3

At a Distance to the City

Jamia Millia Islamia, 1920–1935

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Jamia Millia Islamia, the Muslim National University, was founded in 1920 in Aligarh in response to M. K. Gandhi's call to cease all cooperation with the colonial government, and notably to withdraw from state-funded schools and colleges. Like the Non-cooperation movement, Jamia had a twofold basis of intellectual, organisational and financial support. On the one hand, the members of the Khilafat Committee weighed in. These were young Muslims, many of them educated at the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, founded by Saiyid Ahmad Khan, who had struck a collaboration with the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) of several Islamic colleges, Firangi Mahal, the Nadvat ul Ulama in Lucknow and the madrasa in Deoband. On the other hand, members of the Indian National Congress party, Gandhi most prominent among them, played a decisive role.

Much has been written on the alliance between these two groups, on Jamia's foundation, its forms of collaboration and their final breaking apart.[1] In this chapter, I would like to take the debate in a slightly different direction and ask how Jamia continued to bring together its Islamic heritage with a Gandhian approach to nationalism. For this, I will focus on the way it situated itself vis-à-vis the urban and the rural. Long after the Khilafat movement and the Congress had parted ways, Jamia defined itself as a Gandhian institution, which was both consciously nationalist and Muslim. The pupils wore *khaddar* (homespun and woven cloth) and took up spinning; students and teachers participated in nationalist campaigns in the 1930s and 1940s, and more than a few of them went to prison (Hasan and Jalil 2008; Mudholi 2004 [1965]). However, in an

interesting twist to the Gandhian philosophy of the village, Jamia, its college, its schools and its engagement with social work remained firmly connected to the urban space – though at a slight geographical and mental distance from the city itself. Education thus was marked by neither a rejection of the urban space in favour of the village nor a simple continuation of the links between the city and civility, but reconfigured the relationship between education, urban space and emotions. The urban and the rural, I argue, are as much spatial categories as linked to and created through emotional styles (Gammerl 2012). Navigating between the village and the urban thus implies navigation between different habitual ways of feeling. Education takes place in a specific space – the urban or the rural in our case – and addresses the challenges posed by the structures of this space. At the same time, it introduces and habituates children to the emotional style making up the space and imparts ways of affectively relating to it.

This chapter will focus on the first 15 years of Jamia, from its foundation in Aligarh in 1920, its move to Karol Bagh on the outskirts of Delhi in 1925 and, finally, the foundation in 1935 of what was soon to become a sprawling campus in Okhla, at that time still a small hamlet in the south of Delhi at the riverbank of the Yamuna. After a brief recapitulation of the intellectual history of the village republic and the *qasbah* (small town, usually a center of Muslim learning and culture) and the different models of education they offered, the first section explores how Jamia's foundation in Aligarh links and transcends both of these. The second section, which constitutes the core of the chapter, will follow Jamia's history in Karol Bagh in some detail, while the last one will focus on the institution's transfer to Okhla and what it meant for its relations with Delhi. The conclusion will draw together the sections on the shifts in Jamia's location in the rural–urban environs of Delhi with the question of how to situate Jamia within the unfolding landscape of nationalist education in colonial India and argue that situating its pedagogical endeavours in space allows for a new response to the question if, why and how Jamia can be called a Gandhian institution.[2]

The Garden, the *Qasbah* and the Village

The *akhlaq* tradition, hailing from the translation and adaptation of Aristotelian ethics into Arabic and Persian in the medieval era and central to the Indo-Persian culture almost until the end of the nineteenth century, laid out the principles of a good and virtuous life for the individual and the polity. Premised on the ideal of balance and harmony (*e'tidal*), it saw virtuous emotions as the median between two excesses. Gardens, the garden of paradise, but also the beautifully laid out gardens of the imperial and noble palaces, were a crucial metaphor to talk about

the soul. Like a garden, the soul needed to be cultivated to overcome raw nature and to become a work of art. Discipline did not aim at uprooting the plants, but to trim their excessive growth to create a beautiful object.[3] Emotion-virtues were subjected to the will, but the will was not to be geared towards suppressing the feelings. The perfect man was not the ascetic, but the man of heart. The place for the cultivation of this emotional ideal could be the city – the link between civilisation and the city translated into the relation between *tamaddun* and *medina*. But more often it was the *qasbah*, the small town, in which the Indo-Persianate landed gentry dominated, Muslims but also quite a number of Hindus (Hasan 2004; R. Rahman 2015).

The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College was founded in Aligarh in 1875 by Saiyid Ahmad Khan as an institution for the reform and advancement of the Muslim community. Most of its supporters did not come from Aligarh itself; as in Oxford and Cambridge, whose model it was striving to emulate, town and gown rarely interacted. The college was based on a network spreading all over the north Indian *qasbah*s, including the larger cities in the Urdu-speaking region: Delhi, Lucknow, Lahore and Hyderabad. And it was heavily based on the *sharif* (noble, genteel, respectable) culture, which permeated the *qasbah*s (Lelyveld 1996 [1978]). However, already in the founding generation, the ideal of *e'tidal* was increasingly contested in favour of passionate emotions (*josh*), which were believed necessary to stem the decline of the community and infuse it with new vigour and virility (Pernau 2019). This tendency was further intensified with the coming of age of the Young Party, led by Mohammed Ali and his brother Shaukat. While they held onto the urban basis of the *akhlaq* tradition, they gave up the notion of discipline and harmony and instead saw the salvation of the community and the nation in passions no longer submissive to the will – the less nature was interfered with, they argued, the more it would be able to guide and strengthen a community in its struggle for survival.[4] However, this did not translate into rural romanticism and a return to nature. While the garden had been both a metaphor and a reality for those steeped in *akhlaq* literature, for the Young Party the guiding image of nature no longer needed a spatial reference. It was the metropolis, first Calcutta and then Delhi, but also industrial towns like Kanpur, which provided them with a congenial atmosphere for their work of political and emotional mobilisation.

