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A New Pablik*: Abdul Halim Sharar, volunteerism, and the Anjuman-e Dar-us-Salam in late nineteenth-century India**

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Abstract

In the second half of the nineteenth century an increasing number of Indians entered the world of volunteerism and public activism. One such individual was the prolific Urdu writer Abdul Halim Sharar (1860–1926), who served as the secretary for a short-lived voluntary association, the Anjuman-e Dar-us-Salam, during the late 1880s in Lucknow, India. Using readers' letters as printed in Sharar's widely circulating monthly periodical, *Dil Gudāz*, this article seeks to understand the reasons behind the increasing role of volunteerism as part and parcel of a modern *sharīf* Muslim identity in the post-1857 period. Having adopted the role of a community activist, Sharar began using his periodical, soon after its inception, to mobilize and recruit his readers to participate in what he described as a passionate movement sweeping through the '*Islami pablik*'. Both rhetorical and descriptive, such an idea provided hope for a divided and struggling community to overcome the divisions that were central to their many challenges in a post-1857 world. Through the study of the vicissitudes and challenges faced by Sharar and his fellow activists, this article underscores the ways in which public activism and volunteerism simultaneously represented the possibility for Muslims to use their own resources to bring about real social and political change, and also reminded them of their shortcomings and the limits of an informal activism. This article seeks to show that ultimately, even such 'failed' and ephemeral attempts were foundational for more effective mass mobilization efforts in the following decades and into the twentieth century.

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Introduction

When Lucknow's last nawab, Wajid Ali Shah (r. 1847–1856), lost his throne and faced self-imposed exile in Calcutta, he was separated from more than just his throne and kingdom; he left behind one of his favorite wives, Zinat Begum, otherwise known as Mumtaz Jahan or Iklil-e Mahal ('crown of the palace'). During his early years in exile, he wrote a series of poetic, emotional love letters that not only expressed yearning for his beloved, but also encapsulated his inner turmoil and longing for all he had lost. To mitigate the former nawab's state of sorrow and frustration, his secretary had copies of these letters bound into an illuminated volume that, in moments of grief, could uplift the king's heart by validating his loss and providing the nostalgic comfort of cherished memories.[1] These letters and their repurposed potential for agency are an apt metaphor for both the sense of loss and the catalytic capacity of that longing that *sharīf* Muslims and Hindus in north India experienced in the wake of 1857.[2]

The following decades were full of attempts by Indians to navigate the changing political, social, and cultural landscapes. The British sought out alliances with elites who could act as intermediaries between them and the larger Indian population. Indians could not form their own government during this period, but they could form associations, set out agendas, and press the government for the rights they believed were due them.[3] Thus, a proliferation of voluntary associations sprang up in the second half of the nineteenth century with many efforts focused on education. From Lucknow's first voluntary society, the Jalsah-e Tahzib (established 1868; hereafter the Jalsah), to the Aligarh Scientific Society (established 1864), most similar associations were civilizing projects 'based on notions

[1] London, British Library, Or. 5288, fol. 79.

[2] While technically *sharīf* was a term used to describe Muslims who could trace their lineage to Arabia, in the latter half of the nineteenth century it came to connote a more generic sense of belonging to a particular respectable cultural milieu. I use this category of *sharīf* in a similar manner that Marshall Hodgson used the term 'Islamicate' to refer to a broader cultural world that was not defined by religious tenets but rather was characterized by a shared culture spanning the Muslim world. Thus, in this context, Urdu-speaking Hindus and Muslims could both participate in a shared *sharīf* cultural world.

[3] The Indian Association, established in 1876, was one major factor in the increased political activity in the country. See Sudhir Chandra, 'Subjects' Citizenship Dream: Notes on the Nineteenth Century', in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld (eds), *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), pp. 117–120.

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of individual morality and merit, civic participation, public service, and social reform'.[4] While most early voluntary associations were dominated by Indians versed in colonial collaboration and involved British officials as patrons or even presidents, this began to change in the latter part of the nineteenth century, raising fresh challenges. For such independent endeavours to achieve sustainability, they would need to find a way to garner support. The rapid rise and fall of voluntary associations at this period demonstrates the challenge this entailed.[5]

The involvement of the Urdu writer Abdul Halim Sharar (1860–1926) as secretary of the short-lived voluntary association, the Anjuman-e Dar-us-Salam (established *circa* 1888; hereafter Dar-us-Salam), provides a particularly prescient example of the possibilities and limits of a public-based activism which could appeal to a broad range of Muslims from various classes—conceived of for the first time as the Islamic public. The account detailed in the following pages is a story of not only Sharar's foray into the world of public activism and volunteerism, but also of Dar-us-Salam and the connected individuals whose voices and responses were recorded in Sharar's monthly periodical, *Dil Gudāz*. This article seeks to address several sets of questions. The first follows broadly in the vein of Ranajit Guha's work and those in his wake who have highlighted the value of recognizing what could be called the subalterns of history—the voices left out of dominant historical narratives, the fragments of history. Generally, the Muslim lower classes and their participation in projects of activism and volunteerism appear either as a threat to the more secular-minded and middle-class participants in voluntary associations, or represent, as in Sharar's case, the possibility for a truly public type of activism. The recognition of and desire for the participation of Muslims from all walks of life creates a space—at least rhetorically—for the equal participation of non-elites. While funding was key to the long-term success of movements during this period, the traditional scholarly focus on the 'successes'—organizations that left significant historical traces in the forms of educational institutions or long-running publications—has led to the neglect of a fundamental line of enquiry. How did those without significant resources provided by wealthy donors and colonial funding contribute to the wave of

[4] Ulrike Stark, 'Associational Culture and Civic Engagement in Colonial Lucknow: The Jalsah-e Tahzib', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 48, 1 (2011), p. 4.

[5] David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 82.

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volunteerism that swept through much of the subcontinent in the latter part of the nineteenth century? Did they truly contribute? In other words, as Anil Seal has written, if associations 'brought nineteenth-century India across the threshold of modern politics', was there a space, whether conceptual or real, for the participation of the *'ām* (public) as agents in their own right?[6] Or were they purely *sharīf* middle-class projects that used the idea of the *rifāh-e 'ām* ('public good') to support their own advancement as leaders of their community? In addition, what does the nature of gifts given in fundraising programmes tell us about the kind of project a particular association represented? In short, this article argues that the move to modern politics, as in Seal's formulation, was brought about not merely by the growth of 'successful' modern institutions, associations, and the corresponding practices of deliberative procedure,[7] but by the fairly non-modern circulation of the everyday: dishes, grains, candles, people knocking on doors.

The second set of concerns is motivated in part by a project of recovery. The dominant trend in the historiography of post-1857 Muslim north India has focused on revival and reform as the modus operandi—which gradually gave way to politicized religious identities towards the end of the nineteenth century, coalescing in 1906 with the formation of the All-India Muslim League. Collective decline (*zawāl*) and humiliation (*zillat*) often serve as the backdrop, while 1857 and 1947 form the beginning and end points. Educational institutions such as the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Farangi Mahal, and the Deoband Seminary along with figures such as Syed Ahmad Khan, Azad, Hali, Iqbal, Jinnah, and other prominent members of the community have been the dominant focus of this scholarship and have been used to map this in-between period. These institutions and figures serve as points on a historical map, each with its own web of connections. The superficial narrative of this period is that as Muslims grappled with a new historical environment and their loss of political power and prestige, they either aligned themselves with the British to promote the advancement of their community or focused their efforts on being better Muslims, with little desire to emulate or engage British models. While scholarship working within this narrative has added greatly to our knowledge of this period, it has often not been able

[6] Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism: Competition and Collaboration in the Later Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 194.

[7] Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, p. 80.

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to progress past it. Focusing on the same figures and their writings, colonial sources, and institutions to write and rewrite the history of this late period can be a helpful exercise and surely continues to add variety in interpretation, but it fails to open up new archives and rests content with the map as it stands. This article, through its focus on Sharar's involvement as the secretary of the previously unstudied voluntary association Dar-us-Salam, is in part an attempt to fill in that map and seeks to demonstrate that opening up these archives is a crucial part of the process of remapping the period.

Having organized what was likely the largest political gathering of Muslims in Lucknow since the Insurrection of 1857, Dar-us-Salam was tremendously successful for a short time harnessing anti-Congress sympathies, a perceived communal attack, and educational concerns to mobilize Muslims for political and social causes.[8] Philanthropy, education, activism, literature, and politics coalesced in Sharar's articulation of the group's goal. Yet, as Lelyveld notes, most voluntary associations in earlier decades rose with a flurry and quickly petered out.[9] Dar-us-Salam was no exception and also quickly faded into seeming nonexistence. If this had been the case since the 1860s, why did Indians continue to exert their efforts towards projects that seemed to have such a high rate of failure? This article suggests that Dar-us-Salam provided a much-desired avenue for the expression of activism among Muslims from different classes. Certainly, such associations were always at a serious disadvantage due to the lack of resources and their haphazard nature. Yet despite these disadvantages, even the short-lived experiences of such associations provided significant learning experiences and served as stepping stones for more effective mass mobilization efforts in the following decades. Such moments in time, pregnant with hope and possibility, pointed to roads that had yet to be travelled.

In contrast to the Jalsah, Dar-us-Salam never received colonial patronage, raised significantly less funds, and left no institutions in its wake. While the Jalsah, the Aligarh Scientific Society,[10] the

[8] *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in the North-Western Provinces, Oudh, Central Provinces, Central India, and Rajputana*, Received up to 15 May 1888 (Allahabad: N.-W.P. and Oudh Government Press, 1888–1889), p. 308, hereafter *SVN*.

[9] Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, p. 82.

[10] According to Hali, the Scientific Society was formed in 1863 while Sayyid Ahmad Khan was stationed in Ghazipur. It moved to Aligarh in 1864 along with Khan. See Altaf Husain Hali, *Hayāt-e Javaid* (New Delhi: National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, 1999, reprint), p. 124. David Lelyveld provides different dates.

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Anjuman-e Punjab of Lahore (established 1865), the Benares Institute (established 1861), and the Delhi Society (established 1865) were fairly well documented, the shorter-lived Dar-us-Salam left few historical traces. Without the association's records or detailed descriptions within colonial or other secondary sources, I have relied primarily on descriptions of the organization recorded in Sharar's Urdu-language monthly periodical, *Dil Gudāz*.[11] Thus, while we cannot be certain of an exact beginning or end date for the organization, we have significant historical traces left by Sharar and his readers that, between 1888 and 1889, represent some of the hopes and dreams of numerous Muslims spread throughout north India. After a promising beginning, the work of Dar-us-Salam quickly and unexpectedly imploded. According to Sharar, this outcome was a result of pressure from the '*mażhabī* '*ulemā*' ('sectarian religious scholars') and his own journal's disorganization.[12] Dar-us-Salam appears to have been a failure, yet it is a story that deserves a telling. This is not only to restore agency to the individuals who promoted voluntary action by naming them, or to rescue individuals from the 'anonymity of the broad social categories of caste, class and community', but also to help us reconceptualize the categories by which we understand the social construction of activism and volunteerism in late colonial India.[13] While Sanjay Joshi's articulation of the self-fashioning of a middle class in colonial Lucknow can be helpful in many instances, the example of Dar-us-Salam highlights the need to expand the frameworks we use to understand public engagements by groups and individuals in this period.[14]

According to him the Scientific Society was formed in 1864 and moved in 1865 to Aligarh along with Khan; see his unpublished paper prepared for a conference on 'Cultural Institutions, Knowledge Arenas, Post-1947: Revisiting the Roles of Maulana Azad', Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, 21–23 March, 2013, 'Sir Sayyid, Maulana Azad and the Uses of Urdu', p. 8. Francis Robinson provides different dates again. He writes that the Society was formed in 1864 in Ghazipur and moved with Khan to Aligarh when he settled there in April 1864. See Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims, 1860–1923*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 93. In 1866 a building known as the Aligarh Institute was erected and its journal, the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, began publication.

