf al-Din was immediately plunged into a battle with opponents. The dissidents, headed by the sons of the wealthy industrialist Adamji Pirbhoy, decided to take their challenge of the *da'i* to the civil authority of the country's courts; several cases were fought over a period of years within the national legal system, first under the British government and later the Indian, most prominent among them the Chandabhai Gulla Case and the Burhanpur Dargah Case. The new *da'i* had practically no seasoned counsellors; while benefiting from existing legal talent within the community, tough decisions regarding the conduction of the lawsuits were taken solely by the *da'i*. Lawyers involved in *da'wat* cases today find guidance in the sagacious arguments presented by the 51st *da'i* in court. He finally won every legal suit.

Tahir Sayf al-Din's concerted efforts during the early years focused on clearing the doubts regarding the *da'i*'s legitimacy. The exponents of the *inqita' al-nass* theory had been functioning clandestinely within the community since the time of Sayyidna 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din, whose successors had adopted a policy of forbearance and conciliation for various reasons, including the dread of causing a fatal rift in the community and the consideration that several prominent *da'wat* figures were involved. Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din confronted these challengers head on, in writing and in speech. He presented arguments for the doctrinal essentiality of a *da'i al-mutlaq*, with particulars about the *nass* of the 47th *da'i* in his first Ramadan *risalat* (treatise) titled *Daw' nur al-haqq al-mubin* (1335/1916–1917). The verdicts in British court cases concerning this issue further added to the success of his efforts. As a result the *da'i*'s position and authority within the community were greatly strengthened.

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din transferred the headquarters of the *da'wat* to Bombay (now Mumbai, capital of the state of Maharashtra); the *da'i*'s residence, Sayfi Mahal, and the Sayfi Masjid – the largest *masjid* ever built by a *da'i* and the city's principal Bohra *masjid* – are focal points of the Bohra landscape in Bombay. Bohras tended to gravitate towards and settle in centres of commerce and trade. Bombay, which by now had a Bohra

population of about 5,000, had replaced Surat with its 2,000–3,000 strong community as the most populous Bohra centre. While Surat had been one of the major port cities of British India, it was becoming less important as a mercantile centre, and it was Bombay that was destined to become the commercial capital of modern India. Gujaratis had dominated the political and economic scene in Bombay during the colonial period, and it was mainly Gujarati entrepreneurs who helped to create the metropolis of Bombay; among them, Bohra businessmen also quickly filled the niches in the mercantile industry created by the expanding trade with Europe, and even established virtual monopolies in areas such as hardware and glass. While most Bohras owned shops or small businesses, a fair number went into banking and larger industrial ventures.

Sayyidna Taher Sayf al-Din's term covered more than 50 years, spanning an extremely eventful half-century in world history. The atmosphere in the Bohra community was one of animated activity, of seizing opportunity, of advancement and progress in all aspects of life. Many of the world's revolutionary events found echoes in the *da'wat*. It was a time of two world wars; in the *da'wat* there was turbulent activity and conflict with dissidents. The industrial/technological revolution encouraged a move towards technical and professional training among the Bohras; as the world became a smaller place with advanced communication and speedier travel, the *da'wat* administration was tightened and firmer central control established, while Bohras around the world had experienced a greater cultural unity and closer contact with the *da'i*. Expanding cosmopolitanism, the nationalism following Indian independence from British colonialism, and the globalization of the world economy, all had a considerable impact on the Bohras and the *da'wat*'s political and financial policies, initiating a degree of participation in national affairs and a recognition of their place in the forum of Indian Muslims especially, and then within the international Muslim forum.

These changes and trends were, by all accounts, directed by the vision and the firm hand of the 51st *da'i* in accordance with fundamental religious principles. On the one hand, he was fully alive to the need for dealing realistically with the complex problems of modern life; he had a hands-on manner of operation which ensured his awareness of and involvement in the details and decisions regarding developments in the *da'wat*. On the other, since the close-knit network of the community was opening up to a greater cosmopolitanism, to outside influences and ideological currents, a corresponding emphasis on the reinforcement of essential traditional values and practices, of the community's ideological roots, became a critical priority.

Having put into place the process for religious reaffirmation – fully restoring the authority of the *da'i*'s position, bringing about a resurgence of faith and participation in religious tradition focusing particularly on the youth – Tahir Sayf al-Din opened the community to accepting the beneficial aspects of modernity on a large scale. Secure in their ideology and tradition, Bohras had not undergone the crisis of identity of Islam versus modernity experienced by certain other Indian Muslims after the dissolution of the Mughal Empire and its replacement by British rule; no psychological or ideological obstacles had prevented the learning of new languages and the adopting of new ways of communication and trade. Instead all manifestations of progress that did not contradict fundamental religious principles were welcomed without qualms.

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din now launched comprehensive reform programmes in several areas of the community, especially administration, finance, education and societal norms. The administrative apparatus was better regulated, systematized and reinforced. Housing and cooperative schemes were encouraged. Along with the regulation and greater facilitation of religious education, *da'wat*-sponsored institutions for secular education were introduced and technical and career-oriented training was encouraged. Tahir Sayf al-Din, a prolific writer of works in both prose and poetry which are a central part of the *da'wat* literary corpus, held regular *sabaqs* for Bohras of various categories – the number reaching an incredible 30 or more classes a day during one period. He emphasized the need to educate the Bohras, the youth especially, in religious tradition to strengthen and reinforce their commitment to the *da'wat*, at the same time advocating secular education, particularly through the medium of the English language, and vocational and technical training. One measure of the success of the drive towards wider education is that the community, including women, achieved virtually 100 per cent literacy at a time when the average literacy in India was around 10 per cent and that of women and Muslims in particular far less. Bohra women were encouraged to seek education, to attend communal prayer and ceremonial/religio-social gatherings and to take an active part in community affairs. Voluntary associations for women as well as men – such as the Sayfi Women's Organization – were formed and drew a large membership involved in extensive social work. Modernity was reflected in the dress code as well. Bohra dress had been, save for a few minor adaptations, the dress of the society in which they lived. As the community opened up, the style of dress also changed. Men began to adopt the Western dress code that was gaining ground in professional and business circles. The *da'i* allowed women as well to wear

other forms of dress within the required canon of religious propriety, while their traditional dress (*rida*) was also modified to allow for a more mobile lifestyle. The Bohras and their *da'i* began to acquire a known public identity on the national scale. The partition of India in 1947 was a time of heightened communal emotion and danger for all in the region, and many Indian Muslims left for Pakistan either freely or as a result of coercion. Despite threats of dire consequences from a senior Hindu leader if he did not leave, the *da'i* decided to remain in his homeland and directed his followers to do the same; other Muslims testified that his resolute stance also motivated them to remain. Particularly after independence, the Bohras assimilated to a degree with other Indian Muslims, supporting, for instance, the Congress Party against more right-wing Hindu parties and participating in the Muslim Personal Law Board. The *da'i* was hailed as a pious, open-minded and wise leader, his public identity highlighted by his meetings and correspondence with government officials of British and independent India, as well as other public figures. The Bohras also began to publicly identify with the international Muslim *umma*.

For the first time, a *da'i al-mutlaq* now visited Bohra communities established in countries outside India. It was the first time many of these Bohras had seen their *da'i*. He visited Ceylon several times. He made a historic journey in 1953–1954 to the Far East, where he visited Rangoon (Burma), Bangkok (Thailand), Jakarta (Indonesia), Sarabaya and Penang (Malaysia), Singapore and Hong Kong, and in 1963 he went to East Africa. The *da'i* was welcomed and honoured by political leaders in all these places. He also made long annual visits to Karachi, which has the second largest Bohra population after Mumbai, even after partition. His wide-ranging travels included several landmark pilgrimage journeys. He was the first *da'i* to visit the Fatimid capital Cairo since the end of the dynasty's rule some 800 years earlier; he was also the first Bohra *da'i* to visit places of historical significance for the Bohras in Palestine and Syria.

