

MODERNITY IN THE FRAME OF MULLAH AUTHORITIES IN DAUDI BOHRA DENOMINATION

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Abstrak

Dauri Bohras, sebagai sekte Ismaili Syi'ah di India, sudah dikenal sebagai sebuah komunitas Islam terkemuka. Meskipun menganut tradisi keislaman tradisional yang diwariskan dari pendahulunya, tetapi pengikut Bohra memiliki pandangan berbeda terhadap Islam sebagai pandangan hidup. Berbeda dengan sekte Syi'ah lainnya yang menjaga jarak dengan modernitas, penganut Bohra bisa mengakomodasi isu-isu modern dalam bingkai tradisional.

Mullah (Dā'i Mutlaq) memainkan peran penting sebagai pemimpin tertinggi yang membimbing penganutnya sesuai dengan aturan yang berlaku. Bahkan, Dā'i Mutlaq yang dikenal sebagai perwakilan dari Imām (pemimpin aliran Syi'ah) telah sukses mengkombinasikan pandangan para penganutnya dalam mendefinisikan Islam dalam bingkai budaya mereka. Oleh karena itu, ini merupakan fenomena yang menarik untuk diteliti. Sebenarnya, paper ini merupakan karya antropologi Jonah Blank yang digunakan sebagai referensi utama dalam artikel ini.

Kata Kunci: *Daudi Bohra, Syi'ah, India*

Abstract

Daudi Bohras as a prominent Shiite Ismaili sect in India has been recognized as a modern Islamic society. Despite their traditional Islamic Shiite custom which is brought up from their ancestry, yet the people of Bohras has a distinct perspective toward Islam as the way of life. Unlike the other Shiite sects that put themselves on a distance to the modernity, Bohras people are able to cooperate within the modern issues in the frame of traditional.

Mullah, or Dā'i Mutlaq played an important role as a top cleric leader in guiding his people according to their rules. Indeed, Dā'i Mutlaq, who is recognized as a representative of Imām (leader of Shiite Islam), has successfully combined the outlook of his people in defining Islam in their cultural frame. Therefore, it is an

intriguing phenomenon to be observed. This paper is, as a matter of fact, Jonah Blank's anthropological work used as a main reference.

Keywords: *Daudi Bohra, Shiite, India*

Introduction

Since the demise of Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD¹ Islam was spread out by his successors throughout the Arabia, leaving an impressive imprint to indigenous people where Islam exists, the state of Islam after Muhammad (*Khulafā' ar-Rāsyidūn* or four caliphs, Umayyad, Abbasid and etc.) had expanded rapidly through remarkable success to convert people into Islam.² As that Islam expanded in various communities then it has an account for local configuration between the notion of Islam and local cultures which later emerged as a complex system of Muslim society, or in another word there has been an acculturation between Islam and local idea existed prior to Islam as well.

Defining Muslim Society in a proper way likely must be carefully taken into account, such Ernest Gellner perhaps indicate one of the definition of it, though Varisco averred the absurdity of Gellner's conception of Muslim society as said Islam only represented as a segment of the Author's (Gellner) creative imagination.³ However thus what Gellner offered to some extent has coped the identification of Muslim Society as he said Islam is the blueprint of social order it holds that a set of rules exist, eternal, divinely ordained, and independent of the will of men, which defines the proper ordering of society.⁴ The highlighted point from the statement which I want to take is the ordering of society which every Muslim community perceives from Qur'ān and Hadīts, yet that is not the final, the term of acculturation between Islam and particular society then becomes the main point of what latter Anthropology of Muslim Society deals with it.

As noted that Anthropology is a recent field of science in the late of 19th century, especially in a matter of religion that lives in certain community in frame of studying "primitive people" as conducted by Tylor and his works on *Primitive Culture* (1871). Not until

1922, it was Radcliffe-Brown⁵ who was not only combined the functionalism and structuralism in his study but also dedicated a large part of his research in religion as his work *The Andaman Islander*, even it is intriguing subject yet the study is lacking. However as Geertz's *Islam Observed* released it was opened the interest study of Muslim society although many assumptions pointed to the politically oriented of studying Muslim like Said(1978) asserts the term Orientalism only in western term to assist the colonial purposes, nevertheless it is not my intention to deal with that point but its only to present the brief chronology of studying Muslim Society.

