

Tablighi Jamaat

Tablighi Jamaat ("Conveying Group") is a missionary and movement. Their activities are not limited to the Muslim community.¹ The Movement's main aim is to bring guidance to the world's Muslims.

Leaders of Tablighi Jamaat claim that the movement is strictly non-political in nature, with the main aim of the participants being to work at the grass roots level and reaching out to all Muslims of the world for spiritual development. In Britain, the movement gained press attention with its attempts to build the controversial London Markaz, termed Mega Mosque by the press, Europe's largest mosque in Newham next to the site for the London 2012 Olympics.²

Organization and Activities

Tablighi Jamaat sees its duty to revitalize the Muslim community, especially those it believes are in danger of losing their Muslim identity. It emphasizes Muslim practice and participation in the Muslim community, which some critics say goes to the exclusion of other communities. It gathers its members in meetings wherever its established and aids in community activities such as mosque building and education. It should be noted that Tablighi Jamaat does not consider its self a sect. But they were criticized by some of the scholars in Islam for its self-financed, Apolitical and Non-Militant nature. People from the 4 main school of thoughts also attend Tabligh as well as Deobandis.

Tabligh maintains an international headquarters, the Markaz, in Nizamuddin, and has several national headquarters to coordinate its activities in over 80 countries. Throughout its history it has sent its members to travel the world, preaching Prophet's message of peace and tolerance. It organizes preachers in Jamaats, groups of 10-12 who find themselves in this preaching mission.

1 Howenstein, Nicholas. *Islamist Networks: The Case of Tablighi Jamaat* (html). Retrieved on 2007-06-14.

2 Muslim group behind 'mega-mosque' seeks to convert all Britain -Times Online

History of the Movement

The Tablighi Jamaat was founded in the late 1920s by Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi in the Mewat province of India. The inspiration for devoting his life to Islam came to Ilyas during his second pilgrimage to the Hijaz in 1926.³ Maulana Ilyas put forward the slogan, 'Aye Musalmano! Musalman bano' (in Hindi / Urdu) which translates 'O Muslims! Become Muslims' (in English). This expressed the central focus of Tablighi Jamaat, which has been renewing Muslim society by renewing Muslim practice in those it feels have lost their Muslim-ness.

Ilyas was a prominent member of the Deobandi movement and throughout Tabligh's history there has been a degree of association between the two groups. Tabligh was formed at a time in India when some Muslim leaders feared that Indian Muslims were losing their Muslim identity to the majority Hindu culture.⁴

In 1978, construction of the Tablighi mosque in Dewsbury, England commenced. Subsequently, the mosque became the European headquarters of Tablighi Jamaat. Ameer or Zimmadar are titles of leadership in the movement. The first Ameer, also the founder, was Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalawi (Maulana Ilyas) (1886-1944). The second was his son Muhammad Yusuf Kandhalawi (1917 – 1965). The third one was Inaam ul Hasan. Now there is a shura which includes two leaders: Zubair ul Hasan and Saad Kandhalawi. In Pakistan the duties of the Ameer are being served by Haji Abdulwahab. Muhammad Zakariya al-Kandahlawi (1898 – 1982) is also among the personalities of the jamaat, as he compiled the book *Fazail-e-Amal*.⁵

With the ascent of Maulana Yusuf, Ilyas' son, as its second leader, the group began to expand activities in 1946, and within two decades the group reached Southwest and Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. Initially it expanded its reach to South Asian diaspora

3 Islamic Fundamentalism in India, Twenty First Century Indian Society, 1986, p. 41

4 Kepel, Gilles. *The War for Muslim Minds*, 2004, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, pg.261

5 Alexiev, Alex. "Tablighi Jamaat: Jihad's Stealthy Legions", *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2005. Retrieved on 2007-02-01.

communities, first in Arab countries then in Southeast Asia. Once established, the Tablighi Jamaat began engaging local populations as well.

In the 1990's, the official apolitical stance of Tabligh was challenged by a break-away sect which added a seventh tenant to Tabligh's 6-point ideology, "jihad in Pakistan and abroad."

Although the Movement first established itself in the United States, it established a large presence in Europe during the 1970's and 1980's. It was especially prominent in France during the 1980's, although its influence has fallen since then, with many of its members becoming associated with UOIF, although one of its members is still represented in the French Council of the Muslim Creed.⁶ Tabligh's influence has grown, though, in the increasing Pakistani community in France, which has doubled in the decade before 2008 to 50,000-60,000.⁷

However, Britain is the current focus of the Movement in the West, primarily due to the large South Asian population that began to arrive there in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸ By 2007, Tabligh members were running 600 of Britain's 1350 mosques.⁹

By 2008 it had a presence in nearly 80 countries and had become a leading movement. However, it maintains a presence in India, where at least 100 of its Jamaats go out from Markaz, the international headquarters, to different parts of India and overseas.¹⁰

6 Gilles, Kepel. *The War for Muslim Minds*. 2004. pg.261

7 Rotella, Sebastian. "European Plot Allegations Prove Ambiguous," International and UN section, Los Angeles Times, February, 11, 2008.

