Transmission of Islamicate Learning: Institutions and Personalistic Appurtenances in Mughal North India

Shams Tabrez

Knowledge production is an activity integral to human beings, and the repertoire of the accumulated knowledge is inestimably vast. Often new knowledge replaces the old, of course with continuity, changes and ruptures, leaving elusive imprints. Knowledge has no codified existence for several centuries and what has survived to us remains present in different forms connected to past practices. In literate societies, knowledge is codified but with a variety of hurdles in the path of comprehension, such as multiplicity of forms, cognitive encounters, genealogies and ruptures, knowable and unknowable properties, and so on.[1] There is synthesis and aggregation, besides the problem of elusive circulation, dialectical expansion, and mutual nullification. The production of knowledge entailed both formal and informal patterns, agencies and institutions. While codified, structured and systematic production of knowledge formed part of formal production, the informal production revolved around oral transmission. Textual production and reproduction, and teaching in institutions—both formal and informal—are chief constitutive element of formal production of knowledge.

In the course of human history, every literate society has devised various sets of mechanism and institutions to produce, acquire, and transmit knowledge to successive generations. The process of transmission entails both institutional structure as well as informal system. However, the two channels of transmission—formal and institutional as well as informal and personal—overlap each other. Mughal India developed means for acquisition and transmission of knowledge for a variety of purposes. The transmission took place through agencies, not all of which can be put under the rubric of formal institutions, as we understand in the modern sense of the term.

Institutions give meaning to an organization, establishment, foundation, society, or the like, devoted to the promotion of a particular cause or programme, especially one of public, educational, or charitable character. It also connotes the concept of any persistent structure or mechanism of social order governing the behaviour of the concerned scholars within a given community. They are identified with a social purpose, transcending individual concerns and intentions by mediating the rules that govern living behaviour. On the general plane, institution is an enduring and stable set of arrangements that regulates individual and/or group conduct on the basis of established rules and procedures.[2] However, if we move back in time, the processes appear more fluid than fixed.

I

In Mughal period, we come across four levels of learning, namely, *maktab*, *madrasa*, *khanqah* and household, requiring some institutional presence, official patronage and support, especially for higher stages of learning and scholarly endeavour. *Maktab* (school) was the institution for instructing students at primary level.[3] The term was used for the place where students acquired learning as well as the system wherein students received basic/primary education. It was not a systematized structure or a set-up with explicit rules and regulation; it was run, usually, by an individual teacher with concomitant authority to regulate the affairs. However, if and when funded by community at large or individual, the activities were under the watch of the funding agencies.

Although, there were separate provisions for educating the princes where teachers were appointed to teach them but the place of instruction was known by the term *maktab*. It is said that Faizi, the poet-laureate of Akbar's court, at the beginning of his career obtained access to the *maktab* of prince Salim and displayed his merit in the presence of the emperor, Akbar.[4] However, there exists difference of opinion in the sources about the channel through which he was introduced to the emperor but the reference to the term, *maktab*—where the prince was

getting instruction at the primary level—makes the point. Referring to the ceremony of commencement of Shah Jahan's education, the author of *Amal-i Salih*, Muhammad Salih Kambu, also refers to the place of instruction as *maktab*.[5] On 4 July 1642, as per instruction of Shah Jahan, Murad Bakhsh was put in the *maktab* (*dabistan*) to acquire etiquettes of religion, traditions and obligation of Islamic law (*adaab-i din wa sunan wa faraiz i shariat*) of the seal of the Prophet. Learning these aspects was considered essential for protection of profane/worldly dignity as well as safeguard of the self from the standpoint of both reason and faith. On this occasion, Mulla Mirak Harawi, one of the very learned persons (*fazil dindar*) was bestowed robe of honour, thousand rupees, and was appointed as the teacher (*amuzgar*) of the prince.[6] In the opinion of Sujan Rai Bhandari, the author of *Khulasat–ul Makatib* (a textbook for the use of students learning *insha*[7]), a child should be brought to primary school (*maktab khana*) when he starts speaking/conversation.[8] The references to the place of instruction of children commencing their education were generally referred by the term *maktab* in Mughal period but sometimes the term *dabistan* was also used for it.

Although the term *maktab* was used generally for the place of instruction of primary level, it was, in some cases, also applied for the transmission and acquisition of learning of higher grade. In such case as well as in the case of other institutions of learning such as *madrasa*, the institution was run and managed by a single person with hardly any external regulation or well-devised set of policy. For instance, Balkrishan Brahman, a petty official, joined the *maktab* of Akhwund Abdul Hameed, and acquired learning from beginning to higher grades. He acquired proficiency in Persian books and mastery in the art of conversation (*adab-i muhawarat*) along with epistolary composition (*insha*).[9] There was no religious discrimination in permitting the students to study in *maktab*; both Muslims and non-Muslims were encouraged to receive instruction. To get a government job, one was supposed to learn Persian language—the language of court and administration. In a way, this was compulsory but not Arabic, as some modern authors have suggested.[10]