Like Geertz's *Islam Observed*, Rabinow's *Reflection on Fieldwork in Morocco*, and many other anthropologist of Muslim Society who are trying to observe the actual behavior of daily ritual of what Muslim perceive from Qur'an and Hadits which to some extent is different. Another contemporary ethnographic study which has the same interest as mentioned above is Jonah Blank's *Mullah on The Mainframe* as it is my concern of writing. This ethnographic writing intended to present the contemporary practice of Sy'ah sub sect Daudi Bohra community in modern life, how they perceive modernity and apply it into daily life.

Unlike the other Sy'ah sub sect such as Aga Khan, Nizariyya and Sulaimani, Daudi Bohra in one side uphold the most strict and traditional manner of Islamic orthopraxy as well as Taliban in Afghanistan, yet in another way they eagerly adopt any kind of modernity as they send their children to Britain or United States, and not to mention they perform each (modernity and orthopraxy) in a daily life and in whole aspects. Thus Blank in his very first words stated that for the past two decades the Bohra clergy has attempted with great success to establish a communal identity that is at once universally Islamic and unique to the denomination.⁶

This intriguing phenomenon of Islamic society had found interesting, at least for the Author to write ethnography of it, his intention as we may know is a description on how traditional values not only can be maintained but also resurrected and created in a unique means, as its leader *Dā'i Mutlaq* has his own charisma to lead his members. The aspect of political authority of *Dā'i Mutlaq*, though not the only focus, has also be the fascinating issue to deal with as it is my writing intention. Other concern such as women position, dress, education, economic, rituals, and other also will be taken into account.

Objective

In the first place, Blank wanted to look out deeply Daudi Bohra denomination survived in nowadays era and engaged modernity without ignoring their origin tradition, this study of ethnography in Badri Mahal right in downtown Mumbai for years. This study is pioneering for the community famed with its rigidity, he used a participant observation rather than survey data that we know this kind of methodology in ethnography exist in order to get closer to the object by “being there” and the researcher can come closer to the insider,⁷ in other side this ethnography method has been used widely since its development as Malinowski and his student Franz Boas used it. Thereof, he was able to accomplish the fieldwork for the very first time in this Syṭah Ismāʿīlī sub sect, although there is some who studied the Syṭah Ismāʿīlī for instance Farhad Daftary’s work “*The Ismaili: Their History and Doctrines*”.⁸

Modernity and tradition as the strengthening ideas in Blank’s work for this community depicted in many aspects of daily life as also in religious matter it is obviously recognized from its title, but beneath all these issues Blank had a special intention not to present the whole aspects in detail, instead the orthodoxy and centralized authority of hierarchy on one person (*Dāʿī Mutlaq*),⁹ in other word Blank wants to present how this centralized person is able to maintain the traditional and embrace the modernity as he is also able to build his personal charisma so that Bohra people could adhere and obey his order undoubtedly.

For those, it can be said that the objective of this study is trying to present the Bohra denomination in perceiving modernity under the control of *Dāʿī Mutlaq* as a top clergy leader. Nevertheless the objective of my concern here though reflected from Blank’s work, yet intended to examine the *Dāʿī* authority in his community as a central power and figure that latter lead this group to embrace modernity as a mean of social cohesion without ignoring their attribute of orthodoxy. In doing so, there are some objectives question in accordance with this paper to describe, namely:

1. What are the roles and importance of Mullah or *Dāʿī Mutlaq* as a centralized power in the community in relation with the community perception of modernity?
2. How does Daudi Bohra perceive modernity and adjoin it with its orthodoxy tradition?

The Origin of Daudi Bohra

Daudi Bohra community is the sub sect of Syī'ah Ismā'īlī who believed that Ja'fār Sādiq was never gave any mandate to his son Mūsa to become next Imām but to his elder brother Ismā'īl. Ismā'īlī developed their schools and found their glorious era in Fatimid Caliphate that brought to Magrib (nowadays Tunis) and founded the empire, in the era of Faimid Caliph al-Mustansir Billāh the school divided into Nizāriyyah and Musta'li, member of Nizāriyyah believed that Imām after al-Mustansir is Nizār, and people of Musta'li believed that Imām after him should be Musta'li, the other Mustansir son.

