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KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNSEEN THEOLOGY:

Arguments on The Scope of Prophetic Knowledge

In the Writings of al-Sayyid Muhammad Ibn Ja'far al-Kattani, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan & Major Scholars at Madrasah Deoband

Research By:
Mohammad Monawwar Ateeq

The nature of proof-texts on Prophet Muhammad's (Allah give him peace and blessings) knowledge of the unseen, definition & classification of the knowledge of the unseen, boundaries of scholarly disagreement, the five schools among Arab scholars, views among Indian ulama, historical accounts of the Indian controversy in the early 20th century, important analysis of the differences, introduction to understudied yet pressingly indispensible works and much more in this unique explanatory study on the scope of Prophetic Knowledge based on major primary sources

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Read This First

- **Who was al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Kattani?**

Known as Shaykh al-Islam of his era, al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Kattani (1857 or 8-1927) was the father and teacher of the great Muhaddith of Syria and president of its Ulama league, al-Sayyid Muhammad Makki al-Kattani. He was born in Fez where he studied at the Qarawiyyin and the Kattani Zawiyah under the major ulama of his era including his father, grandfather and uncles who were all major religious authorities in Fez. He travelled to the Two Holy Sanctuaries and Syria imparting the sacred sciences at the major mosques. He was renowned for teaching the huge Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal with full investigative analysis according to the Hadith commentaries and fiqh of the four madhabs, something unprecedented in history, which he taught at the Qarawiyyin in Fez, in the Two Holy Sanctuaries in Hijaz and Syria at the Grand Umawi Mosque.

Imam Kattani authored some of the finest works of his time including a comprehensive biographical dictionary of the awliya buried in Fez in 3 volumes titled Salwat al-Anfaas, a detailed description of Hadith textual corpus called al-Risalah al-Mustatrifah and other incredibly valuable books exceeding eighty in number. In al-Mathnuni wa al-Battar, Ahmad al-Ghumari mentioned that Turkish, Moroccan and Hijazi royals would serve the Shaykh and found honour in associating with him. In Fihris al-Faharis, the world renowned Muhadith of Fez, al-Sayyid Abd al-Hay ibn Abd al-Kabeer al-Kattani – one of his students- remarked he was the most knowledgeable of men in Hadith such that he dived into the sciences and there was none like him in the Maghrib in respect of knowledge and courage. Shaykh Badr al-Din al-Hasani, al-Muhadith al-Akbar of Syria, said "I have never seen a man as great as al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Kattani". His students include top scholars such as the Hijazi Hadith scholar Umar Hamdan al-Mahrasi, Abd al-Qadir ibn Tawfiq al-Shilbi al-Madani, Ahmad Shareef al-Sanusi, Muhammad Zahid al-Kawthari, Abul Khayr al-Maydani, Taajudin ibn Badr al-Din al-Hasani of Syria and major Ghumari scholars. He died in the old city of Fez in 1927 and is buried there.

- **Who was Imam Ahmad Raza Khan?**

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (d.1921), conventionally known as a leader of the twentieth century Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at tradition (people of the Sunna and the majority) to its followers and to others as the Barewli Movement, was an alim and sufi in British India. He was born a year before the civil and military revolt of 1857 and was traditionally educated by his father, Mufti Naqi Ali Khan (d.1880) at home in Bareilly, under whom he completed the Dars-e Nizami syllabus studying a range of twenty-one Islamic sciences by the age of thirteen. He studied with other teachers too and traces intellectual links to the three centers of Islamic learning in India; Lakhnouw, Khayrabad and Dehli.[1] In his licenses and Isnad certificates to the scholars of Makkah and Madinah in 1905, he put on record to have pursued an extensive spectrum of twenty eight sciences alone. He authored works in more or less everything he studied[2] some of which received compliments from leading Sunni scholars of Hijaz, Yemen, Syria and Egypt.[3]

[1] Madrasahs of Bahrul Ulum Abdul Ali Lakhnouwi, Allamah Fazle Haq Khayrabadi and Shah Abdul Azeez Dihlawi.

[2] A number of bibliographical surveys of Imam Ahmad Raza's books reveal that he authored somewhat a thousand books and marginal notes in some fifty sciences.

[3] See testimonials to al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah, Imam Ahmad Raza's monograph on the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen.

Imam Ahmad Raza occupied most of his time in writing responses to people seeking guidance in religious, social, moral and political affairs which absorbed him to the very end of his life producing a bulky fatawa compendium in the Hanafi Law, now fully edited and indexed in thirty-three over sized volumes.[4] He was an authoritative author, gifted scholar of classical Islamic sciences both the rational (ma'qulat) and transmitted sciences (manqulat) offering original contributions in nearly every field he studied, phenomenal Arabist, distinguished Mufti, a genius in the pantheon of great thinkers and recognized as a maker of the Muslim world[5]. He never wavered from supporting the Sunni doctrines and remained mindful of the positions of his elders as he was not just a scholar of Law but also a committed student of a Sufi father and devout murid of the Barakatiyya Sayyids of Marahra[6], who followed the Qadiri path[7].

[4] He mentioned in one of his writings that the *fatawa* he wrote exceeded the work of ten muftis and at anytime there could be up to five hundred queries to be answered through mail.

[5] Oxford Oneworld series called "Makers of the Muslim world" includes Usha Sanyal's biography of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan published in 2005 paying special tribute to his work and thought.

[6] A town in the Etah district southwest of Bareilly.

[7] The family had settled in Marahra in the seventeenth century around the hospice (*dargah*) of Shah Barkat Ullah (1660-1729). Qadiri documented a history of the family in his *Khandan-e Barakat* (1927).

الحمد لله رب العلمين والصلوة والسلام على أعلم خلق الله وأفضل رسل الله سيدنا محمد وعلى اله وصحبه أجمعين وبعد

Question: How many views are there among Muslim scholars regarding the vastness of our Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings)? Please could you offer a detailed response elaborating views among the Arab scholars as well as Indian ulama highlighting their sources and reasons for difference? Can you also please explain what matters are important for the public to know and what matters are for the scholars to disagree upon in this regards?

Answer:

By the grace of Allah Most High and kind attention of the Illustrious Emissary of Allah Muhammad (may Allah give him eternal peace and blessings), I have replied to your questions in three parts, in addition to a muqaddimah on the definition of the word Gayb and a conclusion, hoping to answer them all in the best possible way using primary sources and some secondary sources. The summary of the three sections is as follows:

Fasl 1. In which I have presented views of the Arab scholars by summarising the discussion of Shaykh al-Islam al-Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Hasani al-Kattani (d. 1345h), a major authority in Hadith, Fiqh and Tasawwuf from Fez (Morocco) from his encyclopaedic work on this issue titled Jala al-Qulub min al-Asda al-Gaybiyyah bi-Ihatatihi sallallhu alayhi wa sallam bi al-Ulum al-Kawniyyah [Enlightening Hearts with Echoes of the Unseen by Explaining He (Allah give him peace and blessings) Encompasses All Worldly Knowledge]. I refer to him as Imam Kattani throughout.

Fasl 2. In this section I have detailed views of the Indian scholars focusing on the Ahle-Sunnat scholars of Bareilly and the scholars at Deoband.

Fasl 3. Here I have shown what constitutes Iman, kufr and innovation regarding knowledge of the unseen clearly highlighting what is important for Muslims to know and what ulama are warranted to disagree about regarding the scope of Prophetic Knowledge.

The primary sources I consulted include the writings of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, particularly al-Dawlah al-Makkaiyyah, Khaalis al-I'tiqaad and Inba al-Musatfa, Imam Kattani's Jala al-Qulub, Ismail Dihlawi's Taqwiyat al-Iman, Rasheed Gangohi's Baraheen-e-Qati'ah and Ashraf Ali Thanawi's Hifz al-Iman. The secondary sources include Shaykh Gibril Haddad's Albani & His Friends and Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller's Iman, Kufr & Takfir. I pray this reply will serve as a succinct and beneficial answer for you and all those seeking clarity on this matter, and all praise is for Allah.

ﷺ*Muqaddimah*: Defining Gayb

Before I delve into replying to your questions, it is important that we first understand the meaning of the word unseen (gayb). Al-Raghib al-Asfahani (d. 502 H/1108CE) defines the Arabic word *gayb* (unseen) in his excellent lexicon of the Qur'an titled al-Mufradat as follows,

"[الغيب] ما لا يقع تحت الحواس ولا تقتضيه بداهة العقول وانما يعلم بخبر الأنبياء"

> "Anything absent from the range of perception by sense or mental perception and is known only by means of Divine revelation through the Prophets." [8]

The upshot of this definition is:

[8] Al-Mufradat, p. 18. Egypt: Mustafa Albabi, 1961.

a) The unseen cannot be grasped by the physical senses
b) It is beyond the range of mental/intellectual perception
c) The unseen is only known through the Prophets

Al-Qadi Nasir al-Din al-Baydawi (d. 796H/1286?CE) defines *gayb* in his renowned tafsir Anwar al-Tanzil saying,

"(الغيب) الخفي الذي لا يدركه الحس ولا تقتضيه بداهة العقل وهو قسمان: قسم لا دليل عليه وهو المعنيّ بقوله تعالى (وعنده مفاتيح الغيب لا يعلمها إلا هو) وقسم نصب عليه دليل كالصانع وصفاته واليوم الأخر وأحواله..."[9]

> "The unseen is anything unapparent to the human senses and unperceivable by reason and is two kinds: one that has no evidence to it and this is what is intended in the Qur'anic verse "and the keys of the unseen are with Him, none besides Him knows them" [An'am: 59]. The other kind has evidence to it such as the existence of the Creator and His attributes, the last day and its details."

We can adduce the following points from Qadi Baydawi's definition of the unseen,

a) Humans cannot perceive unseen matters through their senses or reason independently
b) The unseen that has no evidence to it exclusively belongs to Allah Most High and it is this kind that is intended wherever there is negation of knowledge of the unseen from creatures in the Quran
c) Allah Almighty unveils a certain kind of knowledge of the unseen to His creation. It is referred to as the unseen which has evidence to it; be it scriptural (dalil naqli) or rational (aqli). This is what Muhyuddin Shaykhzadah (d. 950AH) also supported in his commentary to this tafsir.

According to these definitions of gayb, it is reasonable and valid to assert that Prophets possess knowledge of the unseen and that every kind of knowledge of the unseen is not exclusive to Allah Most High. Unseen matters upon which there is rational or transmitted evidence can be known by humans. In his outstanding Tafsir al-Kabir, Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 606H/1210CE), succinctly pointing to this asserts in the commentary of Baqarah verse 3,

"فإن قيل: أفتقولون العبد يعلم الغيب أم لا؟ قلنا قد بينا أن الغيب ينقسم إلى ما عليه دليل وإلى ما لا دليل عليه. أما الذي لا دليل عليه فهو سبحانه وتعالى العالم به لا غيره وأما الذي عليه دليل فلا يمتنع أن نقول: نعلم من الغيب ما لنا عليه دليل"

> "If it is said: do people know the unseen or not? Our reply is: we previously mentioned that the unseen is divided into that which has evidence to it and that which does not have evidence to it. As for that unseen which has no evidence to it, Allah alone has knowledge of it, and that which has evidence to it, it is not inaccurate to say "we know the unseen to which there is evidence"."