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din completed 50 years as *da'i* in 1963. His Golden Jubilee was celebrated with great pomp by the Bohra community worldwide. Eminent public leaders and scholars also participated in the commemorations and expressed their appreciation for the *da'i*'s work; others sent messages of felicitation and tribute for his guidance of his community, his promotion of the cause of Islam and his personal contributions to humanity. Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din died on 19 Rajab 1385/12 November 1965; his mausoleum, Raudat Tahira, remains a focal point of Bohra devotional sentiment.

Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din (II), 52nd *da'i* (1385/1965– present) Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din was succeeded by his eldest son Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din – nominated by him when only 19, a point referred to at almost every public oration since – which ensured the renewal of faith and promised security in the endurance of tradition. Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din's term has reaped the fruits of the 51st *da'i*'s labours. When the 52nd *da'i* took up the reins of the *da'wat*, he continued on the path set by his father. He appointed as *ma'dhun* his young brother Sayyidi Khuzayma Qutb al-Din. He confirmed the late *da'i*'s brothers, Sayyidi Salih Safi al-Din as *mukasir* and Sayyidi Ibrahim Zayn al-Din as *ra's al-hudud*. Many of the guidelines and activities of the *da'wat* regarding political policies, social welfare, etc. continued for a time along the course established, and several trends begun by the 51st *da'i* were further developed. Inevitably, as the passage of time has brought changes and developments, and new people with new ideas and attitudes have gained prominence in the establishment, some modifications, alterations and new directions have become apparent.

The Bohra community in Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din's time has kept in step with the developing times in all practical aspects of life. The trend towards more widespread and higher education has continued; while business is still the form of livelihood most encouraged, modern times have seen the emergence of more and more professionals, doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers, architects, etc.; the participation of women in community affairs, their education and even careers are now taken for granted, and Bohra women enjoy a degree of involvement in and contribution to the community far above that of the average Indian Muslim woman. The *da'wat* machinery, too, has continued to evolve: finances have improved dramatically, and education and welfare facilities among the community continue to improve and reach further. While the administrative format remains basically the same, more departments have been added, the infrastructure has been revolutionized with the coming of the computer age and new centres are being established at a rapid rate to accommodate the dispersal and expansion of the community.

Simultaneously, a more rigorous Islamic-centred approach in all aspects of life – including dress code, finance, etc. – is being propagated by the establishment. This emphasis is motivated in part by the desire to counteract anti-traditionalist, anti-authority aspects of Westernized modernization. Bohras who have settled in Western countries are perhaps particularly prone to such influence, but these trends are rapidly pervading Indian society, especially the youth, and have penetrated the Bohras

as well. Inter-communal marriages are increasing, and permission is given with reluctance to such unions, as it is believed that they have negative consequences in the long term for the community inasmuch as they usually generate a dilution of tradition and a weakening of the bonds of loyalty to the *da'wat* in subsequent generations. The convening of religious functions has increased, and attendance is huge particularly when the *da'i* himself is present. Construction of devotional and pilgrimage-related structures also takes place on a much wider scale, and several ambitious renovation projects have been completed.

Much of this construction is now inspired by the Fatimid affiliation of the Bohras – one of the major features of Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din's time is the physical reinforcement of the Bohra's Fatimid identity, their involvement with the one-time Fatimid capital, Cairo, and their leader's persona as 'Fatimid *da'i*' in Egypt and other Arab countries. The Bohras see themselves as the inheritors of the Fatimid legacy. Their socio-religious norms reflect aspects of Fatimid culture (to give but one example, the choice of the colour white, the official Fatimid colour, for traditional male clothing), while *da'wat* literature and education is the inheritance and perpetuation of Fatimid religious learning. Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din travelled to Cairo shortly after becoming *da'i*, by invitation of the Egyptian government to inaugurate the *Ra's al-Husayn* cenotaph in 1966.⁶ He has come to be known in the Arab world as 'Sultan al-Bohra', and is referred to as 'Azamat al-Sultan'. His renovation of the 4th/10th-century Fatimid *masjid* of Imam al-Hakim in Cairo, al-Jami' al-Anwar (one of the largest *masjids* in the world), which had lain for many centuries in virtual ruin, was a landmark undertaking in the Tayyibi *da'wat*'s history and proved to be of particular significance to the Bohra community.⁷ It was responsible for the settlement of a fairly large Bohra community there; students from the Jami'a are given the opportunity to study in al-Azhar University. Since the restoration of al-Anwar (inaugurated in 1980), a 'neo-Fatimid' style has come to dominate the style of *da'wat* monuments, in which architectural forms and design motifs found in Egyptian Fatimid architecture are utilized, with copious use of marble and gold leaf, particularly in *mihhrabs*. In renovated Indian monuments, stone structures have generally been replaced with marble; the Indian element that blended with the Islamic/Mughal has been retained in some renovated structures, but in all new edifices the 'neo-Fatimid' style prevails. The 1997 rebuilding of al-Masjid al-Mu'azzam in Surat is an example of this style.

Currently the 96-year-old *da'i* continues to lead an active community

life and governs the *da'wat* in all its various aspects. As a direct result of their love and staunch allegiance to the person of the *da'i*, the Bohra community scattered all over the world has preserved an impressive degree of vigour and cohesion.

Historical Trends in Political Policies and Internal Dynamics

The modern period has been by and large one of prosperity and relative calm for the Tayyibi *da'wat*, particularly when compared with the preceding epoch. In India the *da'i* was respected historically as an illustrious spiritual personage by the Hindus and Sikhs, as well as Muslims. The Bohras have been noted for their attitude of harmony, non-confrontation and goodwill in their interaction with people of other creeds. However, as a minority Shi'i community, they have frequently suffered hostility and persecution. Their distinctive public observance of religious practices, such as the celebration of 'Id on an astronomically fixed day (rather than by the sighting of the moon), separate Friday prayer, the practice of *matam*, etc., has antagonized Sunni Muslim denominations; the slaughter of animals for meat has sometimes additionally angered vegetarian Hindus (factors also important in the broader context of Hindu-Muslim unrest in the country). The noticeable cohesion and effectual social welfare among the Bohra community, celebrations, and latterly their better lifestyle and advanced level of education have aroused the jealousy of some of the poorer and less well-organized among their co-religionists. A primary factor in inter-communal tension has been the Bohras' material affluence, which, say historic accounts, excited the avarice of Hindu and Sunni rulers and governors in pre-independence days, and has since led to the targeting of commercial property in communal violence.

The political authorities have both protected and persecuted Bohras through the ages. The political policies of the Indian *da'is* have been informed by their traditional perception of themselves as a *gharib qawm*, literally 'poor people', or a defenceless and politically weak people, in Misra's words 'a persecuted and harried community',⁸ a small minority beleaguered by a potentially hostile majority. Hence the *da'is'* policy has been to keep a low profile and to solicit where possible the goodwill of the ruling powers of the land. To this end, the *da'is* of pre-independence India cultivated cordial relations with local *nawabs* and *rajas*, such as the Maratha Peshwas, and the rulers of the princely states such as the Sindhias of Gwalior, the Holkars of Indore and the Gaekwads of Baroda.

The *da'i* 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din and the Bohras had cordial relations

with the foreign mercantile powers making political inroads in India, particularly the British, who began to gain ascendancy and consolidated their dominance in almost the whole of India by the early 19th century. After suffering years of sectarian persecution, the Bohras welcomed the sympathy and protection of the British. The Bohras' positive experience with and historical perception of the British Raj is a fact that post-colonial scholars would perhaps be uncomfortable with – the negative sides of British colonialism continue to be the subject of academic and political discussion – but for the Bohras, British rule meant a friendly authority comparatively free from religious prejudice, which not only established a large degree of political stability but also initiated positive reforms in the infrastructure of the country and offered expanded business opportunities, a cosmopolitanism and cultural benefits. While Surat had been among the most populous and important of the Bohra settlements, control of it by the British East India Company was probably a key factor in the *da'i* Yusuf Najm al-Din and his successors choosing it for the *da'wat* headquarters.⁹ The Bohra merchants were an active and influential sector of the city's trade, and the goodwill was mutual. 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din mentions in a *risalat* (official letter/treatise) that a Frenchman, having received impressive reports about the *da'i*, immediately agreed to a request to vacate the seaside villa he had hired so that the *da'i* could convalesce there. In Surat at least, after suffering the aggression of Shivaji and the Hindu Marathas, many of the leading Muslim families supported the British, and even during the upheavals of 1857 the area remained tranquil. In contrast to the peace and security in Surat, continued harassment of the Bohras by local rulers in various other areas is reported. The author of *Mawsim-i bahar* describes graphically how the persecuted Bohras – possibly referring to the area around Morbi, where the *da'i* was resident at the time – lived in a constant state of uncertainty, while their financial situation deteriorated;¹⁰ community leaders in Ratangarh-kheri and Jaatha (in present Madhya Pradesh) were interned by the Maratha Peshwa Baji Rao II.