[11] Khursheed Kamal Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India, 1850–1947: A Compendium of Basic Information on Political, Social, Religious, Cultural and Educational Organizations Active in Pre-partition India* (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992), p. 481.

[12] 'Abdul Halim Sharar, 'Anjuman-e Dār-us-Salām Lucknow', *Dil Gudāz* (March 1889), p. 13–14.

[13] Stark, 'Associational Culture', p. 31.

[14] Sanjay Joshi, *Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 2. A 'project of self-fashioning' implies

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The structure of the following pages is fairly straightforward. I will first focus on Sharar and the circumstances that led to his role in Dar-us-Salam. I will then examine emerging conceptions of publics in this period, the rise of a middle class, civil society, and ideas of the public good. I will then give an account of Dar-us-Salam during 1888 and 1889, focusing on fundraising, the 'everyday', collaboration, reader responses, and a large political gathering in Lucknow in 1888. Throughout, I will comment on the role of activism and volunteerism for the period's growing middle class and offer final reflections on what their aspirations and experiences can tell us about life at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century—as well as about our practice as scholars and our attempts to remap the period.

Abdul Halim Sharar and *Dil Gudāz*

The young Sharar first entered the world of print with the help of many others—and perhaps partly as a result of his own indiscretions. Having spent some of his youth in Wajid Ali Shah's exiled court in Matiya Burj, Sharar grew up with reminders of the past glories of Muslim rule in South Asia as well as the present state of degradation. When Sharar's father, religious scholar Tafazzul Hussain Khan, heard of the teenager's proclivity for the princely lifestyle involving the pursuit of pleasure, he sent his son back to Lucknow. There, most likely due to his father's efforts, Sharar spent most of his time with religious scholars. Shortly after marrying his first cousin in 1879, Sharar disappeared from his home to Delhi where he pursued the study of *hadith* (the sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad) with Abdul Hai. Two-and-a-half years later, he returned to Lucknow only to quickly depart to Hardoi where his father had found employment as a clerk under the lawyer Pandit Bashan Narayan. After only a few days in Hardoi Sharar, too, found employment, teaching Arabic to Syed 'Ali Reza's son, Syed Muhammad Reza, who later became a judge at the Chief Court in Lucknow. Sharar moved into the family's home and earned ten rupees a month in addition to food. However,

a greater level of control than seems to be accurate. While this description is more helpful than seeing class as a flat sociological fact, I want to draw attention to the ways in which this project had the auxiliary effect of necessarily excluding some. That is to say, it is impossible to fashion oneself as civilized without creating a less civilized 'other'.

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at the beginning of 1882 when news of Sharar's involvement with a prostitute in Hardoi reached his father, he was sent back to Lucknow.[15] For the next six months, Sharar met regularly with the Farsi scholar and Urdu essayist Munshi Ahmad 'Ali Kasmandavi, whose articles appeared in *Avadh Punch*. It was Kasmandavi's influence that first sparked Sharar's interest in writing newspaper columns and it was he who chose Abdul Halim's nom de plume, Sharar ('spark'). After a short stint working for the Naval Kishore Press, Sharar began writing, editing, and printing for *Payām-e Yār*, a journal edited by his friend Munshi Niṡār Hussain. Through Hussain's encouragement Sharar embarked on what he considered to be his first novel, *Dilchasp*. The first edition sold out quickly and was soon on its second printing.

Despite the positive response to his writing, Sharar became discouraged at the difficulty in finding adequate compensation for his work. Thus, in late 1886 Bashir ul Din, son of 'Deputy' Nażīr Aḥmad, encouraged Sharar to start a monthly journal written in the style of *Dilchasp*. When Sharar expressed doubt that anyone would subscribe, Bashir paid five rupees for five subscribers, the names of whom he provided. With those five rupees, Sharar advertised in *Payam-e Yar* for his new monthly periodical *Dil Gudāz*, and within 15 days 30–40 requests arrived, each with the annual one-rupee subscription fee. Three to four months later, *Dil Gudāz*'s circulation had risen to more than one thousand[16] and eventually hovered around two thousand monthly subscribers for many years during its publication, making it one of the most widely circulating periodicals during the period.

From the very first issue, it was clear that Sharar desired his publication to engage his audience on a personal level. Appealing to the widespread discontent among Muslims and their perceived position in local society and the broader world, Sharar concluded his first issue with an appeal to his readers, the raisa of Bhopal, and the nawab of Rampur to contribute resources and manpower to the building of a mosque in London and the spread of Islam in Europe.[17] In one of

[15] 'Abdul Ḥālīm Sharar, 'Maulānā Sharar Marḥum Kī Ḳhūd Navisht Sawānih 'Umrī 'Āp Baitī'', *Dil Gudāz* (January 1934), p. 3.

[16] Sharar, 'Maulānā Sharar Marḥum Kī Ḳhūd Navisht Sawānih 'Umrī 'Āp Baitī', p. 56–57. To give a sense of the scale for this period, the circulation numbers of Naval Kishore's famous *Awadh Akhbar* never reached one thousand.

[17] 'Abdul Halim Sharar, 'London meñ Ḳhāne-e Ḳhudā', *Dil Gudāz* (January 1887), pp. 15–16.

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his most articulate explanations of the purpose of his writings Sharar wrote as follows:

> The first goal is to show the past glories of our *qaum* ['community'] and to generate a fresh fervor in the burdened hearts of today so that their uproar will rise—they will desire to climb the stairs of progress and move to action. And then, with resolve, they should try to surpass other communities ['*qaumoñ*']. Secondly, the goal is to inform the youth of their vices and negligence and show the extent of harm caused by the spread of divisions, worthless ignorance, and apathy for our religious brothers. If God grants me success in both these things, then I will be able to say that I accomplished something.[18]

With such explicit aims, it is not surprising that Sharar had already turned his attention to the work of Dar-us-Salam, the voluntary association in which he served as secretary. In February of 1888, he began writing about both Dar-us-Salam and the Muhammadan National Volunteer Fund and included readers' letters. There would be no other series of articles in all the years of the journal's life that would stir up such excitement among his readers. Sharar went on to use *Dil Gudāz* to promote Dar-us-Salam's agenda and raise resources to provide education for youth who had not been given such opportunity.

There are limited sources that cite Dar-us-Salam outside of Sharar's articles. A few nineteenth-century publications cite Dar-us-Salam as the organizers of a gathering of approximately 20,000 people in Qaisarbagh. There is also a brief entry in K. K. Aziz's *Public Life in Muslim India, 1850–1947*, which appears to be the only secondary source to mention the existence of Dar-us-Salam. Sharar's articles are therefore unique in providing a historically rich glimpse into the life of Dar-us-Salam during his tenure as its secretary. Due to this paucity, this article is less interested in providing a biographical sketch of Dar-us-Salam than in coming to terms with the role of Dar-us-Salam in its context and understanding the appeal of volunteerism and collective activism to a growing middle class. What was it that drew Sharar's readers and others into the workings of Dar-us-Salam? These social and political movements thrived from a growing desire among an emergent middle class for greater social capital. This capital came from membership in a *sharīf* Islamicate milieu and was built on networks of writers, friends, relatives, scholars, and neighbours, but voluntary associations offered an additional

[18] 'Abdul Ḥālīm Sharar, 'Hamārā Jadīd Nāvil', *Dil Gudāz* (January 1889), p. 14.

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means to expand one's reach. And while the ranks of the lower classes were excluded from membership, anyone could theoretically enter those circles through various means, particularly education. Yet anxiety surfaced among the middle class at the thought of the lower classes attaining positions of authority through education. Sharar's focus on educating the poor and his desire to include the *'ām* ('public' or 'commoners') as active participants in Dar-us-Salam was in part motivated by a desire to numerically increase the Muslim middle class and thus its influence. But he was also inspired by an idealistic understanding of the Muslim community as one, united in faith.

Years later in 1910 Sharar addressed this conflict directly in an article on *tablīġh* (proselytization). He bemoaned the Muslims' lack of success in India relative to Africa and blamed such failures on their adoption of a caste system, which resulted in the thinking that no 'good' Muslim would give his daughter in marriage to a convert. He encouraged readers to tell potential converts that they would become one with the community of Muslims upon conversion: 'We will give our daughters to you and you will give yours to us.'[19] In effect, he argued that class, caste, or religious background should not prevent any members of the faith community from full membership in all areas of social life. These attempts to dispense with class and caste divisions from within the community did not always work in practice, but were nevertheless present.[20] Sharar's ideal of a Muslim society not separated by caste or other divisions speaks to strains of thinking that held tremendous appeal to the many Muslims who believed disunity was one of the primary reasons for their degraded state in the modern world. However, such ideas of cross-class unity stood in stark contrast with the ideals of traditional elites who, having found partnership with the British to be advantageous, were typically anxious to secure the ranks and prevent any personal loss of power and prestige.

Several recent scholarly studies have highlighted the rise of printing presses in India in the second half of the nineteenth century and their

[19] 'Abdul Ḥālīm Sharar, 'Chand Muḳthaṣir Khalayat', *Dil Gudāz* (August 1910), pp. 23–24.

[20] Despite Sharar having created several uproars with his writings and being known as a divisive figure, it is important to recognize him as someone who strove to unite Muslims—not in the doctrinal arena, but in the broad religious, social, and political life of the community.

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correlation with the emergence of a middle class.[21] Joshi has examined how this emerging middle class was pulled in different directions. They hoped to portray 'themselves as enlightened representatives of public opinion, through which they sought to replace the nawabi paradigm of respectability in Lucknow'.[22] At the same time, as Joshi argues, this middle class felt it necessary to distinguish themselves from the lower orders of society, thus emphasizing the 'inherent inferiority of the lower classes'.[23] In this model, the distinction between those of the middle and lower classes was great, and was further reinforced by the middle class's focus on its own empowerment at the expense of those at the top and bottom of the ladder.[24] The sources Joshi has examined certainly support this thesis, and Ulrike Stark's recent work on the Jalsah-e Tahzib, Lucknow's first voluntary society, provides further support to such conceptions of a self-fashioning middle class. However Sharar's involvement with Dar-us-Salam presents the picture from a slightly different angle.

Sharar's hopes for widespread collaboration among Muslims drew heavily from Islamic notions of equality among members of the faith community. Sharar went out of his way to stress the inclusive nature of the organization and its aims. Those individuals Sharar put into the spotlight as examples of the widespread appeal of the group included those who were neither elites nor part of the middle class. When describing fundraising efforts in Allahabad and Pratabgarh, Sharar made the point that out of all the money collected, 'one or two *anna* and three *paise* were the most precious because a ten-year-old student, who after a long time had collected the *doanni* coin, intended as a gift, but then entrusted it to his fellow inhabitants of the land. And the two or three *paise* were given by a young man

[21] Priya Joshi, *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture, and the English Novel in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Joshi, *Fractured Modernity*; Christina Oesterheld, 'Entertainment and Reform: Urdu Narrative Genres in the Nineteenth Century', in Stuart H. Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (eds), *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004); Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2007).