Despite the close alliance between Gandhi and Mohammed Ali and his collaborators, which was both a matter of political convenience and a deeply felt connection that carried with it huge hopes, Gandhi's political philosophy was based on very different principles. This had little to do with the religious

differences which were emphasised as the reason for the strains in their relation after the end of the campaign, by contemporaries as well as historians. While they shared the goal of an independent India and also agreed on the strategies to reach this goal, the future they imagined for the country was quite different. If the Aligarh tradition both of the Old Party and the Young Party emphasised their urban moorings, Gandhi drew on a critique of civilisation that disparaged the city as the emblem of modern times and argued for the need to return to nature and the village. Unlike the romantic flight from the city, Gandhi never exalted the aesthetic experience of nature – more than in the spatiality of the village and its embeddedness in a landscape, his focus was geared towards what he perceived as the village mentality.

Gandhi saw the return to the village as an effort to revert to an earlier stage of history, finding salvation in bygone times, not yet spoilt by modernity (Parel 1997). This mental, if not material, return to the village, for him, was also the only solution that would bring the Indian villages, which still housed the overwhelming majority of the population, and the urban elites together. Practical considerations played an important role – mass mobilisation, the need to provide a solution to underemployment in the countryside and the emotional distance between the city and the village. But opting for the village culture implied even more than this. It was only through the village, imagined as an independent republic, in the tradition of Henry Maine, that the state and its violence could be overcome (Mantena 2012).[5] For Gandhi, this substitution of the state with the immediacy of social interaction in the village community was based on an emotional regime that stressed discipline and bodily asceticism as the foundation of moral authority and also made these qualities possible in the first place. If anger, hate and the lack of emotional discipline needed and produced the state, non-violence and *swaraj* – in its meaning of personal self-government – made the need for the state and its dominance redundant. The village provided a space similar to Gandhi's ashrams, in which moral authority and personal relations would not be obfuscated by structural constraints, but on the contrary be allowed their full impact, educational and transformative (Alter 2000). However, for Gandhi, morality mattered more than space. Gandhi did not necessarily urge people to move to villages. As long as they lived in the city as if it were a village, be they elites or workers in the mills of Ahmedabad, this was all he asked for.[6] If Mohammed Ali wanted to conquer and appropriate first Aligarh and then the colonial state, Gandhi wanted to overcome and move beyond colonialism, its education and its state structures. For both Gandhi and Mohammed Ali, the move to the city or the village was about much more than geography and space.

It involved subscribing to different temporalities (the relentless drive towards the future versus the goal of timelessness) and a different way of relating to emotions (*josh* versus asceticism as the basis for ahimsa) as well.

These differences did not preclude the possibility of a common leadership of the national movement; they probably appear much starker in hindsight. In the late summer of 1920, Gandhi called for non-cooperation with the colonial state. Next to the boycott of the law courts and resignations from state service, including the police and the army, this also included an appeal to students to withdraw from state-governed and state-funded schools and colleges. Though Aligarh catered to an upper-middle-class and aristocratic student community, it was heavily dependent on government subsidies. Hence, the board of trustees refused to be drawn into the boycott. It was students and young faculty who took up the cause and approached the national leaders. They pledged their support but suggested that for a larger number of students to leave their studies an alternative educational institution was needed (Faruqi 1999).[7]

This led to the inauguration of Jamia Millia Islamia, a university that was to be Islamic and national at the same time and contribute to bringing forth the kind of young men needed for the present and future struggles. The foundation of Jamia on 29 October 1920 was followed by an opening ceremony on 5 November at the mosque of the college. Mahmud ul Hasan, famous representative of the *ulama*, leader of the theological college of Deoband and just released from political imprisonment, gave the opening speech, marking the occasion as a coming together of the Young Party of Aligarh, the *ulama* and the Gandhian Congress. While Mohammed Ali had hoped to be able to lead the struggle from within Aligarh and build up enough pressure on the board of trustees to force them to join the movement, the power equation worked for the Old Party, and Jamia was evicted from the college. In a move, which for Mohammed Ali recalled the Hijrat, the migration of the Prophet and his companions from Mecca, Jamia resettled outside of the college and camped in four rows of tents (Figure 3.1).

The image in Figure 3.1 quickly became iconic, as it symbolised the transition from an affluent elite culture to poverty, from the urban to an indistinct space in the wilderness between the city and the village. Living in tents, attending classes in the open air and sitting on disused jute bags was an exhilarating experience for the students, which was recalled again and again over the years (Talib 1998: 161). The spatial move out of the college was also a move out of the linear temporality, with its imagination of progress, which had been foundational for Aligarh. The desert, the wilderness, called for new experiences of time and emotions and made them possible. If until now it had been poetry and the *mushairah*,

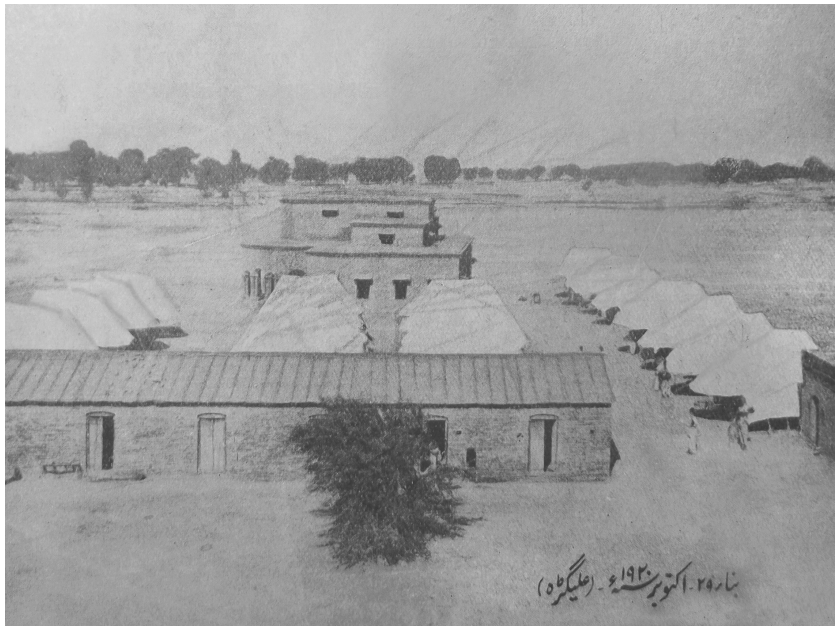

Figure 3.1 The first site of Jamia Millia Islamia in Aligarh, outside of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College