During the 46th *da'i*'s sojourn in Pune, British officers were so cordial it was said that no previous Indian *da'i* had received such accolades from a political power. A letter written by the 47th *da'i* in reply to a British agent contains an overview of the *da'is*' long friendly association with the British in India, outlining instances of mutual help and support.¹¹ In his time, British sovereignty passed from the East India Company to the Crown following the uprising of 1857. The *da'i* was conferred the title 'First Class Sardar of the Deccan'; this title, along with its benefits,

was also conferred on his successors. Earlier *da'is* had been offered *jagirs* (land grants), which were refused because of the political obligations they entailed. British governors and residents enjoyed the *da'is'* hospitality and sought their advice; local British officials participated in ceremonial occasions such as weddings; the British military provided escorts and protection for *da'is*; British authorities facilitated Bohra trade ventures abroad. It is not, therefore, surprising that *da'wat* history recalls British rule as an era that brought security, stability and progress.

Although the Bohras had, in the interests of their own survival, chosen to take the path of least resistance with the powers that be, they were not isolated from the aspirations of the people among whom they lived. They sympathized with the independence movement of India – many Bohras were active participants, with the *da'i's* blessings – and had good relations with the freedom fighters; Mahatma Gandhi was offered the *da'i's* bungalow for his stay in Dandi during the Salt March, which was later donated to the nation as a historic site. After independence, cordial relations continued particularly with the Congress Party and its leaders, and the *da'i*, while still abstaining from directly participating in politics, continues to meet and act as host to national and international political leaders.

Ironically Bohras in India have suffered historically from the prejudice of Muslim rulers while enjoying comparative freedom from religious restrictions and persecution under Hindu rulers; this experience continued in post-independence India. Particularly since the 20th century, the Bohras began to assimilate themselves, albeit to a limited degree, into the Indian and then the international Muslim community. The 51st *da'i* was successful in establishing a greater rapport with members of other Muslim denominations. By word and action, he emphasized the basic unifying factors of Islam rather than the differences among various Muslim communities. In the national elections held in 1935, the Bohras in Bombay – where the voting franchise was dominated by Muslims – supported Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah of the Muslim League. The *da'i* as an influential community leader gained a highly respected voice in national Muslim affairs. Receptions hosted by the *da'i* for visiting international Muslim leaders, the Aqsa restoration appeal and the Palestine Conference were an assertion of the Bohra community's pan-Islamic association and sympathies. Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din presented the *kiswa*, red draperies that were hung in the interior of the Ka'ba, in 1931 and 1937, and donated the intricately crafted silver and gold cenotaphs (*zarihs*) for the tombs of Imam 'Ali (1942), Imam Husayn (1937), and Ra's al-Husayn in Cairo

(inaugurated in 1966). The *da'i* has participated in international conferences related to religion.

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din placed the Bohra community on the national map of India. Under his direction, the Bohras began to achieve national recognition as a positive constituent of the country's society, and their strong religious roots, code of conduct, business acumen, discipline and tolerant outlook have been frequently praised by eminent public figures. Bohras have risen to occupy prominent civil posts such as Sheriff of Bombay and Chief Justice of the Indian High Court and even the Supreme Court. Since the mid-20th century large numbers of Bohras have begun to settle in the Middle East and the West. The *da'wat* has acquired an international public identity, particularly with the *da'i*'s visits to the new community centres; he is officially recognized abroad as the head of a known religious community, welcomed as a guest of governments and has even been awarded civic honours in several countries.

While the role and activities of the Public Relations Office instituted in the time of the 52nd *da'i* are still limited, eschewing presenting statements or explanations in the press, good relations are built outside the community through the general conduct and actions of Bohras. In 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din's time, the Governor of Ratlam wrote of the *da'i* and his followers with admiration in his book *Tarikh-i Malwa*.¹² Apart from their live-and-let-live attitude where ideology is concerned, in the 19th and 20th centuries the *da'is* contributed generously towards relief and charity for Hindus as well as other Muslims. Private meetings between *da'wat* dignitaries and religious and international political leaders, including leaders from all denominations and all political parties, are a means of promoting goodwill.

The Bohras have, for the most part, enjoyed a peaceful and productive coexistence with Hindus, Muslims and other communities. However, inter-communal conflicts have erupted, and continue to do so, from time to time, disturbing the customary smooth relations.

Internal dissent

Historically, episodes of dissent within the community have usually been based on a rival claim to the leadership. Dissenters – termed *munafiqin* in the *da'wat* – have tended to develop and utilize further this doctrine in order to support their claims. As far as is evident from accounts of such movements, social disaffection of any sort has not usually been an issue, at least not a declared motive. The *da'is*' policy has usually been

one of prompt refutation, accompanied by attempts at reconciliation and re-absorbing, as far as possible. Some dissenters have seceded from the *da'wat* to form separate sects which are still in existence today, such as the Mahdibaghwalas; some have returned to the *da'wat*, either individually or the entire group (members of the Hujumiyya sect who had seceded in the time of the 33rd *da'i* returned during the time of the 43rd *da'i* 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din; the 75 remaining followers of Majdu', a prominent dissident during the time of the 40th *da'i*, returned during Tayyib Zayn al-Din's time). From about the middle of the 20th century, 'social reform' became the main slogan of dissenters, who demanded the restoration of what they regarded as the 'original' Bohra tenets which they held had been distorted by the *da'i* and the establishment. While they claim to accept the *da'i* as their leader, albeit limited to what they define as the spiritual sphere, the dissenters continue to dispute the perimeters of his authority¹³ and to seek outside intervention for perceived injustices. The period under study saw a few occasions of internal dissent, which had varying degrees of impact.

The inqita' al-nass theory

A very serious sedition or *fitnat*, in every way, occurred in the time of the 47th *da'i*, Sayyidna 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din, a controversy about his authority as legitimate *da'i al-mutlaq* that pervaded the fabric of the community even in the highest circles, causing an internal upheaval that threatened the very dogmatic bedrock of the *da'wat*. The *nass*-validity issue has tended to dominate the historical accounts of the reign of the 47th *da'i*, with almost all non-Bohra sources uncritically replicating – for various reasons – the dissident view; the argument for the 47th *da'i* is hardly even mentioned. Historical records supply evidence that the 46th *da'i* had always spoken of, written about, alluded to and treated 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din in a manner which left no doubt that he regarded him as his successor, clearly stating his choice publicly on several occasions. Hence the Ma'dhun Sayyidi Hibat Allah Jamal al-Din (d. 1274/1858) addressed him in a letter as *al-mansus alay-hi miraran* ('the heir oft-designated-by-*nass*').¹⁴ His succession was decreed by authoritative scholars to be by a valid witnessed *nass*, no objection is reported to have been raised at the time, nor was any other candidate put forward. The *da'i*-ship began smoothly, with all the usual traditions of transition: the oath of allegiance, the letters and poems of congratulations, the routine financial entries under the name of the new *da'i* in the ledgers (*daftar*). Many years later, however, doubts were raised about the legitimacy of his *da'i*-ship by disaf-

fectured elements of the Bohra elite aiming to undermine the *da'i*'s supreme authority. They actively propagated the claim that he had not received the mandatory formal designation of *nass* from his predecessor; coining the *inqita' al-nass* theory, viz., that the tradition of *nass* necessary for a legitimate *da'i al-mutlaq* had been severed, they proclaimed that 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din was simply a *nazim da'i*, a 'manager *da'i*' who had no spiritual authority. The *da'i*'s supporters cited specific instances of *nass*; the *da'i* himself was constrained to draft a response to his accusers.¹⁵ Fifty years later, in court session, a British judge heard both sides of the argument and ruled categorically in the pro-*nass* party's favour.¹⁶