In the period of certain caliphs Ismā'īlī school spread out through India and established the community in Gujarat, a while after establishment there was a conflict between Sulaimān and Dāwūd ibn Ajabsyah regarding the authority of Imām and control to the community, this conflict ended up in court and declared that Dāwūd should be the Imām. The court decision split the community into Daudi who received the decision and Sulaimānī who did not, soon Daudi Bohra of Syī'ah Ismā'īlī become prominent determination in India and surrounding area because its rival Sulaimani gained no interest and lack of support. The name "Bohra" generally presumed to be derived from the Gujarati verb "Vohrun" (to trade) reflecting the occupation of majority Bohra community, though some level of society like *Dā'i Mutlaq* family and other claim themselves as descendant from aristocrat clan called *Rajput Kshatria* a clan that originated from Hindu-India tradition.¹⁰ Bohra community survived into its existence from Fatimid Caliphate to the present, and lead by *Dā'i Mutlaq* who served as substitution and representatives to Imām since twenty first Imām Abū al-Qayyim ath-Thayyib went into hiding in 1132 CE. Up to now the *Dā'i Mutlaq* is the 52nd and hold by Syedna Muhammad Burhānuddīn.¹¹

Daudi Bohra community recently centralize in Mumbai as mentioned before, and named the place as *Dawat* and Badri Mahal is the place where activities of the community arranged right in the downtown of Mumbai. Originally *Dawat* located in Yemen but then removed to India for safety excuse as it was suppressed by Ottoman Empire which adopted Sunni Islam and the importance of Bohra community in India.¹²

In fact, the Bohra has many text sources deal with the community but only few provided and published for public and access

to many of texts is limited only to people of Bohra. The publication made for public for instance *1998 Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* by Dawat affiliated Syaikh Musthafā 'Abd al-Husain. As Blank pointed out that remarkable sources rely on publication published in anywhere and anytime nearly past hundreds years ago and compiled in single source *Gulzare Daudi For The Bohras of India* by Mian Bhai Mullah 'Abd al-Husain of Rangoon in the early twentieth century and the holding of the source continue to the other Bohras dissidents as many researchers rely on it, but then the problem is invariability of dissidents.

Those obstacles made the research impossible to researchers unless they blessed and authorized by the *Dā'i Mutlaq*, this proved that the authority and political hegemony of *Dā'i* is really essential as will be explained later. However, Blank has been given that bless and allowed to study the community and because of du'a or blessing the *Dā'i Mutlaq* had ordered his member to be cooperated with Blank, this also made Blank the first ethnographer to study Bohras community so that he was able to describe almost the whole aspects such as ritual activities, death rituals and Muharram rituals that reach it best by doing participant observation precisely by going down into the people life. The decision to let Blank study the community is based on the idea of knowing other denomination either muslim or non muslim to find some benefits from what Bohra community effort to maintain the traditional and orthodoxy but in the other hand accept the modernity (the term of Modernity will be explained later) as a part of their daily life. One of the basic premises of *Mullah on the Mainframe* other than above mentioned implicitly is that a peaceful coexistence is indeed possible between the concept of Islamic orthodoxy and modernity that derived from western concept.

Political Hegemony and the Role of Mullah (*Dā'i Mutlaq*)

To some extent it can be said that the setting of cleric authority and its royal member lead by *Dā'i Mutlaq* distinguish Bohras and perhaps other Ismā'īlī from other muslim society group especially Sunni. In Syī'ah conception all Muslim, should cherish descendants of Prophet Muhammad through 'Alī and the the next Imām, this conception derived from Qur'ān Surah as-Syūra verse 23,¹³ this concept also known as *tawalla* and *tabarra*. However, the concept in nowadays Bohras has changed as it is not really to apprise the real

biological descendants but rather in spiritual by means of Imām and the successor of Imām and his family, but in case of the real Imām is in hiding the authority falls into *Dā'i Mutlaq* whose authority to represent that hiding Imām.

The present hierarchy of Bohras top clergies actually originated from Fatimid Caliphate but only *Dā'i Mutlaq*, Mazoon and Mukassir that still exist in present day. During the Fatimid Caliphate the structure was as follows:

- a) Imām (the highest leader in Syī'ah Islam)
- b) Chief *Dā'i* or *Dā'i* Dawat: this institution of *Dā'i* was the supervisor for all religious structure and executes all the Imām's command
- c) Hujja: *naqib*, *lahiq* or *Yad* which are mean representative, in Fatimid era every province and region guard and supervise by hujja
- d) *Dā'i Balāg*: this office actually remains unclear because shared duties with Hujja, and not used since the seclusion of Imām Thayyib
- e) *Dā'i Mutlaq*: this office in Fatimid era only a middle rank, but becomes the highest institution after the seclusion of Imām and indeed in Bohra denomination
- f) Mazoon: first assistant of the *Dā'i* and today this office hold by relatives of *Dā'i* as well Mukassir
- g) Mukassir (persuader): in the Fatimid era this office job is to lead a clerical debate with other religious group, but later in the twentieth century Mukassir served as a chief amil in Mumbai district.