Madrasa (college) was an important institution for imparting instruction and transmission of knowledge where students acquired education in higher echelons of learning.[11] *Madrasas* were established by the emperors, officials and even by private individuals. While those established by the state and its agencies had imperial provisions for maintenance, the private ones were either maintained by private donations or else they approached the state for grant to run the institution. We get many references in details of students acquiring knowledge and teachers imparting instruction in a *madrasa*. For instance, in 1562-63, Maulana Alauddin Lari, the author of a gloss on *Sharh Aqaid- i Nasafi*, came from the court of a noble, Khan Zaman, to Agra, and applied himself in the study of sciences, and built a *madrasa* of weeds (*khass*).[12] The teaching also entails study by the teacher himself, which is a continuous process as testified by Badauni about Alauddin Lari's lifelong engagement in acquiring different streams of knowledge. In the same year, an assassination attempt was made on Akbar from the top of the balcony of the *Madrasa-i Begum*—an institution established by Maham Anaga in Delhi.[13] Shaikh Hasan, one of the leading *ulama* of his time, along with Maulana Ismail Arab, was occupied in the instruction of the students in a college in Delhi identified as *Madrasa-i Hazrat-i Dehli*.[14] Mihnati of Hisar was fond of study and was in the college of Delhi. He was afterwards, by the emperor's order, appointed judge of Sirhind.[15] During his governorship of Lahore (1589-1593-94), Qilich Muhammad Khan, one of the great nobles of Akbar and Jahangir, gave lessons for one watch of the day (equal to three hours) in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Quranic exegesis (*tafsir*) and tradition (*hadith*) in the *madrasa* in Lahore. He is stated to have tried hard to propagate knowledge of Islamic law (*ulum-i sharia*), and the people of Lahore, in the hope of gaining proximity to him and attaining their objects, acquired such knowledge with great diligence. Akbar built a hospice (*khanqah*) and a *madrasa* in Fatehpur Sikri at the cost of Rs 5 lakh rupees on the account of growing connection with Shaikh Salim Chishti; the association of the emperor and the Sufi developed because of blessing and prophecy of the latter regarding the birth of the emperor's long-awaited male heir, Sultan Salim.[16] At the time of appointment of Munim Khan-i Khanan as *jagirdar* of Jaunpur, he was instructed to give special attention to *ulama* and Sufis of the place. He is credited to have given a new life to mosques and *madrasa* of the place, and bestowed bounties on religious elite as well as the needy.[17] In the *madrasa* of Mir Haji Sadr, ecclesiastical officer under Akbar, one teacher was appointed for teaching and students were engaged in study; and everyone was given fellowship according to his condition.[18] Maulana Jamal Lahori, a renowned *alim* of Akbar's reign who is said to have improvised the commentary of the Quran by Shaikh Faizi, was a teacher at a *madrasa* in Lahore. Known as a prodigious child, Lahori went on to develop a fine reputation for himself as a scholar. To his credit was a manual of subtle points of discussion in rational and traditional subjects, easily comprehensible for students.[19]

During the reign of Shah Jahan, when Nazar Muhammad Khan, the ruler of Balkh, attacked Kabul, his officers occupied places under the fort. One of his officers, Abdur Rahman, stationed himself in the *madrasa* of Khawaja Abdul Haqq.[20] In another case, Mir Shamsuddin

Ali Khalkhali, a reputed scholar (*mu'tabar danishwar*) of Shah Jahan period, was appointed as a teacher by the emperor in one of the *madrasas* of Agra where he remained engaged in teaching and giving instruction for some time. From among his writings is a journal (*risala*) on mathematics, which he wrote for students and associates; it was incomparable in the opinion of the author of the *Tabaqat-i Shahjahani*.[21] Similar references to *madrasas*, being established and run by different agencies, are found in the sources pertaining to later period of Mughal India, where reputed scholars imparted instruction and produced students of high caliber who rose to become important personalities.[22]

The category of *Madrasa* as institution of learning is not clearly discernible in the period of our discussion. Yet based on information available in the sources, it can be classified in three categories: private, state and state aided but run by individual. While *madrasa*, owing to its personalized character of education pattern and system, appears to be focused upon and dependent on scholars, there still are references to the institution which remained existent for a longer period of time. *Madrasa-i Dehli* is one such case where the institution remained functional for a longer period of time.[23] The educational institutions had provisions for residential students who came from far-flung areas to study. Along with boarders, day scholars attended the madrasa. Shaikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddith used to go twice a day to the *Madrasa-i Delhi*, morning and evening, during the heat and cold, returning to his own house for the meal but only for a short time. The college was at a distance of 2 miles from his residence; he had to travel an average of 8 miles a day indicating indeed a great passion for learning on his part.[24]

On the precise structure and functioning of a *madrasa*, we do not have much detailed information. Still, a view can be formed on the basis of idea of a *madrasa* provided by Khairuddin Muhammad Jaunpuri in connection to a petition he presented to Lord Marques of Wellesley (Governor General of India, 1798-1805).[25] In the petitions, the author deplores the dilapidated condition of institution of learning of Jaunpur, and the grim condition of those engaged in the scholarly pursuits. He implores the governor to revive the intellectual tradition of the place for which he proposes establishment of a *madrasa*. Since the old *madrasa* was in ruins and constructing a new one required heavy cost, he proposed the chief mosque, *Jami-us Sharq*, to be selected for the place of instruction. In the scheme, the houses on two sides of the mosque could be used for the residence of the students after necessary repair of the broken and fallen portions.

In his proposition, the best *madrasa* was the one in which there would be not less than five teachers (*maulvi*). The more the number of teachers, the better would be the means of imparting instruction. It was suggested that the four *maulvis* should be stationed on four sides of the *madrasa* and one *maulvi*—who was in-charge of the affairs of the teachers and responsible for the necessities of the students, should stay in the centre of the *madrasa*. The person in charge was supposed to always inquire into the conditions/circumstances of the teachers and students. The four teachers were given the task to teach different subjects and grades. For instance, one should be entrusted with the task of teaching Persian and small textbooks on grammar and syntax. The other should be teaching rational and transmitted subjects. The responsibility of the in-charge of the institution was not only to impart instructions in all fields of knowledge but included inquiry into the condition of all students, keeping the teachers in good humour, and inquiring about the students' lesson/study separately. He was also required to report the circumstances of each teacher and student before the authority, and to collect the books for the library. It was further suggested that some assistants/ servants (*mulazim*) should be appointed to assist the in-charge (*mutawalli*) towards looking after the boarding houses of the students and to look after their necessities. The textbooks (*kitabahay-i darsi*) should be purchased from different quarters and scribes should copy them. There should be a provision for stipends to the students in consideration of their circumstances and merit. If a student completed his education and started teaching in this *madrasa*, his salary should be fixed by the authority (in this case, Governor-General) as per his reported capability and attainments. As regards the salary of the four teachers and the *mutawalli*, Khairuddin Muhammad left the matter for the kind nature and judgment of the governor to decide.[26]