Source: Premchand Archives and Literary Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

the poetical gathering following rules of intertextuality hallowed by centuries, which had provided the space for the celebration of unrestricted passions, in the new learning environment these boundaries burst and passions spoke directly to the lives of the students and their teachers and their experiences. The expectations for the future no longer followed the precedent set by the colonial powers. Instead, Mohammed Ali's reference to the Hijrat pointed to a different set of imaginations, referring to the past and the future in the same movement and drawing forth the fervour of the students. The Islamic, the Prophetic past suddenly was no longer confined to books, and remembrances were no longer marked by the pain of having been born too late. Rather, through the move into the new space, this past was transformed into the present, calling for their affective response: like the Prophet and his Companions, they too lived in tents and barns in what almost looked like a desert.

In these early days, Jamia was certainly poor, but a not unsubstantial monthly grant by the Central Khilafat Committee (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 66; Z. Nizami 1988: 164) soon allowed it to rent houses and set up structures: classrooms,

regular curricula, stipends for the poorer students and even a printing house, which allowed for the publication of a bimonthly journal, the *Jamia*, from the end of 1922 onwards.[8] This kind of life without financial security seemed an adventure for the young students, at least in the short term. However, for those carrying the responsibility for the institution, unlike for Gandhi, poverty and asceticism were never desirable means in themselves, believed to lead to greater virtues, but conditions to be accepted if necessary to reach a greater goal.[9]

Jamia in Karol Bagh

Gandhi's calling off of the Non-cooperation movement after incidents of violence in 1922 and the abolition of the Khilafat by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1924 led to the dissolution of the Khilafat movement and strained the personal and institutional cooperation which had carried the wave of Hindu–Muslim cooperation in the campaign against the British in the past decade. Realising that Jamia would not lead to a reconquest of his Medina, Aligarh Muslim University, Mohammed Ali withdrew the financial support of the Central Khilafat Committee. While he continued to act as a well-wisher of the institution, his commitment was no longer comparable to the earlier days. In 1924, Jamia seemed to have run out of options and its closing appeared imminent.

In this situation, several factors came together. Zakir Husain, one of the young initiators of the foundation of Jamia and among its early teachers, had meanwhile gone to Berlin for his doctoral studies and had been joined there by Muhammad Mujeeb and Abid Husain, who were also pursuing their studies. When Zakir Husain heard the news, he pleaded with the leaders not to take any decisions before he and his companions would come home next year – for their part, they pledged to work for Jamia at a nominal salary. Gandhi, too, was willing to fight for the future of national education and promised to beg for funds himself, if needed. Finally, Hakim Ajmal Khan, a Unani doctor with a professional social network covering the *qasbah*s of north India as well as the princely states, who was one of the most important leaders of Delhi and a close collaborator of Gandhi, agreed to take over the responsibility for Jamia. His condition, however, was that Jamia move from Aligarh to Delhi, to facilitate his administrative work.

In 1925, Jamia moved into a couple of rented buildings next to Hakim Ajmal Khan's Tibbia College in Karol Bagh. At this point, Hakim Ajmal Khan and his family had not only been the leading practitioners of Unani medicine in Delhi for more than a century, but Hakim Ajmal Khan had also been at the forefront of bringing Unani medicine into a dialogue both with Western medicine and

also Hindu Ayurvedic theory and practices. He brought Unani medicine out of the confines of a family-based system of knowledge that catered to patients individually and founded the Hindustani Dawakhana, a dispensary for standardised pharmaceuticals, next to the family mansion in Delhi's Ballimaran quarter. This dispensary provided the financial basis for the foundation for Tibbia College (Ghaffar 1950: 68–69). In turn, the college from the beginning became a point of identification for Delhi's nationalist elite (Pernau 2013: 312–323). Its architecture showed the influence of the Indo-Saracenic style, a style which was favoured by British colonial officials if they wanted to underline the oriental character of a building and which drew on a reinterpretation of Mughal architecture. But unlike the British interpretation of these architectural models, which was marked by an exuberance of decorative elements, Tibbia College created a style that shunned excess in favour of symmetry and balance – a late nineteenth-century interpretation of *akhlaq* culture translated into architecture, gardens and emotions. It drew on classical aesthetics but gave them a useful twist. At the same time, the gardens provided many of the ingredients for the medicines used in the dispensary of the college (Figure 3.2).

Like the tents of the early days, the move to Karol Bagh placed Jamia in an in-between space between the city and the wilderness. The neighbourhood was situated right in the middle of several important sites. In the north, the Sadar Bazar was the domain of the Punjabi merchants (the Muslim community of the Punjabi *saudagaran* [traders]) and their Hindu counterparts, mostly Khatris. Here the coming of the railway had led to a sprawling industrial site (Geva 2022: 8). Also in the north lay Sabzi Mandi, originally the wholesale market for vegetables grown in the open land west of the city and the territory of the Arain

Figure 3.2 Tibbia College, undated

Source: Ayurvedic and Unani Tibbia College and Hospital, New Delhi.

community (Koul 2017). Here too mills had begun to spring up (Kishore 2020: 112–118; Vanaik 2020: 31–37). Towards the east of Karol Bagh, there was a lower-class Muslim area, which had developed around the slaughterhouse. Here butchers and leatherworkers could be found, who had been at the forefront of the Khilafat movement, but were now leaning towards the Ahrars and thus open to a collaboration with the Congress (Ahmad 2018; Awan 2010). The presence of the Idgah, where the end of the month of Ramzan was celebrated, and the shrine of the Qadam Sharif, housing a footprint of the Prophet of Islam, also brought larger groups of Muslims to the area, especially during the annual festivities (Figure 3.3).