These structures of Fatimid era only for normative form that written in its code law, sometimes this arrangement only covers few of them as shown in Bohras today. Apart from that of Fatimid Hierarchy, in present Daudi Bohras the structure consist of *Dā'i Mutlaq* and assisted by Mazoon and Mukassir, the job description of both Mazoon and Mukassir are not strictly divided since those institutions seized by *Dā'i* relatives, however their duties more or less are similar to those of Fatimid caliphate's Mazoon and Mukassir. However, besides Mazoon and Mukassir there are Amils who serve as the leader in every Bohra community in the world.

Based on Syī'ah conception of Tabarru and tawalla as mentioned above, Bohras top clergy or *Dā'i* enjoys the position of being praised and centralized as an important figure in the community, this is not just because *Dā'i* need to be respected as have been told to do so, but rather the charisma and the inner power that exist in every *Dā'i*. As Blank reported in his short survey asking the most important aspects of their faith, and it was found remarkably that 94.0%¹⁴ of his respondents always attached to the *Dā'i* in the entire aspects of life. People will ask *Dā'i* for advice, child giving name, and so forth, nearly 84,8% of his respondent having ask *Dā'i* to name their children, and 64.6% of them are seeking blessing and *Du'a* for their life, homes, and business.

This remarkable circumstance of *Dā'i* rarely can be found in other Islamic Sufi or even other Ismā'īlī sects like Nizārīyah for instance. *Dā'i Mutlaq* in Bohra denomination linked to very aspects of Bohra community and is guiding his followers, in that, *Dā'i Mutlaq* has to serve as a bridge between hidden Imām and Faith as he also must be part of his followers daily live, or in another word hegemonic oversight is his job. As the *Dā'i* Syedna Muhammad Burhānuddīn the 52nd *Dā'i* has a privilege to be *Kal Ma'sūm* (infallible) like Imām but partially, it means that *Dā'i* only infallible when making theological doctrine. However this enjoyment did not make *Dā'i* or even his royal family live extravagantly as perhaps noted from similar position in other society.

What made this much more exiting is the role that used by *Dā'i* to preserve the community by means of a unique method, perhaps it is hard enough to believe that the orthodoxy could be coupled with modernity (the term modernity will be described later), especially when come up into a single authoritative in Islam as Taliban in Afghanistan for instance, the boundaries is so rigid and strict even they are denying television and any kind of electronic devices that considered to be the infidel symbols and must be avoided. In contrary, Bohra people and their *Dā'i* are able to place themselves in between without betraying their orthodoxy. Hence, what Blank had done was really remarkable in presenting the other side of Muslim society, as he writes:¹⁵

“Islam is far too varied and complex to have a single authoritative position on the topic of modernity. For every hidebound Taliban Zealot who condemns television or female

education as *bid'ah* (innovation), there are tens of thousands of other Muslims who do not. By what standar is he more Islamic than they? An excellent case could be made that it is the literalist themselves who are outside the mainstream of contemporary Islam.

By having these authorities *Dā'i* can mobilize and lead the community to embrace something and in this case is the modernity. Thus the uniqueness is not merely derived from the community, yet it is the role and the authority of *Dā'i* who has an exceptional view of Islam in a term of modernity and orthodoxy, such a modernity implemented by *Dā'i* from the small matters to the most rudimentary principles such as using computer, internet, and other modern technology facilities in order to keep in touch with the leader and asking guidance, in addition Bohra use it as a tool of social cohesion. Another distinction from bohra in term of authority power and charisma of *Dā'i* is the concept of to cherish, as in other Sy'ah denomination it is obliged to apprise and to have a deep devotion to *ahl al-bait* or Prophet family like ordered in verse, nevertheless Bohra has a different expression by extending that devotion into *Dā'i* as a successor of Imām and his royal family.

