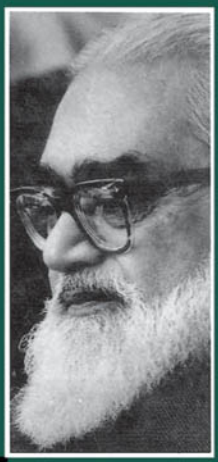

MAWDUDI & THE MAKING OF ISLAMIC REVIVALISM

SEYYED VALI REZA NASR

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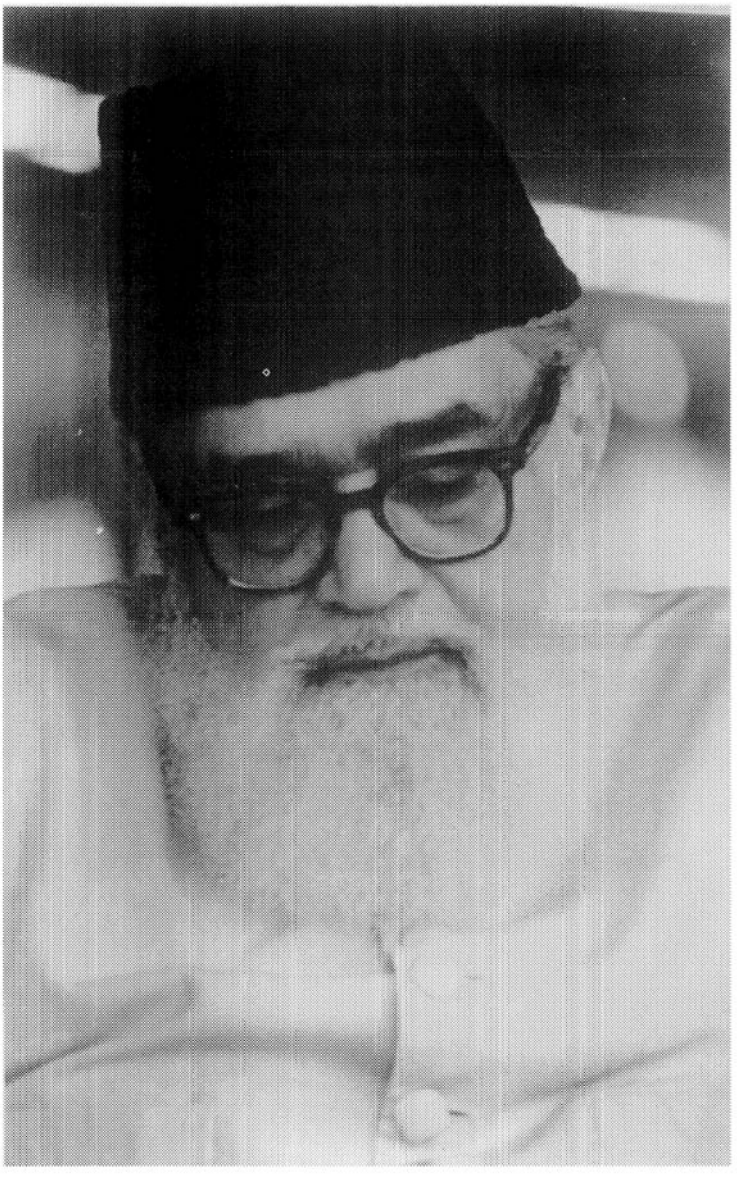

Mawlana Mawdudi

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Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr

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Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

For my father,
my first teacher

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Acknowledgments

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Margaret Ševčenko has, as always, done a superb job of editing this book and making it more readable, and Cynthia Read and the editorial staff of Oxford University Press have done a wonderful job of producing it. Of course, none of those mentioned here are in any way responsible for the views expressed in the following pages.