[22] Joshi, *Fractured Modernity*, p. 21.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid, p. 23.

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of low standing.'[25] The next section will explore possible reasons for Sharar's focus on these small gifts of seemingly inconsequential individuals through a look at the broader context of social activism and developing ideas about the public, particularly those expressed by Sharar.

The *darbār* of the *pablik* and the Anjuman-e Dar-us-Salam

Class and caste served as tremendous obstacles to the cooperation of diverse groups of individuals, yet towards the end of the nineteenth century, the '*pablik*', which represented newfound horizontal affiliations, attained a strong rhetorical power in Urdu writings. The public as an ideal provided a conceptual framework for individuals from different classes to embark on collective projects. One of the most revealing usages of this form of the English word 'public' can be found in an article Sharar wrote in June of 1900 on blank verse poetry.[26] Believing other Urdu poems written in this form unsuccessful, Sharar composed a scene for a drama in blank verse in order 'to show it in its *aṣlī shān* ['true style'] so that those *ahl-e suḳhan* ['discerners of fine language'] who like it will also write such types of poems. Simple and *be takaluffī* ['without ostentation'], I will show complete poetry.'[27] He solicited readers' opinions on the poem, asking whether there was a need for such poetry and if it had the potential to gain popularity. He concluded the poem's preface with these words: '*Ab bakamāl adab pablik ke darbār meñ yih na'ī naẓm aur yih 'ajīb qism kā ḍrāmā pesh karte haiñ'* ('With great respect, I now present this new poetry and fascinating type of drama before the court of the public').[28]

While pre-colonial forms of traditional debate within the Indian 'ecumene' (or public sphere) continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, print also became an arena that allowed for

[25] The Urdu phrase used was *kam ḥaisīyat*, which could also be translated as 'little means'. Abdul Halim Sharar, 'Muhammadan National Volunteer Fund', *Dil Gudāz* (March 1888), p. 13. *Ikanni* was a one-*anna* coin, and *doanni* was a two-*anna* coin.

[26] The following mentions that Sharar's article was the first of its kind in Urdu to address blank verse poetry. Muḥammad Qamar Salīm, *Āshāriya-e Dilgudāz*, Vol. I (Mumbai: Qaumī Konsil, 2003), p. 86.

[27] 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, 'Blaink Vars yā Naẓ-e Ġhair Muqfā', *Dil Gudāz* (June 1900), p. 10.

[28] Ibid, p. 10.

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new affiliations to form.[29] Reading publics were linked through print technology and reading practices. Yet the public also understood itself through a shared sensibility: shifting but shared identities and an orientation to action.[30] Sharar's use of *pablik* coupled with *darbār* (court) drew from traditional usages associated with courtly customs and protocol. In the context of the court, the *darbār-e ḳhāṣ* or *diwān-e ‘ḳhāṣ* was the hall of private audience, whereas the *darbār-e ‘ām* was the public hall of audience. Sharar's usage represented the conceptual and rhetorical power that came to be associated with the idea of the *pablik*, distinct from traditional concepts of the *‘ām* and that which was outside courtly control. Sharar's usage of '*pablik kā darbār*' ('the court of the public') did not conceptually distinguish between the *ḳhāṣ* (literally, 'special') and the '*ām* (literally, 'common'). Sharar's message was that the court of kings and nobles was finished and now the only court was that of the public. This shift was not confined to the linguistic or conceptual realm, and in the last decades of the nineteenth century there was an increasing level of cooperation on the part of lower-class and *sharīf* Muslims.[31] Competition among different Muslim and Hindu groups could be overcome through an appeal to a larger collective identity.[32]

Many individuals during the second half of the nineteenth century became concerned with the 'public good', evidenced in part by the increased usage of *rifāh-e ‘ām,* the Urdu equivalent. In the 1880s alone, there were four voluntary associations with the name Anjuman-e Rifāh-e ‘Ām ('Association for Public Welfare').[33] Additionally, two associations were called Anjuman-e Mufīd-e ‘Ām ('Association for the Benefit of Everybody'). In any discussion about voluntary associations, it is helpful to keep the distinction between civil society and the state in mind. Civil society may be understood as 'a region of society where people have come together and formed associations

[29] C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 180–211.

[30] C. Ryan Perkins, 'From the *Mehfil* to the Printed Word: Public Debate and Discourse in Late Colonial India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 50, 1 (2013), pp. 52–53.

[31] Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community : Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 117.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India*, p. 488.

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outside the purview of the state',[34] and which includes public and political arenas not directly part of the state. Still, there are mutually constitutive dynamics at work; in the context of Europe, Ute Frevert has underscored the strong connection between democracy as a political system and a vibrant civil society containing a range of organized interest groups. Both civil society and the state often impact one another symbiotically.[35] Many matters of public concern, like health care, education, and charity, have first been raised and addressed by and in civil society. Historically, it was common for local or central governments to then take over these institutions. Private enterprise and voluntary associations would then move on to other issues of public concern to 'help, support and mobilise'.[36]

Stark has made the point that the relationship between civil society and associational culture in nineteenth-century India was different from that in Europe. From her study of the Jalsah, she has concluded that associational culture, while distinct from the state, 'was not situated in a "state-free" sphere'.[37] Instead, the Jalsah functioned through 'negotiation plus collaboration with the state'.[38] This was also true of other organizations such as the Benares Institute, the Aligarh Scientific Society, the Anjuman-e Panjab of Lahore, and the Delhi Society. However, Dar-us-Salam is but one example of an organization that appears to have functioned fairly independently of the state. Yet Dar-us-Salam and other associations still understood their interventions as having potential to put pressure on the government to address their concerns.

Once, while describing the success of Dar-us-Salam, Sharar suggested that a movement had begun in the *Islāmī pablik* ('Islamic public').[39] While the first usages of the English word 'public' had surfaced years earlier in Urdu, this appears to be at least one of the first instances, if not the first, when it was coupled with the qualifier *Islāmī*.[40] Similar to Sharar's usage of the term '*pablik kā darbār*', the term

[34] Rajeev Bhargava, 'Introduction', in Rajeev Bhargava and Helmut Reifeld (eds), *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005), pp. 13–14.

[35] Ute Frevert, 'Civil Society and Citizenship in Western Democracies', in Bhargava and Reifeld (eds), *Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship*, p. 68.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Stark, 'Associational Culture', p. 29.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Sharar, 'Anjuman-e Dār-us-Salām' (November 1888), p. 171.

[40] Perkins, 'From the *Meḥfil* to the Printed Word', p. 52.

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Islāmī pablik represented the attempt to create both a language and a space for a type of Muslim engagement that would be truly public at its core. Widespread denigration of any form of public representation in favour of elite representation, demonstrated by Sayyid Ahmad Khan's sentiment and his audience's strong affirmation, contrasted greatly with the potential value Sharar attributed to the Islamic public.[41] The idea of the *Islāmī pablik* provided a subtle critique of prevalent elitist models espoused by those like Khan, which gave little to no recognition of the value of non-elite opinions.[42]

As noted, Sharar's focus on two small gifts by non-elites underscored the participatory significance of a diverse range of individuals involved with Dar-us-Salam; it also contrasted with the ethos of other groups' fundraising efforts, which highlighted large gifts. In February of 1888, Sharar first introduced Dar-us-Salam to his readers in an article titled 'Muḥammaḍan Naishanal Vālinṭīr' ('Muhammadan National Volunteer'). Following a litany of complaints about the decline of education among Muslims, Sharar wrote:

> The *qaum* has not established a fund and the *umrā'e* ['leaders'] of the *qaum* have not even thought about this issue. At present the final suggestion is that Muslims form a group of *Naishanal Vālinṭīr*s (*qaumī sapāhī*) ['national soldier']. It will not be the job of these volunteers to request the government to ban one weapon or to provide weapons' training. Instead they will become *qaumī faqīr* ['national beggars']. They will sacrifice their respect for the *qaum* . . . knock at every door, spread their hands before everyone and even beg from store to store. As a result of this holy income, the resources will be gathered and will help those youth of the *qaum* who deserve the gift of literacy, but because of the world's injustice have not had the chance to read.[43]

Here Sharar used the English words 'national volunteer' in Urdu and then provided his own gloss of these words, *qaumī sapāhī*, which

[41] Shaikh Muhammad Isma'il Panipati (ed.), *Ḵhuṯbāt-e sar Sayyid, jild-e duvvum* (Lahore: Majlis Taraqqi-e Adab, 1973), p. 6. The translation below is that of Frances Pritchett. See http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_sir_Syed_lucknow_1887_fwp0106.html#fwp04, [accessed 27 February 2015]. The relevant excerpt of the speech is as follows: 'Please reflect that, to sit with the Viceroy in Council, there must be an honored [*mu'azziz*] person among the honored persons of the land. Will the Ra'ises of our land like it if a man of low [*adna*] community [*qaum*] or low rank [*darjah*], even if he has taken a B.A. degree or an M.A., and even if he is also worthy, would sit and rule over them, would be master of their wealth, property, and honor? Never—nobody at all will like it. [*Cheers* [*chi'arz*].]'

[42] For a brief discussion of this, see Joshi, *Fractured Modernity*, p. 44.

[43] 'Abdul Ḥālīm Sharar, 'Muhammadan National Volunteer', *Dil Gudāz* (February 1888), p. 11.

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functioned as a powerful metaphor. Sharar, the master stylist, made extensive use of metaphor, hyperbole, and other rhetorical flourishes in his writings, no less so when talking about Dar-us-Salam. Using a language of sacrifice, he equated the *qaum* with the Muslim community and portrayed the work of Dar-us-Salam as a collaborative effort of Muslims carried out by volunteers for the good of illiterate and underprivileged youth. Further, the transformation of a volunteer into a *qaumī faqīr* used religious imagery to expand the vision even further. A *faqīr* (holy man) lived off the alms of people. In this context, the *faqīr* was renouncing the world not merely in pursuit of God, but also in pursuit of the *qaum*. Sharar implied that individual spiritual pursuit was not sufficient for the challenges facing Muslims as a community. Instead of renouncing the world to escape it, the modern national *faqīr* would transform his devotion for God into social and religious activism. Speaking of the donations collected as 'holy income' gave the work spiritual value.

This movement toward a more socially oriented participation in society had been developing for some time, particularly among Sufi movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries throughout the Muslim world. In their examination of Muslim publics, Armando Salvatore and Dave F. Eickelman have emphasized how Sufi 'revivalism' in many parts of the Muslim world, including South Asia, paved the way for 'a new conception of Islamically legitimated action in public life' through the implicit development of the 'idea of the social Muslim'.[44] Despite continued ambiguity between mystical self-denial and 'a more socially oriented disciplined participation in society', Sufi practices in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries began favouring 'collective understandings and shared practices that could cut across lines of occupation, wealth, lineage, and region ... these shared habits and practices contributed significantly to developing Islam as a principle of the *social* order'.[45] While it is difficult to measure the influence of Sufi practices on groups such as Dar-us-Salam, it seems safe to assume these developments were but one factor in the rise of these organizations and their emphasis on a religiously based social activism.