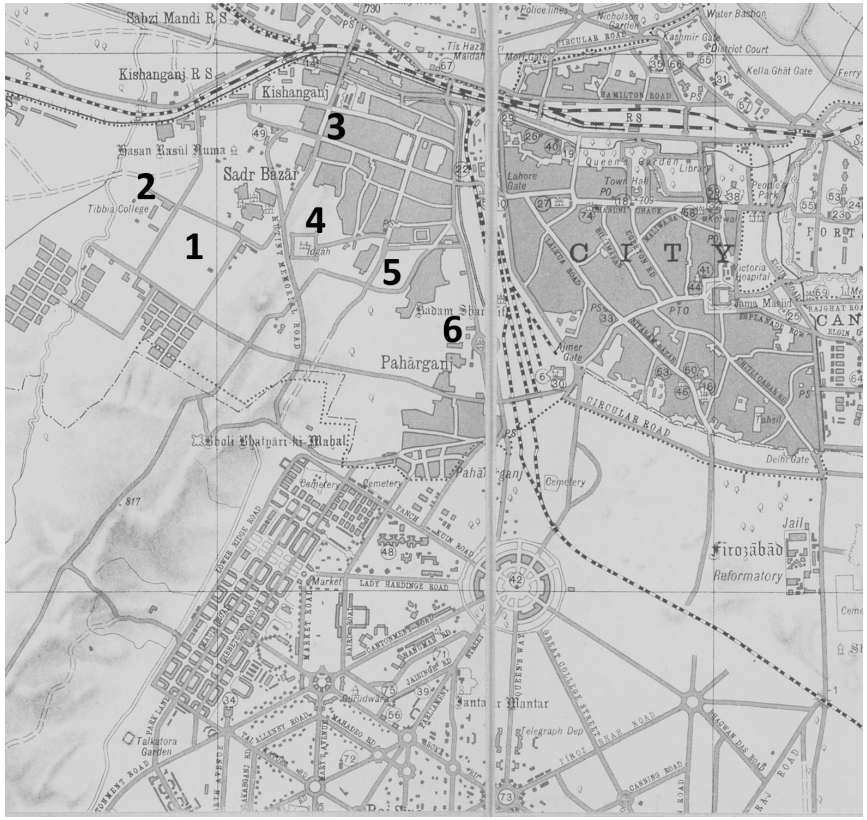

Figure 3.3 Delhi, c. 1927

Source: 0 Maps I.S.79, British Library Board.

Note: [1]Karol Bagh, [2]Tibbia College, [3]Sadar Bazar, [4]Idgah, [5]Slaughterhouse, [6]Qadam Sharif. Sabzi Mandi is beyond the border of this map, to the north of Sadar Bazar.

As shown in Figure 3.3, the geographical location for Jamia had been selected for practical reasons – Hakim Ajmal Khan was only able to take up the administration of Jamia if it was situated in physical proximity to his residence and to Tibbia College. His influence in the neighbourhood probably also made it easier for Jamia to find affordable rental space. Nevertheless, if Jamia had looked for a space to symbolise its programme, it could not have done better. Despite the presence of Tibbia College, this was not a neighbourhood that would have been considered congenial to the traditional *ashraf*, the respectable families of the *qasbah*s, or the city. Neither its geographical space nor the social relationships available were those that lent themselves easily to the *akhlaq* culture and its attempts to transform nature into a work of art. This remoteness, however, did not imply a rupture. The distance separating Jamia from the city of Delhi could be overcome in an easy walk of less than an hour to Sharif Manzil, the residence of Hakim Ajmal Khan in Ballimaran, and a little bit more to the office and house of the Ali brothers in Kucha Chelan, in the southern part of the city and to the house of Dr Ansari in Daryaganj, where also many of the Congress leaders stayed when they were in Delhi. Given Jamia's financial situation, walking would be the first choice of moving through space, and a *tonga* (two-wheeled cart, drawn by a horse or donkey) for those who could afford it. Visitors probably would increasingly make use of cars to cross the distance (Figure 3.4).

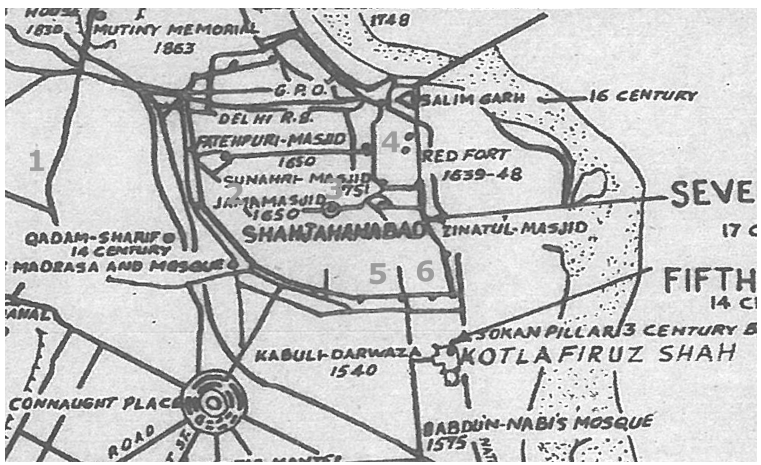

Figure 3.4 Delhi, c. 1925

Source: Map Section, Department of Delhi Archives, Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi.

Note: [1]Karol Bagh, [2]Ballimaran (Hakim Ajmal Khan), [3]Jama Masjid, [4]Red Fort, [5]Kucha Chelan (Mohammed Ali), [6]Daryaganj (Dr Ansari).