The upshot of these explanations is:

a) A certain kind of knowledge of the unseen cannot be denied from the Prophets
b) We are allowed to attribute knowledge of the unseen to humans

[9] Anwar al-Tanzil, vol. 1, p. 18. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah,, 1999.

c) The unseen cannot be known by humans except through Divine revelation that comes from the Prophets and therefore it is right to say they have knowledge of certain unseen matters.

ﷺ *Fasl* 1. Views Among Arab Scholars

Imam Kattani's Categorisation of Five Views

In the first *maqsad* of his outstanding book, Jala al-Qulub, Imam Kattani masterfully explains that there are five views altogether concerning the scope of the Noble Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings). Before presenting the details, he makes a very important assertion that is particularly noteworthy as it will later help understand the differences among the schools in the Subcontinent. Here is the translation of his opening words,

> "[Dear reader,] may Allah guide you and direct you towards every success and guidance! You must know that there is no disagreement among the men of knowledge, that is the entirety of them, that He [the Prophet Muhammad], upon him be peace and blessings, was informed by Allah Most High about a large quantity of unseen matters which cannot be enumerated in number and their manifestation shall never end by the passing of eras. They agreed that he was granted knowledge of the events of the past, present and future which cannot be comprehended by human minds, and that no Prophet or Messenger before him was granted knowledge of this measure..." [10]

Having unequivocally clarified that there is no dispute among Muslim theologians about two basic matters, a) our Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) had knowledge of the unseen and b) it was immense knowledge of the past and future such that no other Prophet was granted this before, Imam Kattani further explains that the division among the later scholars of the East (Mashariqah) and West (Magaribah) i.e. the Moroccans, was due to questions about whether his knowledge encompassed the five matters (khams)[11], the soul and things of this kind. Another matter that divided them was the concept of encompassing knowledge (al-ilm al-muhit). Questioning did the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) have encompassing knowledge of all things? Or did his knowledge encompass all that which it was allowed for him to know with exception of certain things? Or can we not call his knowledge encompassing? Hence there were men of knowledge who claimed full encompassing knowledge of creation whilst others disagreed and another group which remained silent due to the conflicting evidences. On grounds of such questions, Imam Kattani identified there emerged five schools among the late Muslim scholars (muta'akhireen):

1. The first view was that Prophetic Knowledge encompassed the entire creation (al-qawl bil-ihatah). This view was held by the Qadi of Sijlimasah and the most learned scholar and faqih of his era, Abu Marwan Abd al-Malik al-Taajma'uti who died year 1118h and Sayyidi Masud Jamu from the Magaribah. Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-

[10] Jala al-Qulub min al-Asda al-Gayniyyah [al-Gaybiyyah] bi-Ihatatihi bil al-Ulum al-Kawniyyah, vol. 1, p. 126. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 2005.

[11] These five things, mentioned in the Qur'an (31:34), are: Knowledge of what is in the womb, Knowledge of when the Hour will rise, Knowledge of what one will gain tomorrow, Knowledge of the land in which one will die, Knowledge of the time Allah will send rain.

Manufi from the Mashariqah as well as the Mufti of Halab Abu Hafs Umar ibn Abd al-Wahhab ibn Ibrahim al-Halabi also held this view.

2. The second was the view that Prophetic Knowledge was not all encompassing of the entire creation (al-qawl bi-adam al-ihatah) and this was the view of the majority of the scholars of Morocco in particular those in Fez. The scholar who argued for this view mainly was Abu Ali al-Hasan ibn Masud al-Yusi. From the *Mashariqah*, Najm al-Din al-Gazzi al-Dimashqi held this view.

3. The third view was that Prophetic Knowledge encompassed creation unlike the encompassing knowledge of Allah Most High (al-qawl bil-ihatah laa ka-ihatah ilmillah) and this was held by al-Shaykh al-Akbar Ibn al-Arabi in his Futuhat and Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'rani.

4. The fourth view among certain extra cautious scholars was to remain silent on the matter without passing judgement on the amount of the Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings) out of fear that their comment may lead to belittling the rank of the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) or lack of adab with Allah Most High. This view was held by Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn al-Tayyib al-Qadiri of Fez. Note that the silence of these scholars was regarding the *quantity* of the Prophetic Knowledge and whether it could be called "encompassing knowledge" and it was *not* regarding the vastness of his knowledge and its excellence as Imam Kattani mentioned above unanimous scholarly agreement on certain matters above.

Imam Kattani explained the nature of all four views commenting succinctly that the fourth view is the cautious one, the third view is the strongest in these four, clearest and moderate, the second view that only Allah has encompassing knowledge is in accordance with the ostensible contexts of many textual evidences, and the first view that claims full encompassing knowledge for the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) can hold the following possible meanings;

a) It encompasses literally everything including the essence of Allah and his reality (ihatah haqiqiyah tafsiliyah) – it is this suspected meaning that engendered fatwas against al-Taajma'uti though he never explicitly claimed this but his opponents assumed this from his writings (Kattani 2005: p. 131, 143).

b) It encompasses all things in the metaphorical sense (ihatah majaziyah ijmaliyah) and is hence unlike the knowledge of Allah Most High. This has the same outcome as view three and this is what the scholars of the first view held in their unclear statements (Ibid: p. 128, 142). Kattani argued that al-Taajma'uti never explicitly claimed that Prophetic Knowledge was equal to Allah's Knowledge. He added, if he the latter did profess this explicitly, he held the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) did not possess this knowledge personally and independently, and his knowledge was contingent and not eternal and that the reality of his knowledge was still different to the reality of Allah's Knowledge (Ibid: p. 143).

c) It encompasses full knowledge of a certain kind of unseen and hence is relative (ihatah idafiyah) but this explanation is unbeneficial and ambiguous as there is no clear evidence stipulating this.

5. The fifth view regarding the amount of Prophetic Knowledge, adds Imam Kattani, is that of the expert people of Tasawwuf. This view was not discussed by the scholars of the outward sciences (ahl al-zahir) which he described as follows: "the Noble Prophet's

knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings) encompasses all creation and every essence He Almighty created. Hence not a single entity (dhat) of creation from pre-eternity till hereafter is excluded from Prophetic Knowledge whether it is related to the Divine Throne or the earth, and whatever is above them, below them and between and neither are the happenings in these places from the beginning till end excluded from it. As for the essence of Allah Most High, His Divine Names and Attributes, the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) acquired knowledge about these of a measure that no human or angel besides him possessed. Major Prophets did not sense its fragrance and nor the angels brought-near let alone those below them. As for the reality of Allah's essence and knowledge encompassing it or that pertaining to it is not possessed by anyone as there is no share for creation in such knowledge in any way or respect, neither in this world nor in the hereafter" (2007: vol. 1, p. 232-488). Imam Kattani strongly supports this fifth view and relies upon it in his work producing numerous proofs spread over two hundred and fifty pages!

Three Kinds of Proofs on Prophetic Knowledge

After detailing the different views regarding the scope of Prophetic Knowledge, Imam Kattani presents the textual evidences used by all the various scholars on this matter and then establishes how the fifth view was the most reliable one in light of the evidences. He divides the textual/scriptural evidences regarding Prophetic Knowledge into three categories:

1. Those that ostensibly reject all knowledge of the unseen in general from all creation including the Prophets (upon them peace and blessings). Imam Kattani presents these in eight pages and explains them too. (2007: vol. 1, 148-155)

2. Texts that ostensibly prove knowledge of the unseen of all things for the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) with exception of complete knowledge of the five matters (khams), the soul and things of its kind. Imam Kattani presents these evidences in over fifty pages (Ibid: p. 179-232) and mentions that the majority of the Hadith scholars, general ulama and fuqaha based their view on these proofs (Ibid: p. 200). They used these proofs to restrict the general texts and qualify the unqualified texts.

3. Textual evidences that establish Prophetic Knowledge encompassed every detail of creation in the absolute and general sense, from the beginning of time till the end, in the earthly sphere and the heavens including all the five matters and the soul. Imam Kattani notes that the top specialist researchers (muhaqiqeen) among the scholars and numerous men of tasawwuf based their view on these evidences (Ibid: p. 232-488). He commented (p. 201), "and this is the accurate view about which no fair-minded person can have doubt, and none other than someone laggard and deliberately oblivious shall disagree after having read its evidences in this *risalah*".

Imam Kattani named his magnificent work 'Jala al-Qulub min al-Asda al-Gaybiyyah bi-Ihatatihi sallallhu alayhi wa sallam bi al-Ulum al-Kawniyyah' [Enlightening Hearts with Echoes of the Unseen by Explaining He (Allah give him peace and blessings) Encompasses Worldly Knowledge] plainly expressing his belief regarding the Prophetic Knowledge in the title. This work is encyclopaedic in respect of detailing the evidences of the various schools and contextualising proofs. I found my heart expanding as I diligently studied its first volume with great thought and attention and I witnessed my love for the Beloved Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) increase as did my knowledge about him. This work is a must read for every sincere and genuine Arabic reader on the topic. May Allah Most High reward the author immensely for his tireless efforts to preserve the truthful way.

ﷺ *Fasl* 2. Schools of the Indian Subcontinent

1) Ahle-Sunnat Ulama at Bareilly

As for the differences among scholars of the Indian subcontinent, they vary from those differences mentioned above in various aspects to be discussed later. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly (d. 1340h) argued in his widely recognised al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah bi al-Madah al-Gaybiyyah [The Makkan Treasure on the Subject of the Knowledge of the Unseen], his most famous Arabic work on this matter, that the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) had vast and matchless knowledge of creation that did not encompass Allah's essence nor His knowledge and supported the view of the experts of Tasawwuf that Imam Kattani identified as view five. In the words of Shaykh Gibril Haddad, the great Imam offered "the greatest and most definitive answers on this chapter" (2004: p. 21)[12]. He solicited support from the major scholars of the Hijaz for al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah and received unrivalled acclaim as the reader of the Arab endorsements to it notices.

Imam Ahmad Raza's Exceptional Use of Qur'anic Evidence

Imam Ahmad Raza established his view in light of Qur'anic verses and their commentaries, Hadith texts and their commentaries and sayings of the noble companions, their students and the Ahl al-Sunnah scholars. Here is a single passage showing not only his grasp on the evidences but also the strength of argumentation on this matter. He says in the fifth section (al-nazr al-khamis) of al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah [The Makkah Treasure],

> ''By Allah's given ability I say; our Lord's speech is a perspicuous word and a just pronouncement. He says,
>
> 'And We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things' (16:89), and
>
> 'It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it- a detailed exposition of all things' (12:111), and He says,
>
> 'Nothing have we omitted from the Book' (6:38).
>
> The exalted Qur'an therefore testifies, and what a great testifier it is, it is a clear exposition of all things (tibyaan li-kull shay). Tibyan in Arabic is 'an explicitly perspicuous exposition in which there is not a single iota of ambiguity' since the multiplicity of letters in a word indicates increase in the meaning. [The aforementioned is a distinctive variation between the linguistic meanings of the words 'Bayan' and 'Tibyan']. Exposition must have an explainer and someone for whom the explanation is made. In this case, Allah is the explainer and our Master, Allah's Messenger (may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) is the one upon whom the Qur'an was revealed as a clear exposition. The word 'thing' (shay) according to the agreement of Sunni scholarship applies to 'all that which exists'. Hence, the verse encompasses entirely every existing thing from the earth to the Divine Throne, the east to the west, including all substances, states, movements, every immobility, moments, glances, notions, thoughts, and so forth.
>
> From those 'things' is the script of the Sacred Tablet (al-Lawh). The Qur'an is a clearly all-encompassing detailed exposition of that too. If we ask the Qur'an of what is inscribed in the Tablet we find it saying,

[12] Albani & His Friends. Birmingham: Aqsa Publications, 2004.