Other concerns focused on threats posed by the spread of Western missionary schools appear to have been more prominent in the writings

[44] Ibid.
[45] Dave F. Eickelman and Armando Salvatore, 'Muslim Publics', in *Public Islam and The Common Good* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 12.

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of Sharar and others of the period. Stressing the severity of the situation facing Muslims as a community he wrote: 'You have seen that your children have been plucked from the laps of their mothers and are falling into the hands of Christians. Your women have left the Quran sitting in the home and are reading the New Testament. Trade is leaving your hands. In work and service, people push you out of the way and advance on.'[46] As Sharar saw it, the solution required the active participation of Muslims from all walks of life; yet in reality, the primary recipients of these efforts were to be less privileged youth. This focus was similar to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's early plans for the establishment of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College. In an 1872 speech, Khan expressed the goal for the proposed educational programme to impact not just the *sharīf* or traditional elites, but individuals from all classes of society (*jam'ā*), including the lowest (*'awām un-nās*).[47] Yet, by the time the college had opened its doors, this concern had almost completely disappeared.[48]

Associations, fundraising, and the everyday

Indians of this period found themselves swimming in a tumultuous sea of rapid structural shifts. Vast social changes were afoot as shifting power structures gave way to newly emerging elites who were 'staking their claims to social and political leadership'.[49] Old elites who were clever or fortuitous enough to sense this change adapted accordingly. Like many other voluntary associations at the time, Dar-us-Salam was not without its own elite individuals, the most prominent being Nawab Murtaza Khan, grandson of the chief minister during the time of the former nawab of Awadh, Asaf ud Daula. His emergence at the forefront of the organization came about during a Dar-us-Salam meeting concerning education and fundraising. Nawab Murtaza Khan rose from among the assembly and declared with conviction that 'for the sake of the unfortunate students of this *qaum*' he would become a beggar.[50] Such partnerships proved beneficial to organizations like

[46] 'Abdul Halim Sharar, 'Muhammadan National Volunteer Fund', *Dil Gudāz* (April 1888), p. 62.

[47] Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*, p. 123.

[48] Ibid, pp. 122–123.

[49] Chandra, 'Subjects' Citizenship Dream', p. 113.

[50] Sharar, 'Muhammadan National Volunteer', p. 11.

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Dar-us-Salam and old elites who found new platforms to increase their public roles in society.

Sharar's passionate and eloquent writings on Dar-us-Salam's activities impressed readers with the sense they were witnessing the making of history in real time. In contrast, news updates in publications like the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* predominantly consisted of short news briefs. For example, in one issue it described the proceedings of the Allahabad University's first convocation with language fit for a law book;[51] it also detailed the dry minutes from standard organizational meetings. Articles or news bites were often taken directly from other newspapers; briefs from various cities around the world were written as if they were entries in an encyclopedia. The primary exception consisted of articles opposing the Indian National Congress, which provided a running theme of the publication after 1885. Yet, no attempt was made to provide an overarching narrative or transform readers into activists who could enact change. Sharar's writings, on the other hand, focused on creating an excitement among his readers and utilized evocative language to report on the rapid rise of the group. When Sharar introduced Murtaza Khan to his readers as the face of Dar-us-Salam, he praised the nawab-turned-beggar who was travelling door-to-door raising funds for the cause: 'With a sack in his hands and prayers flowing from his mouth, we are without a doubt struck by his passion, self-denial, and sympathy for the *qaum*. O God, through his efforts, make the *Anjuman-e Dār-us-Salām* successful in their *qaumī* goals.'[52] According to Sharar, the future of the Muslims of Hindustan rested in the education of their children—for whose sake Nawab Murtaza Khan had become a religious mendicant. Appealing to both his audience and the princes of the land, he wrote: 'O nobles of the *qaum*, o nobles of Islam, for God's sake hear the cries of this mendicant, fill his sack, fulfill completely his request for alms ... Nothing is limited to just the nobles and princes; he stands before every Muslim with his hands stretched out. Money, cowries, or grains; whatever you give, this mendicant will take.'[53] While the minutes of a municipal board meeting might presumably educate readers in deliberative procedure and the inner workings of voluntary associations in civil society, such a publication

[51] 'Opening of the Allahabad University', *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, Allahabad, 15 November 1887, pp. 1303–1304.

[52] Sharar, 'Muhammadan National Volunteer', p. 11.

[53] Ibid, pp. 11–12.

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could not touch its readers emotionally like Sharar's impassioned writings.

In the same appeal of February 1888, Sharar specified that 30 rupees, some cowries, flour, and other items had already been collected in the Muhammadan National Volunteer Fund.[54] In the following month of March, he listed the exact items and amounts collected in the Volunteer Fund. Among the items he included were flour, rice, one plate, one *loṭīyā* (wash pot), and a bundle of candles. He then called on his readers again to help in whatever way they could: 'That time is coming very quickly when a *mishnarī jamā'ṫ* (missionary organization) from *Dār-us-Salām* will go out to communicate their aims in different cities. Now I am hopeful that the other organizations of Hindustan will help us in those aims.'[55]

If viewed from a purely monetary perspective, these donations hardly demonstrate great success in the arena of fundraising. The Jalsah and the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College enjoyed contributions primarily from wealthy nobles, businessmen, government officials, and the British government, and monetary gifts often ranged in the thousands. The common practice of listing such large gifts created an environment in which donors received recognition, thereby increasing the likelihood that other wealthy patrons would consider donating funds, but it downplayed the significance of donations from individuals with limited means.[56]

To Sharar, however, the amount of money raised was less significant than what each donation represented. His fundraising appeals and descriptions of items collected created a space for even those with limited resources to contribute in a meaningful and public way.[57] If even poor children could give a part of what little they had to make a positive impact, then anyone could at least do something. Recognizing the value of small gifts from those who were considered part of the *'ām* went against common practices by imparting greater significance to the participation of a diverse group of individuals than to the amount they could contribute. This was a fairly modern idea,

[54] Ibid, p. 11.

[55] Ibid, p. 14.

[56] For a look at Sayyid Ahmad Khan's acceptance of even the smallest gifts, see Altaf Husain Hali, *Hayat-i Javed*, K. H. Qadiri and David J. Matthews (trans) (New Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1979), pp. 148–159.

[57] Malavika Kasturi, '"All Gifting Is Sacred": The Santana Dharma Sabha Movement, the Reform of Dana and Civil Society in Late Colonial India', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 47, 1 (2010).

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similar to the notion that 'every vote counts'. In the case of Sharar's listing of donations, it would be difficult to think of more common, domestic, or everyday items than these (rice, flour, a plate, candles, and a wash pot). While on one level such gifts were practical, particularly in the context of madrasa-style education where young students were often provided with food and basic utensils, the act of bringing these everyday objects into the public realm as representative of a larger movement seems to signify the potential for the domestic ('inner') to transform public life (the 'outer'). Imparting a transformative potential to the everyday seems to have been linked to, or at least co-terminus with the transformation of the everyman or *'ām* into the public.[58] While seeking to transform the outer, the inner (or everyday) was also being reshaped and reimagined.[59]

Henri Lefebvre pointed to the possibility for the reclamation of the value of everyday life to be part of the emancipatory project. His insights into the potential for everyday life to function as a site from which to criticize formalized and alienated social practices can provide a helpful conceptual framework to understand the function of domestic items in the context of Dar-us-Salam: [60]

> The day dawns when everyday life also emerges as a critique, a critique of the superior activities in question (and of what they produce: *ideologies*). The devaluation of everyday life by ideologies appears as one-sided and partial, in both senses of the word. A direct critique takes the place of indirect criticism; and this direct critique involves a rehabilitation of everyday life, shedding new light on its positive content.[61]

When seen in this light, the plate, flour, rice, candles, wash pot, and inclusive activities of Dar-us-Salam functioned as a critique of the exclusive practices that characterized much of society at the time and many voluntary associations. These items represented the emergence

[58] For a useful exploration of the transformation of the public sphere into the 'public', see Harold Mah, 'Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians', *The Journal of Modern History* 72, 1 (2000), pp. 154–155.

[59] For a fuller treatment of the 'inner' and 'outer' in the context of colonial India, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 6; and Gyan Prakash's critique in 'The Urban Turn', in Ravi Vasudevan, Jeebesh Bagchi, Ravi Sundaram, Monica Narula, Geert Lovink, and Shuddhabrata Sengupta (eds), *Sarai Reader 2002: The Cities of Everyday Life* (Delhi: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2002), p. 3.

[60] Michael E. Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 77.

[61] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume I: Foreword*, J. Moore (trans.) (London: Verso, 2008), p. 87.

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of everyday life from the shadows into the realm of public activism. It is not that the gifting of domestic items was necessarily rare; rather, Sharar's upholding of these items as representative of a successful fundraising campaign transformed the everyday and the *'ām* into symbols of social change. It revealed a revolutionary potential in each individual comprising the *'ām* and the elements of their everyday life that, while always having existed, had long been suppressed by traditional elites who claimed the sole ability to represent the masses and foster change. Although fairly novel at the time, this ability to see the everyday as possessing transformative potential would become increasingly common in the following decades, leading to Gandhi's upholding of salt and the spinning wheel as everyday items around which a critique of colonialism and modernity could emerge.

Collaboration

One of Sharar's main concerns in his writings on Dar-us-Salam dealt with the need for Muslims of all stripes to contribute. In order to accomplish such cooperation, Sharar used his journal to appeal to the Anjumān-e Ḥimāyat -e Islām[62] of Lahore and the Anjuman Aḳhwān-ul Ṣafā from Kanpur, asking God 'to put it in the hearts of these groups' secretaries to send a collection from their members to help further the aims of the Muḥammaḍan Naishanal Vālinṭīr'.[63] Sharar stressed the importance of supporting this cause with 'money or whatever else' and encouraged his audience to address their shipment to the secretary of the group. He concluded his appeal by urging the editors of other newspapers to reprint his article on the last page of their periodicals so that 'the cries of your *qaumī* mendicant might reach every ear'.[64]

In March of 1888, the following month, Sharar again devoted a full column to the Muhammadan National Volunteer Fund. He told of how a group of Dar-us-Salam members had travelled from Lucknow to Allahabad and Pratabgarh. In Allahabad they joined a meeting of

[62] The Anjumān-e Ḥimāyat-e Islām formed in 1884 out of a desire to defend Islam in writing as well as to provide education to Muslim children. In particular, they wanted to protect poor children and orphans from the proselytizing activities of other religious groups. Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India, 1850–1947*, pp. 73–74; Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 175–182.

[63] Sharar, 'Muhammadan National Volunteer', p. 13.

[64] Ibid.

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the Muhammadan Club of Allahabad where they shared information about the work of Dar-us-Salam. In response the Muhammadan Club donated funds, thus establishing a close relationship between the groups. In another city, with the help of Munshī Nis̈ār Ḥussain, a subcommittee was formed and more money collected. Sharar then shared the responses of *Dil Gudāz* subscribers who had been greatly affected by his previous article and enquired of Dar-us-Salam how they might help the Volunteer Fund.