Jamia made a conscious effort to integrate into the networks of Delhi. Its foundation committee read like a who's who of dignitaries of the city and of leaders of the national movement, both Hindus and Muslims (Z. Rahman 2004: 64–73; Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 67–80). The move from Aligarh to Delhi, which went hand in hand with the distance they now set between themselves and the Khilafat Committee, meant that Jamia started to see itself less as a political and more as a pedagogical initiative. It also meant that they moved beyond college education and shifted their focus to providing schooling at the secondary and even the primary levels. They were still unequivocally part of the national movement, but they did not take sides with the different factions and instead tried to bridge the differences – for ideological but perhaps also for financial reasons, as they needed as broad a basis as possible to appeal to for donations and could ill afford to antagonise anyone. Jamia hosted a lot of visitors. Not only were the members of the foundation committee regular guests at Jamia, inspecting the work, offering advice and helping with the raising of donations, but they were also joined by members of the Municipal Board (who started to offer modest financial support to Jamia from the early 1930s onwards) (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 183–184), educationists, travellers from abroad and most of the political leaders, who spent some time in Delhi.[10]

Every year, the *yaum-e tasis*, the day celebrating the foundation of Jamia, was a festive occasion, allowing many people from the city and the neighbourhood to partake in the event. Beyond the usual speeches by the Amir-e Jamia, the chancellor, and the Shaikh-ul Jamia, the vice chancellor, there was also an educational exposition, featuring objects that showcased the achievements of the students and pupils – something the children and young people became increasingly involved in preparing and organising.[11] Another regular feature during the foundation day, but also throughout the year, were the theatre performances, which had the children act in short dramas written by the teachers, with Abid Husain and Muhammad Mujeeb leading the way.[12]

The integration into the network and *ashraf* culture of the city did not stop there. Though Gandhian simplicity marked the life of the students, training in the appreciation of beauty, notably of the beauty of the Urdu language, was always an important feature of the emotional education of the students. From an early age onwards, children were encouraged to listen to but soon also to write poetry. *Mushairah*s, evenings devoted to the recital of poetry, involved everyone, from the most renowned Urdu poets of north India, who came together to a yearly celebration at the invitation of the Urdu Academy (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 78, passim) to the youngest pupils (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 173, passim), whose first

attempts might then be printed in the children's journal of Jamia, the *Payam-e Ta'lim* (Pernau 2023). The children responded so enthusiastically that the editors asked them to have their poetry read and corrected by an adult before sending it in, as they were overwhelmed by the response and could not help every child polish their poetry to a printable level.

Hakim Ajmal Khan had long already been a patron of the last of Delhi's storytellers, the *dastango* Mir Baqir Ali, and took to inviting him to perform for Jamia as well. Years later, the magic of these performances is still reflected in the words of Abdul Ghaffar Mudholi, when he described how on moon-lit nights all the students and teachers gathered on the roof of Khaksar Manzil, the hostel for the younger children, to listen to Mir Baqir Ali painting pictures with his words, evoking kings and merchants from Delhi to life, recreating the language and even the tonality of the voice of old men and children, of ladies and nobles, and addressing the children directly and keeping them spellbound for hours on end (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 98).[13]

If this introduced the students to the feeling culture of Delhi and of the *qasbah*s, which their teachers felt worth preserving in the middle of all the struggles of the national movement and of fundraising, Jamia was also consciously part of the lower-class neighbourhood it found itself in and strove to embody the Gandhian ethos of bridging the gap between the urban and the rural, between the elite and the common people.

In the 1920s, Gandhi's analysis of the problems of the Indian villages increasingly focused on spinning and weaving. It was the destruction of the indigenous weaving industry by the colonial power that had led to the plight of the villagers, he argued. Underemployment during the months they did not work in the fields not only meant a loss in income leading to abject poverty but also closed the path to all the virtues acquired through hard work. The introduction of spinning and weaving, to his mind, solved the economic problems of the village, but it was not only villagers who were exhorted to take up the spinning wheel. For Gandhi, spinning overcame the division between those who had to work with their hands and those who claimed a higher status because they were able to avoid bodily labour. Instead of focusing on books to provide knowledge, Gandhi argued that schools and colleges should teach pupils to properly use the spinning wheel. This would help them to develop their character and moral values, something far more important than bookish knowledge. Whatever little knowledge in history, geography or mathematics was required could easily be imparted with the help of spinning (Gandhi 1936).

Jamia agreed with the importance of the villages for the regeneration of the nation and pushed the interpretation into the causes of village poverty. Already for his doctoral research, Zakir Husain had focused on the transformation of the Indian agrarian economy under colonial rule (Z. Husain 1930). This was followed up by regular articles in the journal *Jamia*, which addressed the Gandhian concerns of unemployment but also spoke about the dependency of the farmers on the moneylenders, the isolation of the villagers, their lack of education and the low productivity of farming – not because the soil did not yield enough fruit, but because the traditional laws of inheritance led to an increasing fragmentation of the fields. All these topics went far beyond Gandhi's analysis and pointed to problems, which could not be solved only by moral education and the spinning wheel (Kidwai 1928).

Nevertheless, from its inception, Jamia enthusiastically took over the lesson of the spinning wheel and made regular spinning classes and the wearing of homespun and home-woven cloth part of the visual aesthetics of school and college at all levels. But unlike Gandhi, who despite all his belief in village autonomy, had an interest in promoting the same model throughout India, Jamia devised a multitude of ways to engage the pupils in manual work, beyond the narrow focus on the spinning wheel – a project on gardening, for instance, related directly to the vicinity Jamia found itself in at Karol Bagh. The fact that the area was not yet included in plans for urban development made it affordable for the school to acquire some fields, in which the pupils could grow their own produce. Moreover, it was something that connected them with the gardening and vegetable-growing communities among their neighbours to an extent that spinning failed to do. Abdul Ghaffar Mudholi, the principal of the primary school, described in great detail how he involved the pupils not only in the performing of manual labour but also in the development of the project itself. Instead of presenting them with a ready-made programme, he had the pupils discuss what vegetables were appropriate to the soil, which ones would fetch the best prices at the market and how to care for the plants at their different stages of growth. The pupils learned to search for information in books, but also asked around in the neighbourhood and involved the gardening experts in their project (Mudholi 1963: 19–31; Mudholi 1931). While the project was exciting for the boys, they also complained about the burning sun, the thorns that hurt their feet and the headaches they got from carrying loads on their heads for the whole day. Mudholi recorded their complaints in their own words just as faithfully as he recorded everything else (Mudholi 1942: 107).