> ‘Every matter, small and great, is on record’ (54:53),
>
> And ‘And of all things have We taken account in a clear Book’ (12:36),
>
> And ‘There is not a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but is inscribed in a record clear’ (6:59).
>
> Rigorously authentic Hadiths verify that the Scared Tablet contains knowledge of everything from the first day till the last, up until the people of heaven enter it and the people of fire enter their abode. This is what is meant by the word ‘abad’, in the Hadith, which is used for a long scope of time as explained by Baydawi in his commentary on the Qur’an otherwise the limited cannot sustain limitless details. This is what is meant by the expression ‘knowledge of the past and future’ (ma kaana wa ma yakun).
>
> It has been scrupulously established in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh), a negation which is followed by an indefinite noun engenders generality in its meaning thereby Allah Most High has not omitted any ‘thing’ from His Divine book. Also, the word ‘kull’ (all) is the most explicit word that entails generality in its import; therefore *nothing* remains unexposed in the absolute clarity of the Qur’an. The general proposition (aam) is definitive[13] in its application to its entire particulars and the texts (nusus) must apply to their apparent meanings as long as there is no sound preventative. Restriction (takhsees) and interpretation (ta’weel) without proof is interpolation (tahweel) and change (tabdeel) in the texts, and the solitary reports regardless of what degree of authenticity they meet are not warranted to restrict the generality of the Qur’an. So how can that of a lesser degree than the solitary reports such as mere argumentation (qeela wa qaala) restrict the generality of the texts? The principles also explain that later restriction (takhsees mutaraakhi) is determined abrogation (naskh) and previous stories (akhbaar) cannot be abrogated. Moreover, restriction by reason (takhsees aqali) does not disembark the general proposition from its decisiveness (qat’iyyah), and neither is it permissible for a speculative proof to restrict the general proof-text. Hence the throne of meticulous investigation in this matter remains firm, and for Allah alone is all-praise.’’[14]

It is for the elaboration of this passage in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah that Imam Ahmad Raza decided to author a complete work explaining the Qur’anic verse ‘And We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things’ (16:89), which he masterfully produced in Arabic approximately in four hundred and fifty pages titled “Inba al-Hay Anna Kalamuh al-Masun Tibyan li-Kull Shay” [Disclosure by the Ever-Living One that His Sacrosanct Word is an Exposition to Everything]. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan offered the abovementioned argument in Inba al-Mustafa too thereafter he added[15],

> “By the grace of Allah Most High, it has become clear from a decisive proof (nas qat’i) that Allah Most High gave our Messenger (Allah give him peace and blessings) the knowledge of all creatures and all past and future events (ma kaana wa ma yakun). The verse “a Book explaining all things’ (16:89) (tibyan li-kull shay) gave us this knowledge and it is clear that this is the attribute of the whole Qur’an and not of every individual verse and chapter hence if before the complete revelation of the Qur’an it says “we have

[13] Imam Ahmad Raza at this point highlights there is difference between the use of Qat’i in Kalam and Qat’i in Usul which is Ijtihadi and thus their implications differ [02/07/2011].
[14] Pp. 74-83. Lahore, 2001.
[15] In Fatawa Rizwiyyah vol. 29, p. 488-489. Lahore: 2005. See also Ibid: p. 407, 409, 513.

not related to you events…" [lam naqasus alayka], it does not negate the encompassing nature of the Prophetic Knowledge.''

In Inba al-Mustafa [The Disclosure by the Chosen One] he added,

> "By the grace of Allah, all stories, reports and events used to diminish the vast knowledge of Muhammad the Messenger of Allah (Allah give him peace and blessings) contradicting decisive Qur'anic verses has been answered in these two paragraphs. Such reports belong to one of the following two kinds; either a) their date is known or b) their date is unknown. If the date is unknown, it cannot be used as proof since it is understandable that the report belongs to the time period in which the Qur'anic revelation was not complete. If the date is known, then there are two scenarios, either the date is from the period before the completion of Qur'anic revelation or after it. Using a report whose date belongs to the first period as evidence is erroneous. In the second case [where the report belongs to a period after Qur'anic revelation completed], if the opponent does not have an explicit textual proof (nass sarih), using that report as proof is merely unacceptable. Whatever our opponents present belong to these kinds of reports. They cannot present a single sound text (nass sahih) that is both explicit (sarih) and decisive in its meaning (qat'i al-ifadah). Let us accept for argument sake, they do present such a proof-text, this single inclusive, beneficial and sufficient reply suffices for all that opposing the generality (umum) of decisive Qur'anic verses using solitary reports (akhbar) is purely erroneous."

After a similar comment in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah[16] he says:

> "Lo! I adamantly invite every Wahhabi of Gangoh, Deoband and Dihli and every dweller of the woods and mountains, to collectively come together and present a single proof-text (nass) decisive in its meaning (qa'ti al-dilalah) and decisively verified in its transmission (majzum al-thubut) such as a Qur'anic verse or a mass-narrated hadith that explicitly and decisively establishes that after the completion of Qur'anic revelation, a worldly event remained unknown to the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) such that he did not know it...If you cannot present such proof and we unwaveringly confirm you will fail from presenting this proof, then know that Allah will not guide any deceiver's deceit!"

In Izahat al-Ayb bi-Sayf al-Gayb [The Removal of Invisibility][17], Imam Ahmad Raza Khan similarly states,

> "This humble person (faqir) established through decisive Qur'anic verses that the Noble Qur'an's revelation completed over twenty three years which taught him the knowledge of every event in the past and future (ilm ma kana wa ma yakun), that is to say, the knowledge of everything from the first day to the last. The principles of Islamic law illustrate that a solitary report cannot be accepted when in contradiction of decisive verses, though it may be rigorously authentic. Hence whoever presents a proof against the Noble Qur'an must necessarily bear in mind four basic points:
>
> a) Firstly, the proof must be a Qur'anic verse decisive in its meaning or a similar mass-narrated hadith
>
> b) The event must belong to the time period after the completion of Qur'anic revelation

[16] p. 85, Lahore, 2001 & also in his Fatawa, vol. 29, p. 407.
[17] In his Fatawa, vol. 29, p. 512-3.

c) The proof must basically show lack of knowledge [and not a slip] as a slip does not negate knowledge but in fact establishes it and requires [previous] knowledge

d) It must explicitly negate knowledge since many a times concealing certain knowledge is due to greater interest and replies such as "Allah knows best", "only Allah knows" and "none besides Allah knows this" are idioms used to avoid the answer. Negation of true intrinsic knowledge does not entail negation of true granted knowledge as on the Day of Judgment Allah Most High will assemble the Prophets and say to them "what was the response you received" (5: 109) i.e. when you took guidance to the infidels, what did they say? To which they shall reply "we have no knowledge". These four sentences suffice in replying to such doubts [against vast Prophetic Knowledge]. There is a fifth condition too, that is that the event [in the proof-text showing lack of knowledge] must belong to events from within the first day of creation to the last day, namely, everything inscribed on the Sacred Tablet as this is our claim. Matters regarding the essence of Allah, His qualities and infinite matters (gayr mutanahiyat) are out of the scope of discussion and presenting them is clear sign of wandering in the loop of insanity and silliness. After these words, every objection of the Wahhabis is destroyed "like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability (Q14: 26)".

Differences Between the Knowledge of the Creator and His Creatures

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan established in categorical terms the knowledge of our Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) was unlike the knowledge of Allah Most High, and stressed this saying it was not equal to Allah's knowledge not having even the relation a 1000,000th of a drop of water has to a million oceans! He believed that those who considered the view that Prophetic Knowledge encompassed everything in the Sacred Tablet was *shirk* were undermining the essence and scope of Divine Knowledge. He says in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah,

> "It becomes extremely evident and apparent from our discussion that the thought that the entire creation's knowledge altogether is equal to the knowledge of Allah cannot enter the mind of any Muslim. Not a single Muslim could possibly have a thought equal to even an iota in his mind that the knowledge of creation is comparable with the knowledge of Allah. These blind people [i.e. opponents] do not even realise that Allah's Knowledge is personal (dhati) whilst creation's knowledge is gifted (ata'i). Allah's Knowledge is a necessary attribute of His essence (Wajib li-dhatih) and creation's knowledge is contingent (mumkin lahu) because all of creation is contingent and an attribute cannot precede the attributed. Allah's Knowledge is uncreated (ghyar makhluq) and His creation's knowledge is created (makhluq). Allah's Knowledge is not under anyone's power (ghayr maqdur) whilst creation's knowledge is under Divine power (maqdur/maqhur). Allah's knowledge is for everlasting (wajib al-baqa) whilst creation's knowledge is intrinsically perishable (ja'iz al-fana). Allah's Knowledge can never change (mumtani al-tagayyur) change is (tabaddul) is characteristic of human knowledge. With these differences, who beside the accursed, blind and deaf would assume that the knowledge [of Allah and creation] is equal?"[18]

Imam Ahmad Raza further says,

> "Oh Allah, show us your mercy! Darkness has embraced us and has increased beyond limit! Many people are walking in the darkness of misguidance. We have discussed in detail the personal (dhati) and absolute all-encompassing (mutlaq muheet) knowledge of Allah Most High. This kind of knowledge exclusively belongs to Allah's essence such

[18] Al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah, p. 51.

> that no human being shares it. Indeed, every Muslim has a share in the absolute gifted knowledge (mutlaq al-ilm al-ata'i) including primarily the Noble Prophets, upon them peace and blessings."[19]

Drawing clear distinctions between creation's knowledge and Allah's Knowledge, Imam Ahmad Raza further says in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah,

> "Knowledge that is personal (ilm dhati) is uniquely attributed to Allah Most High and is not possible for any other. Whoever believes even a small part of an iota of it belongs to any other than Him, has enunciated disbelief and *shirk.*" (p. 6)[20]

In the same part he says,

> "The actual everlasting (ghayr mutanahi bil-f'il) knowledge is exclusive to Allah Almighty" (p. 10)

In the same part he says,

> "It is both legally and rationally impossible for any creation to encompass the entirety of Allah's Knowledge in the completely detailed sense. In fact, if the knowledge of the entire creation was gathered, from beginning to end, it would not even have the relation a 1000,000th part of a single droplet of water has to a million oceans with the knowledge of Allah." (p. 10)

In the second part (nazar*)* of the work Imam Ahmad Raza says,

> "It becomes extremely evident and apparent from our discussion that the thought that the entire creation's knowledge altogether is equal to the knowledge of Allah cannot enter the mind of any Muslim." (p. 15)

In the same part he adds,

> "We have established through several strong proofs that it is decisively impossible, in light of rational and transmitted evidence, for creation's knowledge to encompass everything in the knowledge of Allah." (p. 16)

In the third part (nazar)of this work he says,

> "Personal knowledge that is absolute and all-encompassing in every detail belongs to Allah Most High alone and His servants have no other than absolute[21] granted knowledge." (p. 3)

In the fifth part (nazar) of this work he says,

> "We do not believe in the equality [of creation's knowledge] with Allah's and neither do we uphold it can ever be attained independently and we do not establish except some knowledge [for creation] which is granted by Allah." (p. 28)

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[19] Ibid: p. 55.