Sharar again wrote articles concerning Dar-us-Salam in April, June, July, October, and November of 1888, and for the last time in March of 1889. In the June issue he thanked God for the organization's progress, not merely in Lucknow, but throughout Hindustan, and reported that more than 500 rupees had been raised. He went on to share that Dar-us-Salam had successfully promoted unity among Sunnis and Shias, as well as having opened a library of more than 1,200 rare books. In the October issue, Sharar further focused on unity among Muslims:

> Although the solution to discord and differences is not in the hand of any one individual, *Anjuman-e Dār-us-Salām* has begun to try and help all the Muslims of Hindustan reconcile with each other. Success is in the hands of God, but we certainly need to show that we are ready. More or less, what is needed is for all the Islamic organisations of Hindustan to correspond with each other and revive the old relations and past alliances.

> It is a matter of great joy that the nobles of most areas of Hindustan have displayed their readiness and want to become members of this organisation. But, in my opinion, this extent of preparation is not enough. In their own locations the nobles need to unite Muslims and harness the *ʿām qaumī rāʾī* ['popular national sentiment/opinion']. At that time they can say they did something. Today, if we have one united force in our hands we can petition the government with entreaties concerning our rights. In actuality, the many Islamic organisations in Hindustan have all been established as brothers of one family. It is unlikely we will ever find such a noble way to increase our power than by everyone joining together to promote dialogue in his own vicinity and exchanging advice in every matter. We are able to increase our strength in a short time—on the condition that we want to do so.

> *Dār-us-Salām* has established *vālinṭīring uṣūl* ['the principles of volunteering'] and with perseverance has continued its work ... It seems to me that in most places because people did not receive the authority to formally collect subscriptions they have chosen to remain quiet. Now I am informing them

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that if you understand it as your duty to help the *qaum* then acquire permission from the association.[65]

In this passage, Sharar's intent to help create a public coalesced around a religious identity was further clarified. Sharar believed differences among Muslim organizations made it impossible to function as the Islamic public or achieve success in the larger public sphere; rather than function as the 'Islamic public', they would merely function as competing groups. Sharar seemed to believe political power would be gained through the consolidation of diverse segments of society. The way in which he envisioned this points to the patriarchal nature of the endeavour in which the nobility would unite Muslims and harness the popular national sentiment (*'ām qaumī 'rā'ī ko vo apnī muṭṭhī meñ leñ')* in order to gain increased political power. This was an attempt to make use of the waning influence of the nobles. It also reveals the belief that the nobles could function best as the leaders of the community if they would only take on the masses' sentiments as their own. Yet Sharar recognized that times were changing and the nobles alone could not ensure success. Participation of the masses was crucial.

In the November 1888 issue of *Dil Gudāz,* Sharar wrote about the passionate responses he had received in response to the October issue: 'Without exaggerating, many of my afflicted friends who read the article on *Dar-us-Salam* in the last month's issue of *Dil Gudāz*, were shaken up. I received many letters from which it seems that a movement has begun in the *Islāmī pablik*.'[66] The focus of this article was again the need for the unity of Muslims, and all the problems facing the Islamic public were attributed to this lack of unity. Sharar mentioned how his friend started another organization in Gorakphur and that it would be connected with Dar-us-Salam. He encouraged others to do the same and stressed the need for all Muslim organizations to work together. He then cited his desire to publish a list of all the Muslim groups within the pages of *Dil Gudāz* to help foster this.

The emphasis placed on the *Islāmī pablik* as an idealized collective in *Dil Gudāz* points to the problem with the conclusion that 'the emphasis of Muslim identity, at least in north India, for much of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was one of exclusion rather than

[65] Abdul Halim Sharar, 'Anjuman-e Dārus Salām Lucknow', *Dil Gudāz* (October 1888), p. 15.
[66] Sharar, 'Anjuman-e Dār-us-Salām', p. 171.

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inclusion into a larger identity'.[67] While exclusion was particularly true among the *ulema* (religious scholars) of different *mazhabs* (Islamic schools of thought)—whether Shia or Sunni or *maslaks* (sects), which are smaller than *mazhabs* and include the Deoband, Ahl-e hadis, Tariqah-e Muhammadiyah, Faraizis of Bengal, and the Barelvis[68]—it is difficult to know how widespread these debates were among the larger Islamic community. While these currents were present, there were also attempts by Muslims to foster the creation of an Islamic public that would transcend sectarian divisions. Such attempts to override divisions were not necessarily new, but the language used to describe a collectivity as an *Islāmī pablik* was novel.

Reader responses

Over the course of the year Sharar published numerous readers' letters, which provide insight into the concerns of his audience. The first letters concerning Dar-us-Salam were published on 19 March 1888. In one letter Muhammad Zahir 'Alim, a deputy collector from Azamgarh, expressed his excitement upon reading Sharar's previous article on the activities of Dar-us-Salam. He suggested that a subcommittee be established in every province so the organization could more effectively achieve its goals. He believed that other Muslims, at least in his area, would be enthusiastic to support such a group, and sought Sharar's permission to begin that work. In closing, he asked where he should send financial support and whether rules for the safekeeping of contributions had been established.[69] Alim's suggestion to form subcommittees points to the improvisational nature of Dar-us-Salam and demonstrates that ideas related to the proper functioning of voluntary associations in civil society were gaining ground. In the act of printing readers' letters in his journal, Sharar had essentially removed the sense of distance between his readers and Dar-us-Salam as an abstract idea or movement, creating a space for the exchange of ideas as a means of immediate action available to all. In Sharar's hands, the periodical became more than a tool to spread the message of Dar-us-Salam; it became a means

[67] S. A. Zaidi, 'Who Is a Muslim? Identities of Exclusion—North Indian Muslims, *c.* 1860–1900', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 47, 2 (2010), p. 206.

[68] Ibid, pp. 209–210.

[69] Sharar, 'Muhammadan National Volunteer Fund', (March 1888), pp. 14–15.

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of mobilization and a forum for readers, separated by geographic distance, to form collectivities and pursue their common goals.

Muhammad Muslim, a schoolteacher from the town of Arrah (in modern day Bihar), was so moved by Sharar's article that he shared it with his students, hoping they might contribute their own resources. In his letter to Sharar he revealed he had already collected funds, but he was unsure about the next step:

I hope that the Association can forgive my passionate action and tell me what I should do. What should I do with the three rupees and seventeen Gorakhpuris[70] that I already collected; should I come, send the money, or return it? And should I collect money in the future or not? In the midst of these efforts, the fruits of which I have kept secure, it was suggested that a locked collection box be placed in mosques and at all the appropriate places so that people will have a way to donate money or anything else. Once a week it can be opened and the money can be put in one safe place. After three or four weeks, whatever has been collected can then be sent on. An assembly has also been formed here. Its secretary is Maulvi Muhammad Yasīn. Maulvi Ibrāhīm and Maulvī 'Abdul Ḥakīm are some of the other esteemed members. I am going to visit Maulvī Ibrāhīm tomorrow. If it is appropriate then give the order to one of these esteemed men to collect money here. Among the Shias, there is the lawyer Maulvi Luqman Haider. A lot can also happen because of him. And I know I am devoted to our prosperity and will make every effort. I am just waiting for your reply. There is no permission to take from Hindus or to give to Hindus, but should anything be accepted from Hindus or not?[71]

If anything, this letter underscores the empowering nature of the space Sharar had created for those with limited means or influence. While it is not certain whether Sharar sent replies providing guidance to each individual, it is clear that the call for his audience to actively promote the aims of Dar-us-Salam in their own geographical locations was heeded. Muslim's letter seems to have recognized that isolated actions tended to be sporadic and disorganized without direct guidance. He sought to counter this potential inefficiency through the mention of an assembly formed in Arrah. The printing of Muslim's request for Sharar to give an order about the collection of funds transformed

[70] Gorakhpuri was a mint in Gorakphur under the authority of the Nawabs of Awadh. These coins have the mint-name 'Muazzamabad' inscribed on them which was an Islamic alias of Gorakhpur. By 1888, they were no longer in production, but continued to circulate. Their value depended on the price of grain and ranged from approximately 60 to a little over 100 gorakphpuris per rupee. I want to thank Shailendra Bhandare for illuminating me on the Gorakhpuri currency. Also see, *Gazetteer of the Province of Oudh*, Vol. I.–A. to G. (Lucknow: Oudh Government Press, 1877), pp. 170 and 521.

[71] Ibid, pp. 15–16.

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the 'literary' journal into a discussion board of sorts where anyone could post his thoughts and suggestions. Sharar could not only guide his readers, but they could guide him as well. These were the types of exchanges that taught Sharar and his contemporaries about the possible uses of the printed word that lay beyond the boundaries of the page. In particular they learned about the mobilization of individuals, now conceived of as potential volunteers—the public.

Muhammad Muslim's question regarding the role of Hindus in this endeavour revealed the extent to which the contours of religious identity and community activism were still malleable. Through contributing factors such as the Hindi–Urdu debates, the move to representative politics, the census, and the increasing politicization of religious identities, a palpable tension was on the rise between communities of Hindus and Muslims. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslims had effectively been separated from the dominant conception of 'Indian'. This 'collective unconscious' revealed itself in the ever-increasing way in which Muslims and the people of India were treated as two separate entities.[72] The fact that Muslim's question was asked at all points to the underlying confusion related to the role of Hindus in such efforts that were focused primarily on the Muslim community. As a schoolteacher, Muhammad Muslim would have been concerned about matters of education, yet he was operating from a position with far less social capital than Muhammad Zahir 'Alim or Muslim leaders, such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who may have been less inclined to raise such a question. While his question appears not to fit with the rest of Sharar's articles on Dar-us-Salam or other readers' letters, it is as if the unspoken question of others was finally articulated.

Many have argued that the census, among other factors, contributed to an objectification of religious difference, yet the enumeration of communities was a practice long preceding colonial times.[73] Colonial emphasis on these differences generally resulted in identities forming a foundation for subsequent political action. This was not necessarily

[72] Chandra, 'Subjects Citizenship Dream', p. 121. Chandra illustrates this point by reference to Gopal Krishna Gokhale's speech in the supreme legislative council where he unconsciously makes a distinction between *Mahomedans* and the *people* of Bengal.

[73] Sumit Guha, 'The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India *c.* 1600–1990', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, 1 (2003), p. 153.

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the case though, even with the move to representational politics.[74] Depending on the context and the issues at stake, any one of the many identities people inhabited could come to the fore. It was in 'the public arena where these various identities and their associated interests and aspirations' played out as a 'kaleidoscope [and] shifting alliances kept appearing every now and again'.[75] Muslim's question revealed the discrepancy between his experiences and the rhetoric used by both the British and Muslim leaders to describe Hindu competition (as well as Muslim 'backwardness'). The British employed such rhetoric to secure Muslim support for British imperial control that could theoretically protect the community's interests, while Muslim leaders used similar language to secure as much governmental and popular support as possible for their own agendas. In this instance, to Muhammad Muslim, Hindus were neither a source of competition nor a threat. Instead they represented potential partners in the endeavour to promote the education of poor Muslim youth. Muslim's question highlighted one of the central yet generally unspoken ironies faced by Muslim leaders who, in order to create support, felt the need to convince Muslims they were under threat and facing competition from their Hindu neighbours. This rhetoric did not necessarily represent the realities faced by many Muslims. Muslim's question points to the need to further explore educational movements, volunteerism, and associational life from the peripheries when possible. The concerns and questions of such peripheral figures were often different from those expressed by individuals and groups who have been the traditional focus of scholars. Without further information it is difficult to state whether Muslim's ambivalence was representative of the views of a wide swath of north Indian Muslims or not. However, Muslim's voice reveals that religious-based volunteerism and activism did not necessarily function in opposition to other religious communities. Uncertainty regarding such terrain was indicative of 'shared but shifting identities'.[76]

[74] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996); Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[75] Chandra, 'Subjects' Citizenship Dream', p. 114.