8 Howenstein, Nicholas. *Islamist Networks: The Case of Tablighi Jamaat* (html). Retrieved on 2007-06-14.

9 Norfolk, Andrew. *Muslim group behind 'mega-mosque' seeks to convert all Britain* (ece). Retrieved on 2008-04-07.

10 Arshad, Sameer. "Tabligh, or the enigma of revival," *The Times of India*. July 23, 2007.

Celebrity and Political links

There are many renowned personalities associated with the movement.

One of the largest gathering of after the Hajj, is known as “Bishwa Ijtema.” Which is a gathering from all over the world and is hosted by the leaders of “International Tabligh Jama'at.” It takes place in “Tongi” which is on the outskirts of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.

Former President of India, Dr. Zakir Hussain was associated with the Jamaat. Former president of Pakistan Rafiq Tarar. Former head of ISI of Pakistan Gen Javed Nasir and Gen Zia-ul-Haq have also been linked with the movement{fact}.

former Singer Junaid Jamshed has close links with the jamaat. Among professional sportsman Shahid Afridi, Saqlain Mushtaq, Inzamam-ul-haq, Mushtaq Ahmed and Saeed Anwar. It is also widely believed the Pakistani middle order batsman Mohammad Yousuf embraced “Islam” with the help of the Tablighi Jamaat.

Dr. Arbab Ghulam Rahim the former chief minister of Sindh, and Ijaz-ul-Haq have strong ties with the tablighi activities.

The six principles

Tabligh in Arabic means "to convey (the message)" and Tablighi Jamaat consider as one of the primary duties of a Muslim. They encourage people to follow Islamic principles and the life of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) through his teachings, going out for months or years in the same fashion as the companions of the Prophet (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

When an individual goes out in a Jamaat, he tries to bring 6 qualities into his life, which were commonly found in all the companions, if one brings these into his life, then following the complete Deen will be made easy for him. These six qualities are:

- 1) *Firm belief in the Kalimah*- "An article of faith in which the *tabligh* accepts that there is no god but Allah and the Prophet Muhammad is His messenger. and that Allah can do each and everything without the help of the creation, and the creation cannot do anything without the help of Allah. The only way to succeed in this world and the next (life after death) is to walk on the path shown by Prophet Muhammad."
- 2) *Concentration and Devotion in Salaat*- "Five daily prayers that are essential to spiritual elevation, piety, and a life free from the ills of the material world. To build a connection with Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala and to gain from his unlimited treasures"^[2]
- 3) *Ilm and Dhikr*- "The thirst for knowledge and remembrance of Allah conducted in sessions in which every individual contributes whatever knowledge which one can regarding performing prayers, reciting the Quran and reading *Hadith* and to gain the remembrance of Allah in every action make Dhikr by reciting 3 Tasbihaat, Third Kalimah, Durood and Istighfaar."
- 4) *Ikram-i-Muslim*- "The treatment of fellow humans with honor and deference, to love the youngsters and respect the elders and have respect for the scholars of Islam"
- 5) *Ikhlās-i-Niyyat*- "Reforming one's life in supplication to Allah by performing every (good) human action for the sake of Allah and toward the goal of self-transformation"
- 6) *Dawat-o-Tabligh*- The sparing of time to live a life based on faith and learning its virtues, following in the footsteps of the Prophet, and taking His message door-to-door for the sake of faith. Since Rasoolullah Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wasallam was the last and final prophet, it is our duty to now carry on this work of the prophets, i.e. call others towards good and prevent evil"¹¹

Criticism

Due to their Deobandi affiliation (and being seen as an activist group for the movement), the Tablighi Jamaat has yet to gain complete acceptance amongst orthodox Sunni Muslims. Their differences concerning the validity of the celebration of the birth of the Prophet (may Allah bless

¹¹ Howenstein, Nicholas. Islamist Networks: The Case of Tablighi Jamaat (html). Retrieved on 2007-06-14.

himand grant him peace), requesting his assistance, etc. remain hotly disputed, and open debates through literature or organized confrontation continue to this day.