[20] All quotes from this one onwards on the differences between the knowledge of the Creator and His creatures from al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah have been taken from Khaalis al-I'tiqaad in Fatawa Rizwiyyah, vol. 29, pp. 436-437 (Lahore: Raza Foundation) and the pagination, here only, is according to the Bareilly (India): Matba'ah Ahl-e-Sunnat edition.

[21] Every form of *granted* knowledge belongs only to humans and not Allah Almighty.

Imam Ahmad Raza argued that knowledge of what happened in the past and what is to occur in the future (ilm ma kana wa ma yakun) cannot be the essence of Allah's Knowledge as time has boundaries and Allah's Knowledge is boundless. He believes that his opponents undermined Divine Knowledge saying ,

> "We have shown that the knowledge of Allah cannot be restricted both in light of religious evidence and rationally. When Wahhabis read books written by the religious scholars and their followers, and therein study the knowledge of the unseen possessed by the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) in light of the Qur'an and Hadith, and reach the point that the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) possess knowledge of every past and future event from the beginning of creation till the last day, their reaction is to issue fatwas of *shirk* and *kufr* upon these writers. They accuse them of equating the Prophet's knowledge with Allah's Knowledge. These Wahhabis are flawed in making this assumption and are incorrect. They themselves in fact fall into the pitfalls of *kufr* and *shirk* due to this statement, as they level the limited and measurable knowledge [of creation] to the boundless and infinite (ghyar mutanahi) knowledge of Allah Most High."[22]

In Inba al-Mustafa (d. 1318H) he says[23],

> "It is unfortunate that these blind shirk-fatwa writers do not understand that Allah's Knowledge is intrinsic, whereas creation's knowledge is granted, His knowledge is a necessary attribute whereas the latter is contingently possible, His knowledge is pre-eternal whereas this is contingent, His is uncreated and this is created, His knowledge is not under authority whereas this is under His authority, His is necessarily forever lasting and this is perishable, His cannot possibly change and this changes! It is only an insane and blind person who could assert there is a possibility of shirk here and claims knowledge that encompasses the past and future events (ma kaana wa ma yakun), with the differences mentioned here, is equal and similar to Allah's Knowledge, may Allah forbid."

Imam Ahmad Raza negated the attribution of any of the following views to him and asked his opponents who alleged he claimed equality between Allah's Knowledge and the Prophet's (Allah give him peace and blessings) to present their evidence. He wrote in Khaalis al-I'tiqaad that he never held any of the following views:

- The Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings) is *personal* and intrinsic
- The Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings) is *equal* to Allah's except that Allah's is eternal and his is contingent
- The Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings)*encompasses everything in Allah's Knowledge* with the exception of His essence and attributes
- The Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings) *effectively* encompasses, with complete detail, all everlasting matters (umur gayr mutanahaiyah bil-fi'l)[24]

Imam Ahmad Raza's Twofold Classification of Knowledge[25]

Imam Ahmad Raza gave a fine classification to knowledge of the unseen in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah. A proper understanding of this classification not only omits doubts concerning the

[22] Al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah, p. 53-54. Lahore: Mu'assassah Rida, 2001.
[23] Ibid: vol. 29, p. 500.
[24] See Fatawa Rizwiyyah, Vol. 29; p. 434-435.
[25] See al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah pp. 38-54. Lahore: Mu'assasah Rida, 2001.

Prophetic Knowledge but also shows the unparalleled greatness of Allah Almighty's Knowledge. It is noteworthy that Imam Ahamd Raza is the first known scholar to offer such a comprehensive study of this classification basing his original research on writings of the previous ulama which he shows in his annotations titled al-Fuyudat al-Malakiyyah and elsewhere. The classification is as follows:

Classification A. Knowledge can be divided into two categories in respect of its source:

Knowledge is either a) personal (dhati) or b) granted (ata'i). Personal means it is not granted by anyone and cannot be shared and granted means it is given by another and is not independently known. The first kind is the unique knowledge of Allah Most High and the second is the knowledge of human kind. The first cannot be attributed to any creature whilst the second is uniquely attributed to creation and cannot be attributed to Allah Most High. A person who attributes granted knowledge to Allah Most High is unquestionably out of the fold of Islam.

Classification B. Knowledge can be divided into two categories in respect of what it is attributed to:

Knowledge is either a) knowledge in the unconditional sense (mutlaq al-ilm) or b) absolute knowledge (al-ilm al-mutlaq); the first kind refers to the term *mutlaq* used by the scholars of the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh) which means it is established by a single part and is negated when all parts are negated. The second kind refers to essential generality and encapsulation so that it cannot be established unless every part is established and is entirely negated when one part is negated. Both of these kinds are further classified into two categories; a) summarised (ijmali) and b) detailed (tafsili) so the outcome is:

- Knowledge in the unconditional sense that is summarised (mutlaq al-ilm al-ijmali)
- Knowledge in the unconditional sense that is detailed (mutlaq al-ilm al-tafsili)
- Absolute knowledge that is summarised (al-ilm al-mutlaq al-ijmali)
- Absolute knowledge that is detailed (al-ilm al-mutlaq al-tafsili)

Imam Ahmad Raza masterfully shows in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah that the first three types of knowledge are possessed by humans and the last type is unique to the essence of Allah Most High. He argues that absolute knowledge of the unseen that is summarised (al-ilm al-mutlaq al-ijmali) is from the absolute essentials of Islam and every single Muslim knows certain unseen things without which Iman is incomplete, such as the existence of Allah Most High, paradise, judgement day. When this kind is rationally and religiously proven, knowledge in the unconditional sense that is summarised (mutlaq al-ilm al-ijmali) is thereby naturally acquired. And the fact that every Muslim knows these particular unseen matters, each of them individually and separate from the other, then knowledge in the unconditional sense that is detailed (mutlaq al-ilm al-tafsili) is obviously proven for even the general Muslim masses. Hence all three kinds of knowledge of the unseen are proven for humans.

Circulation of al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah in the Scholarly Circles

During the year 1328H in Hijaz, the scholars of Madinah sought copies of al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah from scholars in Makkah, where it had been written, having heard from Imam Ahmad Raza's opponents that he claimed the Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings) was equal to Allah's in this work. These scholars of Makkah and Madinah studied the book and endorsed it in writing censuring the allegations of the opponents and circulated it among visiting scholars and students to ensure maximum awareness of the author's scholarly veracity and of his work. It is for this reason that most of the endorsements on al-Dawlah al-

Makkiyyah were written after 1328AH which unequivocally assert the book and author are free from such false claims. By the grace of Allah, I have seen several original manuscripts to these endorsements.

After his return to India from Hajj in 1324H/1905 to India, the opponents of Imam Ahmad Raza spread the news that he authored a book in Arabic claiming there was *no* difference between Allah's and that of His Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings). In order to rebut this allegation, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan authored a comprehensive work in Urdu to show the views he expressed in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah which he titled Khaalis al-I'tiqad. In this work, he reiterated his original comments in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah highlighting the differences between Allah's and creation's knowledge, those I have shown above, and by presenting one hundred and twenty statements of the ulama he illustrated he held the same belief as the expert people of haqiqah, that which was identified as view five by Imam Kattani above. His two largest works containing oceans of textual evidences and scholarly commentaries titled 'Mali' al-Jayb bi-Ulum al-Gayb' [Fullness of the Heart] and 'al-Lu'lu al-Maknun Fi Ilm al-Basheer Ma Kaan wa Ma-Yakun' [The Concealed Pearl] also reflect that Imam Ahmad Raza's belief concerning Prophetic Knowledge was same as the belief of major ulama of this ummah.

A List of Imam Ahmad Raza's Indispensible Writings on Prophetic Knowledge

The following treatises on the immense knowledge of the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) share with their readers gems, each of them containing different discussions, all belong to the insightful Imam at Bareilly Ahmad Raza Khan, who continued to preserve Sunni creed and the way of the people of true Tasawwuf:

1. **Mali' al-Jayb bi-Ilm al-Gayb** [Fullness of the Heart with the Knowledge of the Unseen] dated 1318H – also called Bahr-e-Ubaab in four chapters rebukes the claim that Satan's knowledge is more vast than the Noble Prophet's (Allah give him peace and blessings). This is perhaps his first known major work on the vastness of Prophetic Knowledge.

2. **Al-Lu'lu al-Maknun fi Ilm al-Basheer Ma-Kaan wa Ma-Yakun** [The Concealed Pearl: The Knowledge of the Bearer of Glad Tidings in What has Passed and What Shall Be] dated 1318H which gives special focus to reconciling between ostensibly conflicting textual proofs and is an expansion of chapter four from Mali' al-Jayb.

3. **Inba al-Mustafa bi-Haal Sirr wa Akhfa** [Disclosure by The Chosen One of the Secret Matters and Things More Hidden] dated 1318H-This is a summary of his previous two works extremely useful in highlighting the main discussions. It is a short yet replete refutation of Baraheen-e-Qatiah's notorious passage on knowledge of the unseen. It was published in Moradabad the year it was written three times in thousands and once with al-Kalimah al-Ulya which is a stunning work on the issue by the Imam's disciple, Sadr al-Afadil Na'im al-Din.

4. **Al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah bi al-Madah al-Gaybiyyah** [The Makkan Treasure on the Subject of the Unseen] written in just over eight hours in 1323H in response to five questions presented to the great Imam by the ulama of Makkah.

5. **Al-Fuyudaat al-Malakiyyah li-Muhib al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah** [Angelic Blessings for the Admirer of al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah] - detailed annotations on al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah that began in 1323H in Makkah and expanded over the next 2 years. The first note was written by a Madinian scholar Sayyid Hamdan Waynisi Maliki.

6. **Inba al-Hay anna Kalaamahu al-Masun Tibyan li-Kull Shay** [The Disclosure of the Forever-living that His Sacrosanct Word is a Clear Exposition of Everything] - a super Arabic commentary on a passage in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah written in 1325H with its annotations titled Haasim al-Muftari ala al-Sayyid al-Bariy in vindication of Mufti Barzanji from Gayat al-Ma'mul's corrupt published text ascribed to him.[26]

7. **Khaalis al-I'tiqaad** [The Genuine Creed] dated 1328- with an excellent forward titled Rimah al-Qahhaar ala Kufr a-Kuffaar highlighting the disparaging passages regarding Prophetic Knowledge by some of his contemporary scholars and also exonerating Mufti Barzanji from the altered Gayat al-Ma'mul attributed to him.[27]

8. **Izaahat al-Ayb bi Sayf al-Gayb** [The Removal of Invisibility by The Sword of the Unseen] 1330?- written in response to four objections concerning Prophetic Knowledge.