Contents

Note on Transliteration and References

All Urdu, Arabic, and Persian words have been cited using a simplified transliteration system that eliminates diacritical marks other than the 'ayn and hamzah. Vowels are rendered by *i*, *u*, and *a*; on occasion, *e* or *o* is substituted to convey a spelling more in line with the local pronunciation of the name or source cited. The use of *u* instead of *w* and *ia* as opposed to *iya* reflects the closest approximation to the local pronunciation of the name or source in question. Well-known terms, such as jihad, nizam, purdah, and ulama, appear in anglicized form. A glossary of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu/Hindi terms is provided at the end of this book to make the reading easier.

Personal names are rendered in accordance with the transliteration rules cited here, even when they are not spelled that way by the persons in question. The only exceptions are names such as Khomeini, Bhutto, or Ayub Khan, where the particular spelling has become established in Western literature. In transliterating personal names, the collapse of vowels and the particular pronunciation of Arabic or Persian words typical of Urdu have been retained (for example, Hashmi rather than Hashimi). Whenever the transliteration of a directly quoted source differs from the one employed here, the variations have been respected. All translations from Urdu were done by this author.

A note is also in order with regard to the references. The names of all interviewees who have contributed to this study are cited both in the notes and in the bibliography. The date and place of the interviews are cited only in the bibliography, as are the translations of the titles of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu books and articles, and the names of publishers of books, journals, and periodicals. When requested by an interviewee, the name has been withheld and the term "interviews" has been substituted. Direct quotations and references, whenever possible, are drawn from official and published English translations of the original Urdu works. However, when required, reference has been made to the original Urdu source. Translations of the titles of Arabic, Urdu, and Persian works are given only in the bibliography. Finally, in all sources in order to reduce confusion, the spelling of Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi has been made uniform, although spellings of his name vary widely in various sources. Particular spellings of his name in titles of works, however, have been retained.

MAWDUDI
AND THE MAKING OF ISLAMIC REVIVALISM

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Introduction

The development of Islamic revivalism as a social movement is closely tied to the life histories and intellectual contributions of particular individuals. It is they who advanced the formative ideas, spoke to the concerns of various social groups, shaped public debates by selecting which ideas would be included and which would not, and related individual and social experiences to lasting questions and concerns about freedom, justice, good, evil, and salvation. In short, they articulated an ideology, one that uses social impulses to make a new discourse possible. The biographies and ideas of men like Mawlana Mawdudi (1903–1979), Ayatollah Khomeini (1900–1989), and Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) therefore are not only essential to historical investigation into contemporary Islamic thought and action but critical to understanding it. They allow us to locate the roots of Islamic revivalism in specific processes and events, sharpening the focus of the more general explanations that have revolved around the larger forces of industrialization, urbanization, imperialism, or uneven development.

Mawlana Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi's life and thought is worthy of particular attention in this regard for a number of reasons. He was one of the first Islamic thinkers to develop a systematic political reading of Islam and a plan for social action to realize his vision. His creation of a coherent Islamic ideology, articulated in terms of the elaborate organization of an Islamic state, constitutes the essential breakthrough that led to the rise of contemporary revivalism. His writings were prolific, and the indefatigable efforts of his party, the Jama'at-i Islami (Islamic party), first in India and later in Pakistan, disseminated them far and wide. Mawdudi is without doubt the most influential of contemporary Islamic revivalist thinkers.[1] His views have influenced revivalism from Morocco to Malaysia, leaving their mark on thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb and on events such as the Iranian revolution of 1978–1979, and have influenced

the spread of Islamic revivalism in Central Asia, North Africa, and Southeast Asia.[2] Mawdudi's contribution to the development of Islamic revivalism and its aims, ideals, and language is so significant that it cannot be satisfactorily understood without consideration of his life and thought.

In writing this book I hope to further the understanding of the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism through a systematic study of Mawlana Mawdudi's life and ideas. His biography provides fresh insights into the origins of Islamic revivalism, his ideology explains the nature of this revivalism as an intellectual current and a political movement, and the combination shows how the structure of his arguments are related to the formative influences and key events that shaped them. The biography is the context for the ideology.