Also Known Salafi scholars have criticised the group for not addressing the important issues related to Aqidah and instead focusing on the peripherals like Dhikr. The group is also accused by the Salafis of mis-using the statement of Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn Baaz (which he made about the importance of 'such' religious gatherings when he was not made aware of the beliefs of the group). Shaykh 'Abdul-'Azeez ibn Baaz later gave "The final fatwa" which denounced the group for it's religious innovations. Another Salafi scholar, Abu Muawiya wrote a detailed account of the various, "Polytheistic" stories mentioned in the group's book "Fazail Amal"(Part 1,Part 2, Part 3). Also, the Salafis have circulated books and articles against the group over the internet.

Allegations that Tablighi Jamaat has ties to terrorism

Dozens of the captives the USA holds in extrajudicial detention in its Guantanamo Bay detention camps, in Cuba, had their continued detention justified through their alleged association with the Tabligh movement. Other nation's counter-terrorism agencies also suspect the movement, or some its members, of ties to terrorism

The American counter-terrorism analysts who prepared the allegations against Yasim Muhammed Basardah wrote:¹²

"The detainee was recruited by **Jamaat Tablighi** (*sic*), a group that recruits young men for Jihad in Afghanistan. Many of these young men are poor and on drugs. The detainee attended meeting sponsored by Jamaat Tablighi (*sic*) for two months."

12 Summarized transcript (.pdf), from Yasim Muhammed Basardah's Administrative Review Board hearing - page 233

The allegations prepared for Saad Masir Mukbl Al Azani's Administrative Review Board hearing, stated:¹³

"Jama'at Al Tablighi (*sic*), a Pakistan-based Islamic missionary organization, is becoming increasingly radicalized, and is being used as a cover to mask travel and activities of terrorists including members of al Qaida."

Murat Kurnaz's lawyers prepared a long dossier for his Administrative Review Board hearing, that included letters from three American professors of Religion, who assured his Board that the Tabligh movement was founded on a principle staying out of politics. However, it is often said that one thing deviants have in common, is the sword.

Qamar-ul Huda - "From the very beginning the Jama'at al-Tablighi has deliberately distanced itself from politics, political activities, and political controversies."¹⁴

Barbara D. Metcalf - "I will also attempt to explain why it is implausible to believe that the Tablighis support terrorism or are in any way affiliated with other terrorist or 'jihadi' movements such as the Taliban or Al Qaeda."¹⁵

Jamal J. Ellias.- "I must emphasize this last point, that the Tablighis formally and actively believe that travelling to engage in missionary activity fully discharges any religious obligation to engage in Jihad."¹⁶

This group has the same beliefs as the Wahabis and Deobandis, however, to make the Ahle Sunnah follow their corrupt beliefs they only talk about Kalima and Salaah. When a Muslim falls in their trap they make him a

13 Factors for and against the continued detention (.pdf) of Saad Masir Mukbl Al Azani Administrative Review Board, May 27, 2005 - page 3

14 Murat Kurnaz ARB, Department of Defense, pages 93-95

15 Murat Kurnaz ARB, Department of Defense, pages 96-98

16 Murat Kurnaz ARB, Department of Defense, pages 103-105

staunch Deobandi and Wahabi making such people to disrespect the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

There is a group of people who have been visiting Islamic countries and preaching and advising Muslims under the name Tablighi Jamaat. Leaving India and Pakistan in gangs of three to five persons, these people have been going all over the world. They say that they try to spread Islam. They claim to be in the path of companions. Some of them also say that they follow the Hanafi madhhab and admire Ibn Taymiyya. Though they speak very usefully and righteously and since the fact that they never mention the names and words of Islamic scholars and seem to hush up part of the Ahl as-Sunnah knowledge, they arouse suspicion and sorrow. In the following, the writings of some of the religious authorities living in India and Pakistan on them are given: “They are heretics. They call themselves Jamaat at-tabligh. Their centre is in Delhi [with large branches in Karachi and Lahore, Pakistan.] Wherever they go, they lay stress very much upon performing salaah. They give useful and necessary religious information. They call these activities of theirs ‘Ghast’ in Urdu language.

It is said that their organization was founded by an Indian named Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas. This man was born in Kandla in 1303 A.H. (1886). He was Rashid Ahmad Gangohi’s disciple. It is written on the 43rd and 49th pages of the book Mawlana Ilyas Uranki din Dawat by one of Ilyas’s close disciples that he stayed near him for ten years. When Rashid Ahmad died in 1323 (11th August 1905) he was taught by Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri.

In his Urdu book, Khalil Ahmad [d. 1346 (1928)] says that the devil is more learned than the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace).