A *Magnum Opus* by Allamah Na'im al-Din Moradabadi

There had been a lot of tension between scholars of the Indian Subcontinent in the first twenty years of the 14th century Hijrah. A major sunni scholar from Rampur, Mufti Salamtullah had been attacked by numerous opponents for writing a work titled 'I'lam al-Adhkiya' [Informing the Intelligent People] in which he proved vast knowledge of the past and future (ilm ma-kaana wa ma-yakun) for the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings). A disciple of Imam Ahamd Raza Khan, Allamah Na'im al-Din Moradabadi[28], a Qur'anic exegete, penned its defence titled 'al-Kalimah al-Ulya li-I'la Ilm al-Mustafa' [The Loftiest Word Honouring Prophetic Knowledge] which is an impressive work spread over one hundred and fifty pages[29]. Impressive because it attempts to reply to every argument used by opponents to his day against the vastness of Prophetic Knowledge and claims to reply to the arguments of the following works, Taqwiyat al-Iman, Nasihat al-Iman, Mas'alah Ilm-e-Gayb by Muhammad Yahya and endorsed by Rasheed Gangohi, Gaybi Risalah, Fatwa Ghulam Muhammad Randeeri, Fatwa Ulama-e-Deoband wagahyrah, Majmu'ah Matba Siddiqui Lahore, Kashf al-Gata an izalat al-Khafa by Muhammad Sa'eed Banarasi, Sahm al-Gayb fi Kabid ahl al-Rayb by Abd al-Hamid Barelwi, Rad al-Sayf, Tanzih al-Tawhid by Muhammad Gulam Nabi Nabawi, Baraheen-e-Qatiah by Rasheed Gangohi, Hifz al-Iman by Ashraf Ali Thanawi, Tahqeeq-e-Haq Taqreer Muhammad Idris, Ilm-e-Gayb ka Faysalah matba ahl-e-hadith Amritsar, Ahl-e-Hadith ka madhhhab by Thana'ullah Amritsari and I'la Kalimat al-Haq by Hafiz Wahid Noor. This list not only reflects the historical reality that the matter under study was of immense discord among scholarly circles in the Indian Subcontinent but also shows the tireless efforts of sunni ulama responding to this wave of literature. Moradabadi takes one objection at a time and scrutinises it by checking it against the Qur'an, hadith and commentaries of the ulama and for this particular approach, his work is extremely

[26] See more about this work on p. 27.

[27] Khaalis al-I'tiqad, Fatawa Rizwiyyah, vol. 29 p. 411-483. This groundbreaking work offers a detailed study to this categorisation of doctrinal matters and knowledge of the unseen using several textual evidences and analyzing the scholarly commentaries and schools. It has been masterfully written on five matters: the first matter is regarding Wahhabi lies that Imam Ahmad Raza believes the knowledge of Allah and His Messenger is equal, matter two pertains to the study of Qur'anic proofs on the negation of unseen with their replies, the third matter details commentaries of the ulama in which they divide knowledge into personal (dhati) and granted (ata'i), the fourth matter is regarding the doctrines upon which there is unanimous scholarly consensus on the issue of the knowledge of the unseen and disagreement is forbidden and the fifth matter is regarding the doctrinal issues in which difference is allowed and establishing the madhhab of the people of tasawwuf regarding Prophetic Knowledge that which Imam Kattani refers to as the fifth school in his categorisation of schools (see above p. 6).

[28] Known by the title 'Sadr al-Afadil'.

[29] Siyalkot (Pakistan): Qadiri Kutub Khanah.

useful and appealing. I mentioned above that Inba al-Mustafa of Imam Ahmad Raza had been published alongside this work from Moradabad and distributed together during his lifetime.

2. Views of Scholars at Madrasah Deoband

Rasheed Gangohi & Khaleel Ambethwi

At Madrasah Deoband, however, there was a different attitude to the issue to that at Bareilly. Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi and Khaleel Ambethwi argued in Baraheen-e-Qat'iah that claiming encompassing knowledge of the worldly sphere for the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) was *shirk* yet they argued at the same point that Satan had such knowledge of the unseen and that his vast knowledge was established by textual evidence unlike our Prophet's knowledge! Here is the translation of their passage:

> "The upshot is that we should carefully note that if, after seeing the state of Satan and the Angel of Death, we affirm that the Pride of the World [30](upon whom be blessings and peace) has all-encompassing vast knowledge of the earthly sphere, contravening without proof decisive scriptural texts and proceeding solely from false analogy, then if this is not outright *shirk,* how should it be a part of faith? Such vastness [of knowledge] is established for Satan and the Angel of Death through scriptural texts. Through what decisive scriptural text has the Pride of the World's vastness of knowledge been established, that one should affirm an act of *shirk* by rejecting all scriptural texts?" [31]

These authors argued that establishing vast knowledge for the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings), sound hadiths were not sufficient as the matter pertained to tenets of faith (aqidah) and thus decisive (qati'i) evidences such as Qura'nic verses or mass-narrated hadith were required but were non-existent. On the other hand, they presented a baseless narration, thus not even a reliable solitary report, that the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) claimed to lack knowledge of what was behind the wall. They presented this report in order to establish an aqidah point that the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) did not posses knowledge of the unseen. They wrote,

> "First, tenets of faith [like this one] are not analogical (qiyasi), that they may be established by analogy. Rather, they are decisive (qat'i), or established by decisive scriptural texts, to such an degree that even a single hadith (khabar wahid) is of no use as a proof in this context. In consequence, the affirmation [of the vastness of the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen (Allah bless him and give him peace)] is only worthy of attention once the author establishes it through decisive proofs." [32]

And they said,

> "The Pride of the World (upon whom be peace) himself says, "By Allah, I do not know what will be done with me or with you"—the hadith. Sheikh 'Abd al-Haqq relates [the hadith]: "I do not even know what is behind this wall."[33]

[30] I.e. Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be blessings and peace).
[31] Translation from Nuh Ha Mim Keller's Iman Kufr and Takfir, 2007.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

When any objective and critical reader investigates the previous three statements in the Baraheen-e-Qati'ah, he realises that these authors not only committed *shirk* according to their own standard by proving vast knowledge for Satan – which they considered *shirk* when proven for the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings)- but also violated their own standard for accepting textual evidences in aqidah as they offered a baseless report to establish an aqidah point that the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) did not possess knowledge of the unseen whereas they themselves demanded decisive textual proof to prove the vast knowledge of our Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings)! These authors in fact openly argued that the Noble Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings) was so limited that he did not even have knowledge of his own fate (Allah forbid!). The reader, after having read Imam Kattani's discussion above on the evidences concerning knowledge of the unseen also notices that these authors were extreme as well as disingenuous in their claim that there was no textual evidence on the vast knowledge of the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) and scholars only used analogy. It is clear to any objective reader of Baraheen-e-Qati'ah, therefore, that its authors employed every effort to support the Satan and disparage the Noble Messenger of Allah (Allah give him peace and blessings).

Ashraf Ali Thanawi

Ashraf Ali Thanawi, also from Deoband, claimed in Hifz al-Iman that the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) did not possess all inclusive knowledge (kull ghayb) but possessed partial knowledge (ba'dh gayb). He says,

> "If it refers to but *some* of the unseen, then how is the Revered One [the Prophet] (Allah bless him and give him peace) uniquely special, when such knowledge of the unseen is possessed by Zayd and 'Amr [i.e. just anyone], indeed, by every child and madman, and even by all animals and beasts?"[34]

The careful reader notices that Thanawi claimed the Noble Prophet's (Allah give him peace and blessings) partial knowledge was not a unique speciality. How did he deny this? It was by comparing Prophetic Knowledge to that of lowly creatures, every layman and insane people! The point he desired to establish was that there was no speciality in the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) possessing knowledge of the unseen when such kind of knowledge was also possessed by other lowly creatures. He not only made an ugly comparison that demeaned the lofty station of our Beloved Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings), but also ignored the crucial point that virtue was not restricted to full knowledge (kull ghayb), but in fact, even partial knowledge was virtuous. For example, the degrees among ulama are considered virtuous even though their knowledge is partial. Thanawi did not pause for a moment and ponder as to why he was honoured by the title "hakeem al-ummah" among his mureeds and why his elders such as Rasheed Gangohi were revered with lofty titles such as "Qutb-e-Alam"[35] if virtue was restricted to full-knowledge alone that is only for Allah Most High? The following comments also belong to Ashraf Ali Thanawi in his Behishti Zeywar p. 37,

> "Calling someone from far with the belief that he is aware is *shirk* and *kufr*".

Muhammad Ismail Dihlawi

Dihlawi was not from Deoband but indeed was an Imam and respected elder of the major Deobndi scholars, particularly those mentioned above. Their writings were influenced by his works in particular by Taqwiyat al-Iman which is a highly embraced and promoted book among

[34] Ibid.
[35] Learned saint occupying pinnacle status in the spiritual realm.

Deobandis even today[36] just as it is welcomed by Salafis and Wahhabis that it is published with Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's Kitab al-Tawhid in a single volume in current editions. Dihlawi held the view that it was shirk to assert any creature had knowledge of the unseen. He wrote in his notorious Taqwiyat al-Iman,

> "If someone asks about the number of leaves on a tree or the number of stars in the sky, then one should not say "Allah and His Messenger know" because only Allah knows the unseen, what does the Messenger know [about them]?"[37]

And he wrote on p. 10[38],

> "Whether such person believes he knows this intrinsically or through knowledge granted by Allah, in all cases shirk is established"

Here we notice that Dihlawi denied even the attribution of granted knowledge of the unseen (ilm ata'i) from creation. As for Allah's Knowledge, he alluded it was both optional (ikhityari) and contingent opposing Muslim consensus that Allah's Knowledge is necessarily unchangeable and permanent thus He does not acquire knowledge and nothing is unseen from Him. He says,

> "Acquainting with an unseen matter, such that whenever one desires can acquaint with it, is only [in] the great might [shaan] of Allah Sahib." [39]

Khaleel Ambethwi's aforementioned view that the Messenger of Allah (Allah give him peace and blessings) did not know his ultimate fate was inherited from his infamous Wahhabi elder Muhammad Ismail Dihlawi who said in his notorious Taqwiyat al-Iman, Chapter Four p. (78) concerning the hadith in Sahih al-Bukhari "Even though I am a Messenger of Allah, I swear I do not know what will happen to me or to you",

> "It implies that the kind of treatment Allah is going to mete out to His slaves in this world, in their graves, or in the Hereafter is neither known by a Prophet, nor a sage. They neither know about themselves nor about others"[40].

Imam Ahmad Raza gave these authors an acclaimed scholarly response in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah and Inba al-Mustafa quoting several Qur'anic verses that informed the Beloved Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) of the great pleasures he was promised in the hereafter and his followers showing these authors were disingenuous with proof texts and misrepresented the correct Sunni doctrine. Ulema mentioned the quoted hadith was abrogated thus it is impermissible to derive such meaning from it. Shaykh Gibril Haddad commented on this view saying[41],

> "one who does not know the difference between valid rulings and abrogated ones in Islam is not qualified to teach others about the subheadings of the Law, much less Tawhid. The prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) is related to say: "whoever gives fatwa without knowledge, the angels of the heavens and the earth curse him".