It is significant that the challenge was raised openly so long after 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din's assumption of *da'i*-ship, when most of the eminent scholars of the time of the 46th *da'i* and earlier were no longer alive to answer the accusations, including the witnesses to the appointment and scions of the 'Izzi and Zayni families with direct knowledge of the affair. Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din placed the controversy 15 years into 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din's term, based on the death in 1271/1854 of the pre-eminent *da'wat* notable Sayyidi 'Abd 'Ali 'Imad al-Din, perhaps the most influential of the *da'i*'s supporters. It culminated in the launching of a direct challenge to the *da'i*'s authority some 40 years into his term by a group calling itself *Hilf al-Fada'il*, comprised of people occupying prominent positions in the *da'wat* establishment, sons of the late *hudud* who had endorsed the *nass*, plus a few members of the *da'i*'s family. Their demand for the management of the *da'wat* by consultative assembly (*shura*) was in effect a claim for the devolution of supreme authority within the *da'wat* upon themselves. Their purpose, says Professor Robert Serjeant, was to usurp the *da'i*'s power and acquire control over the *da'wat* revenues;¹⁷ several founders of the *Hilf* also had personal grudges against the *da'i*.

The *da'i* did re-establish his authority, the principal dissidents rendered him public obeisance and desisted from further open sedition, but a certain amount of damage had been done, and the consequences and costs of the conflict and the measures taken to protect the *da'wat* would be felt for many years. The stature of the *da'i* in the community had been undermined by years of rumour. To dilute the opposing *shaykh* faction, the *da'i* began conferring the title of *shaykh* more commonly, with the result that it became less esteemed; to lessen their hostility, he allocated the income from prominent administrative areas to powerful potential trouble-makers in the *da'wat*, reducing the *da'wat*'s overall income; *dars* instructors had participated in the affair and hence the institution suffered. Most importantly for the *da'wat*, the dissenters had used their

status to create doubts in the minds of a significant portion of the Bohra community; the new doctrines of the invalidation of the *da'i*'s spiritual authority continued to survive in prominent circles and had repercussions for succeeding *da'is*, becoming a much used weapon in the hands of would-be challengers. It would take the strenuous efforts of the 51st *da'i* to finally set the issue at rest.

The Mahdibaghwalas

The early years of the 49th *da'i*'s term were fraught by the turmoil of religious dissent and internal challenges to the *da'i*'s authority. The wealthy Bohra contractor Adamji Pirbhoy, who served as Sheriff of Bombay in 1897–1898, earlier a spirited supporter of the *da'is* and an ardent admirer of the *da'i*'s father 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din, began to solicit for more power in the *da'wat* administration. Influential *da'wat* personages still espousing the *inqita'* theory were able to exert tremendous pressure on the *da'i*.

Early in his term, a certain 'Abd al-Husayn b. Jeeva-ji began actively advocating this theory. Following in the footsteps of Majdu', he claimed that he had established direct contact with the concealed Tayyibi Imam and been appointed to the highest ranks in the *da'wat*. 'Abd al-Husayn, called by his followers 'Malik Sahib', publicly challenged the *da'i* in 1314–1315/1897, and succeeded in attracting many followers in the areas of Nagpur and Burhanpur, central India. They were known as Nagpuriyas or Mahdibaghwalas, from the city and locality of their congregation. Several refutational treatises were written by *da'wat* scholars, and efforts by the establishment to bring back the separatists were fairly successful, particularly following disillusionment with the claimant and his promises.¹⁸ A small number still survive in Nagpur.¹⁹

After 'Abd al-Husayn's death, a faction of the Mahdibaghwalas formed a separate group, the Pidribaghwalas, on the question of leadership. In the time of the 51st *da'i*, 48 Bohras left the community to join this group, who had begun to proclaim that 'the Period of *kashf* [disclosure] had started' and the *shari'a* had been abrogated. They came to be called Artalisiyas (literally, 'forty-eighters').

Legal battles with the dissidents

Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din had to face internal challenges very soon after he assumed the *da'i*-ship. Foremost among his opponents were the sons of

the above-mentioned business tycoon Adamji Pirbhoy, who was now old and reportedly had been influenced against the *da'i* by his sons. Shibani Roy suggests that having acquired enormous wealth, these businessmen aspired to the *da'i*'s powers and expected deferential treatment from him. Disappointed, they resolved to ruin his good name; they saw the British courts as a suitable arena for their battle which they fought to the end, even ruining themselves in the process.²⁰ The Pirbhoyes had joined forces with the main dissident faction, exponents of the theory of the invalidation of the spiritual *da'i*-ship, and were active in causing discord within the community and with the government.

Among the most famous cases were the Chandabhai Gulla Case²¹ (in which, for the first and only time, the *da'i* himself gave a protracted personal testimony) and the Burhanpur Dargah Case. The legitimacy and extent of the *da'i*'s authority within his community became an issue in both cases, and though victory is claimed by both sides, the final verdicts, in each case, seem to have been outstandingly in the *da'i*'s favour. The first, instigated by the Pirbhoyes in 1917, originally concerned the *da'i*'s sole trusteeship of the *gulla* (offertory box) in the shrine of Chandabhai Seth and connected properties. While the court did not accept as legal the notion of an unaccountable trustee²² – a ruling which enabled the plaintiffs to claim victory in the case – they cleared him of the allegation of mismanagement of funds and denied the request for a change of trusteeship. A wider issue brought up deliberately by the *da'i* during the case and resolved in court was the position and rights of the *da'i al-mutlaq* and the *inqita' al-nass* theory to which the plaintiffs subscribed. The Bombay High Court in 1921 delivered a verdict in favour of Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din's legitimate *da'i*-ship.²³ This ruling, further reinforced by the Privy Council judgement of December 1947,²⁴ helped to clear the uncertainties that had plagued a substantial portion of the Bohra community for half a century, and, though the dissidents made an attempt at recovery by calling Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din 'a court *da'i*', it crushed the backbone of the dissident protest movement.

The Burhanpur Dargah Case filed in 1925²⁵ focused on the *da'i*'s right to excommunicate. The plaintiffs were a group of trustees and students of the Burhanpur Hakimiyya School, who had been excommunicated by the *da'i*'s *'amil* on a charge of disobedience and anti-*da'i* activities. The creation of this school – the first *da'wat*-sponsored school for secular education – was driven by influential *da'wat* personages subscribing to the *inqita'* theory and malcontents for whom secularism was also a means of undermining the *da'i*'s supreme authority, and Sayyidna 'Abd Allah

Badr al-Din had granted his permission reluctantly. The school became a hub for the anti-*da'i* faction, who cited the *da'i*'s reluctance as indicative of opposition to secular education. Tahir Sayf al-Din's vigorous encouragement of secular education effectively disposed of that contention. The excommunication was declared invalid by the court owing to certain necessary procedural prerequisites not having been fulfilled.²⁶ This 1931 judgement incidentally is quoted frequently by dissidents, as in it the validity of Sayyidna 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din's *da'i*-ship is deemed doubtful; they usually do not mention the Chandabhai Gulla Case ruling, or the later Privy Council Appeal and other cases which decisively overturned this particular point. Control of the Hakimiyya School finally reverted to the *da'i* after 30 years, following a Supreme Court judgement that ruled for the dismissal of the litigious trustees. The hostile 1931 judgement had inherently recognized the *da'i*'s right to excommunicate. In 1949 in independent India the Prevention of Excommunication Act was passed which targeted, amongst other castes and Muslim Biradaris ('Brotherhoods'), the Bohras.²⁷ A series of appeals against the Act as unconstitutional were made by the *da'wat*. The Act was initially upheld by the Bombay High Court in 1953, but the final Supreme Court Judgement of 9 January 1962 ruled in the *da'i*'s favour, accepting the right of religious denominations to excommunicate non-conforming members.²⁸ These court verdicts did help to reinforce the *da'i*'s authority within the community, while Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din had succeeded in forcing the dissidents into the open and exposing their motives. The issue of excommunication, particularly sensitive in the present socio-political climate, was raised again after the 51st *da'i*'s demise and continues to be controversial; excommunication has virtually ceased to be exercised by the *da'i*.