Mawdudi's life and thought also suggest that Islamic revivalism is more than just some reactionary effort born out of a cultural rejection of the West. In Mawdudi's case, at least, it is closely tied to questions of communal politics and its impact on identity formation, to questions of power in pluralistic societies, and to nationalism. Mawdudi's arguments were anti-Western, but they were motivated by Muslim and Hindu competition for power in British India. He sought an interpretation of Islam that would preclude the kind of cultural coexistence that the Indian National Congress party promised.[3] Islamic revivalism therefore entailed a process of identity formation that could compete with both traditional Muslim identity and secular nationalism. It was defined in large measure in terms of imagining a new Muslim community that was distinct from both.[4] To do this, it borrowed from the West, even as it challenged it, and used its tools to achieve its purpose, particularly the printed word in lieu of the oral tradition that had dominated Muslim life and thought until then.[5] The Jama'at disseminated texts that created an environment in which ideology could be related to social concerns and a collective movement could emerge that would lead to the founding of an Islamic nation.[6] For the Jama'at, that nation was none other than the *ummah* (holy community), the core of the promised Islamic state. This shows that religion can be a component, or even a vehicle, for expressing nationalism. The Jama'at's texts have competed with nationalist propaganda for the hearts and minds of Muslims and have performed the same sociopolitical function of presenting an ideal Muslim community that would be both a refuge and a vehicle for empowerment. Mawdudi made Islamic revivalism the ideology of choice for those who feel marginalized and declassé and fear social disorder.

Mawdudi's ideas emerged at a time of flux in the history of the Muslim community of India. His views were informed by the acute despair that gripped that community and was directed at finding solutions to its plight. At the time, Muslims lacked political consensus and a united leadership. They were divided along linguistic and ethnic lines and dominated by the traditional structures of authority. Mawdudi's aim, much like the Khilafat activists—those Indian Muslims who sought to preserve the institution of the caliphate after World War I—before him, was to arrest this decline and to reassert its claim to power. To realize this objective, he sought to underscore Muslim identity and to foster unity and accord so that the needs of the Muslims could be addressed at the

national level. Once that was accomplished, the community could then establish viable political structures rooted in the cultural symbols of Islam that would be able to sustain a broadly based movement in a modern political context.[7]

The first step was to assert Indian Muslim identity in the face of a departing colonial order and the political aspirations of the Hindu majority. His vision was rooted in Indo-Muslim cultural traditions, political sensibilities, and the legacy of Muslim rule, which in India shaped the Muslim worldview and set the agenda for Muslim politics. Mawdudi was clearly driven by this vision, which "tended to stress the dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims, and to reject the 'dualism' obtained by subjecting Muslims to non-Muslim law."[8] Although a one-time Indian nationalist, he had succumbed to the lure of Muslim communalism in the post-Khilafat period after his encounters with the Hindu revivalism of the Shuddhi and Sangathan movements and the ever more apparent Hindu domination of the Congress party under Mahatma Gandhi. As a political activist, he understood the power of Islam as a symbol in galvanizing the Muslim community and legitimizing political action. Many of these ideas later carried a different significance, both in his works and in the writings of numerous Islamic thinkers across the Muslim world, but they were nevertheless rooted in the contest to define Muslim identity in India before the partition.

Paul Brass argued that communalism was an instrument of the Muslim elite, who deliberately used Islam to serve their political interests;[9] Francis Robinson found its origins in the directives of the Islamic faith itself.[10] At first glance, Mawdudi's case would seem to support Brass's thesis in that political interests led him to Islamic revivalism; however, Mawdudi never had a secular outlook on politics. His political choices were always—to varying degrees—informed by his faith. This is not to say that he was motivated by primordial values embedded in Islam or directives inherent to that faith. In fact, his political career is neither an example of an Islamic impulse articulating a communalist perspective nor a ploy to use Islam for political ends. Mawdudi more likely was moved by the Muslims' attachment to the legacy of Mughal rule, which could be described as the right of Muslims to rule and the undesirability of living under non-Muslim law.[11] Moreover, for Muslims community is always more important than the individual,[12] and in Mawdudi's view, man could only realize his spiritual potential if the community did so, and the community could do so only if it was purely Islamic. These considerations were more pertinent to a ruling minority anxious over the prospect of political subjugation. They arose from an instinct for self-preservation and a reaction to the uncertainty of life in a Hindu India.[13]