He further implores the governor to appoint a physician to treat the afflicted as well as train/ teach students. There was lack of medical facility and doctors in the place, and the inhabitants suffered a good deal of misery due to the diseases. He gives a precedent that 12 years back, Mr. Duncan, a resident of Banaras, appointed Hakim Lai Bakhsh at a pay of Rs 50 for treatment of the inhabitants of the city. After departure of Mr. Duncan, his salary was stopped and he left for Banaras. He requests the governor to appoint a physician well versed in the science of medicine and would practice in the city and the *madrasa*. He would instruct the students as well as treat the sick. Establishment of a medical school (*madrasa-i tababat*) would lead to production of hundreds of skilled physicians.[27]

In the medieval period, the concept of benediction and reward went along with the concept of learning. It was an accepted dictum in Islam that people benefitted from the rewards of learners; some of the concepts crystallized

into practices such as recitation of the *Quran* (*Quran khwani*) on the birth of a child or the death of a person. For the reason of religious significance such as reward, individuals established institutions, which purport to give them perpetual benefit (*sadqa jariya*). It is in this connection, the tomb complex was usually attached with structures having provisions for learning. The institutions of learning also had mosques contiguous to it or attached with the same structure for the reason that learning and prayer went hand in hand. It was considered quite necessary to have both knowledge of the religion and practice of the knowledge (*ilm wa aml*).

The *madrasa*, usually, were part of a larger complex containing mosques as well. *Madrasa* were often attached with the tombs of emperors, nobles and religious elites. The Khairul Manzil, built by Maham Anaga (wet-nurse of Akbar) in the year 1561, was attached with a mosque. Carr Stephen gives a description of the remains of the building:

'the *madrasah* is in ruins, but the cloisters are still to be seen here and there; it stands almost in front of the western gate of Purana Qilah, and near the supposed site of the western gate of Delhi of Sher Shah,…'[28]

Akbar constructed a mosque, *madrasa* and *khanqah* on the hillocks in Fatehpur Sikri. Abul Fazl says that the travellers testified to very few like that.[29] During the reign of Shah Jahan, another feather was added to the mental map of mosque –*madrasa* complex. A *madrasa*, named *Dar-ul Baqa* (abode of eternity), was built on the southern end of the mosque along with the *masjid-i jami* in Shahjahanabad, which was pulled down after the mutiny of 1857. The construction of the *madrasa* started in the same year in which construction of the mosque started. The institution was, later, entirely deserted, and most of the buildings were left dilapidated. Maulvi Muhammad Sadruddin Khan Bahadur, the chief ecclesiastical officer of Shahjahanbad, reports *Athar-us Sanadid*, took it from the then emperor, repaired the buildings, and made it functional. Many worthy students were placed in it.[30] Shah Jahan's elder daughter, Jahan Ara Begum, constructed the *jami* mosque of Agra, and along with it a *madrasa*, which kept running successfully for a long time. The shops around the mosque were endowed for meeting the expenses of the *madrasa* and the mosque.[31] Nawab Sharaf-ud Daulah Iradat Khan constructed a *madrasa* and a mosque in 1722 during the reign of Muhammad Shah.[32]

A typical example of the complex arrangement of place of learning and house of worship is the *madrasa* founded by Ghaziuddin Khan Firoz Jung, the favourite officer of Aurangzeb and later, one of the principal nobles in the court of Bahadur Shah.[33] Near the Ajmeri gate of Delhi, he constructed a *madrasa*, his own mausoleum and a mosque—all situated within the same enclosure. A handsome gateway leads into the enclosure. The arched rooms in the outer wall of the gateway are supposed to have been kitchen of the students of the *madrasa*. These magnificent structures were originally outside Shahjahanabad, but were included within the modern Delhi when the walls were repaired by the British in 1803. The *madrasa*, the mausoleum and the mosque within the same enclosure form one of the remaining specimens of religious endowment combining in one spot a place of worship, a tomb of the founder, and a residence and place of instruction for those who were to have charge of them.

The tombs usually contained numerous rooms that were used for the purpose of lodging students and teachers. The beautiful tomb of Humayun, constructed during Akbar's reign, had a grand *madrasa* with small rooms functioning as students' cubicles. Carr Stephenson reports:

"The college, which is on the roof of the tomb, was at one time an institution of some importance, and men of learning and influence used to be appointed to the charge of the place. It has, however, long ceased to maintain its reputation, and for the last 150 years the once, probably, well filled rooms have been completely abandoned."[34]

Monastic establishment (*khanqah*) was another important institution for imparting learning. Sufis and *mashaikhs* (pl. of *shaikh*, a sufi master/grand scholar) considered not only striving to purify their spirit and repetition of religious invocation/recitation of devotional text or litany their prayer but they did reckon their true purpose (*haqiqi nisb-ul 'ain*) teaching and instructing Islamic law and Sufi path (*shariat wa tariqat*), as well as exoteric and esoteric knowledge. On the account of this consideration in the life of Sufis, it is common to find them engaged in teaching and instruction in the reference and biographies of Sufis. In every *khanqah*, along with the seeker of the Truth, a large group of seekers of exoteric knowledge was present. A significant amount of the pecuniary grant given by the state was spent on students.