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[36] It is taught in Nadwat al-Ulama (Lakhnouw) till today and all its branches as core part of the syllabus.
[37] Al-Fasl al-Khamis, p. 17. Lahore: Matba'ah Aleemi.
[38]India: Matba'a Mujtabai edition.
[39] In Taqwiyat al-Iman al-Fasl al-Thani p. 14. Lahore: Matba Aleemi & p. 20. India: Matba'ah Mujtabai.
[40] Translation from Shaykh Gibril Haddad's Albani & His Friends, p. 69. Birmingham: Aqsa Publications, 2004.
[41] Ibid: p. 69-70.

In refutation of Ismail Dihlawii, Shaykh Gibril Haddad says (p. 60),

> "The statement in chapter four [p. 70-71]: "in case someone recognizes a Prophet ... to be such (having knowledge of the unseen), such a person becomes a mushrik". This mad fatwa makes idolaters of the **entire ummah** since a Muslim necessarily confesses the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen..."

Deobandi Fatwas of Kufr on Muslims who Believe Prophets Possess Knowledge of the Unseen

In reply to a question whether Prophets (upon them peace and blessings) have knowledge of the unseen, Rasheed Gangohi replied in Fatawa Rasheediyah (3: 7),

> "The belief and *maddhab* of every scholar concerning knowledge of the unseen (ilm al-gayb) is that no one besides Allah knows it...hence establishing knowledge of the unseen for anyone besides Haq (i.e. Allah) Most High is explicit *shirk*."

The reader of this paper should realise that this is an empty claim and the author was dishonest in his assertion. He further added in this fatwa,

> "When the Prophets (upon them peace and blessings) do not have knowledge of the unseen (ilm-e-gayb), saying Ya RasoolAllah becomes impermissible. If the caller holds the belief that he hears from far due to knowledge of the unseen, this is intrinsically *kufr*, and if this is not the belief, it is not kufr however his wording is similar to kufr (kalimah mushabih ba-kufr)."[42]

This fatwa was signed by all the following Deobandi scholars: Mahmud al-Hasan, Muhammad Is'haq Farkh Abadi, Mufti Azizur Rahman, Muhammad Riyaz al-Din, Muhammad Nazir Hasan, Khaleel Ahmad Saharanpuri (Ambethwi), Ahmad Hasan Amrohi, Siraj Ahmad Meerathi, Abdul Mu'min. Rasheed Gangohi added at its end,

> "Knowledge of the unseen belongs exclusively to Allah Most High. To use this word in any way for anyone else is not free from *shirk*."

Ashraf Ali Thanawi reproduced this fatwa of *kufr* in Behishti Zeywar p. 37 saying,

> "Calling someone from far with the belief that he is aware is *shirk* and *kufr*"

Another in the Fatawa Rasheediyah (3: 15) reads,

> "Calling someone besides Allah from far constitutes shirk when one believes the person he calls is listening".

Both of these passages were quoted by the Deobandi scholar Murtaza Hasan Darbhangi in his Fatwa of *kufr* on this issue.[43] Another Deobandi, Fazil Lathani Yaar Muhammad Multani added at the end of these fatwas,

> "Someone who becomes aware of these absurd doctrines and does not consider the person who believes in them an infidel (kafir), cursed and deserving hell fire similarly

[42] Quotations from Mawlawi Hussain Ali's *Bulghat al-Hayran Fi Rabt Ayat al-Qur'an,* p. 2. Lahore: Maktabah Ukhuwwat.
[43] Ibid. p. 4.

> becomes an apostate and kafir himself and then whoever does not consider this person as such also becomes the same."[44]

In another question regarding Prophetic Knowledge, Rasheed Gangohi replied (3: 32),[45]

> "Whosoever considers the Messenger of Allah (Allah give him peace and blessings) was a knower of the unseen is undoubtedly an infidel and *mushrik* according to the Hanafi scholars."

He added,

> "As for their saying that his knowledge of the unseen of all things is not intrinsic but is granted by Allah Most High is purely absurd and from their fables."

This fatwa was signed by the following Deobandi scholars: Abul Khayrat Sayyid Ahmad, Muhammad Ya'qub, Ahmad Hazarwi, Mufti Azizur Rahman, Abdullah Ansari, Muhammad Mahmud al-Hasan and Muhammad Is'haq.

Someone asked Rasheed Gangohi the following question,

> "Is prayer [salah] permissible behind someone who considers the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) has knowledge of the unseen?"

To which he replied in clear words in his Fataawa (3: 113),

> "Prayer [salah] is invalid behind whoever establishes for the Messenger of Allah (Allah give him peace and blessings) knowledge of the unseen, which is exclusive to Allah Most High, because it is *kufr* and prayer behind him is unlawful. Such is stipulated in al-Durr al-Mukhtar"[46]

Under the subheading in his Fatawa "the Messenger's knowledge of the unseen", Rasheed Gangohi writes (p. 244),[47]

> "Hazrat (Allah give him peace and blessings) did not have knowledge of the unseen nor did he ever claim it. The Word of Allah (i.e. Qur'an) and numerous hadiths tell us that he was not a knower of the unseen and believing he has knowledge of the unseen is explicit *shirk*".

Rasheed Gangohi similarly states in Mas'alah Ilm-e-Ghayb p. 154[48],

> "All four Imams of the schools unanimously concur that prophets, upon them peace and blessings, are not informed of the unseen".[49]

Imam Ahmad Raza considered these offensive fatwas of shirk and kufr attacks on Muslim scholarship and Islamic tradition. After presenting one hundred and twenty references to the Qur'an, hadith and scholarly commentaries proving vast knowledge of the unseen for the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) he exclaims in Khaalis al-I'tiqad[50],

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid. p. 3 & p. 228-229, Karachi: Daarul Isha'at.
[46] His last words "because..." have been moved into the footnote in the new Karachi Daarul Isha'at edition.
[47] Karachi: Daarul Isha'at.
[48] Published with Ilm-e-Gayb by Qari Tayyib, ed. Lahore: Idarah Islamiyat.
[49] Also cited by Shaykh Gibril Haddad in Albani & His Friends.
[50] Fatawa Rizwiyyah, vol. 29, p. 481-2l, Lahore: Raza Foundation.

> "Oh Wahhabis, Gangohis, Deobandis, Thanawis, Dihlawis and Amritsaris! If you are true in your word and firm in your heart then close your eyes and proclaim with your mouths that from Shah Wali Ullah to the scholars of law, hadith, tafsir and doctrine and the major scholars, from the major scholars to the righteous awliya, from the righteous awliya to the scholars of the madhhabs, from the scholars of the madhhabs to the honourable Prophets, from the honourable Prophets to the leader of the Prophets (Allah give him peace and blessings) and from him to Allah, the One, are all infidels in your view... It was easy for you to assert that Ahmad Raza holds a doctrine of kufr that the Messenger of Allah (Allah give him peace and blessings) has knowledge of the unseen, but you did not see that Ahmad Raza's soul is connected with which pure people! His doctrinal beliefs hail from the pathways of the ulama, awliya, Imams of fiqh and the companions and are connected with Muhammad the Emissary of Allah, Allah give him peace and blessings, and then with Allah the Lord of the universes, and all praise is for Him."

Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller's Misrepresentation of Historical Facts

I would like to highlight two additional important points for the benefit of the sincere reader. Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller argued in his misleading paper *Iman, Kufr and Takfir* that Khaleel Ambethwi made offensive comments regarding Prophetic Knowledge in the heat of argument with Imam Ahmad Raza Khan as he deemed the Imam's comments to be exaggerated about the Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings). Shaykh Nuh presents the argument of Khaleel Ambethwi, after presenting Imam Ahmad Raza's stance from al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah, as though the former directed his argument at al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah. The intelligent reader knows the severity of Shaykh Nuh's mistaken assumption at this point since Ambethwi authored Baraheen-e-Qat'iah in reply to al-Anwar al-Sati'ah by Abd al-Samee Rampuri, his fellow Peer bhaey and not Imam Ahmad Raza Khan's al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah. Imam Ahmad Raza authored al-Dawlah in 1323H on Hajj whilst Khaleel authored Baraheen in1304H 19 years earlier! Had Shaykh Nuh studied the historical chronology to these writings, such an absurd mistake would not have emanated from his remiss pen. Another mistake, also based upon superficial knowledge of the historical context to the Deobandi writings, is Shaykh Nuh's incorrect assertion that Thanawi authored Hifz al-Iman as an objection to Imam Ahmad Raza Khan's calling the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) "Knower of the Unseen" ('Alim al-Ghayb). Shaykh Nuh, and in fact, no Deobandi has been able to show this is true as Imam Ahmad Raza never used the title 'Alim al-Gayb' for the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings), to the contrary, he mentioned in his Fatawa (vol. 29; 404) that it was exclusive to Allah Most High. Shaykh Nuh has no resort except to correct his paper as soon as possible.[51]

[51] These two examples illustrate Shaykh Nuh's article is not a reliable source for the study of the Deobandi-Barelwi conflict, in particular, on the vastness of the Prophet's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings). Shaykh Nuh, and *anyone* treading in his footsteps aspiring to unify the schools of the Indian Subcontinent at the expense of the Noble Prophet's dignity (Allah give him peace and blessings), should take a lesson from his flaws that are related to both historical information and legal criteria (shar'i). I partially highlighted his legal misunderstandings in two separate papers, 'Explaining the Correct Methodology of Subki in Takfir' and 'A Rejoinder on Contextualizing the Hadiths Quoted by Shaykh Nuh in his Iman, Kufr and Takfir', (www.scholarsink.wordpress.com) all of which came with tawfiq from Allah Most High.

﴾ *Fasl 3.* Doctrinal Differences & Essential Knowledge

Imam Ahmad Raza elaborated that belief in the knowledge of the unseen falls into 3 primary doctrinal categories[52]:

1. **Absolute Essentials of Islam** [Ma'lumat min al-Din bi al-Darurah]**-** any doctrine in this category is of the highest importance such that its denial takes one out of the fold of Islam and even doubt about it**.** These include the following matters:

    - Allah Most High is the only independent Knower of the Unseen. No one can have a single letter of knowledge of the unseen without His teaching

    - Allah Most High granted His Prophets and Messengers (Allah give them peace and blessings) abundant knowledge of the unseen and whoever denies this is in fact in denial of their prophethood itself

    - Our Messenger's (Allah give him peace and blessings) knowledge is greater than every creature's knowledge including Satan's

    - Knowledge as a Divine and unique attribute of Allah cannot be possessed by anyone including the Prophets as this would be *shirk* thus if anyone claims it for Satan, he commits *shirk*

    - Calling the knowledge of Zayd, Amr [i.e. any person] and that of every child, beast and insane person similar to that of the knowledge of the Messenger of Allah (Allah give him peace and blessings) is an explicit insult and plain infidelity

2. **Essentials of Sunni Doctrine** [Aqa'id Ahl al-Sunnah al-Ijma'iyah]- matters in this category are also crucial such that their denial takes one out of the Sunni fold and is thus heresy. This includes:

    - The righteous *awliya* are given some knowledge of the unseen through the Messengers (Allah give them peace and blessings). The Mu'tazilites who believed knowledge of the unseen is possessed by the Prophets and denied it from the righteous.