Starting with the transfer to Karol Bagh, Jamia also ran an evening school to teach the workers in the neighbourhood reading and writing and to provide them with religious instruction. The classes were run by the regular teachers of Jamia, with the help of the more advanced students, but also involved the support, and perhaps even some extent of teaching, by Khwaja Hasan Nizami and his followers. Nizami, one of the leading Sufis at the shrine of Nizam ud Din in Delhi, had closely collaborated with Gandhi during the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements. He not only propagated Hindu–Muslim unity as a strategy but also penned devotional poems in praise of the Hindu deity Krishna (K. Nizami 1917). Without distancing himself from his earlier positions, in the late 1920s he became one of the founders of the Tablighi Jama'at, an organisation aimed at imparting education to Muslims about their faith and religion and purifying their practices from influences deemed non-Islamic – something that appears more of a contradiction for later historians than for Nizami and his contemporaries. While the goal of turning the Muslim pupils of Jamia into better Muslims remained unchallenged from the early days, the need to publicly debate what this implied does not seem to have been felt – or it was avoided to preserve the harmony between the different interpretations which identified with Jamia as their common project.

The evening school was open to everyone working during the day, without restriction of age. It did not charge fees and provided the pupils with free reading and writing material (*Payam-e Ta'lim* 1926a, 1926b). Teachers from Jamia, notably Abd ul Ghaffar Mudholi, took up the task of awakening enthusiasm for learning among the juvenile workers and started visiting them in their houses and talking to them. He argued that with only an hour a day they would be able within a year to read stories and advertisements (probably for jobs) and to write letters. Attendance numbers rose quickly; and after a month, more than 300 pupils had already enrolled. To facilitate communication, a *panchayat* (council) was created to represent the complaints and problems of the pupils; as in the villages, the *panchayat* also worked to discipline those pupils who had become negligent in their work (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 77). Like the primary school, the evening school had annual assemblies, to which the neighbourhood was invited and at which the pupils gave speeches and received prizes for their achievements (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 87). Moreover, regular evening meals brought together the pupils from the evening school and Jamia, joined by the leading men from the neighbourhood and the teachers (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 77). This helped to further integrate Jamia into the geographical and social space it found itself in

and familiarise its teachers and leaders with the problems faced by the workers and their families.

The programme, which developed over the years in relation to the *qaumi hafta* (national week), pointed in a similar direction. It was celebrated each year around 13 April, in commemoration of the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in 1919, when a British officer had opened fire on an unarmed crowd of demonstrators in an enclosed space, from which escape was almost impossible. This commemoration could easily have been used to invoke feelings of hate against the colonial power and to pass them onto the next generation, as Zakir Husain explained in one of his annual speeches. But this would be to the detriment of everyone, he continued his speech – plants nourished by the soil of hate fade quickly, as hate destroys and only love builds up. It would also be easy to use the power of rhetoric to paint an image of India's humiliation for the boys and ignite their sense of shame and their passionate *josh*. However, feelings were fleeting, he reminded the audience, and freedom was not won in a day. Rather than emotions, it was new and stable habits that were required from them, habits that became part of their character (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 130–131). What Husain argued against here was not so much emotions as such – after all, even the disparagement of feelings is itself never void of an emotional undertone – as strong and potentially violent passions. Even at its height, *josh* had never been unequivocally proclaimed as an ideal, irrespective of age and gender. Here, however, Husain seems to go a step further and almost plead for a return to the balance and harmony of the *akhlaq* culture.

For this, however, it needed more than speeches. Central to the programme of the *qaumi hafta* was an almost carnivalesque inversion of hierarchies at Jamia – the *akhlaq* ideal was to be achieved by measures alien to this culture. The menial staff working at the school were given the day off, and their tasks were taken over by the students and their teachers (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 86). The day ended with a meal prepared by the students, which was shared by everyone, symbolically overcoming the distinctions of class and caste and showing the pupils, once again, that manual labour was neither degrading nor shameful (*Jamia* 1930b) but, on the contrary, deserved respect. In later years, the movement was extended to involve the school's neighbourhood: on this day, the pupils and their teachers went out to clean the vicinity, something usually done by people deemed untouchables. Besides, they also offered advice and practical help on issues of health and provided unemployed women and old people with spinning wheels and raw cotton to enable them to earn their livelihood (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 129).[14]

Once again, emotional styles were anchored in space and closely interwoven with its reproduction. Though, at first sight, the practices marking the national week seemed to produce emotions and an emotional atmosphere that almost could not be further from the affective culture of the respectable families of the city of Delhi, the founding fathers of Jamia saw no contradiction – or wanted to overcome the contradiction, even against initial resistance[15] – between the emotions evoked by the exquisite language of a poem, by striving to avoid all excesses, and the *khidmat ka jazba*, the emotions of service towards the poorest, even if this meant taking up tasks considered dirty and degrading (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 129).

During the 10 years that Jamia spent in Karol Bagh, the character of the neighbourhood changed dramatically. During the coronation *darbar* (royal court) of 1911, it had been announced that the capital of British India would be transferred from Calcutta to Delhi. This led to the construction of a new city of Delhi, adding to the seven or more cities recorded through history, to house the government and the administration and offer living space for everyone, from the viceroy to the most minor clerks. After the First World War, the 1920s had been spent with the design of the new capital and the construction of what was to be called Lutyens' Delhi, with its homogenous administrative buildings and bungalows, recalling the concept of the garden city with its neatly devised streets, its open spaces and its greenery (Irving 1981).

In this process, Delhi had become Old Delhi, increasingly neglected and starved of funding. At the same time, the construction of New Delhi led to an increase in population, which pushed urbanisation far beyond the boundaries still in place in the 1920s. Karol Bagh became the destination of landless Dalit labourers, who hoped to find employment in New Delhi's building work, as well as construction workers and migrants from Rajasthan (Vanaik 2020: 31). For Jamia, which still rented most of its school and hostel buildings, this meant an increase in the costs, as well as a deterioration in living conditions, because the municipality did not invest in the water supply, canalisation and other infrastructure to keep up with the increasing population (Legg 2007: 185).