Sufis imparted instruction in both worldly knowledge as well as trained pupils in the spiritual domain. For instance, Shaikh Nizamuddin of Ambethi removed Shaikh Hatim from among the class of students who read in the hospice of Qazi Mubarak, and imparted him spiritual training along with exoteric knowledge.[35] Shaikh Sadullah's (d.1581) *khanqah* in Bayana was resorted to by students and followers of religious life (*ahl-i suluk*) who received instruction and spiritual guidance from him.[36] Saiyid Shah Mir of Samana, an *alim* (scholar) and *sufi*, imparted instruction to students in his *khanqah* in Agra.[37] Mulla Salih, uncle of poet Tifli, was appointed a teacher for the *khanqah* Fathpur.[38] The *khanqah* of Shaikh Abdur

Rashid (one of the great *Sufis* and renowned *ulama* of Jaunpur) would be in a rendezvous with the students and acquirers of perfection. It was his routine to spend half the day in teaching the students, and the other half in instructing the acquirers of spiritual knowledge.[39] In the *khanqah* of Shaikh Muhammad Maah, one of the great Sufi *shaikh* of Aurangzeb's period, such a huge crowd of students (*taliban ulum*) gathered that the people incharge of supplying their food often became unable to make a correct estimate of necessary articles, and were exhausted in the work of distributing their meals.[40] Later, the task of teaching students and guiding the seekers of spiritual path was carried on by his son and successor Shaikh Muhammad Ghauth (reign of Muhmmad Shah). It is said that daily increasing number of students were found in his monastery, and every one arriving after nightfall got food from his kitchen.[41]

Apart from buildings constructed solely for education, the mosque was an important place for imparting education and transmission of learning.[42] Every large and old mosque was a learning place. In Hindustan, we find big and magnanimous mosques in most of old towns and cities having a sizable population of Muslims. A large portion of the mosque was used as place for instruction, and small rooms around the courtyard were residential places for students and teachers. For example, the rooms around the large courtyard of Fatahpuri and Akbarabadi mosques (constructed in 1060) were especially meant for the residence of students. The structure of Fatahpuri mosque is still used for the same purpose, and produces a large group of *ulum-i Arabia* graduates.[43] Mirza Muflis, an able *'alim* well equipped in the knowledge of interrogation and disputation (*ulum-i jadl wa munazara*), came from Transoxiana to India, and taught for four years in the *Jami masjid* of Khwaja Moinuddin Farankhudi.[44] Mulla Haji Muhammad Lahori (d.1609), a master of jurisprudence and traditions, had a mosque in his own house where he taught religious subjects to students.[45]

The centrality of the mosque in the institutional mechanism/structure of the medieval world can also be gauged from the fact that Khairuddin Muhammad while requesting the English Governor-General for establishing a *madrasa* in Jaunpur suggests the idea of using the mosque as *madrasa* to save the cost of constructing a new one. It would also bring fresh lustre to the mosque as there would be offered five-time prayer, congregational Friday prayer and the two *Eids* in the manner of the previous sultans, argues the petitioner.

Apart from institutional structure, the house of *ulama* and Sufi served as a place for the transmission of knowledge. Teachers taught in their homes. For instance, Maulana Kamaluddin, compendium of theory and practice (*aml wa ilm*), and brother of Maulana Jamaluddin mentioned earlier, benefitted a large number of people from his teaching and instruction in Lahore and Sialkot for a long time. Shaikh Ahmad Mujaddid Alf Thani and Mulla Abdul Hakim Siyalkoti were from amongst his best known pupils.[46] This channel of instruction was quite effective. Many students who received their education in it became eminent scholars and writers. Interestingly the highly accomplished scholars, Abul Fazl and Faizi, were product of the household. This system of imparting education was very much an important and integral part of the education system, second to none. It was not used, mainly, as has been pointed out by the Law, for those branches of arts and sciences for which schools or colleges made no provisions, e.g. music, painting, etc. Rather it was kernel of the education system of the time.[47]

II

Even though we come across institutions where student acquired education and teachers taught, yet the primacy of individuality of teachers is significant in the biographical dictionaries that provide information on the world of learning in Mughal India. There are more references to teachers/scholars under whom one had studied a text, a subject, or a group of subjects rather than references to the institution, where one studied. The personalistic character of education defies the view that the household system of education only supplemented the collegiate education. N. N. Law writes:

> "While speaking of the schools and colleges of these days, we should not lose sight of the educational work done by distinguished learned men, teaching pupils in their houses. They supplemented, as already pointed out, the educational work done by the literary institutions, and provided a field for post-collegiate studies."[48]

While referring to the academic career of a scholar as well as his teaching pursuits, the reference to the individualistic tendencies is prominent. In describing the path of acquisition of knowledge of a student/scholar, there are more references to the scholars from whom one has received education rather than intuitions. For instance, Shaikh Mubarak Nagauri (1505-1592), reputed to have orchestrated and written the *mahzarnama* during Akbar's reign, and father of famous literati, Faizi and Abul Fazl, after reaching young age, went to Ahmadabad, and acquired opulent perfection from Khatib Abul Fazl Kazeruni and other great persons of the place. In 1543, he returned to Agra where he spent about 50 years, imparting instruction and teaching religious knowledge (*ulum-i-dini*).[49] His sons, Faizi and Abul Fazl, and the author of *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, Adul Qadir Badauni, were his star students. Mulla Abdullah Makhdum-ul