[76] Perkins, 'From the Meḥfil to the Printed Word', p. 53. Shafique Virani has made a similar point regarding the need to re-evaluate the terms '"Hindu" and "Muslim" as either/or categories', in Shafique N. Virani, '*Taqiyya* and Identity in a South Asian Community', *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70, 1 (February 2011), pp. 124–130.

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While it is not possible to determine what, if anything, came of Muslim's efforts in Arrah, the fact that an assembly had been formed and that he was utilizing existing connections and networks to expand the scope of Dar-us-Salam's work speaks to the creativity in volunteerism and associational life at this time. This creativity was particularly notable with newly formed organizations and among individuals who were encountering such forms of volunteerism for the first time. In April of 1888 Sharar reiterated the success of Dar-us-Salam by including the full text of a letter from Karim Bakhsh, a primary school teacher in Sialkot. Bakhsh wrote of the magical effect Sharar's writing had on him as well as hundreds of others, and of the excitement present among his students and other youth. He included a list of the items he and his students had collected for the fund, including goods such as wheat, dal, and cowries. He concluded by asking what he should do with all they had gathered.[77] While Sharar praised Bakhsh's efforts, his printed response was short and to the point. He advised Bakhsh to continue his efforts and to enquire again after collecting more, although currently there was no need to send anything. Sharar ended the issue by providing a few names of those who had made monetary donations, which ranged from 10 to 50 rupees, and then promised readers that he would publish more letters and updates in the near future.

These letters written by Sharar's readers demonstrate the interaction with those outside Lucknow who were able to participate in the activities of Dar-us-Salam via print. Within Lucknow, however, Dar-us-Salam's efforts to organize a large anti-Congress meeting turned into a dramatic encounter with one of the most well-established and influential voluntary associations of the city, the Rifāh-e ʻĀm (hereafter Rifah).[78] The following section will explore several accounts of the meeting and shed light on the politicization of volunteerism and Sharar's resistance to this.

Qaisarbagh and the politics of mobilization

On 6 May 1888 two competing gatherings met simultaneously in Lucknow. At the end of the second meeting violence erupted. The

[77] Sharar, 'Muhammadan National Volunteer Fund', (April 1888), pp. 63–64.
[78] For a brief mention of the association, see Joshi, *Fractured Modernity*, p. 30.

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first meeting organized by Dar-us-Salam in Qaisarbagh, had two purposes: first, to condemn the National Congress, and second, to condemn Pandit Ajudhia Nath[79] and his 'communal attack' against Muslims, in which he compared anti-Congress Muslims to Yazid, the most reviled figure from Islam's past. The full scope of this seemingly innocuous attack can only be understood when placed within the context of pre-existing tensions in Lucknow between the Sunni and Shi'ite communities. This comment was felt to be such a threat because it played into these tensions. The second meeting, organized by the Rifah, was intended to compete with the meeting of Dar-us-Salam and show support for the Congress, Nath, and those Muslims who were accused of supporting Nath's verbal attack on the Muslim community. According to contemporary accounts, the Qaisarbagh gathering attracted more than 20,000 attendees and one account even stated that it was the 'first such political gathering of Muslims that had ever occurred in India'.[80] While the latter claim may have been an example of hyperbole, the gathering appears to have been the largest gathering of Muslims in Lucknow, apart from Eid celebrations, since the Insurrection of 1857–1858.[81] In an anti-Congress pamphlet, the United Indian Patriotic Association also reported on the gathering at Qaisarbagh as including 20,000 people, many of whom were transported to the gathering free of charge by 'Muhammadan carriage-drivers'.[82] It is not surprising that the

[79] Pandit Ajudhia Nath was a prominent Kashmiri Brahmin lawyer, leading pleader of the Allahabad High Court, and 'spokesman of Hindu educated opinion in the UP'. He was also a proponent of Urdu in the Hind–Urdu debates of the period and one of the leading supporters of the National Congress. For more information regarding Nath, see Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, pp. 31–32; 114–120.

[80] United Indian Patriotic Association, *Showing the Seditious Character of the Indian National Congress and the Opinions Held by Eminent Natives of India who Are Opposed to the Movement* (Allahabad: Pioneer Press, 1888), p. xxxiii.

[81] *Āzād*, a newspaper published out of Lucknow states: 'The three halls of the Baradari were crowded to suffocation, the number of persons present on the occasion exceeding 20,000. Such a large crowd of people has never assembled in the Kaisarbagh since the Mutiny.' As found in *SVN*, p. 308. Sharar estimated that 20,000–25,000 people attended the gathering; see 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, 'Qaisarbāġh meñ Islām kā ro'b o dāb', *Dil Gudāz* (April 1888), p. 9. The *Aligarh Institute Gazette* stated: 'All those gathered agreed that apart from Eid, at least for the last thirty to thirty-two years, such a gathering of Muslims in one place in Lucknow has not been seen.' See 'Kārespānḍans: Anti-Congress kā Jalsah Lucknow meñ', *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, (12 May 1888), p. 535.

[82] United Indian Patriotic Association, *Showing the Seditious Character of the Indian National Congress*, p. xxxiii. The Indian Patriotic Association was established in August of 1888 in order to convince the British that Congress demands were

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United Indian Patriotic Association had received its report about the gathering from the secretary of Dar-us-Salam, Sharar himself. Almost two decades later, in what has been described as the longest and bitterest of polemics in the history of Urdu literature, Sharar was accused of writing under pseudonyms for different newspapers with the intent to make his position appear to have more support than it did in reality.[83]

While it is necessary to approach the accounts of those with vested interests cautiously, in the case of Sharar this may be even more necessary. Fortunately, there are several other accounts of the gatherings that allow us to build a more complete picture. In addition to Sharar's monthly periodical, the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, *Azad*, and *Avadh Punch* of Lucknow reported on the events of the day. Both the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* and *Azad* painted a positive picture of the anti-Congress Dar-us-Salam gathering, while *Avadh Punch* described the gathering in a negative light. Each paper's coverage echoed the editor's sentiments regarding the Indian National Congress and groups such as the Rifah that supported the Congress. Sharar's account, on the other hand, is particularly striking for its omission of any mention of the Indian National Congress or the Rifah. Instead, he obliquely referred to 'enemies' (*dushman*). Yet, according to the United Indian Patriotic Association's pamphlet, when the secretary of Dar-us-Salam wrote to them about the gathering, he stressed the anti-Congress aims of Dar-us-Salam and of the meeting held on 6 May 1888.[84] It is impossible to say if the anti-Congress sentiments of the United Indian Patriotic Association influenced the way they relayed Sharar's message, or if

unrepresentative. The 'United' in its name was added later to underscore its pan-communal nature. For more information on the Association, see Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims*, pp. 120–122. For a fuller treatment of this debate, see Perkins, 'From the *Meḫfil* to the Printed Word'.

[83] This debate erupted in 1905 after Sharar published a critical review of Brijnarayan Chakbast's new edition of Pandat Daya Shankar Kaul Nasim's (1811–1843) *maṡnavī* ['narrative poem'], 'Gulzār-e Nasīm' ['Rose Garden of Nasim']. See Muḥammad Shafī Shīrāzī and Amīr Ḥasan Nūrānī (eds), *Ma'rakah-e Chakbast o Sharar, Y'anī, Mubāḥiṡah-e Gulzār-e Nasīm* (Lucknow, 1966), pp. 318–321.

[84] The quote reads that the secretary of Dar-us-Salam 'wrote to say that the *Anjuman* agreed with the United Indian Patriotic Association and was opposed to the National Congress, believing it to be very harmful, not only for Muhammadans but for the whole people of India; and that the *Anjuman* had worked hard against the Congress in Lucknow, the great meeting of 20,000 people on May 6th having been held under its auspices'. See United Indian Patriotic Association, *Showing the Seditious Character of the Indian National Congress*, p. xxiii.

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Sharar tailored his message specifically because of the United Indian Patriotic Association's anti-Congress goals. Regardless, it is clear that individuals and groups were using print in such a way that allowed them to tailor messages according to the specific context and aims at hand. Sharar may have been seeking greater publicity when writing to the United Indian Patriotic Association by focusing on the meeting's anti-Congress aims, while there was no hint of the anti-Congress aims of Dar-us-Salam and its gathering in the tardy April issue of *Dil Gudāz*. Considering the fact that condemnation of the Congress was one of the two main goals of Dar-us-Salam's gathering, what was the reason for this omission? And why did Sharar refrain from mentioning the Rifah by name, instead only referring to the 'enemies' of Dar-us-Salam and the name of their meeting place (Lyall Hall)?[85] Sharar's almost singular focus on the work of Dar-us-Salam as a '*taḥrīk*' ('movement') whose purpose was to provide education for the poor and unite *Muslims* from all backgrounds reveals likely reasons for his refusal to mention the Congress or the Rifah. While opposition to the Congress was salient among Muslims, many were supportive of the Congress' aims. In effect, this divided Muslims into two camps. Sharar's focus on the gathering's opposition to Pandit Ajudhia's 'communal attack' against Muslims, on the other hand, was sure to stir up and unite the sentiments of all Muslims regardless of their political leanings. In this case, Sharar's participation in Dar-us-Salam was less connected with its political agenda than the platform it gave him to promote the advancement of the Muslim community through cooperation and collaboration, both rhetorically and in practice. As Sharar often sought to foster the unity of Muslims through romanticized portrayals of an 'otherworldly' ('*jannat kā ṭukṛā*'; literally, 'piece of heaven') unity, he described the meeting as comprised of a diverse group of Muslims who gathered to carry out blessed work for their religion (*dīn ke mubārak kām ke liyie*) and demonstrated solidarity.[86] The *Aligarh Institute Gazette* and *Azad* also pointed to the display of unity by a diverse crowd, but both focused on the anti-Congress sympathies of the gathering. Antipathy to such a heated political topic as the rise of the Congress was not in

[85] 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, 'Qaisarbāġh meñ Islām kā ro'b o dāb', *Dil Gudāz* (April 1888), p. 12. Lyall Hall was named after Sir Alred Comyn Lyall (1835–1911) who served as lieutenant governor of North West Provinces and chief commissioner of Awadh from 1882 to 1887.

[86] 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, 'Qaisarbāġh meñ Islām kā ro'b o dāb', *Dil Gudāz* (April 1888), p. 9.

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question for Muslims of north India, which makes Sharar's refusal to name the Congress even more striking.

Sharar's utopian picture of the concord experienced at the gathering was nevertheless in conflict with the violent encounter between participants from Dar-us-Salam and the Rifah's meetings. It is only in the other accounts that more details emerge. Differing in their foci, the various newspaper accounts speak to the divisions among Muslims and ways in which Lucknow's voluntary associations attempted to shape public opinion through the use of print. The world of voluntary associations was hardly free from the types of divisions that characterized other areas of public, political, and religious life. The Jalsah itself was established to combat the influence of the British Indian Association of Oudh (Anjuman-e Hind-e Avadh), an organization established in 1861 by the *Avadh ta'alluqdar*s, the rural landholding elite. The formation and subsequent growth of the Rifah a decade after the Jalsah's inception came at the expense of the Jalsah.[87] And at least in this instance, the work of Dar-us-Salam seemed to have posed a threat to the Rifah. In the following pages, I will summarize accounts of the gatherings as found in *Dil Gudāz*, the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, *Oudh Punch*, and *Azad* of Lucknow, paying particular attention to Sharar's account, as well as to the silences and moments of divergence.