It was only in the late 1930s, with the designation of Karol Bagh as the area of settlement for minor clerks working in New Delhi, that the area began to be systematically developed. By this time, Tibbia College was the lone building surviving from earlier times amid a grid of streets and houses neatly designed according to the schemes of the Delhi Improvement Trust.

The Bucolic Planes of Okhla

By this time, Jamia had moved on again. Hakim Ajmal Khan passed away in 1927. This went hand in hand with a shift of responsibilities, financial as well as political and educational, from the foundation committee to the younger generation. Even Gandhi, who had assured Hakim Ajmal Khan that, if the need arose, he would go begging to save Jamia, now exhorted Zakir Husain that, while he would always give his blessings to Jamia, it was time for them to be in charge.

The renouncing of state funding meant that Jamia was entirely reliant on donations. While those responsible for Jamia tried to minimise their dependence on the big donors and broaden their basis to include many supporters who could just give one rupee or a couple of *anna*s, the big money needed for survival came partly from traders and mostly from the princely states. In 1930, the Nizam of Hyderabad donated 50,000 rupees, in addition to a monthly contribution of 1,000 rupees; a little earlier, the Begum of Bhopal on her part had pledged 1,000 rupees per month, as well as a sum of 250,000 rupees for permanent buildings (*Jamia* 1930a). After some delay, as the colonial government had blocked the funds during the Civil Disobedience movement, in which several teachers and students participated, the plans for a permanent structure were laid out, and Jamia started to acquire land, design buildings and finally began the move to Okhla in 1935.

Unlike Karol Bagh, Okhla appears outside the purview of the different studies on Delhi in the first half of the twentieth century. Okhla (the abbreviation for Old Kanal and Land Authority) came into being in the 1870s with the inauguration of the Agra Canal, which supplied irrigation to the agricultural land south of the Delhi district (*Gazetteer* 1912: 10).[16] The land was mostly owned by Jat cultivators, still showing traces of its earlier connection with the Raja of Bharatpur (*Gazetteer* 1912: 83). Besides agriculture, the weir of the Agra Canal allowed for fishing (*Gazetteer* 1912: 38). Since 1904, Okhla was also on the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, connecting with Delhi through Nizam ud Din and Sadar Bazar (*Gazetteer* 1912: 185).

Okhla was not an unknown place for the members of Jamia, as it had been the destination for school outings for a couple of years already. Children enjoyed a swim and the teachers joined them – even if Zakir Husain preferred to sit at the bank, saying that while he had mastered the theory of swimming, he was still hesitant to put it into practice (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 97). Joy and fun were emotions as central to Jamia's educational considerations as the sterner ones of discipline and sacrifice (Figure 3.5).

Figure 3.5 Pupils at the riverbank of the Agra Canal

Source: Premchand Archives and Literary Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Already in 1929, the editor of the journal *Kamyabi*, Sa'id Ahmad, had initiated a debate, suggesting that Jamia should move to a village, far from the city, where the children, the teachers and also the parents could settle.[17] The editor of *Jamia* agreed that their aim should be to enhance the children's joy of living, to bring together faith and deed and to teach them simplicity, but not asceticism, and a religion that did not carry the smell of narrow-mindedness and superstition, creating an atmosphere which brought together patriotism (*qaum parasti*) and piety (*khuda parasti*). Therefore, it was necessary to distance oneself from the culture of the present with its poisonous breath of hate, enmity and malice, not only for the sake of one's health but also to preserve life itself. The authorities in charge of Jamia had already started the search for an appropriate location. However, distance also carried its own dangers, the editor continued his argument. The aim of education was not only directed at the children but at the community and nation as a whole. This would only be possible if Jamia continued to participate in social life and carried the burden, shoulder to shoulder, with its brethren across the community and the nation. Children had

to be protected from the storms of life, the editor agreed, but only for a limited time, until they were strong enough to face all the attacks. *Himmat* – energy and courage – could only be developed in adversity, not in a bucolic environment shielded from modern life (*Jamia* 1929).

Okhla fulfilled the need for a protected environment – all the descriptions underlined its *pur-faza*, its openness and the purity of its atmosphere. At the same time, it was just eight miles from Old Delhi and even less from the centre of New Delhi, so visitors could still reach the school in an easy drive.

These reflections were proved right already in the ceremony laying the foundation stone, on 1 March 1935. The editor of *Jamia* described the festivities in a delayed issue of the journal: no one had hoped for more than 300–400 visitors, he elaborated. But the feeling of love was so strong that more than thousand people came, the rich and the poor from the city, Hindus and Muslims, representatives of science and scholarship and art, people from the administration, and those who were bare of all of this but full of purity (*khulus*) and passion (*josh*), the editor continued. The recitation of a poem by Aslam Jairajpuri, the head of the Department for Islamic Studies, was followed by speeches by Zakir Husain and Dr Ansari, which made such an impression on the listeners that the audience shed tears of fervour, exciting those who worked for Jamia to joy and pride, but also courage and passion (*Jamia* 1935b). The foundation stone was laid not by some prominent person but by the smallest child, a member of the new generation (*nizhad-e nau*), the rulers of the future and therefore more worthy than anyone who was still a slave of the present (*Jamia* 1935a). For the first time, the celebrations also included an assembly by more than a hundred of Jamia's women, presided over by the widow of Mohammed Ali, where the ladies listened to speeches and showed their commitment by pledging financial support and donating jewellery (Hameed 2021; *Jamia* 1935b). Once again, the sources allow for a detailed depiction of the event and the emotions, seen from the perspective of Jamia itself. Quite probably, outside observers agreed with these observations and assessments to different degrees. However, the first public conflict involving Jamia and its educational policy occurred only in 1937/1938 in the context of Zakir Husain's involvement in Gandhi's programme of basic education.

Jamia and Gandhi: The Education of Emotions between City and Village

Jamia considered itself a Gandhian institution. Gandhi had played a central role in the foundation period and beyond. He was the inspiration behind the boycott

of educational institutions during the Non-cooperation movement and behind the idea of a national university. While pursuing his doctoral studies in Berlin, Zakir Husain worked as an unofficial ambassador of the Mahatma, spreading his message in talks and writing. Gandhi supported Jamia politically and in the initial years helped the drive for donations; Jamia in turn followed him even once the alliance which had carried the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements had become brittle and communal relations deteriorated. As for many in the Congress, Gandhi was a father figure for Zakir Husain and his colleagues, exacerbating at times, but deeply revered and loved.