Mulk studied under Maulana Abdul Qadir Sirhindi, and acquired a complete knowledge of Islamic law.[50] Mir Muhammad Masum Bhakkari, a noble of 1000 rank during Akbar's reign, had studied under Mulla Muhammad—a resident of Kingri (a dependency of Bhakkar)— excelled in syntax, grammar, poetry and prose.[51] The second son of Shaikh Abdullah Khan, a noble of Akbar's reign of 3000 rank, Ziyaullah (d.1597), acquired knowledge from Wajihuddin Alawi—a learned person in exoteric sciences, and writer of valuable commentaries and gloss upon many books—in Gujarat. At Pattan, he received a certificate (*sanad*) in traditions from Mohammad Tahir Muhaddith Bohra.[52] Mirza Chin Qillich, son of Mirza Qillich Muhammad Khan of Akbar's reign, and for a time *faujdar* of Jaunpur and Benaras, studied textbooks (*kutub-i darsiya*) under Mulla Mustafa Jaunpuri.[53] Saiyid Yasin, a Sufi and cousin of Saiyid Shah Mir, studied most of the standard and current books (*kutub-i mutadawla*) and acquired traditional/customary knowledge (*ulum-i rasmi*) from Miyan Wajihuddin in Gujarat. He also became his disciple in spiritual matters. Further he moved to Mecca for performing *hajj* where studied traditions as well.[54]

The primacy of individual in the education system was quite pivotal. An institution, on losing a scholar or set of scholars on whose credit and reputation students flocked and pecuniary help reached, started to decline once they left. It is said that many *ulama* and *fuzala* came from distant places to Gopamau for receiving education under Qazi Mubarak, and reached perfection. The graduates carried the torch of transmission of knowledge. Badauni laments, 'those caravans of sojourns have now reached its journey's end, leaving no successors. The mansions and abodes of learning have now cleared of the tiger of the forest of knowledge, so that those, who fox-like, are ever ready to creep into an earth, have taken their place.'[55] Shaikh Bhikhari Kakori (1485-1573-74), son of Amir Saifuddin, compendium of exoteric, mundane and spiritual, esoteric knowledge (*ulum-i zahir wa batin*), read common textbooks from his father in the beginning. He was a student of Maulan Ziyauddin Madani Muhaddith and Qazi Abdul Latif Herani in exoteric knowledge, and acquired spiritual and esoteric knowledge from Saiyid Ibrahim Eirchi, who was from among the descendents of Abdul Qadir Jilani.[56]

The author of *Tabaqat i Shah Jahani* writes that there were a great number of scholars and learned men (*mulla*, *alim*, *fazil* and *danishwaran*) in towns and villages in the period of Jahangir. He deplores that he had to content himself with writing about a few since he did not heard about them.[57] Sadr Jahan Pihani (d.1617), an *alim* and *fazil*, spent a good part of his life in the army camp. He had reached perfections in the acquisition of knowledge in the service of Shaikh Abdun Nabi, and with the latter's effort he was appointed jurisconsult (*mufti*) of imperial dominion for some years.[58] Shaikh Amin ibn Ahmad Naharwaleh (d.1608) had a good command over customary and current knowledge which he had received from Maulana Muhammad Tahir Muhaddith Naharwali. He came from Gujarat to Malwa, and sat on the seat (*masnad*) of teaching.[59]

The centrality of the teacher in the world of Islamicate learning is also evident from the case of career of education received by the author of the text, *Matla' Davazdahum*. The author was born in 1609 (in the fifth year of accession of Jahangir) in Surat. His father was employed there under Abdur Rahim Khan Khanan. He resigned from the position in 1612 and moved to Ahmadabad. In 1613, Shah Jahan (then still a prince) sent him in the campaign against the Rana. In 1614, he was appointed to the posts of *faujdari* and *wizarat* of Malwa province. In 1615, when port of Surat was given in assignment to Shah Jahan, he was given the charge of privy counseller of the place, and remained engaged in that employment for two years. Most of the time, the author kept moving from place to place along with his father, and received education in all these places. During his student career, the author mentions many a teacher under whom he received education at different places but nowhere refers to an institution (*madrasa* or *maktab*) where he received instruction. In 1618, he received instruction under Mir Muizuddin Yezdi in Allahabad along with the elder son of Hakim Abdul Hadhiq, son of Hakim Humam Gilani, Mirza Abdur Razzaq. He praises the teacher since regular curiosity took place in his teaching circle. In the same year, he received lessons in *Kafiya* (a book on Arabic grammar) by way of augury and blessing (*tayumunan wa tabarrukan*) from Shaikh Shah Muhammad Jaunpuri in Allahabad. After that, Shah Muhmmad left for Jaunpur and remained engaged in teaching and instructing there until his death in 1622. The author also studied under Maulana Abdus Shukur and Maulana Muhammad Husain Kashmiri (d.1627). He practiced *khat-i qayam* near Mirza Muhammad Husain Sirati Ghaffari Qazvini. He also wanted to study under Maulana Hamid in Patna but could not get the opportunity. In 1624, he read *Tahrir Aqlidas* (a work on literature) in Jaunpur in the service of Shaikh Afzal Jaunpuri, one of the great *ulama* of the time. In that city only, he reached Shaikh Mahumud, grandson of Shaikh Shah Muhammad, and studied under him for some time. He refers to all teachers under whom he had acquired knowledge moving from place to place as a consequence of his father's employment and transfer. Finally, his father left him in Jaunpur to acquire knowledge when he left the place to join the court of sultan Pervez. After completing his studies, he joined his father in 1625.[60]