Unlike the previous *Dā'i*, the present *Dā'i* traveled a lot to his followers around the globe, traveling by plane, communicating by fax, email, and so forth. In an implicit meaning we can see how the *Dā'i* encourage himself and his community to comprehend the essence of modernity not only as a tool of social cohesion as what Blank wrote, yet the deep meaning of that is how the authority and hegemonic role of *Dā'i* could reflect the entire people of Bohra. Indeed what it makes different that *Dā'i* is present and entering the spiritual life of people so that every aspect of life and ritual go beyond the demarcation of typical denomination bounded, still, the orthodoxy is maintained. This definitely an extraordinary hegemony of *Dā'i* and the royal family that placed Dawat (central place where Daudi Bohra conduct its activity) as political reality of religious denomination. Yet as Blank points out, it is precisely this central focus, more than any other factor, that has enabled the Bohra clergy to promote modernization and simultaneously to reinstitutionalize tradition through to the top-down effort to solidify a community identity that is both thoroughly Islamic and uniquely Bohra.¹⁶ Thus uniqueness based on Pan Islamism though with variations, but it is noticeable for the combining of traditional

and modernity, for instance child birth, circumcision, women status, ritual of adulthood, variation in the marriage norm, and so forth as will be described in the following sub chapter.

Modernity among Daudi Bohra

Modernity that embraced by Bohra can be typified, perhaps, as a unique constellation between two different matters, although the term of modernity is confusing to sometimes, Indeed, modernity was not that too simple to be pinned down since there are many of scholars have a different outlook of modernity. One straightforward meaning of modernism is that the concept emerged as a sign of a post traditional era of agrarianism to the industrialize and capitalize society or the nation state building,¹⁷but in context of general understanding modernity has been associated with cultural and intellectual movements occurring between 1436 and 1789, and extending to the 1970's up until now.¹⁸

Those plain classifications in some extent likely to be confronted by the term of traditionalism, the term that always attached in defining modernity. Nowadays, many people misunderstood the term of modernity as they perceived in inappropriate definition, detach it from anything affiliated with an old and past instrument and referring to unrepresentative concept of modernity, thus, creating boundaries of any cultural and religious values from preservation in a recent era, as a result modernism tend to be tagged as a tool of secularism. Such an inflexible and rigid conception had even been said by Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr from Pakistan, he assumed the modernity must be approached in a wise manner as he examines from the case of nowadays fundamental Islam:

Modernization can no longer be regards as a process that automatically produces secularization, privatization of faith, and the rejection of old values. Nor can religion any longer be seen merely as a set of traditional rites and beliefs, impervious to change and irrelevant to modernization. The task therefore becomes one of recopncilling anachronistic values and loyalties with time-honored assumption about the content, nature, and direction of modernizing change.¹⁹

This valuable notion from Nasr reflected the vague meaning of modernity embraced by many, thus modernity is not simply interpreted as a someone who use technology such as computer or

internet, nor Traditionalism who still practice religious rites. Like Bohra community for instance, they freely to accept modernism and modern technology as a tool of social cohesion like stated before, yet in the other hand Bohra people are conventional and hold their faith of Islam rigidly.

In term of modernity and fundamentality in religious matter, Muslim society divide into modernist and traditionalist, the former instigated in the late 19 century of what Muhammad Abduh dispersed the notion of modernism in the way how to act as a muslim, he also regarded as a founder of Neo Mu'tazilism.²⁰ In addition, the latter was considered merely as a literalist who has an opposing concept, yet both are claiming to restore Islam with each interpretation, while modernist Islam emphasized spiritually rather than ritually.²¹

Within the typical differentiation of fundamental and modernist in Islam, it is hardly to represent the whole Muslim communities in the globe. The variety and complexity of Muslim society is not merely divided into those categories, regions, cultural assimilation, perception of scripts and prophet tradition play a significant role in defining each muslim society. Apart from Bohra perception of Islam and modernism, Indonesian prowess scholar such as Amien Rais, Abdurrahman Wahid, and even Nurcholis Madjid perceive Islam as a universal values and ordered its followers to respect the humanity, freedom, and other concept of modern culture of western understanding, except for Amien Rais, though he studied in The United States he always confront the US policy and its understanding of Human right and democracy, he has a mindset of modernity n his own way as he scattered his own into Muhammadiyah, one of the biggest organizations in Indonesia, he said "we must respect and tolerate others, so that all may enjoy the practice of their respective religions, he also not intended to resurrect the tradition or lifestyle from the past, " as a muslim, I see no obstacle to enjoying the modern world."²²