In his typically evocative language, Sharar began his account by imagining the experience through the eyes of those old enough to have experienced Qaisarbagh during the time of Wajid Ali Shah:

What lay before the eyes of the aged ones from before—the past age of kings whirls about in the history of Qaisarbagh. Taking pleasure from that time and with the greatest interest, I should speak of how once upon a time this place was like a piece of heaven. Those hustle and bustle-filled assemblies of yesteryear occupy their [the elders'] thoughts today. Through the weakened eyes of their frailty, it is as if they are seeing the coquetry of heavenly and fairy-faced forbidden ones in the buildings all around. The life of this world (alas, that very one who is resting under the earth of Bengal) [Wajid Ali Shah] has disappeared. The faces of the delicate-bodied wives are smeared with ashes appearing like yoginis [. . .]

[87] Stark, 'Associational Culture', pp. 15, 30–31. The two associations had high cross-membership and almost merged at one point. However, this did not occur, and membership numbers for the Jalsah continued to decline, while those of the Rifah increased. See *Report on the Administration of the NWP & Oudh*, for the year ending 31 March 1883, p. 92. As cited in Stark, 'Associational Culture', p. 30.

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But closer to us, well, on Sunday the sixth of May, Qaisarbagh was a piece of heaven.[88]

This was not the only instance in Sharar's five-page description where he linked the present assembly to the past. After stressing the diversity and unity of all those gathered, Sharar continued by comparing the scene to both the hajj and the Battle of Badar (624 AD/2 AH) when Muhammad and his companions achieved one of their most significant victories.[89] Framed by this grand historical picture, Sharar presented the gathering of Dar-us-Salam as the latest manifestation of Islam's grandeur. While he did not explicitly mention the more recent battles of 1857, when Qaisarbagh stood as one of the strongholds of resistance against the British, these could not have been far from readers' minds. From the cultural heights achieved during the time of Wajid Ali Shah to devotional camaraderie in the hajj to the Prophet's own great military victory, Sharar characterized the individuals gathered in Qaisarbagh as the latest in a long line of human actors witness to God's power. If it was through divine intervention that the Prophet Muhammad defeated his enemies in the Battle of Badr, then divine intervention would be expected and hoped for in their present circumstances. A golden age was not merely present in the past, but as Sharar made clear, existed all around them. Referring to the Qaisarbagh gathering as a 'piece of heaven', the following description is particularly noteworthy for the way in which it reveals Sharar's idea of heaven on earth as being characterized by a radical egalitarianism:

Rich and poor, learned and ignorant dressed themselves with the garments of Islamic camaraderie and religious brotherhood, and have come. Everyone is of the very same rank. They are of the exact same means. They are in the very same condition. They are all seen as equal. They gather together with singular affection, one intent alone, one singular purpose, one singular wish, one singular longing. They confess one faith alone. They bow their heads before the very same Mecca. They uphold the laws of the very same Quran. They have faith in one very God without partner. And they have gathered to

[88] Sharar, 'Qaisarbāġh meñ Islām kā ro'b o dāb', *Dil Gudāz* (April 1888), pp. 8–9. During the time of Wajid Ali Shah, Qaisarbagh was the venue for performances which the nawab himself choreographed.

[89] Ibid, pp. 10–11. For descriptions of the Battle of Badr, see Martin Lingis, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1983), pp. 138–152; Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), pp. 35–36.

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reduce to dust the attempts by some to throw dust on that very final message of the Prophet.[90]

For Sharar, writing about the gathering presented an opportunity for him to stir up his readers and cause them to believe they were witness to the unfolding of history. It was as if he hoped the vision, if evocative enough, could override divisions among Muslims and usher in a new era. Framing the meeting as a response to an attack on Islam made the historic link to the Battle of Badr even more powerful; yet, beyond the superficial trope of Islam under attack, the connection was tenuous at best. In this regard, the purpose was less to demonstrate a concrete connection than to create an emotional response that could serve to unite Muslims from all walks of life.

Sharar's account was not the only one to speak of such camaraderie among those gathered. The *Aligarh Institute Gazette* also spoke of great diversity, concord, an unbounded enthusiasm, and a 'marvellous spirit' present at the gathering.[91] Whereas Sharar and the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* stressed the fact that the gathering included both the high and the low, *Avadh Punch* attempted to discount its significance by claiming that those in attendance were 'chiefly composed of butchers, weavers, and other such low classes'. In response, Sharar stressed the presence of prominent figures, pointing to the attendance of Inayat ud Daula, the eldest son of the former nawab of Awadh, as well as many others. Yet, according to Sharar, even Inayat ud Daula could not find a place inside the gathering because the audience was listening to the speakers with such great intensity that they were oblivious to all else. While *Avadh Punch* attacked the gathering through a denial of the presence of prominent figures, the overwhelming presence of 'butchers, weavers and other such low classes' (or *choṭī ḥaiṡiyat kī log*, as Sharar described them) seems to point not to the gathering's failure but to its ability to incorporate those outside of the traditional elite classes.

Prominent Muslims were caught in a contradiction. They viewed themselves as 'the dominant and powerful men of their putative community' and thus emphasized their unique ability to represent the opinions of the masses of Muslims.[92] Yet they used the language

[90] ʻAbdul Ḥalīm Sharar, 'Qaisarbāġh meñ Islām kā roʻb o dāb', *Dil Gudāz* (April 1888), p. 10.

[91] 'Kārespānḍans', *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, p. 535.

[92] Guha, 'The Politics of Identity and Enumeration', p. 160.

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of numbers and equality alongside this rhetoric of political power and historic significance. Within this conceptual framework it was essential for Sharar and the United Indian Patriotic Association to draw attention to the role of these powerful figures.[93] Similarly, for those hoping to downplay the significance of such a large gathering the simplest approach was to employ the type of attack used by *Avadh Punch*. Sharar recognized the significance and noted the names of many respected individuals in attendance; yet he made no attempt to dispute the accusation that the majority present were from the lower classes, and seemed to take pride in the fact that the gathering was not merely composed of traditional elites or the middle class.[94] He described it metaphorically as a garden whose beauty is not found in the rose alone, but in the diverse forms of plant life that make it a garden. Likewise, the beauty of the gathering was found in its diverse makeup. Sharar alluded to a variety of trees, the radiant colours of spring, the gentle breeze, the dew of dawn, and the songs of birds, transforming the weavers, butchers, the high and low into the 'garden of the *qaum*. The trees are Islam's present generation. And the nightingales are the passion-filled speakers of *Dar-us-Salam*.'[95] This transformation signalled changes that were afoot: populist leaders identifying with the masses would soon come to replace 'ci-devant aristocrats' whose claim to leadership was premised on their superiority to the masses.[96]

After the Qaisarbagh gathering ended, some attendees made their way to the Rifah meeting and reiterated their belief that Pandit Ajudhia Nath had made a communal attack on Muslims. Not surprisingly, chaos broke out. According to *Azad*'s account, 'stones were thrown at the table, and a large lamp placed there was broken'.[97] *Aligarh Institute Gazette* commented that inappropriate words thrown

[93] United Indian Patriotic Association, *Showing the Seditious Character of the Indian National Congress*, p. xxiii.

[94] For a comparison, see the following, in which the description of those in attendance at Sayyid Ahmad Khan's 1888 speech at the Muhammadan Educational Conference in Lucknow included only those it considered to be the 'intellect and the aristocracy, the brain and the muscle, of the Mahomedan community'. Syed Ahmed, *Sir Syed Ahmed on the Present State of Indian Politics, Consisting of Speeches and Letters Reprinted from the 'Pioneer'* (Allahabad: The Pioneer Press, 1888), pp. 1–2. http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00islamlinks/txt_sir_Syed_lucknow_1887.html, [accessed 27 February 2015].

[95] Sharar, 'Qaisar Bāġh meñ Islām kā ro'b o dāb', *Dil Gudāz* (April 1888), p. 12.

[96] Guha, 'The Politics of Identity and Enumeration', p. 160.

[97] *SVN*, p. 309.

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about were 'extremely shameful for a religious gathering'.[98] *Avadh Punch* reported that a group of 'ill-disposed men' with intent to create a riot arrived at the Rifah's gathering as it was about to disperse, but that 'the organisers of the meeting showed great moderation and avoided a breach of peace'.[99] Sharar mentioned nothing of this encounter. Instead, he described how Dar-us-Salam's enemies should give thanks because of the kindness Dar-us-Salam demonstrated by providing them with their new president, Inayat ud Daula. According to Sharar, 'the eldest prince of the minister of Awadh whose younger brother has been appointed to teach the queen Urdu ... had come to Qaisarbagh, and was going back after taking leave when someone led him into Lyall Hall and made him their president. I hear that Inayat ud Daula Bahadur is against Pandit Ajudhia Nath.'[100] This discrepancy between the reality of a confrontation and Sharar's concerted effort to cast the Qaisarbagh gathering and its participants in an idealized light indicates that he purposely glossed over any detail that might have complicated his narrative of divine concord.

Azad underscored the difference in turnout between the two meetings, stating that only 300–400 people attended the Rifah's meeting, while *Avadh Punch* claimed approximately 5,000 persons had attended.[101] The *Aligarh Institute Gazette* stated that, with the exception of between five and ten Muslims, 'most of the participants in the town hall meeting were Hindus'.[102] At the same time, *Avadh Punch* sought to discount the Qaisarbagh meeting by casting it as a lower-class gathering of which some sources had greatly exaggerated the number of attendees. Additionally, it claimed the lower classes had gathered 'under the idea that the meeting would declare a remission of the income tax, defend cow-killing, proclaim a *jihad* against Hindus, and so forth. When they heard no mention of any of these things at the meeting, they were highly disappointed and left the place in disgust, cursing the men who had deceived them.'[103] *Avadh Punch* accused the organizers of issuing a 'sensational notice' and using 'various tricks in order to secure a large attendance. Some of them even walked up and down the road in front of the hall of the Rahah-e-Am [*sic.*] Association

[98] 'Kārespānḍans', *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, p. 536.
[99] *SVN*, pp. 309–310.
[100] Sharar, 'Qaisarbāġh meñ Islām kā ro'b o dāb', pp. 12–13.
[101] *SVN*, pp. 308, 310.
[102] 'Kārespānḍans', *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, p. 536.
[103] *SVN*, pp. 309.

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for several hours and induced by misrepresentation many persons who desired to go to the hall to attend the Kaisarbagh meeting.'[104] Had the gathering attracted far fewer than the estimates provided by Sharar, it is likely *Avadh Punch* would not have felt the need to explain away a large turnout. These accusations, valid or not, reveal how elites and many of the middle class sought to limit the lower classes' participation in civil society's debates by portraying the '*ām*'s concerns as irrational and disconnected from reality.