Mulla Qutbuddin of Sahali, a famous scholar and teacher, whose teaching linkages spread throughout the Mughal empire, acquired perfection from Mullla Shaikh Daniyal Jurasi, who was among the students of Mulla Abdus Salam of Dewa, and Qazi Ghasi. He offered fealty (*b'ait*) at the hands of Qazi Ghasi, who was the best student and perfect successor of Shaikh Muhibullah Allahabdi. Mulla Qutbuddin taught for his whole life, and pupils from distant places came to acquire perfection under him. The quantum of graduates produced under his instruction was so high that Azad Bilgrami, an 18th century scholar and writer of many famous works, claimed that the chain of benefit of the most of the *ulama* of Hindustan reached Mulla Qutbuddin.[61] Qazi Muhibullah Bihari (d.1707), who was considered ocean of knowledge, was born at Muhibb Alipur in Bihar. At the threshold of youth, he travelled to eastern region (*dayar-i purab*), and studied books of primary and secondary stages at different places. He completed his studies in the teaching circle (*halqah-i dars*) of Saiyid Qutbuddin Shamsabadi.[62] Shaikh Jan Muhammad Lahori (1708-09), a learned expert in both juridical as well as Sufic knowledge, was stationed in Muhalla Pervezabad on the outskirt of Lahore. At a young age, he was acquiring knowledge under Shaikh Abdul Hamid, deputy (*khalifa*) of Shaikh Ismail alias Miyan Kalan Lahori. One day he visited the *shaikh* along with his teacher. Miyan Kalan asked 'if you become 'alim will you do discussion in *Hadith* (*takrar ahadith*) with me.' Shaikh Jan Muhammad, out of modesty and etiquette, remained silent. After indication from his teacher, he presented that if by his pious blessing he succeeded in the aim, he would definitely report for the same. Miyan Kalan prayed for him. In some months, he reached such excellence that Shaikh Abdul Hamid found himself unable to teach Jan Muhammad. He handed him over to Shaikh Taimur Lahori. In a short time, he finished his education under Shaikh Taimur. One day, he himself had the urge to see Miyan Kalan. When he reached him, Miyan embraced him and bestowed spiritual bounties, and said that according to promise, he would engage in discussion and disputation on traditions on two days of the week.[63]

Maulana Shaikh Nuruddin Ahmadabadi (1652-1733-34) was inclined towards knowing God and acquisition of knowledge from the beginning. He read the *Gulistan* of Saadi (with meaning) from his mother in seven days. He acquired most of exoteric knowledge from Akhwund Maulana Ahmad bin Akhwund Maulana Sulaiman, and esoteric knowledge and art of recitation with lilts (*qirat*) and traditions from Saiyid Muhammad Abul Majad Mahbub Alam. considered unequalled in Arabic, the reputation of his knowledge reached far and wide. And people from distant places reached and stationed at *madrasa* Hidayat Bakhsh to receive knowledge from Maulana. He assigned suitable stipends to students himself. A large number of people reached high stages of perfection (*martaba-i kamal*) from his abundant blessing.[64] Maulana Nuruddin (1653-1742), born at Ahmadabad, *allama* of the world and unique among his contemporaries, studied under Mulla Ahmad Sulaimani Ahmadabadi and Mulla Fariduddin Ahmadabadi. In 1721, he visited twin cities of Mecca and medina, returned next year, did fealty (*bait*) in the service of Mahbub Alam Ahmadabadi known as Shah Alam Thani, and received *khilafat* of the *khanwada*. He built a grand *madrasa khanqah* where he remained engaged in teaching and writing from the beginning of acquisition of knowledge till the end of his life.[65]

Mulla Nizamuddin (d.1748), son and successor of Mulla Qutbuddin Sahalwi, was best epitomized as teacher of the world (*ustad-i jahan*) and writer of the time (*tahrir-i zaman*) among contemporaries and successive generation of scholars. In the beginning, he moved towards towns (*qasbat*) of *purab* seeking knowledge, and from the *ulama* of the time acquired knowledge of books in the current curriculum (*funun-i darsi*). At last, he moved to Shaikh Ghulam Naqshbandi Lakhnawi, studied rest of the books, and finished his education (*fatiha faragh*). After graduation, he returned to Lucknow, where he spent whole life in teaching and writing. Today, writes Azad Bilgrami, most *ulama* of Hindustan belong to chain of his students, and took pride in that. In addition, a person whose chain of studentship was linked to him became distinguished among the learned (*fuzala-i ilm*). Many students who acquired knowledge in other places and with different teachers finished their education under him.[66]

Khairuddin Muhammad (b.1751), the author of *Tazkirat-ul Ulama*, in his autobiographical account mentions many a teachers and *ulama* under whom he had received instruction but does not mention in a single place that he had studied in a particular *madrasa* or any institution. Neither does he mention any *madrasa* where he himself taught, though he mentions various places where he imparted instruction to the students for many years.[67] Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami (1704-05- 1785-86), the author of *Maasir-ul Kiram*, read textbooks from beginning till end from Saiyid Tufail Muhammad Utraulvi. He received education in lexicography (*lughat*), biography of the prophet, traditions, Arabic and Persian poetry from his maternal grandfather Saiyid Abdul Jalil Bilgrami. From his uncle, Saiyid Muhammad bin Saiyid Abdul Jalil, he learnt poetry writing, art and knowledge of literature (*funun-i adabiya*). Then he left for the twin cities of Mecca and Medina where he read the *Sahih Bukhari* from Shaikh Muhammad Hayat Sindhi, and received permission for six canonical texts of traditions (*sihah sitta*) before

returning to India.[68] The author of *Tabsirat-un Nazirin* read books on Arabic and some current books on traditions from Mir Muhammad Tufail, son of Saiyid Shukrullah Utraulvi (d.1738). After that, he left towards Bhakkar and Siwistan where he was trained by Mir Ghulam Ali Azad and Mir Muhmaad Yusuf.[69]