Referring to Bohra, it is can be understood that Bohra is one of many Muslim communities that has a typical perception of what Islam is, it is likely to be Pan Islamic as told above but a distinct one. Since the 52nd *Dā'ī* held the office, and under his authority and power the enforcement to embrace modernity is even stronger. The core idea of adopting modernity is rely on the people prejudice of Islam as a religion that much more concerned on rites and less concerned to the

social matter, in a specific intention Bohra wanted to give examples how Muslim community under the orthodoxy can also adapt the “lifestyle” of modern people as long as not betray the boundaries. The adjoining two notions (modernity and Traditionality) in such community is lack, however the adjoining concept does not alter their identity, instead the community identity was raised and even the orthodoxy is stronger than before, yet in the same time modernity is part of their life. Furthermore, as it was taken from Blank’s survey with an overwhelming number as high as 90.1 % of people assumption that traditional values is even stronger and modernity had strongly aided in this revive.²³

Thus the unusual phenomena taken from Bohra seems neglect the notion of western concept of what to be called as modernity, being a Muslim in a modern way does not have to leave a traditional faith as also being scripturist doe not have to deny modernity. Like other Muslim denomination which believed to the Islamic notion of being equal in life,²⁴ Bohra had used also the Islamic notion of *deen* and *Duniā* (religion and temporary life) to coordinate with modernity and integrate it with their social life, they are able to interpret modernity as a back up for fundamental tradition in the community, because both religion (believe to God and *Gāib* or life after death) and temporary life must be treated equally.

After all, Bohra has an identical conception attributed to their life such as rites, education, women status, and clothes which are also become the most apparent of how modernity is adopted in an orthodoxy group.

Rites

Like other Islamic denomination or even Islamic faith, Bohra has several activities or rites to be performed in a special occasion and event. The rites in Bohra divided into Birth and infancy, matter of marriage, and annual rites such as Muharram and so forth (will be listed)

1. *Child birth and infancy*: as mentioned above that *Dā’i* has a big influence on every matter of life of Bohra people, couple who wants to have a children often seek a *Dā’i* blessing and after the child birth also they refer to *Dā’i* for giving a name or advice, this depiction shows how great the *Dā’i* influence is. Like other Muslim, Bohra also performs circumcision but in a

safe manner which means they prefer to leave it to the hospital and using a modern way, they indeed believe that the matter is must be cleared from any mistaken practice because such thing is a serious problem. however for female genital mutilation as it is greatly debated in Muslim community, there is no evidence that Bohra deny or prohibit it nor allow it, yet from Blank report it is inferred that the issue is grey enough to be explained for the lack of data and the sensitivity, perhaps there could be a special research on this. The other rituals are the most typical that also performed in every muslim community for instance is *aqīqah* (cutting hair)

2. *Adulthood rites*: in rituals of adulthood consist of Marriage and issues those are related to it. *Nikāh* as also common in every muslim as a formal institution of marriage, the Bohra performs *nikāh* like other muslim but again the centrality of *Dā'i* is imperative and his blessing is really commended. Of the *nikāh* processes are found to be not so different compare to other Muslim denomination except for allowing a childhood marriage and the custom of *shadi* which only exist in Bohra community, factually *Shadi* derived from Hindu customs performed as a public announcement of marriage by having a party, this is become legitimate as long as not break the boundaries of Islamic faith. In addition, for the marriage variation like polygamy, Bohra allowed it because it does exist in the Holy Book, however it is rare to find a husband with wives.
3. *Annual rites*: perhaps Bohra becomes the only Muslim denomination that has unique rites by adjoining the Syī'ah and Sunni denomination. In its own calendar, Bohra has a distinct numeration of rituals, in one occasion people of Bohra either combine both Sunni and Syī'ah or has solitary one, but certainly Syī'ah is more dominating than Sunni. Speaking of which, the most notable celebration or ritual in Bohra are a). *waaḥ*, formal ceremony officiated by the *Dā'i* and he deliver a *khutbah* or sermon from a throne b). *Majlis*, less ceremonial then *waaḥ* sometimes without delivering of *khutbah*. Those rites are prominent in Bohra as a symbol of *Dā'i* authority and his central power of religious authority. Noted as a Syī'ah sect Bohra also celebrate Ashura in the 10th day of Muharram

(Hijria calendar), in this event they celebrate the death of Imām Hussein, all Syī'ah denomination and different sects are celebrating in the same way and put away their sects identity into followers and obedience of Imām Hussayn.