'Youth' and 'Reformist/Progressive Bohras'

Since the latter half of the 20th century, two distinct currents of internal opposition have emerged: a small but vocal group calling themselves 'Reformist' or 'Progressive' Bohras, considered outside the community by the establishment,²⁹ and the localized 'Youth' movement in Udaipur (Rajasthan).³⁰ While radically different in ideology, they have sometimes joined forces to achieve a common political aim: the curtailment of the *da'i*'s authority. While in a way there has been a sea-change in the format of internal dissent, the leaders of these movements are the successors of the group that sought the invalidation of spiritual *da'i*-ship: the ideological guru of the Udaipur 'Youth', a former professor of the Jami'a Sayfiyya

named Ahmad Udaipuri, is an upholder of the *inqita' al-nass* theory, while the 'Reformists', by demanding the limitation of the *da'i*'s authority, quite simply seem to be looking for a '*nazim dai*' instead of a *da'i al-mutlaq*. Both groups recruit supporters for their cause under the banner of social reform.

Youth: A large-scale upheaval has been disrupting the sizeable Bohra community of Udaipur since the 1970s. Initially, conflicting political rivalries aligned into pro- and anti-establishment lines divided the Bohras into two camps, the loyalist Shabab and the self-styled Youth (a translation of the Arabic '*shabab*'). This rivalry took on a more religious tone when Ahmad Udaipuri returned to his hometown and assumed control of the movement, infusing its ideology with his religious views. Violent disagreements between the groups provoked civil unrest in Udaipur. The Youth took control of the four Bohra *masjids*; it was only after a lengthy legal struggle that one mosque was returned for interim use to the loyalist Bohras. The Rajasthan High Court judgement of May 1984 established a vital legal precedent by upholding the religious principle of *raza*, the legal requirement of the *da'i*'s permission for communal worship in *da'wat* mosques.³¹ It was only in the late 1990s that a significant section of the Youth returned to the *da'wat*; there are reports that the movement is alive today, though perhaps more discreetly.

Reformists: The immediate father of the Reformist Bohras was Noman Contractor, a self-made industrialist. Contractor emerged as a leader of the anti-*da'i* movement – which he named the Pragati Mandal ('Progress Committee' – hence 'Progressive Bohras') – in the 1960s, and this generated renewed dissident activity. His influence contributed to defiance of the *da'i* in the immigrant Bohra community in East Africa, but Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din's visit to that country broke the dominance of the dissident movement there. Dissidents in Tanzania were able to cause official trouble during the 52nd *da'i*'s visit. Contractor also exploited the internal conflict in Udaipur, though the Youth are basically antagonistic to the Reformist ideology and leadership. The Reformists again sprang to action in Bombay following the political victory of the Janata Party led by Morarji Desai, a long-time opponent of the Bohras, in 1977. At their instigation the Nathwani Commission report on alleged human rights infringements in the *da'wat* was submitted in 1979; as the members and informants alike were dissident sympathizers, the report lacked objectivity and no action was taken by the government on its recommendations. The Reformist dissident movement is spearheaded today by the scholar and journalist Asghar Ali Engineer, a former disciple of Contractor.

Engineer has for the past two decades been indefatigable in promoting the Reformist cause to Indian society and the world and is the source most quoted in the press in matters relating to the Bohras, one of the reasons why Blank judges the dissidents to be 'winning the public relations war' outside the community, though they have little apparent support inside it.³² The Reformists project themselves as modern secular-minded individuals fighting against a traditionalist and repressive religious authority; this image is also promulgated by members of their elite regarded as part of today's intelligentsia, largely for having made closely guarded *da'wat* texts available to Western scholarship. The *da'wat* views such unauthorized use of its texts, either obtained illegally or lent to them with strict oaths of confidentiality, as stealing. While emotions remain intense and mutual mistrust is as strong as ever, actual confrontations between the dissidents and the loyal Bohras are now few.

Internal Dynamics: Socio-Administrative Structure and Developments

Finance and welfare

Historically the livelihood of the overwhelming majority of the Bohra community has depended, as the most commonly accepted etymology for their name suggests, on some form of commerce. Traditionally and doctrinally, trade and business are actively encouraged in preference to other forms of employment. There have been prosperous Bohra businessmen operating in India since the time the community was first established. At the end of the 19th century the Bombay Gazetteer described them as the 'trading Bohoras' – large-scale merchants trading with Arabia, China, Siam and Zanzibar, mostly local traders or petty shopkeepers – and referred to them as 'the richest and most prosperous class of Musulmans in Gujarat'.³³

The period from the 19th to the 21st century saw a greater extension of Bohra commercial ventures in countries outside India, with prosperous immigrant communities forming in the Eastern and Western hemispheres. In the 19th century, taking advantage of the resources of the British East India Company, Bohras began to venture abroad to other areas in the British Empire, like the Maldives, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and East Africa, encouraged and frequently helped financially by their *da'is*. The severe famine of 1228/1813 also gave an impetus to the Bohras affected to seek

their fortunes elsewhere. The transfer of power to the British Crown in 1857 produced a boost in relations with the British and further emigration and financial advancement for the Bohras. The Bohras' business ventures expanded; Bohra traders along with other enterprising Indians launched successful businesses in the Far East, in Burma, Singapore, Hong Kong, China and Japan. Bohras established import-export businesses, operated rubber and tea plantations and played an important role in the spice trade; the Hong Kong-Kowloon ferry was founded by a Bohra, Abdul-Ali Ebrahim, whose descendants are still leading businessmen in Hong Kong. During the latter decades of the century, Bohras were migrating in ever greater numbers to Bombay and participating in and contributing to the growth of this booming financial metropolis, though within its cosmopolitan milieu they still retained their conservative socio-religious mores. Numerous *masjids* and *jama'at-khanas* ('communal halls') were built by leading businessmen, many in places where there had been none before; by the 49th *da'i*'s time there was a *masjid* in almost every Bohra community. The British presence in Surat had also facilitated for the first time close contact with Western culture, and increased affluence reportedly inspired a taste for European material comforts and made itself manifest in more luxurious homes and lifestyles in cities like Surat and Bombay.³⁴

Da'wat funds³⁵ are traditionally spent, besides on religious, administrative and political purposes of the *da'wat*, on welfare and constant financial, material and medical aid to needy individuals, and in times of calamity. Natural disasters and the subsequent relief efforts, and other inescapable expenditures created a huge burden of debt, but finally, towards the end of the 19th century, the 49th *da'i* succeeded – particularly through the untiring labours of Sayyidna 'Abd Allah Badr al-Din – in paying off every creditor, achieving the full clearance of the debt that had plagued the *da'wat* for about 150 years.

The 20th century witnessed growing material prosperity for the Bohras, who were among the foremost Indian entrepreneurs to take advantage of the expanding markets and growing trade opportunities of the era. Financial opportunities were also one of the main motives – besides education – in the demographic expansion of the Bohras in the West, particularly the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States; the economic motive is paramount in the migration to the Persian Gulf emirates of Bohra men, whose families back in India reflect their increased prosperity.³⁶

While previously the juridical 'tools' for legalizing ostensibly *riba* ('interest' or 'usury') transactions prescribed by Fatimid jurisprudence

were allowed and used, the present *da'wat* establishment, with its more rigorous approach, counsels against any such transactions. In India itself, community members are encouraged to explore forms of Islamic financing. Local *Bachat Yojna* or cooperative saving schemes are operating successfully in Bohra communities almost everywhere and have helped petty traders tremendously. The *da'wat* runs several 'Qarzan Hasana', or interest-free loan schemes, which are the first recourse for most Bohras seeking financial credit particularly on a larger scale. Several new institutions promoting social welfare, charity and finance have been activated, which provide financial and material aid and interest-free loans to a large number of Bohras. Bohras and others benefit from the *da'wat* healthcare facilities, including the recently renovated Sayfi Hospital in Mumbai. The *da'i* continues to provide aid in times of calamity like earthquakes or riots. The *da'wat* provided substantial financial aid and launched rehabilitation efforts when required after the Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay in 1992 and Gujarat in 2002.