It is interesting to note that in medieval period the students were not awarded degree by an institution but were given *ijaza*/*sanad* (certificate/license) by scholars and teachers. The certificate/letter of permission was given after completion of course or a particular text or a branch of learning by the concerned teacher under whom the students had studied. There was neither fixed curriculum nor regular examination for the award of the degree; rather it was given by the teacher when he himself was satisfied with the competence of the concerned student. While granting an *ijaza*, a teacher mentioned the complete academic genealogy of transmission of that particular text or branch of learning tracing the link to the progenitor of the episteme. The *ijaza* remained a personal act of authorization, from the authorizing *alim* to the newly authorized one. In fact, the sovereign had no say in the matter of license even when he was the founder of the institution.[70] We find multiple cases referring to the subject of *ijaza* from the Mughal period. Maulana Mir Kalan (d.1573-74), a profound learned (*danishmand mutabahhar*) endowed with both spiritual and exoteric perfections (*kamalat*), was especially proficient in *hadith* (in which he was wonder of the age). In this subject, he had the authority and the permission from Saiyed Mirak Shah to transmit and teach this.[71] Mulla Haider Kashmiri, a highly equipped *'alim* in traditional and rational subjects belonging to Shah Jahan's period, read *hadith* before Shaikh Abdul Haqq Muhadddith Dehlavi. He remained for a long time in his hospice, studied *Mishkat* and *Shahihain*, and received permission (*ijazah girafteh*).[72] Maulvi Salamullah Muhaddith Rampuri (d.1814 or 1817-18) —a jurist (*faqih*), traditionist (*muhaddith*) and exegete (*mufassir*)— learnt standard/current knowledge (*ulum-i mutadawla*) from his father, who was author of several works, including a commentary in Persian on *Sahih Bukhari*. Salamullah received *sanad* in *hadith* and other subjects from him.[73] It is said that a greater perfection could not be imagined from what Mir Saiyid Mubarak Muhaddith (1115/1703) was. He was a student of Shaikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddith and received *sanad ijazat* from his son, Shaikh Nurul Haqq.[74] People also received permission or *sanad* for one *hadith* to pass it on. For instance, Badauni heard one *hadith* from Maulana Mir of Samarqand in Agra, and received authority to propound and expound it. The Mir had received it only through six intermediaries from the Prophet.[75]

The certificate, called *ijaza or sanad*, was signifier of the degree of scholarship. The more renowned or scholarly the teacher was, the more value or weight it carried. Many a times, during discussion and disputation, these were important tools. For instance, Musavi Khan Mirza Muizz, who had received his education at Ispahan—a centre of learned men and philosophers (*ahl-i fazl wa kamal*), was having intellectual discussion (*mubahasa 'ilmi*) and philosophical disputation (*muzakra –i hukmi*) with Shaikh Abdul Aziz. The discussion prolonged. The Shaikh asked him as to under whom he received his *sanad*. He replied from Shaikh Bahauddin. Shaikh Abdul Aziz remarked that he had confronted/disputed (*harf kardeh*) with the Shaikh in 22 places.[76]

In Mughal India, the structure of institutional mechanism for transmission of knowledge was geared towards certain sets and types of institutions. The institutions played an important role both as a systematized structure and places of instruction. Meanwhile it is more important to notice that the persona of the teacher proved more crucial in the transmission of learning. The personalized component was reflected both in the references of the scholars and students in their academic career as well through the instrument of certificates issued to students. The transmission of knowledge might take place in an institution such as a *madrasa* but the principles which guided the activities of teachers and students, and the standard by which they were judged remained personal and informal, and hence, system of transmission of knowledge proved flexible and inclusive. In the medieval period, it was immaterial where one had studied but it was remarkably important with whom an individual studied. It was very much reflected in the qualification certified not by institutional degree but by a personal license (*ijaza*) issued by a teacher to his student. It was this personal connection which propelled students in the academic world or in the corridors of government services.

Notes

1. Rajan Gurukal, *History and theory of Knowledge production: An Introductory Outline*, New Delhi, OUP, p. 3
2. Andre Heywood, *Key Concept in Politics*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2000, reprint, 2005, p. 93.
3. For the significance and functionality of *maktab* in medieval Islamic world, see George Makdisi, *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University press, 1981; Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992
4. Shaikh Farid Bhakkari, *Zakhirat-ul Khawanin*, ed. Syed Moinul Haq, 3 vols, Karachi, Pakistan Historical society,

1961, I, p. 69, but the biography of Faizi in Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maathir-ul Umara*, 3 vols., eds. Maulvi Abdur Rahim and Maulvi Mirza Ashraf Ali, Calcutta, Asiatic society of Bengal, 1888-91, II, p. 586, does mention his introduction to the imperial court through the *maktab*. Rather it states that those who had the right of audience with the emperor mentioned about Faizi's learning and eloquence. Eventually, Akbar summoned him in 12th regnal year.