Education

The remarkable point founded from Bohra when come up into arrangement and their understanding about education as a pivotal instrument in building society to be more endured. Notably, when we noticed that this exclusive community had many engineers, architects, doctors, and many other prestigious occupations perhaps other people will find it exotic, yet still, the community is an orthodox one.

Among the Indian societies Bohra and other Ismā'īlī sect has been known as denominations that shown such a devotion to a modern concept of education, though India in a whole society is a less educated people in a percentage as high as 64.84%²⁵, in case of that Bohra claims that their community literacy is in perfect number as 100%²⁶, even so the survey conducted by Blank showed that as high as 92,3% people of his respondents are attended high school diploma and no Bohra had less than elementary school.²⁷

Not until Syedna Taher Saifuddin becomes *Dā'ī* Daudi Bohra did not adopt the modern pedagogy, yet Syedna Taher Saifuddin was trying to adopt and integrate it in the part of education system in Bohra community. In that, oncre again *Dā'ī* applied his authority to embrace the modernity in education, while that system must run under *Dā'ī* educational philosophy.²⁸ Institutionally, Bohra has schools called Burhani Madrasas and Jamea tus-Saifiya the former is equal to a high school degree which founded by Syedna Muhammad Burhanudin. As bringing the platform of adjoining modernity under the orthodox frame Madrasas has a modern pedagogic and curricula are coupled both modern science such as English, math, biology and religious science and doctrine in a Bohra manner such as *fiqh*, theology, and so forth. After Madrasas is Jamea tus-Saifiya where the best student will attend this institution located in Karachi and student will take at a various length time study; usually here they supplied with more voracious subject than that provided in Burhani Madrasas. The institution founded in 1814 and recently had changed into the most prestigious and indeed is the apex of Bohra educational system. Those two institution are the great foundation and pivotal element of

educational system in Bohra, as also proved that modernity is transformed into a friendly mate to a traditional notion, like also can be found in Pesantren in Indonesia case for instance, however this ideal constellation told people about a distinct Bohra educational system with remarkable results.

Women Status and Dress

Being debated as a delicate issue, Islam in many people eyes notoriously for treating women as it is shown in the customs of Taliban in Afghanistan and other segregated community in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan and so on, in fact this assumption goes into fallacy, at least if referred to the basic concept of Qur'ān on the treatment of Islam to women. Islam has given privileges and rights to women and enjoyed their existence that is not constitute in others²⁹, however what other found from what experienced from Taliban and other extremist perceive such a misleading estimation about Islam. In case of Bohra understanding is one of the novel and scarce phenomena in Muslim society as will be the illuminated point of view of how such community treats women.

Notably, having adopted a modern notion in everyday use and integrate it into their way of life, it also ensued with the proper understanding of women for the past half century ago along with their understanding of modern education. To say frankly, restructuring of educational system has become the trigger point for women to be treated equally as well, such institution of Burhani Madrasas and Jameatus-Saifiya formed a way of different opinion on the important of women right especially in education, after all it could be easily found that Bohra women are among both the best educated and highest status women of any community on the Indian subcontinent.³⁰ Their conception on this might be similar to the mainstream of Fatima Mernissi about women.³¹

We Muslim women can walk into the modern world with pride, knowing that the quest for dignity, democracy, and human rights, for full participation in the political and social affairs of our country, stems from no imported western values, but is a true part of Muslim tradition.

The modern conception also seems to be adopted in a peculiar way compared to other Syī'ah or muslim society in a traditional mainstream. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Syedna Muhammad

Burhanudin issued pronouncements that bound every member and one of them is the code of dress for both men and women. Typically, Hindu cultural dress code is still much more influencing in Bohra community but the identity then becomes apparent in Bohra, for men they would wear white pajama trousers with a white knee length called Kurta³², however for women are required to cover the entire body from ankles to shoulders with burqa³³ but different from that worn by other muslim society like Taliban for instance which women obliged to cover the entire face except for eyes. In Bohra, burqa is combined with Rida (veil) similar to bonnet but it has a long loose fallen under the breast and the face is still exposed. Men and women are required to wear this as a identity, though many are also wear a modern wardrobe but still, combined with the identical Bohra's dress.