Rashid Ahmad says on the 51st page of Barahin-i qati'a that Khalil Ahmad's book was a blessed one and kept it at the place called 'Bait-i 'ain-i Islam.' Rashid Ahmad was the Khalifa of Haji Imdadullah al-Madani [d. Mecca, 1317 (1899)], and was first taught by Ismail Dahlawi,

who wrote on the 38th page of Taqwiyat al-iman which is the Urdu translation of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's Kitab at-tawhid, 'Rasulullah ('alaihi 's-salam) died and rotted away. He became soil. He who believes that he will intercede in Resurrection becomes a polytheist.'

Another tutor of Ilyas was Ashraf 'Ali Tahanawi who also was a Khalifa of Haji Imdadullah of the Chishtiyya Tariqa. In the first part of his Urdu book Hifz al-iman, he writes very loathsome things which reduce the high grade of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) to the low degree of a child, of a mad person or of animals.

All the four tutors of Ilyas became unbelievers because of such writings of theirs in their books. Ilyas praises, exalts and excessively respects these unbelievers. He says that they are the most eminent awliya of their time. The 114th page of the book Malfuzat-i Hadrat-i Mawlana Ilyas is full with such praises. He says about his shaykh Rashid Ahmad, 'Had not I seen him, my heart would not have attained tranquillity. Whenever I woke up at night I would go to his room, look at his face and then come back and go to sleep. His love, like the blood in my veins, has penetrated everywhere in me.' (pp. 44, 49, Mawlana Ilyas Uranki). Allahu declares in the last verse of the Surah al-Mujadala, "Those who believe in Allahu and the Day of Resurrection will dislike those [unbelievers] who do not obey Allahu and His Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace). Allahu will fill with Iman the hearts of those who dislike unbelievers even though they were their fathers, sons, brothers or relatives.' All the members of Tabligh jamaat exaggerate and praise Ilyas and his teachers very much and say 'rahmatullahi 'alaih' when they mention or hear their names. They spread their above-mentioned books everywhere.

"The Ahl as-Sunnah scholars wrote many books in order to refute the Tabligh group and to reveal the fact that they were heretics. They could not answer these books at all. Mawlana 'Abd al-'Alim Siddiqi wrote that Ilyas's teachers were in an endeavour to demolish Islam from within." [This is written in detail also in the books al-mustanad, Usul al-arba'a fi

tardid al-Wahhabiyya, ad-dawlat al-Makkiyya and Hediyya-t-ul-Mehdiyyin, which were reproduced in Istanbul in 1395 (1975).]

When Ilyas died in 1363 (1949) the successor was his son, Muhammad Yusuf Kandhlawi [b. Delhi, 25th Jamadi-ul ‘Ula 1335 (20th March 1917); d. Lahore, buried Delhi, 1394 (1974)]. Yusuf’s three-volume book, Hayat-us-Sahaba, was translated into Turkish and published in 1395 (1975). Because as-Sahaba are praised much in this book it arouses admiration in the reader. But there is a famous saying: “Judge a man by his actions, not by his words.” One who believes in the superiority of as-Sahaba and loves them has to follow in their path, which is the path shown by the Ahl as-Sunnah scholars. The sign of love for as-Sahaba is to learn the fiqh books of one of the four Ahl as-Sunnah Madhhabs, to endeavour to spread this knowledge and to live up to it. Muhammad Yusuf was succeeded by his son, Shaykh In’am al-Hasan, who was the hadith teacher at Mazahir-i ‘Ulum Madrasa in Saharanpur, India. Abul-Hasan ‘Ali Nadwi, the director of Nadwat al-ulama [founded in Lucknow, India in 1310 (1891)], praises al-Imam ar-Rabbani Ahmad as-Sirhindi and his services in his book Ad-dawat al-Islamiyya [Lucknow, 1395 (1975)], but adds his praises for Ismail Dehlawi (killed in 1246), Nadhir Husain Dahlawi (d. 1320), the Madrasa in Deoband which was founded by Muhammad Qasim Nanawtawi [d. 1317 (1899)], one of the Khulafa of Imdad-ullah, in 1288 (1871), Ashraf Ali Tahanawi (d. 1362), the Tabligh group and its founder, Muhammad Ilyas. This faqir, the author, has read the book Taqwim al-bayan, Persian translation of Ismail Dehlawi’s Taqwiyyat al-iman [Pakistan, 1396 (1976)] and come to the conclusion that Ismail is not only a sheer ignoramus but also a non-madhhabi idiot who strives to censure the right by allying it with the wrong. May Allah protect Muslims from reading and believing such heretical writings and falling into endless calamity! Aameen!