Education

Religious learning is an indispensable prerequisite and thus a major preoccupation of the *da'is*; religious education has been historically a priority, as a means to foster spiritual merit, to perpetuate the rich literary heritage of the *da'wat* and to reinforce the bonds of faith. Various facilities have been set up by the *da'wat* for religious education, including *madrasas*, and the time-honoured traditions of *wa'z* (sermons) and *sabaq* (informal classes on religious texts) have continued uninterrupted through the ages. *Da'wat* literature and learning are discussed in the next chapter; here we shall give a brief historical overview of the period under study.

Sayyidna 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din initiated a literary efflorescence, the crux of which was the theological seminary 'Dars-i Sayfi'. He initiated a programme of intensified and strictly regulated education. The study of the Arabic language reached a new height; juridical issues were interpreted and discussed. Books and treatises on various subjects were written, as were poems in Arabic as well as Indian languages. The *da'i*'s exacting standards for religious merit ensured that the honour of *haddiyat*³⁷ (the status of *hadd*, which carries with it the title of *shaykh*) was bestowed rarely; among the eminent *hudud* – scholars, writers, poets and bureaucrats – of his time, the most prominent was Sayyidi³⁸ 'Abd 'Ali 'Imad al-Din b. Shaykh Jiva-bhai Shahjahanpuri (d. 1271/1854), one of the most celebrated scholars in *da'wat* history. Under Sayyidna Tayyib Zayn

al-Din's direction, the standard of the instructional excellence and living facilities of the Dars rose further, while the number of students multiplied. In the aftermath of the *inqita' al-nass* controversy in 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din's time, the Dars was marginalized, but significant advances were made in the sphere of *da'wat* education and learning; the introduction of the *Lisan al-Da'wat*³⁹ texts made *da'wat* learning more accessible to lay Bohras. *Madrasas* had continued to flourish and increase steadily in the 19th century.

In the 20th century, along with increasing facilities for religious education, the *da'wat* officially began to encourage and sponsor secular education. When Tahir Sayf al-Din became *da'i*, the number of existing *madrasas* rose from 30 to 300 within a few years. The Dars-i Sayfi, renamed the 'Jami'a Sayfiyya', was overhauled and expanded along the lines of a modern seminary, its syllabus being revised to include secular subjects such as science and English. A *da'irat al-ta'lim* (department of education) was instituted to regulate *da'wat madrasas* and schools. Modern primary and secondary schools for boys and girls offering secular education with *diniyyat* (religious studies) as an extra class were established, as were colleges for higher education. Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din further modernized the Jami'a; with its methods of teaching reformed, the library better equipped and reorganized, the capacity greatly increased, the Jami'a has developed into a religious seminary accorded official recognition as an institution for higher learning in various countries. It has its own autonomous department in Badri Mahal and receives the personal interest of the *da'i* himself. New *madrasas* continue to be built, and the *da'wat* sponsors hundreds of schools.

Administrative developments: centralization

Participation in the *da'wat*'s socio-religious administration is ideally regarded as '*khidmat*', service for the religion, not just a means of livelihood but a way of earning spiritual merit. While the bureaucrats receive a salary (*wazifa*), there are also many volunteer groups, committees, etc., who render social services for the *da'wat* for no financial recompense.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw substantial development in the administrative machinery of the *da'wat*. Soon after his assumption of *da'i*-ship, 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din initiated a process of reorganization and reinvigoration designed to restore the practices underpinning the *da'wat*'s moral values, tighten the religio-cultural norms and lay down the foundation for a more efficiently run community – a process whose effects are

perceptibly manifest in the workings of the *da'wat* today. Policies were clearly laid out and carried through; the fiscal system was better regulated; normative customs of displaying reverence for the *da'i* were strictly required; official clothing was firmly regulated; practical guidelines were issued and long-lasting reforms instituted aimed at systematizing the administration with an emphasis on qualifications and the *da'i*'s paramount authority. Sayyidna 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din had been brought up and prepared for the *da'i*-ship by his brother and predecessor Sayyidna Yusuf Najm al-Din, whose influence as the ideal of ascetic piety permeated his entire life. Leaning towards austerity and asceticism in his personal habits, he had an almost puritanical outlook in matters of the *da'wat*, reflected in his insistence on the principles of justice and integrity and in his edicts regarding, for instance, vigorous enforcement of *shari'a* prohibitions and discouragement of outside influences on religio-cultural practices. A ten-chapter manifesto (*taqlid*) sent by the *da'i* as a guiding maxim to all *'amils* offers counsel on social, financial and religious matters, and displays considerable political acumen in the way it finely combines diplomatic skill and integrity, practical considerations of administration and high moral standards.⁴⁰ A key facet of Sayyidna 'Abd 'Ali Sayf al-Din's reforms was tighter control by the *da'i*. All *da'wat* matters were conducted with his personal authorization. He instilled reverence for the status of the *da'i* and respect for his supreme authority. He was closely involved in the affairs of his followers; his influence penetrated all aspects of their lives, not least their ethics and behaviour. He was the arbiter of social norms, particularly in religious ceremonial, and resolute in ensuring observance of correct protocol. Many of the rules and regulations of the 43rd *da'i* persisted after him, though management of *da'wat* affairs varied in different *da'i*-ships according to circumstances, personnel and the personality of the *da'i* himself.

The attempt to dilute, if not negate, the *da'i*'s authority by constituting a consultative assembly (*shura*) responsible for *da'wat* administration in the time of Sayyidna 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din was short lived. The increased independence of *'amils* and administrators was curtailed by the 49th and 50th *da'is*. Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din's rectification of administrative slackness included changes in key staff members and consolidation of the authority of the *da'i*'s office. A manifesto (*dastur al-'amal*) for *'amils* issued in Shawwal 1316/March 1899 provided guidelines for the regulation of finances, the responsibilities of various personnel and the ordering and pruning of social customs, marriage rituals, etc., in order to curtail un-Islamic Indian/Hindu practices.⁴¹ Sayyidna 'Abd

Allah Badr al-Din also took steps to amend deficiencies in local *jama'at* administrative practices.

The 51st *da'i*, having shifted the headquarters of the *da'wat* to Bombay, housed the central administrative offices, named *al-Wazarat al-Sayfiyya*, in Badri Mahal,⁴² and organized *da'wat* administration into well-defined departments with clear-cut responsibilities. Better records were kept and official forms for various *da'wat*-endorsed transactions and activities were standardized. More than 350 *da'wat* community centres were established in various towns, and they formed the basis for local cooperation, administered to social and educational needs, and provided community services. In the 52nd *da'i*'s time, the administration continues to keep pace with rapid demographic expansion. Local centres for religious worship presided over by *wazarat* representatives are increasingly established among new communities, while the central office itself, fully computerized, can obtain detailed statistics, maintain a regular awareness of developments and respond speedily to local needs of Bohra communities anywhere in the world.

Yemen

Yemen was the seat of the *da'wat* for more than 400 years, and continues to have a large Bohra population, though the numbers are greatly depleted. This was particularly due to persecution by the Imams who ruled the Zaydi kingdom of northern Yemen before it became a republic in 1962. The Zaydi Imams of San'a' had traditionally sought the detraction of the *da'wat* and the *da'i al-mutlaqs* throughout a turbulent history. One such instance was reported in 1935: following the signing of a treaty with the Hijaz in 1934, Imam Yahya attempted to enforce mass conversions of the Bohras, who were already being compelled to propagate Zaydi doctrine in their *madrasas*.⁴³ In 1329/1911, in the Haraz region – which has the largest concentration of Bohras in Yemen, living in almost constant hostility with their Zaydi neighbours – Zaydis surrounded Bohra villages; the Bohras gathered near the tomb of the 3rd *da'i*, Hatim b. Ibrahim (d. 596/1199), in Hutayb, and in the ensuing battle managed to repel the Zaydis.