5. Muhammad Salih Kambu, '*Amal-i Salih*, ed. Ghulam Yazdani, revised by Wahid Quraishi, 3 vols., Lahore, Majalis Taraqqi Adab, 1967–72, I, p. 26.
6. *Amal-i Salih*, I, p. 409
7. *Insha* was a branch of literature during the medieval period. Apart from being an interesting subject as a matter of taste, it was required by those who aspired to enter government services. *Insha* collections contained specimen documents and drafts for various occasions which served as guides of acquiring necessary skills in the art of drafting—an important requirement for government servants. For details on the subject, see I. A. Zilli ed., *The Mughal State and Culture 1556-1598: Selected Letters and Documents from Munshaat-i-Namakin*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2007
8. Sujan Rai Bataliyah [Bhandari], *Khulasat-ul Makatib*, MS, I. O. Islamic 3233, f. 15b.
9. Balkrishan Brahman, *Letters Etc.*, MS, Br. Add. 16859, ff. 97a-100a.
10. Krishan Lal Ray, *Education in Medieval India*, Delhi, B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1984, p. 27. The author writes that to get a high post in the government service one had to learn Persian and Arabic in those days, and, hence many Hindu students enrolled themselves in the *maktab*s.
11. The importance of *madrasa*, in medieval period, has been highlighted both empirically and analytically by modern scholarship. See Farncis Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2001; George Makdisi, *The rise of Colleges*; Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo*; Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994
12. Abd-ul Qadir Badauni, *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, 3 vols, eds. Maulvi Ahmad Ali and W. N. Lees, Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1865-69. Persian text, II, pp. 55-56; Rahman Ali, *Tazkira Ulema-i Hind*, Lucknow, 1914, p. 141.
13. *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, II, p. 62. The incident is related with the effort of Akbar towards marital connection with the noblemen of Delhi. It is said that, for the purpose, *qawwals* and eunuchs were sent to the *harem* of the distinguished persons to select the girls and inquire into their conditions. Reportedly, there arose commotion because of this step of the emperor. When the full significance of this incident was made known to the emperor by supernatural admonition and the miracles of the *pirs* of Delhi, he gave up his intention.
14. *Ibid.*, III, p. 130.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
16. *Maathir-ul Umara*, II, p. 555.
17. Maulana Khairuddin Muhammad Jaunpuri, *Tazkirat-ul Ulama*, ed. Muhammad Sanaullah, Calcutta, 1934, p. 34.
18. Ibid., p. 37.
19. *Tazkira Ulema-i Hind*, p. 43.
20. '*Amal-i Salih*, I, p. 249.
21. Sadiq Khan, *Tabaqat-i Shah Jahani*, MS, British Library (BL), Or. 1673, f. 319 b.
22. Mir Ghulam Ali Azad Bilgrami, *Ma'athir-ul Kiram*, 2 vols., Agra, 1910, I, pp. 217, 219; *Tazkira Ulama-i Hind*, pp. 119, 172
23. *Tabaqat-i Shah Jahani*, f. 323a.
24. Abdul Haqq Muhaddith Dehlavi, *Akhbar-ul Akhyar fi Asrar-ul Abrar*, ed. Aleem Ashraf Khan, Tehran, 1383 AH (henceforth *Akhbar-ul Akhyar*), p. 622.
25. For petitioning to the Governor, Khairuddin Muhammad authored a book, *Tazkirat-ul Ulama*, in 1801. He presented the book as a petition for the sanction of an adequate sum for reviving a full-fledged *madrasa* at Jaunpur. The book contains the scholarly achievement of luminaries of the place, and records the pride and prestige of the place because of the presence of significant number of *sufis* and *ulama* there. It also enumerated the contribution of the place in the academic and spiritual world as well high value accorded to it by the ruler of different regimes right from Shirqis of Jaunpur to the Mughals.
26. *Tazkirat-ul Ulama*, pp. 61-66.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
28. Carr Stephen, *The Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi*, Ludhiana, Mission Press, 1876, p.199.
29. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, 3 vols., vol. I, Eng. tr. H. Blochmann, Vols. II and III tr. H.S. Jarret, rev. D. C. Phillot and J. N. Sarkar, Delhi, 1965, rep. 2006, II, p. 191.
30. *Athar-us Sanadid*, I, p.314; Carr, pp. 250, 259. N. N. Law, *Promotion of Learning in India during Muhammadan Rule*, Calcutta, p. 182, has incorrectly written that Shah Jahan repaired the building, and appointed some distinguished learned men as professors with Maulana Muhammad Sadruddin Khan Bahadur as the director of the institution. It is incorrect reading of the source.
31. S.A.H. Nadwi, *Hindustan ki Qadim Islami Drasgahain*, Azamgarh, 1971, p. 24
32. Ibid., p.20
33. Ibid., p.19
34. Carr Stephen, p. 207
35. *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, III, p. 17.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
39. *Tazkirat-ul Ulama*, p. 49.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.
42. Makdisi, *The rise of Colleges*, pp. 10-18.
43. *Qadim Islami Darsgahain*, p.11.
44. *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, III, pp.156-57.
45. *Tabaqat-i Shah Jahani*, f.292
46. *Tazkira Ulema-i Hind*, p.173.
47. Law, p.164; Ray writes that the domestic system of instruction was not less contributive, and its achievement was not less spectacular.

48. Law, p. 164
49. *Ma'athir-ul Kiram*, I, p. 197; *Zakhirat-ul Khwanin*, I, p. 68.
50. *Maathir-ul Umara*, III, p.252.
51. *Zakhirat-ul Khwanin*, I, 201; *Maathir-ul Umara*, III, p.326.
52. *Maathir-ul Umara*, II, p.574.
53. Ibid., III, p. 351.
54. *Muntakhab-ut Tawarikh*, III, p. 120.
55. Ibid., III, p.131.
56. *Tazkira Ulema-i Hind*, p. 33.
57. *Tabaqat-i Shahjahani*, f. 296a.
58. Ibid. f. 288b.
59. Ibid. f. 290b.
60. Anonymous, *Matla' Dwazdahum*, British Museum, OR. 11558, ff. 1b-2a; 5a-7a; 10 a; 24a; 28a.
61. *Maathir ul Kiram*, I, p. 209.
62. Ibid., I, p. 211.
63. *Tazkira Ulema-i Hind*, p. 39.
64. Ibid., p. 247.
65. *Maathir-ul Kiram*, I, pp. 217, 219.
66. Ibid., p.220.
67. *Tazkirat-ul Ulama*, pp.68-69.
68. *Tazkira Ulema-i Hind*, p.154.
69. Saiyid Muhammad Bilgrami, *Tabsirat-un Nazirin*, MS, B. L. Or. 1720, f.135 b.
70. Makdisi, the Rise of Colleges, p. 271.
71. *Muntakhab- ut Tawarikh*, p. 151.
72. *Tabaqat-i Shah Jahani*, f. 320a.
73. *Tazkira Ulama-i Hind*, p. 76.
74. *Tabsirat-un Nazirin*, f. 32a.
75. *Muntakhab- ut Tawarikh*, III, pp. 149-50.
76. *Maathir-ul Umara*, III, p. 633.