As this chapter has shown, Jamia also subscribed to Gandhi's message of the spinning wheel. Spinning lessons were introduced at the school and the college; pupils and teachers more often than not wore simple homespun clothes. This went beyond the politics of symbols. Manual labour as a way to bridge the gap between classes and castes was as important to Jamia as it was to Gandhi.

In two aspects, however, Jamia gave its own twist to the message of the Mahatma. First, if the control of the body and asceticism were fundamental to Gandhi's ideas of moral improvement and character building of children, but also of his co-workers and, in the end, of the nation as a whole, Jamia found a third way between Gandhian discipline (*zabt*) and young Aligarh's passion (*josh*). Without repudiating either of them, their emotional ideal drew on the older model of balance (*e'tidal*) and profoundly transformed it. Jamia was not an egalitarian space. Teachers had authority over their pupils, and Zakir Husain was a firm leader of the institution. However, theirs was not the authority of a dictator. When Zakir Husain once was late to a meeting he was to preside, Abdul Ghaffar Mudholi started without him, and when, as shown previously, the children complained about the labour they had to put in the garden, not only did Mudholi not reprimand them but included their complaints as part of his narrative. This did not substitute one set of emotions for another but changed the emotional atmosphere as a whole. The balance which constituted the affective ideal of Jamia was not the balance of the courtly society or even of the respectable families of the nineteenth-century cities and *qasbah*s, bent on preserving their dignity at all moments. Teachers took part in the activities of the children; they joined them in their athletic competitions, ran with them and swam with them (or remained sitting on the river bank, possibly taunted by the children who were already enjoying their dip in the water). The whole school could be moved to tears on some occasion, but then they returned to their everyday work the next morning, true to their belief that the patient cultivation of good habits (*'adat*)

and a good character (*sirat*) was better than indulging in fleeting passion and emotions (*waqti josh aur jazbah*) (Mudholi 2004 [1965]: 131).

For Gandhi, the village was a central, if not the most central, part of his message. The Indian village had borne the impact of colonialism and modernity, but it could be salvaged and in turn become a space of salvation – the space from where to transcend the state and its need for violence and replace it with an authority based on moral conviction, linked to a bodily regime of asceticism and its emotional practices. Without ever explicitly contradicting Gandhi, Jamia's social and political activities did not rest upon this foundation. It had deep roots in urban culture, notably in the affective world of Urdu urbanity, a culture that it valued and worked to transmit to the following generation. But even where it viewed the development of the city with concern, it never distanced itself beyond the urban periphery. The city and the state had come to stay. What mattered to Jamia was the engagement in favour of the poor, the unemployed, women and mothers, as well as the migrant labourers. Social work and reform were as much needed in the city as they were in the village, and the education of the new generation for a new India should turn their back neither on the village nor on the urban space.

Notes

1. Starting with the monographs, by now canonical, of Minault (1982), Brown (1974), Robinson (1997 [1974]) and Hasan (1991). For more recent titles, see Qureshi (1999) and Chatterji (2013).
2. This resonates with the question of Gautier (2020) but focuses more on spatial imaginations than on religious encounters.
3. For more detailed elaboration and further literature, see Pernau (2015a, 2015b).
4. For more details on the new concepts of emotions in the work of Abdul Majid Daryabadi, one of the first psychologists writing in Urdu, who was also a close collaborator of Mohammed Ali, see Pernau (2019, ch. 8).
5. For an elaboration on the tradition of the Indian village as an independent republic, see Mantena (2010).
6. Thank you to Rukmini Barua for bringing this aspect to my attention.
7. This biography is based on an extensive use of Urdu primary sources. Muhammad Mujeeb (1972) combines the insight of a contemporary close friend of Zakir Husain with the professional skills of a historian.
8. For a vivid description of the early days of Jamia in Aligarh from the perspective of a young man, who tried to join Jamia without following the

proper proceedings and who first earned his living at the printing press, before slowly being allowed to join the classes, see Mudholi (2011: 34–57).

9. Any history of Jamia is bound to suffer from both an overabundance and a paucity of sources. From the beginning, many of the men (and later also the women) linked with Jamia were involved in committing their personal history and the history of the institution to writing and preserving sources for posterity. Between the journals, the monographs produced by Jamia's teachers, the autobiographies and memoirs, and the early history writing by the main characters, it is possible to reconstruct the atmosphere as they experienced it and an almost day-to-day account of events. On the other hand, there are only limited possibilities for an outside gaze to counterbalance these views (and these few are often out of reach for foreigners, given the challenges to access Indian archives at present – no matter how extremely helpful individual archivists try to be).
10. *Jamia* carefully noted the names of all the visitors, very often also giving supplementary information on their special interests, the people they interacted with, the remarks they offered and at times even quoting their speeches at length.
11. Here again *Jamia* reported extensively every year; see, for instance, *Jamia* (1926). On the planning and the many actors it involved, see *Jamia* (1931).
12. S. Husain (1957) referenced by Mudholi (1963: 55); Mujeeb (2012 [1931]) referenced by Mudholi (2004 [1965]: 159).
13. On Mir Baqir Ali and the tradition of *dastango'i*, see the delightful work by Pasha M. Khan (2019: 72–91).
14. Here again one can only hope that sources will still turn up, which would allow us to see how the staff and servants perceived this inversion of hierarchies.
15. For a rather emphatic declaration that the pupils quickly overcame their initial reluctance against this kind of work, if only it was properly explained to them, see *Jamia* (1930b). This provides a rare glimpse that the harmony displayed was less of a given, but rather the result of internal struggles.
16. Thank you to Peter Gottschalk for alerting me to this source.
17. Unfortunately, the issue of *Kamyabi* could not be traced yet, and Sa'id Ahmad's position is only available through its summary in *Jamia.*

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