After the transfer of the *da'wat* headquarters to India in the middle of the 10th/16th century, Yemen was treated as a special province; the administration was placed under the overall control of an indigenous Yemeni *na'ib* (deputy, of the *da'i*), who supervised all the *'amils*, also Yemeni, of various Bohra centres in the country. The *da'is* continued to maintain regular correspondence with the Yemeni community. After

Sayyidna 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din's brief stopover at the port of Mocha on return from the *haji* – when Bohras from all over Yemen came to pay their respects – he gave particular care to the revitalization of the Yemeni community. He appointed a new deputy, and after returning to India sent noted scholars and *hudud* to revive *da'wat* practices.

In 1961 Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din sent his son Muhammad Burhan al-Din, then the *ma'dhun*, on a ground-breaking trip to Yemen to assess the condition of the Bohra community there and reinforce its links with the *da'wat*. He received an official welcome from the British in Aden. Yemen has since become a frequent pilgrimage destination. Early in Sayyidna Muhammad Burhan al-Din's time, Yemen was brought under the direct control of the central administration. Problems with the *na'ib* precipitated his removal and the termination of the post itself in 1971. Now Yemen has two main '*amils*, one based in San'a' and the other in Haraz. They continue to supervise '*amils* in smaller towns but their powers are limited. Yemen continues to rate a certain degree of special attention from the *wazarat* and the *da'i* himself. *Da'wat* policy encourages Yemeni Bohras to visit India (particularly to enrol in the Jami'a) and attend communal gatherings. Yemeni Bohras have in general become more integrated with the Indian Bohras but continue to preserve certain elements of their distinctive dress and culture.

Religio-cultural identity

A greater self-awareness has been engendered among the Bohra community, fostering a self-conscious articulation of communal cultural identity. Several factors have contributed to this: expanding demographics, a general 'opening outwards' in all ways and constant contact with outsiders, combined with increased internal interaction among Bohras and greater central control, perhaps also a need to guard against the onslaught of Westernization, and, not least, a recognizable public profile. One form this articulation takes is the preservation of a distinctive individuality by, for instance, wearing the prescribed traditional dress – part of a wider trend of reasserting the community's Islamic identity manifested in a punctilious enforcement of *shari'a* law in areas such as finance and lifestyle. Routine communal gatherings in the local *masjid* or *markaz* are vital to recharging loyalty to the faith and keeping the blood of the community flowing, so to speak, but an illustration of increased solidarity is the huge congregation of thousands of Bohras travelling from all over the world every year to be present at the 'Ashura sermons commemorating

Imam Husayn's martyrdom held by the present *da'i*. These occasions also serve as an international forum for Bohras to keep in touch with traditional Bohra culture and forge closer ties. The Internet has greatly facilitated the exchange of information and ideas amongst Bohras. Previously two monthly community magazines which started circulation in the 20th century had been the major sources of community news for Bohras; they still draw a wide readership. Forms of constant contact such as these have helped to sustain a close-knit social network and a distinct cultural identity.

The *da'i*'s role in the community's solidarity and the formulation of its distinctive identity is crucial. The *da'is*, in their role as spiritual fathers, always kept their doors open for the community and listened to their problems. The 51st *da'i* formalized this practice by instituting the custom of regular audiences (called *bethak*), where Bohras came to seek the *da'i*'s advice and help in religious, financial and personal matters, or just to receive his blessings. His charismatic and welcoming presence drew Bohras, including the young generation and, for the first time, women, in increasing and unprecedented numbers; this trend has continued in the time of his successor. Every day the *da'i*'s office answers a multitude of letters and Internet *arzi*s (petitions) soliciting guidance on spiritual and temporal matters; an *arzi* department has now been added to the administration.

Whilst love for the *da'i* as leader and spiritual father has always been a basis for fealty, the *da'i*'s actual presence amongst far-flung Bohra communities and his personal attention to their welfare does a great deal to strengthen loyalty to the *da'wat* and reinforce confidence in their identity. In the past, when each journey was a long and arduous affair, the *da'is* travelled in India to places with *da'wat* communities. Fatimid historical sites have always had an evocative appeal for the Bohras, and Cairo and Syria have become among the most visited pilgrimage locations since the pioneer visit by Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din. The *da'is*' pilgrimages are not just occasions of personal spiritual fulfilment, but opportunities for a vast portion of the community to participate in a holy undertaking with their spiritual leader and to reinforce their faith and their bond with their fellow believers.

While striving to adhere to Islamic fundamentals of belief and practice, at the same time the modern period has seen the Bohra community become ever more technologically advanced and very much a part of the modern world. Their rationalist philosophy and dynamic leadership ethic enables them to welcome and participate in progress and development and

to take advantage of all technological and practical advances of today's world. They do not shun modernization as incompatible with traditional forms of religion; instead they attempt to incorporate its benefits, indeed use them as vehicles to promote solidarity and vitality among their community. They claim to practise a religious philosophy that is 1,400 years old, yet is still progressive, outward-looking and germane; the love, loyalty and belief invested in the person of the *da'i* is the basis of their firmly rooted solidarity.

Bibliographical Note

The limits and character of this study have to a certain extent been delineated by the historical information available in the sources. I have used both *da'wat* historical works, most of which are in manuscript or lithograph form,⁴⁴ and published studies on the Bohras by other scholars for this article. Historical works by Indian *da'wat* scholars are generally centred on the lives and activities of the *da'is*, different works comprising varying amounts of personal detail; information about the community has to be more often than not derived indirectly, while actual numbers and statistics are rare. The most comprehensive primary sources for *da'wat* history in the 19th and 20th centuries are works by three *da'wat* historians: Shaykh Qutb al-Din b. Sulaymanji Burhanpuri (d. 1241/1826), *Muntaza' al-akhbar fi akhbar al-du'at al-akhyar*, vol. 2 (MS); Muhammad 'Ali b. Mulla Jivabhai, *Mawsim-i bahar*, vol. 3 (lithograph, Bombay, Rabi' I 1301/1884); and 'Abd al-Tayyib b. Haydar 'Ali Diwan, (i) *Izhar al-qawl al-Tayyib fi akhbar al-du'at al-hudat* (MS, 1335 AH), (ii) *al-Sira al-radiyya: Kitab akhbar al-du'at al-hudat jami' al-khayrat* (lithograph, Jabalpur 1356/1937), (iii) *Hadiqat al-tarikh: Risala mutadammina akhbar al-sadat Al Bharmal-ji* (lithograph, Bombay, 1369/1949). Several treatises of the 51st *da'i* Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din (d. 1385/1965), the *Rasa'il Ramadaniyya*, contain a great deal of historical information, sometimes extracted from earlier works; oral reports originating from this *da'i* in particular are invaluable especially for the period following Sayyidna 'Abd al-Qadir Najm al-Din (d. 1302/1885), which is when the *Mawsim-i bahar* was written. Treatises written in the time of the preceding *da'is* yield some historical information when searched diligently. *Da'wat* publications on the careers of the 51st and 52nd *da'is* are numerous, the most historically useful among them being *A Golden Panorama: Life and Works of His Holiness Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin* (Bombay, 1385/1965), and Mustafa Abdulhussein, *al-Dai al-Fatimi Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin* (London, 2001), picto-

rial biographies of the 51st and 52nd *da'is* respectively. Published material on modern Bohra history by outside scholars is rather limited. Jonah Blank's anthropological study of modern Da'udi Bohras, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras* (Chicago, 2001), the most in-depth and positive treatment to date, provides a historical overview. The Musta'lians/Tayyibis have received a degree of coverage in Farhad Daftary's work *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge, 1990; 2nd ed., Cambridge, 2007). Satish C. Misra's section on the Bohras (particularly chapter 2, 'The Bohra Community and their *Da'is* in Gujarat') in his *Muslim Communities of Gujarat* (Baroda, 1964) is among the most detailed of the earlier sources. Sayyid Abu Zafar Nadwi's Urdu history, *Iqd al-jawahir fi ahwal al-Bawahir* (Karachi, 1936), is the most comprehensive history written by a non-Bohra. Works by dissident sources presenting their version of *da'wat* history include Ali Asghar Engineer's *The Bohras* (Delhi, 1980); earlier works by authors who later turned dissident include Ismailji Hasanali Badripresswala's *Akhbar al-du'at al-akramin* (Rajkot, 1356/1937), and the much-used *Gulzar-e Dawoodi* by Mian Bhai Abdul-Husain (Ahmedabad, 1920).