3. **Matters Upon Which Scholarly Disagreement is Permissible** [Masa'il Mukhtalafah Inda Ahl al-Sunnah]- Such that disagreement with evidence is allowed and belief in either of the views does not take one out of the Sunni fold. This includes the subsequent matters:

    - Our Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) was given knowledge of the final hour
    - Our Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) was given knowledge of all five unseen matters without exception

[52] Khaalis al-I'tiqaad in Fatawa Rizwiyyah, vol. 29 p. 411-483. See page 15 for details about this work.

- Our Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) possessed knowledge of the reality of the soul
- Our Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) was granted knowledge of the ambiguous (*mutashabihat*) verses in the Qur'an
- Our Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) was granted full knowledge contained in the Sacred Tablet, from the first day of creation to the last and much more which exceeds the events of the day of judgment and includes knowledge of all five unseen matters and the final hour as they are inscribed on the Tablet

Sunni scholarship has been in disagreement about these issues. If a Sunni scholar disagrees on these, he cannot be considered a transgressor (fasiq) let alone be called a deviant (mubtadi) or an infidel (kafir) as long as he believes in the doctrines elaborated in the Absolute Essentials of Islam and Essentials of Sunni Doctrine above. In *Shaq al-Jayb an Haq al-Gayb*, Ashraf Ali Thanawi notes that knowledge of the final hour and of all events till the day of judgment are matters in which there is scholarly disagreement but thereafter says "it does not extend beyond the boundary of innovation"[53] and inaccurately claims that the reports establishing knowledge of these matters are "unfounded" (gayr thabitah) and "short from fulfilling the purpose" (gayr kafiyah fi al-dilalah)[54]. Imam Ahmad Raza proved such vast knowledge for the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) from a single verse of the Qur'an above that is decisive in its apparent meaning. Imam Kattani, in fact, whilst supporting the general proof texts on the vast knowledge that includes the knowledge of every event till the last day and its exact time asserted (Jala al-Qulub vol. 1, p. 201) that "this is the accurate view about which no fair person can have doubt, and none other than someone laggard and deliberately oblivious shall disagree after having read its evidences in this *risalah*" clearly stating that the evidences were not only ample but also unchallengeable.

Pointing to why there were differences among the scholars concerning the scope of Prophetic Knowledge, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan mentioned that proofs for the knowledge of the unseen were either taken as evidence in their general and unrestricted meaning (umum), and this was how the people of tasawwuf (ahl al-batin) understood them, or that they were specified and restricted, and this is how the scholars of the outward sciences (ahl al-zahir) understood them (may Allah have mercy on them all). Thus the people of tasawwuf uphold the Prophetic Knowledge encompasses all five abovementioned matters whereas the scholars of the outward sciences disagreed with them. The reader must notice that the nature of the difference in the schools of the Subcontinent varies from the difference among the Arab scholars I mentioned earlier. Imam Kattani highlighted (see p. 6 above),

> a) None of the Sunni scholars ever disagreed on the matter that the Beloved Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) possessed knowledge of the unseen
>
> b) All of them agreed that the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) was the most knowledgeable individual in creation
>
> c) All of them honoured Prophetic Knowledge.

In the Indian Subcontinent, however, Rasheed Gangohi and Khaleel Ambethwi claimed it was *shirk* to claim the Noble Prophet (Allah gives him peace and blessings) had all-encompassing

[53] This devastating comment implies that all those scholars and men of tasawwuf that Imam Kattani mentions in Jala al-Qulub to hold view five (see p. 6-7 above) and Imam Ahmad Raza names by number in Khaalis al-I'tiqaad are innovators and out of the Sunnifold! This fatwa of innovation is in addition to his kufr fatwa shown above on p. 21 [Updated 02/07/2011].

[54] In Bawadir al-Nawadir, p. 750. Lahore: Idarah Islamiyat, 1985.

knowledge of the worldly sphere, arguing Satan had such knowledge and was therefore more knowledgeable and that his knowledge was proven from textual evidence unlike the Prophet's knowledge. They also stated, in a disparaging manner, the Beloved Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) did not know his own ultimate fate and was not aware of what was behind the wall aiming to show that vastness could not be proven when his knowledge was so little and confined that it did not extend beyond the wall. Rasheed Gangohi followed in Ismail Dihlawi's footsteps and claimed that knowledge of the unseen could not be claimed for Prophets and he lied saying every scholar agreed on this. Ashraf Ali Thanawi not only denied the excellence of the Noble Prophet's knowledge (Allah gives him peace and blessings) but also compared it to lowly creatures. Ismail Dihlawi, going a step further, claimed that believing knowledge of the unseen was *granted* to Prophet's such that they did not possess it independently was also *shirk*- hence charged the entire ummah, including the great Imams, with a devastating fatwa!

Named Deobandi scholars thus violated the consensus of Muslim scholars which Imam Kattani mentioned in Jala al-Qulub and insulted the Messenger of Allah (may Allah give him peace and blessings) by comparing his knowledge to animals and belittling it before Satans. These passages from Baraheen-e-Qatiah and Hifz al-Iman are explicit in their meanings and context and even the Muhannad of Khaleel Ambethwi, that attempts to defend these notorious passages, does not present their Arabic translation as they are in the original books. Any reader who understands the blasphemous texts can clearly see this whilst comparing them. The Muhannad clearly distorts the texts and denies the clear meanings saying that Satan was never described more knowledgeable than the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) and then issued a fatwa of kufr against himself saying it was kufr to say such a thing! It also conceals the fact that Rasheed Gangohi and Ismail Dihlawi denied knowledge of the unseen from the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) considering it shirk to believe in it and denies Ashraf Ali Thanawi comparing the Prophetic Knowledge to that of lowly creatures calling such comparison kufr! Pointing to Muhannad's gross deceit, Shaykh Gibril Haddad commented in the footnotes of Albani & His Friends (2004: p. 145),

> "Yet in al-Muhannad, the same author al-Saharanfuri [Khaleel Ambethwi] states (p. 38) that no creature ever received what the Prophet [Allah give him peace and blessings] has received in the knowledge of the first and the last, whether angel brought-near our Prophet-Messenger...These flip flops were examined by Na'im al-Din Moradabadi (d. 1367) in al-Tahqiqat li-Daf all-Talbisat (Lahore)"

Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim Keller, in his article *Iman, Kufr and Takfir,* also confirmed that Khaleel Ambethwi was "disingenuous" with evidences at this point of discussion in Baraheen-e-Qati'ah and confirmed that the authors of Baraheen claimed Satan's knowledge was greater than the Noble Prophet's (Allah give him peace and blessings)! The latter also confirmed that Thanawi's passage contains an "ugly comparison" all of which the Muhannad utterly denies. I quoted the last two sources for neutral readers in order to point that the Muhannad is a dismissive and deceitful text carefully crafted by Khaleel Ambethwi to mislead readers regarding the controversial statements of the elite Deobandi ulama.

In Khaalis al-I'tiqaad, Imam Ahmad Raza succinctly pointed that Deobandi disagreement in the subcontinent with the Ahl al-Sunnah was concerning matters belonging to the first category of issues (see p. 24 above). The careful reader shall notice that Deobandi views do not belong to the third category of doctrinal issues in which scholarly disagreement is allowed but in fact belong to the first category of issues in which even doubt is impermissible and is unbelief. Their passages violate consensus of Muslim scholarship which both Imam Kattani and Imam Ahmad Raza have shown above. When agreed upon matters are violated by individuals, it becomes a religious duty upon the ulama to rebuke them so masses are deterred from their fitna and this is

what the great Imams of the Ahl al-Sunnah of the Subcontinent did when they authored hundreds of fatwas against these writers many of which are published in *Anwar-e-Aftab-e-Sadaqat*[55] and *al-Sawarim al-Hindiyyah*[56], may Allah Most High reward them for their efforts.

Mufti Ahmad al-Barzanji's View Regarding Knowledge of the Unseen

Mufti Barzanji, the grand Shafii Mufti of Madinah, had written a work titled Gayat al-Ma'mul arguing that the Prophet's (Allah give him peace and blessings) knowledge of the unseen did not include all the five matters and things of this kind and he claimed the generality of the proof-texts on knowledge of the unseen was restricted by other texts. We have shown above, quoting Imam Kattani and Imam Ahmad Raza, this was the view of numerous fuqaha and scholars of hadith. Mufti Barzanji and his students therefore disagreed with Imam Ahmad Raza Khan on the details of the unseen and hence they did not endorse his work when other great Muftis had signed it since the latter had supported the view of the people of tasawwuf, that which is identified as view five in Imam Kattanis categorisation. As we have noted above, Sunni scholarship has generally been in disagreement whether all the five matters are included or not in the Prophetic Knowledge so their disagreement does not undermine the work of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan nor does it suggest that he is devious in his belief. Disagreement in this particular matter does not take one out of the Sunni fold (see p. 24 above). Major scholars of the Hijaz and wider Arab world, on the other hand, *did* endorse the work of the great Imam agreeing that every word in it reflected the truth and showed the author was not an ordinary scholar but a leader among the religious scholars, a genius and huge Mufti of the era[57]. Eighty one (81) endorsements to al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah have been discovered so far each which comments on the contents of the work, not a collection of mere signatures. Imam Kattani belonged to the group of ulama that held the Prophetic Knowledge encompassed all the five matters like Imam Ahmad Raza Khan and also disagreed with Mufti Barzanji. Imam Kattani wrote Jala al-Qulub during the scholarly controversy concerning the scope of the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen in the Hijaz. He himself pointed at the beginning and end of his text that he wrote this work due to the conflicting views among the ulama (p. 34) and it is noteworthy that he resided in the Hijaz for 8 years between 1328-1336H when *al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah* was circulating among scholars and its several endorsements were being written and when the controversy was alive and pertinent in the Hijaz.

Unfortunately, Mufti Barzanji's work was manipulated by Imam Ahmad Raza's opponents, some Deobandis, who took it to India and published it after altering the text. The published text not only uses coarse language unlikely to have emanated from an honourable shareef and responsible Mufti regarding a matter in which scholarly disagreement is permissible, but also claims that Imam Ahmad Raza held Allah's and His Prophet's (Allah give him peace and blessings) knowledge was equal which is a clear lie inserted into the text. It was in response to this gross lie and rumour that the Hijazi ulama authored endorsements to al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah in 1328H and thereafter, five years after the book was written after the author

[55] This work was expertly written by Shaykh Fazl-e-Ahmad, a Naqshbandi Sufi scholar who hailed from Ludhiana (India), in 1338 H (published by Kareemi Press, Lahore). It is considered the first most comprehensive critical encyclopaedia of the innovative views held by scholars at Deoband that emerged from a scholar who had no student or mureed affiliations with Imam Ahmad Rida Khan of Bareilly. He in fact solicited support from Shaykhs of the Naqshbandi Mujaddidi order to show that there was agreement between the people of tasawwuf that Deobandis had deviated from the Sunni creed. This work is therefore of significant importance to the reader on Deobandi-Barelwi history seeking non-Barelwi primary sources. It was endorsed by more than forty Muftis and scholars of the time.