Conclusion

The above explanation I have presented showed that Muslim society is a unique phenomenon in nowadays ethnography, notably after being pioneered by several prowess scholars in the twentieth century. Islam as a religion was interpreted differently from either Qur'ān or sunnah in many muslim denomination which also becomes more interesting to deal with it. Thus, as one of those Muslim societies Bohra presented peculiar determinations in a frame of orthodoxy and modernity under the authority of its leader called *Dā'i Mutlaq* and is a central to the people life and because of that the modernity is one of effects of his authority. The modernity as embraced by the Bohra is a distinct one as it practiced in a traditional and orthodox circumstances, however the adjoining concept and notably modernity itself served as an element to strengthen their identities and orthodoxy as also Bohra wanted to depict others that muslims must not ignore modernity nor leave their orthodoxy, such a model is a unique and indeed one of phenomena of how certain Muslim society deals with surrounding life and its faith in other side.

Endnotes:

¹ A. Zahoor & Z. Haq, *Death of Prophet Muhammad*, taken from <http://www.cyberistan.org/islamic/death.html> on May 15th 2010 /11:36 am

² World History Project, *Islam from the Beginning to 1300*, taken from <http://history-world.org/islam4.htm> on May 15th 2010 /11:47 am

³ Daniel Martin Varisco, *Islam Obscured, The Rhetoric Of Anthropological Representation*, (New York: Palgrave Mcmillan, 2005), p. 80

⁴ Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 1

⁵ Gabriel Marranci, *The Anthropology Of Islam*, (New York: Berg Editorial Offices, 2002), p. 32

⁶ Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe: Islam and Modernity Among The Daudi Bohra*, (New York: Chicago Press, 2001), p. 1

⁷ See more on Bradbur D., *Being There*, (Smithsonian, 1998)

⁸ Further reading see: Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlī: Their History and Doctrines*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990)

⁹ Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe*, p. 8

¹⁰ See more on James Camble, M. (ed.), *Gazetteer of The Bombay Presidency*, Vol. 9, pt, 2: Gujarat Population: Musalmans and Parsis Mumbai: Government Central Press, 1899. Reprinted as: *Muslim and Parsi Castes and Tribes of Gujarat*, (Vintage Books, 1990), p. 24

¹¹ Syedna Muhammad Burhanudin was born on March 1915 in Surat Gujarat, India and appointed by his father the 51st *Dā'ī* Syedna Taher Saifuddin to be the next *Dā'ī Mutlaq*

¹² Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe*, p. 41

¹³ The verse ordered muslim to love and cherish prophet Muhammad family as the verse said: *o say (Muhammad) I do not ask you any reward for it but love for my near relatives*"

¹⁴ Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe*, p. 172

¹⁵ Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe*, p. 264

¹⁶ Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe*, p. 159.286

¹⁷ Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theories and Practices*, (London: Sage, 2005), p. 444

¹⁸ Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, (New York: Free Press, 2005), p. 3-5

¹⁹ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of Islamic Revolution: The Jamaat-i-Islam of Pakistan*, (Berkely: California University Press, 1994), p. xiii

²⁰ Ahmed A Ar-Rahim, "Islam and Liberty," *Journal of Democracy*, 17 (1) 2006, p. 166-169

²¹ Shireen T. Hunter (ed.), *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity*, (New York: M.E Sharpe Inc, 2009), p. 4

²² Personal Interview on 16 January 1998 by Jonah Blank as he wrote on his *Mullah on The Mainframe* p. 264

²³ Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe*, p. 286

²⁴ Being equal in life derived from Qur'an (62:10) and Prophet tradition to have an equal life both *ākhirah* (life after death) and *dunīā* (life in the earth)

²⁵ Literacy, taken from: <http://india.gov.in/knowindia/literacy.php> on May 26 2010 11:59 am

²⁶ Maulana Kautsar Niazi, *Heir to a Great Spiritual Heritage, Daudi Bohra Dawat*, (Mumbai: Department of Statistics and Information, 1992), p. 11

²⁷ Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe*, p. 208

²⁸Syaikh Tyebally Davoodbhoy, *In The Footstep of a Glorious Tradition*, (Mumbai: Department of Statistic and Information, 1990), p. 4

²⁹Hamuda Abdul-Ati, *The Status of Woman in Islam*, taken from <http://www.jannah.org/sisters/statuswomen.html> on 27 May 2010 9:34 am

³⁰Jonah Blank, *Mullah on the Mainframe*, p. 125

³¹Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and The Male Elite: A Feminism Interpretation of Women's Right In Islam*, English Revision ed. Of Harem Politique, Mary Jo Lakeland, Trans, (New York: Addison Wesley, 1991b), p. viii

³²It is a loose shirt falling either above or somewhere under knee and a typical for Indian, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan male, and some in female

³³A dress that covers the entire of women body up to shoulder

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