Notes

1. Incidentally this passage of time also saw a change of 'dynasty' in the incumbency of *da'i*-ship – though the office is not, unlike the Imamate, hereditary – from the Badri family to the Al-e Jeevan-ji family, of which line the present *da'i* is the eighth.
2. See, for instance, Jonah Blank, *Mullahs on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity among the Daudi Bohras* (Chicago, 2001), particularly chapter 6, 'Maintenance of Political and Spiritual Hegemony', pp. 159–161, where the author also provides comparative analyses of leadership in other Islamic sects, and pp. 172–174.
3. 'Sayyidna', mostly spelt 'Syedna' (possibly in accordance with English pronunciation), literally means 'our leader'. Bohras and non-Bohras call the *da'i* by this title, by which he is also known in official circles. Bohras also address him as 'Mawlana' (our lord) or simply 'Mawla' (lord), or 'Aqa-mawla', and less frequently as 'Huzurala' (exalted presence). He is sometimes referred to as 'His Holiness'. In pre-independence times he was also known as 'Mullaji Sahib' or 'Bada Mullaji Sahib'.
4. This list has been translated by Asaf A. A. Fyzee, 'The Study of the Literature of the Fatimid *Da'wa*', in George Makdisi, ed., *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of H.A.R. Gibb* (Leiden, 1965), pp. 232–249.
5. Muhammad 'Ali b. Mulla Jivabhai, *Mawsim-i bahar* (Bombay, 1301/1884), vol. 3, p. 693.

6. The cenotaph marking the spot where the head of the martyred Imam Husayn, which was brought to Cairo in the 6th/12th century, is interred. It was donated by Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din towards the end of his life, and the invitation was originally extended to him.
7. Other Fatimid *masjids* in Cairo that had fallen into disrepair were also renovated in 1996: al-Aqmar, al-Juyushi and al-Lu'lu'a. See Paula Sanders, 'Bohra Architecture and the Restoration of Fatimid Culture', in M. Barrucand, ed., *L'Égypte Fatimide, son art et son histoire* (Paris, 1999), pp. 159–165.
8. Satish C. Misra, *Muslim Communities of Gujarat* (Baroda, 1964), p. 16.
9. The British took Surat from the Marathas in 1759, and assumed the undivided government of the city in 1800.
10. Muhammad 'Ali, *Mawsim-i bahar*, vol. 3, p. 608.
11. Translated from the original Persian in Sayyid Abu Zafar Nadwi, *Iqd al-jawahir fi ahwal al-Bawahir* (Karachi, 1936), pp. 260–264. Some occasions of official recognition by the British are given in Robert B. Serjeant, 'The Fatimi-Tayyibi (Ismaili) Da'wah', in Dominique Chevallier, ed., *Les Arabes et l'histoire créatrice* (Paris, 1995), pp. 59–77.
12. The *da'wat* library has a manuscript of this work.
13. The dissidents have created websites using the Da'udi Bohra name, which are a forum for the airing and discussion of grievances and criticisms of the *da'i* and establishment.
14. The letter in question is in the present *da'i*'s possession.
15. This document can be found in Muhammad 'Ali, *Mawsim-i bahar*, vol. 3, pp. 749–750.
16. Chandabhai Gulla Case, discussed below.
17. Serjeant, 'The Fatimi-Tayyibi (Ismaili) Da'wah', p. 71.
18. In John Hollister's view, *The Shi'a of India* (2nd ed., London, 1979), p. 295; 'The *hujjat*-pretender proved to lack the necessary knowledge and the whole affair looked like an effort to make worldly gain.'
19. Accounts of this movement are provided in 'Abd al-Tayyib b. Haydar 'Ali Diwan, *Izhar al-qawl al-Tayyib fi akhbar al-du'at al-hudat* (1335 AH, MS); Sayyidna Tahir Sayf al-Din, *Daw' nur al-haqq al-mubin* (Bombay, 1335/1916), p. 167, and Misra, *Muslim Communities*, pp. 51–52.
20. Shibani Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras: An Anthropological Perspective* (Delhi, 1984).
21. High Court of Judicature at Bombay Suits No. 918 and 941 of 1917, judgement of Justice Marten delivered 19 March 1921.
22. On this point, too, however, a later ruling (Bombay High Court Appeal Judgement, 22 December 1922) allowed two separate offertory boxes to be placed in the shrine, the collection in one accountable, the other labelled the *da'i*'s personal property; it was the latter which always filled rapidly.
23. A document purportedly signed by the 49th *da'i* and stating that the *da'is* from the 47th were merely *nazim da'is* was examined by the court in the Chandabhai Gulla Case and judged by the presiding Justice Marten to be

- invalid: the signature did not match that of the *da'i*, and the witness who presented the document was unreliable.
24. Privy Council Appeal (No. 79 of 1945) from a judgement (25 October 1934) of the Nagpur High Court reversing the judgement of the Subordinate Judge of Burhanpur (2 January 1931).
 25. Civil Suit No. 32 of 1925.
 26. Judgement delivered by Subordinate Judge of Burhanpur, 2 January 1931.
 27. Bombay Act XLII of 1949, Bombay Code III, 1949–1954, p. 3045.
 28. Sardar Syedna Taher Saifuddin Saheb v. State of Bombay, AIR 1962, S.C. 853.
 29. For an account of the 'Reformist' movement by one of its leading figures, see Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Bohras* (New Delhi, 1980), chapter 6. For more critical views, see Roy, *The Dawoodi Bohras*; Serjeant, 'The Fatimi-Tayyibi (Ismaili) Da'wah', pp. 70–72; Blank, *Mullahs*, chapter 9.
 30. Shibani Roy's *The Dawoodi Bohras* is an anthropological study of the Udaipur Bohras.
 31. S.B.C. Appeal No. 5 of 1984, interim judgement delivered on 22 May 1984 by Justice M.C. Jain in the Rajkot (Rajasthan) High Court.
 32. Blank, *Mullahs*, p. 234.
 33. *The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, ed. James A. Campbell (Bombay, 1899), vol. 9, p. 24.
 34. See, for instance, the description by Sir John Malcolm, writing in 1823, of 'modern' Bohra houses in Surat with 'European improvements' in *The Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, ed. Campbell, vol. 9, pt. 2: Musulmans and Parsis, p. 29 n.1. This taste for luxury is reported in *da'wat* sources to have adversely affected the zeal for learning and devout practice.
 35. For *da'wat* sources of income, see Blank, *Mullahs*, pp. 198–201.
 36. In a recent survey of Indian Bohra households, Jonah Blank, *Mullahs*, p. 203, ascertained that three-quarters of the respondents were occupied in business, a fairly small percentage were involved in white-collar professions, an even smaller number cited teaching or manual trades, while 4.2 per cent listed their occupation as industry.
 37. *Haddiyyat*: abstract noun of Arabic word *hadd*, pl. *hudud*, a grade which implied *da'wat* learning and service; senior *shaykhs* were sometimes called *miyansaheb*.
 38. Sayyidi: literally 'my lord', a lesser title than 'Sayyidna' accorded to men of religious/scholarly eminence or rank in the *da'wat*.
 39. *Lisan al-Da'wat*: literally language of the *da'wat*, a Gujarati dialect written in Arabic script, with a substantial incorporation of Arabic words especially.
 40. This *taqlid* is included in its entirety in Muhammad 'Ali, *Mawsam-i Bahar*, vol. 3, pp. 615–625.
 41. See Misra, *Muslim Communities*, p. 51.
 42. In 1331/1912–1913, Sayyidna 'Abd Allah Badr al-Din inaugurated the 'Mahall al-Azhar al-Badri', commonly known as Badri Mahal, which served

as the *da'i*'s Bombay residence and later became the official *da'wat* administrative headquarters.

43. Hollister, *Shi'a of India*, p. 294. A Yemeni *shaykh* related that the Zaydi Imams had hundreds of Bohras of the Hamdan tribe killed, and their bodies piled one on top of the other in huge mounds (personal communication).
44. The MSS I have used here are all from the *da'wat* library. A section of the *Muntaza' al-akhbar* has been edited and published by Samer F. Traboulsi (Beirut, 1999).