[56] Shaykh Hashmat Ali Lackhnouwi collected more than 350 fatwas of infidelity from the entire Indian Subcontinent on the mentioned Deobandi writers in al-Sawarim al-Hindiyyah in 1345H. The majority of these Muftis are not students or mureeds of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan.

[57] See praise for the author in al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah, pp. 137-239. Lahore: Mu'assassah Rida, 2001.

returned to India, vindicating him and his work from such false allegations. The endorsements are self-explanatory in this regards. Their originals are held in the special collections of the ulama and I was honoured to edit and publish the Damascence endorsements of that period for the first time in 2006. The readers must note that the whereabouts of the original manuscript of Gayat al-Ma'mul is unknown. All that is circulating is an adulterated print copy attributed the Mufti (may Allah have mercy on him) which was neither published by himself nor by his students but by Indians who would seize any opportunity to vilify the great Imam of Bareilly at home after his scholarship and fatwas were received with open hearts in the Hijaz[58]. Hence, there is no reliable source to this particular work. During my study of manuscripts in the Haram Library of Madinah, I discovered a manuscript of Mufti Barzanji on this very topic named *Risalah fi al-Ilm al-Nabawi* in the handwriting of his student Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Tarablusi. It gives an accurate representation of Mufti Barzanji's view concerning knowledge of the unseen, free of false allegations against Imam Ahmad Raza Khan and clearly states that scholars who differ on the five unseen matters and matters of this kind are undeserving of a charge of innovation, far less *kufr*! In his own words:

فإن قلت قد قال بعض المتأخرين ممن قرب عصره أن علمه صلى الله عليه وسلم محيط بجميع المعلومات حتى الخمس منهم العلامة الباجوري في حاشيته على سلم المنطق المنظوم (إلى أن قال) فما تقول في هؤلاء؟ فالجواب الذي أقوله أن هذا القول خلاف التحقيق ودعوى بلا دليل (إلى أن قال) ومع هذا لا يلزم من قولهم المذكور كفر ولا بدعة لأنه مبني منهم على تأويل الأيات والأحاديث. اهـ باختصار

Imam Ahmad Raza offered the most definitive replies to Gayat al-Ma'mul in a large work in Arabic, titled Inba al-Hay spread over approximately four hundred and fifty pages. He gave answers to all of the texts the latter used to specify the general proofs on Prophetic Knowledge. He illustrated those scholars who claimed restriction in the general proofs actually established generality unknowingly. In a single place of the book, Imam Ahmad Raza gives five groundbreaking replies to all fourteen evidences presented in the aforementioned work on the restriction of general texts and claims that these answers were sufficient in replying to every proof against the view of the people of tasawwuf (on p. 251). He then analyses all fourteen proofs separately, from p. 249 to 376, demonstrating not only his masterful command in tafsir, but also his awareness of a large hadith textual corpus, its scholarly commentaries and a phenomenal grasp on *munazarah*, use of logic and an enormous understanding of kalam. At the end of this impressive work, he dedicates a section replying to all remaining objections raised by opponents in India, from verses of the Qur'an and hadiths starting from p. 369 to p. 446.[59]

Khatimah: **Conclusions**

Imam Kattani and Imam Ahmad Raza pioneered in the study of the knowledge of the unseen of the Beloved Prophet of Allah (may Allah give him peace and blessings). They both produced some of the finest research on this matter. Their significant contributions suggest that this subject not only appealed to their affectionate relation with the Messenger of Allah (may Allah give him peace and blessings) but also that they felt the pressing need to solve the textual anomalies regarding a matter which had been divisive and the cause of scholarly discord, both in the Arab world as well as the Indian Subcontinent. They did not offer a linear study to the

[58] Such that the Muftis signed his Husaam al-Haramain against the Deobandi insults, presented him their scholarly questions as a result of which he authored "Kifl al-Faqih al-Fahim" and over thirty scholars took Ijazah from him in the religious sciences including major-heads of time who were his father's age that are collated in al-Ijaazaat al-Mateenah.

[59] It would therefore be intellectually wrong to question Imam Ahmad Raza's position and use of evidence without reading this work that has offered all the replies to Deobandi objections (in Arabic) [updated 02/07/2011].

proof texts for and against the matter but gave a microscopic all-inclusive analysis to the texts contextualising each one and explaining it in line with scholarly commentaries and matters agreed upon. Imam Kattani's categorisation of the scholarly views into five is impressive which illustrates the fine differences among the scholars as well as his analysis that every proof on the matter belongs to three primary categories. Imam Ahmad Raza's contributions are matchless in their own respect. He added to the scholarly literature a rich substance that dealt with the classification of knowledge, exclusive use of Qur'anic evidence to prove vast Prophetic Knowledge and methodological replies to the opponent's arguments and contextualisation of evidences. Imam Ahmad Raza's writings on this matter were motivated directly by his opponents that had made every argument to disprove knowledge of the unseen from the Noble Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings). Imam Ahmad Raza's works supported the doctrine of the Ahl al-Sunnah and were based upon the mainstream Sunni interpretation of proof-texts as the reader of his works shall notice.

The Deobandis do not seem to have a consistent and coherent view on this matter. Ashraf Ali Thanawi for example placed more focus on denying all-encompassing (kull) knowledge from the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) in Hifz al-Iman[60] whilst Rasheed Gangohi and his student Khaleel Ambethwi focused on denying even details of partial knowledge like knowledge of what was behind the wall and in fact decisive (qat'i) partial knowledge like the Prophet's ultimate fate. Deobandi writings share a common ground that is they all demean Prophetic Knowledge such that Thanawi restricted excellence and virtue (fadilah) in all-encompassing knowledge alone and for this reason compared the Prophet's (Allah give him peace and blessings) knowledge with the knowledge of lowly creatures thinking there was no virtue in partial knowledge. The authors of Baraheen-e-Qati'ah, for example, considered Satan the cursed was more knowledgeable than the Noble Messenger. Imam Ahmad Raza states in al-Dawlah al-Makkaiyyah (p. 69) that his belief in the Prophet's *partial* knowledge is different to Thanawi's belief in *partial* knowledge because his concept of partial knowledge includes vast knowledge of all past and future events and all creatures whereas Thanawi's concept of partial knowledge is similar to the partial knowledge of lowly creatures! The claims of al-Muhannad in favour of vast Prophetic Knowledge are deceptive and confuse the general reader, who lacks knowledge of earlier Deobandi writings, about what elite Deobandi scholars really believed and stated.[61] Deobandi scholars issued and endorsed shirk fatwas on the entire Sunni scholarship which Imam Kattani noted concurred the Messenger of Allah (Allah give him peace and blessings) had vast knowledge of the unseen. It is evident to every just and critical reader that Deobandi writings fall well below the boundaries of correct adab and scholarly discourse - a point even Shaykh Nuh Ha Mim agreed to - and are not only heresy but also explicit *kufr*[62]. Scholars today claiming there is no major difference between Deobandi and Barelwi schools are simply mistaken. This paper highlights simply one example of a major difference between the two schools and if all of the doctrinal differences were collected, a couple of volumes would be required. Scholars who claim Deobandis never made takfir of any Sunni are also simply wrong (see p. 21 onwards).

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly and Imam Muhammad ibn Ja'far al-Kattani of Morocco, both pioneers and specialists on the issue of the knowledge of the unseen, held the same view

[60] In Shaq al-Jayb (Bawadir al-Nawadir, p. 752), he asserted that the Prophet (Allah give him peace and blessings) was the most learned among creation about unseen matters. Note this inconsistency with the blasphemous comments in Hifz al-Iman [Updated: 02/07/2011].

[61] Note that al-Muhannad came about in 1325H several years after the blasphemous writings of Hifz al-Iman (d. 1319H) and Baraheen-e-Qati'ah (d. 1304H) were published.

[62] For the legal analysis of their statements being *kufr*, see my two of my articles titled: 'Explaining the Correct Methodology of Subki in Takfir' and 'A Rejoinder on Contextualizing the Hadiths Quoted by Shaykh Nuh in his Iman, Kufr and Takfir' on www.scholarsink.wordpress.com.

regarding the vastness of Prophetic Knowledge. They both held the view of the majority of the people of tasawwuf and awliya, in line with the generality and outward unrestricted nature of the proof texts (umum) that the Beloved Prophet of Allah (may Allah give him peace and blessings) had vast knowledge of creation such that it encompassed everything in the heavens and the earths from the beginning of creation to the end including all the five unseen matters. Interestingly, according to Imam Kattani's son, Muhammad al-Zamzami, his father accompanied Imam Ahmad Raza in Madinah after Hajj and the latter eagerly offered to publish his Jala al-Qulub from Bareilly (India) and that upon completion he would send five hundred copies to him in Fez but Imam al-Kattani apologised as the work was still incomplete. Muhammad al-Zamzami also asserted that Imam Kattani penned an endorsement to Imam Ahmad Raza's al-Dawlah al-Makkiyyah though it is yet to be discovered among the special collections in India and Pakistan.[63]

Mufti Ahmad al-Barzanji of Madinah and several of his students held the view that Prophetic Knowledge did not encompass the five unseen matters and the reality of soul in line with the view of the majority of the scholars of Hadith and *ahl al-zahir*. We have shown above through the doctrinal framework given by Imam Ahmad Raza that such *aqidah* differences differ from those held by the Deobandi scholars. Religious scholars were allowed to disagree about third-category aqidah issues but not in matters agreed upon by all Sunni scholars or in matters that are essentials of faith (see p. 24). Mufti Ahmad al-Barzanji considered the Deobandi passages on the Prophetic Knowledge clear insults and infidelity in his excellent endorsement to *Husam al-Haramain* of Imam Ahmad Raza. He in fact confirmed his fatwa of kufr on those passages in Gayat al-Ma'mul, which despite being altered and having a murky publication history, still contains this confirmation in the opening! The false doctrine that Allah's and His Messenger's knowledge (Allah give him peace and blessings) being equal attributed to Imam Ahmad Raza is a clear sign of forgery in the Gayat al-Ma'mul. Imam Ahmad Raza highlighted several differences between Divine Knowledge and Prophetic Knowledge in numerous works giving some of the most definitive and convincing arguments (see p. 12 onwards) that are yet to be appreciated by intelligent readers.

May Allah Most High keep us steadfast on the way of the Ahl al-Sunnah, elevate us in knowledge and taqwa and protect us and our offspring from the discord of deviation and darkness of the misguided sects, ameen.

Authored by: Mohammad Monawwar Ateeq

18th Rajab 1432H (June 2011)

Birmingham, U.K.

[63] See: Muhammad al-Zamzami al-Kattani's *Rihlataan-ilal-Hind* pp. 256-257 in al-Dirasaat al-Islamiyah, Issue 3, vol. 35, Majma al-Buhuth al-Islamiyah; Islamabad University, 2000.