Accusations flew both ways as *Azad* explained that National Congress supporters organized a 'counter-meeting' at the hall of the Rifah 'on the same day, obviously with a view to interfering with the success of the Kaisarbagh demonstration'.[105] The *Aligarh Institute Gazette* further elaborated that 'in order to stir divisions in such a large Muslim gathering' Hasan Ja'afar 'gave a notice for another gathering on the same day at the same time'.[106] Whereas Sharar refused to name Muslims siding with Pandit Ajudhia Nath or involved with the Rifah, the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* listed individuals who had been there when Nath had given his speech and supposedly refused to condemn his 'communal' attack. *Avadh Punch* attempted to deflect such criticisms by stating that 'those Musalmans who had been unjustly accused of supporting an alleged attack on the Muhammadan religion' organized the Rifah's meeting.[107] *Avadh Punch* appears to have been more personally invested in the day's gatherings than either the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* or *Āzād*; both papers ended their accounts with an appeal to the government to stop such gatherings in the future lest riots break out.

The Qaisarbagh gathering followed on the heels of Sayyid Ahmed Khan's 18 December 1887 anti-Congress speech at the Mahomedan Educational Congress in Lucknow. It seems safe to assume that the Qaisarbagh gathering used this wave of anti-Congress sentiment sweeping north India to attract thousands of people. Yet, whereas Khan's speech was attended by hundreds comprising 'the intellect and aristocracy, the brain and the muscle, of the Mahomedan community', the Qaisarbagh gathering attracted thousands from all walks of life. While anti-Congress sympathies were certainly responsible for luring some who attended, the different accounts

[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid, pp. 308–309.
[106] 'Kārespānḍans', *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, p. 536.
[107] *SVN*, p. 309.

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point to the variety of methods and appeals that may have attracted such a large crowd. Some might have been drawn by the empty promises *Avadh Punch* alleged, while others might have been motivated by ideals, as Sharar claimed, or by the perceived threat on their religion and community. Regardless, participation in the social and political life of the community during this time was certainly vibrant, although contentious. While Sharar pointed to the possibilities of a transcendent identity to unite Muslims, it was accomplished through the elision of the political realities of the day.

After Sharar's series of articles, laden with expectation, he was silent about Dar-us-Salam until March of 1889. Without specifying how the funds were to be used, he informed readers that they had not yet been used and that Dar-us-Salam had not been able to actually carry out its work. Previously, he had underscored how the funds were intended to provide education to underprivileged Muslim youth. Yet, as the following statement makes clear, these dreams did not come to fruition:

> It is unfortunate that the most passionate work that the blessed *Dār-us-Salām* gave birth to—with such hopes of success and great interest—has become a failure for them ... The honour-sacrificing volunteer Sahab came under pressure from the religious scholars and gave up on this worthy mission. The disorganization of *Dil Gudāz* further squandered the passion of the public ... Just as the laziness of the *qaum* and the carelessness of my co-religionists has rendered the sympathizers of the *qaum* powerless, so too has it rendered *Dār-us-Salām* powerless on this occasion.[108]

Here, Sharar blamed the religious scholars and *Dil Gudāz*'s apparent disorganization for the failure, which was clearly not the public's fault, for it was the 'passion of the public', in contrast to the 'laziness of the *qaum*' and 'carelessness of my co-religionists', that was the reason for the initial hope. This attempt to preserve the innocence of the public is significant, for it represents Sharar's desire to hold onto an idealized conception of the public in which his and others' hopes would remain secure. Sharar followed this bleak revelation with a request for his readers to inform him of the amounts and dates of their gifts as well as what they wished him to do with their money—should the funds be returned or spent by Dar-us-Salam? Sharar proceeded to recommend the funds be given to a group he had written about in 1887, the Anjuman-e Hamayat-e

[108] Sharar, 'Anjuman-e Dār us Salām Lucknow', pp. 13–14.

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Islam, who, in contrast to Dar-us-Salam, had continued to do great work.[109]

When Sharar's promotion of Dar-us-Salam, in *Dil Gudāz*, as representing the hopes of Muslims ran into the realities of outside pressures and disorganization, it collapsed. Perhaps it was this disappointment that helped shift Sharar's future focus from practical mobilization through any one organization to the composition of histories and novels. This shift in emphasis may help explain the perception that Sharar kept a safe distance from politics by refusing to affiliate with any one political organization.[110] Yet the historical, literary, and political are intertwined and cannot be so easily separated. Sharar aspired to an idealized public; yet the lack of a truly unified and organized public outside of fictive and historical narratives stared him in the face.

While Sharar portrayed Dar-us-Salam as creating a movement among Muslims, the pressure upon 'the honour-sacrificing volunteer Sahab' (Nawab Murtaza Khan) and the resulting abandonment of the mission revealed this movement as ultimately dependent on one personality. It is therefore not surprising that when Sharar outlined his desire to open a library in the April 1890 issue of *Dil Gudāz*, he did not want a collective work to be carried out based on one personality. He included a rough draft of library rules, which included the ideas of others. He requested suggestions from his readership so as to build a consensus of opinion and begin the work promptly. He then included 13 abbreviated letters from readers, each expressing a desire to contribute in some meaningful way, from giving books to financial donations.[111] The possibility that a consensus of opinion could now be formed through the circulation of a periodical brought about dramatic new opportunities.

[109] Aziz, *Public Life in Muslim India*, pp. 73–74; Minault, *Secluded Scholars*, pp. 175–182; 'Abdul Ḥālīm Sharar, 'Anjuman-e Ḥamāyat-e Islām Lahore', *Dil Gudāz* (December 1887), pp. 6–7.

[110] 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, *Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture*, E. S. Harcourt and Fakhir Hussain (trans.) (London: Paul Elek, 1975), p. 23.

[111] 'Abdul Halim Sharar, 'Qaumī Library', *Dil Gudāz* (April 1890), pp. 14–16. The authors of the letters are from the following areas: Gwalior, Gorakhpur, Jaunpur, Lahore, Agra, Lahore, Ferozpur, Aligarh, Gorakhpur, Delhi, Zil'a Basti, Dera Ismail Khan, and Hyderabad.

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Conclusion

For organizations that worked with the British, such as the Jalsah, cooperation and collaboration were the rule. Dar-us-Salam, however, appeared indifferent to the colonial state and appealed to individual Muslims throughout north India and the Deccan. In contrast to the Deoband Seminary, Dar-us-Salam attempted to operate outside the control of the *ulema* (although not averse to their involvement), and in distinction to Aligarh, outside the patronage of the colonial state. As Stark has highlighted in her article on the Jalsah-e Tahzib, 'the full extent of "native" cultural self-assertion and critical participation in the localised public arenas of big city and small town will only reveal itself to us if we dig deeper in the vernacular archive'.[112] This article is an attempt in that direction.

We will only be able to make more definitive statements about the relationship between a self-fashioning and emergent middle class, volunteer associations, and social activism after we have done more groundwork with vernacular sources and taken into account the increasing rhetorical power that religious identities attained in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Religious identities during this period, themselves undergoing significant change and often seen by scholars in a communal light, did not necessarily entail a prominent communal ideology. Rather, religious identities often held out the possibility for cross-class linkages.

Volunteer associations in the first decades after the Insurrection of 1857 were quite different from those that emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. From a 'culture of loyalism' espoused by early voluntary associations to a culture of indifference or even opposition, voluntary associations operated from vastly different platforms for increasingly diverse goals. The case of Dar-us-Salam reveals that a space for mobilization, collective action, and social and religious activism existed outside the confines of the colonial state and apart from entrenched religious establishments. Even though, as argued throughout this article, 'failed' attempts may be seen as stepping stones that laid the groundwork for more effective mass mobilization efforts, such disappointment from the collapse of Dar-us-Salam could not have been without its effects. Sharar's subsequent distance from such endeavours is but one example of

[112] Stark, 'Associational Culture', p. 31.

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the way in which the failures of grass-roots attempts to promote change could also contribute to disillusionment with volunteerism as a practical means to foster broader social and political change as well as its ability to transcend political divisions. It could also be argued that the bitter taste this left in the mouths of those involved pushed them away from investing themselves in similar ventures in the future and ultimately robbed the Muslim community of an opportunity to ride a wave of popular sentiment to transcend political and sectarian divisions. Is it possible that the high failure rate of voluntary associations within the Muslim community, and particularly those with broader, cross-class ambitions, contributed to the narrowing in vision and scope of future endeavours? While the answer to this question lies beyond the scope of this article, it is a line of enquiry that is worth pursuing.

While Dar-us-Salam, as Sharar described the group, created a space for the participation of the non-elites and gave them agency not solely dependent on the *sharīf* middle class or elites, the ultimate failure of the organization to bring its plans to completion underscored the limitations of a public-based volunteerism. While enthusiasm about a cause could be used to encourage participation among Muslims from different social strata, the fact that Sharar's voice was unique in its refusal to name the political nature of the Qaisarbagh gathering points to either his ignorance of the political realities of the day or his desire to transcend them for the perceived greater good. This article has argued for the latter and seeks to underscore how the gathering at Qaisarbagh of 20,000 Muslims represented different possibilities for different people.

The story of Dar-us-Salam points to several noteworthy developments. First, there was a growing recognition that the involvement of the public, made up of individuals from different classes, was essential if any broader change was to come to the Muslim community. Second, Sharar's recognition of the transformative potential of the everyday and the common man presents us with a moment in time when the trope of *zawāl* and *zillat* was combatted, if not overcome, through the idea of public volunteerism and the idea that every contribution, no matter its nature, counted. Yet an idealistic excitement could not substitute for organization or institutional support. Going back to Seal's formulation about the move to modern politics, this article has argued that the circulation of the everyday in this process—donations of dishes, grains, candles, and people knocking on doors—was just as essential as the practices of deliberative

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procedure that came along with the growth of modern institutions and associations. Bringing methods of fundraising common in the context of madrasa-style education into the broader public sphere, into the forefront of middle-class volunteerism and political mobilization, ushered broad segments of society into a closer relationship with the workings of civil society and the modern political process. The nature of such donations and the advertisement of them in a prominent Urdu publication communicated that any manner of participation was more important than the specific nature of that participation.

The idealism expressed by Sharar regarding the transformative power of concord could be faulted for its failure to account for the actual divisions within the community. Yet, for Sharar, the use of the imagination was less concerned with the accurate representation of reality than with providing his readers with a vision that might empower them to dream. The emotional impact his writings had on his readers is a testament to the power of the printed word to cultivate emotional responses which could then serve as social and political bonds. Collaboration with colonial authorities and vested interests presented less exciting opportunities for broader change, but ultimately the lack of a unifying cross-class agenda among the Muslim middle class and elites hindered the success of other alternatives. The overriding concern of the elites and most of the middle-class to protect their interests meant that the participation of lower-class Muslims in the public sphere tended to support *sharīf* middle-class and elite projects, which fortified their own advancement as leaders within the community. Perhaps the allure of historical fiction for Sharar, who wrote what is considered to be Urdu's first historical novel in 1888 and went on to write 24 more, was precisely the ability to portray the glories and failures of Islam's past as predicated upon the unity or disunity of Muslims. The solution to present challenges was thus straightforward—-remove the divisions and unite. For a moment, public volunteerism held out hope for the attainment of that goal. But as the various accounts demonstrate, even that hope was predicated upon the ability of Sharar to craft his narrative to appeal to many of the deepest longings of his readership.

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