In articulating a revivalist interpretation of Islam, Mawdudi wove Islamic dicta and the normative values of the ambient culture of Indian Muslims into a program with a distinct agenda. As his ideas developed, his emphasis shifted from widely shared Indo-Muslim traditions to narrowly interpreted Islamic doctrines. He put forth a view of Islam with an invigorated, pristine, and uncompromising outlook that would galvanize Muslims into an ideologically uniform, and hence politically indivisible, community, one that would assert its demands and remain unyielding before the overtures of Hindus.[14] Mawdudi's

aim was to scrape away centuries of Hindu cultural influence by replacing assimilation with expurgation, accommodation with reassertion, diversity with unity, and submission with defiance. By confirming the distinctive qualities, cultural identity, and social values and mores of Muslims, Mawdudi would erect around the ever more vulnerable and anxious Muslim community an impregnable communalist wall that would exclude outside influences. It was Mawdudi's objective to obviate the possibility of the kind of cultural dialogue and coexistence—assimilation and accommodation—on which the program of the Congress party and its promise of a secular Indian republic was predicated.[15] In cultural seclusion, he hoped, the dejected Muslim community would once again be emboldened. The Islamic identity of the community had to be revived before political mobilization and social action were possible. Still, because revivalism was a radical approach that could have only limited support, its importance in Muslim politics on the eve of partition was minimal. It did, however, eventually find a life of its own and evolved into an all-encompassing perspective on society and politics that has become a notable force in South Asia and has influenced life and thought across the Muslim world.

Because I am concerned here with the origins of Islamic revivalism in the life and works of Mawlana Mawdudi, I will deal primarily with those years in Mawdudi's life when his ideological perspective was formed, his aims were outlined, and his role in politics was defined. Much has already been written about his works and ideas. His teachings on a range of issues—from Islamic history to the status of women, economics, revolution, politics, and religious exegetics—have all been studied. It will serve little to reiterate what has been amply outlined elsewhere.[16] Of interest here is the essence of Mawdudi's message as distinct from the teaching and worldview of traditional Islam within the debate in which his vision took shape: to delineate the structure of the system of thought that he articulated, highlight the directives that are inherent in his corpus of ideas, and determine the pattern and nature of the Jama'at's program of action. Traditional Islam here refers to "those societal norms and institutions that [Muslims perceive] as congruent with or continuing older precedents and values, and as important if not essential to [their] identity,"[17] and which they believe that, in its totality and structure—entwining and enveloping values, practices, and institutions—embodies the truth of their faith and serves as the repository of its spirituality.[18]

The importance of determining the exact boundaries of Mawdudi's ideology lies in the fact that his views remained close enough to traditional Islam to at times make distinctions between the two nebulous. But the differences, though subtle, were fundamental. This book will go beyond a literal reading of Mawdudi's works to seek a greater understanding of the structure of his arguments and the religious and political directives of his oeuvre. Special attention will be given to the factors that controlled the extent and scope of his influence over his audience and determined the nature of his authority. This will enable us to make better sense of why Islamic revivalism developed as it did and how the interaction of ideas and their sociopolitical context shaped its ideological perspective and vision of political authority.

I

THE *MUJADDID* FROM HYDERABAD

Sardar Patel: "What would convince Sirpur that history exists?"
Jaya: "Exile."

Gita Mehta, *Raj*

Everyone who is left far from his source
Wishes back the time when he was united with it.

Jalal al-Din Rumi

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1

The Formative Years

Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi was born on September 25, 1903 (3 Rajab 1321), in Awrangabad, Deccan, the youngest of Sayyid Ahmad Hasan Mawdudi's five children and the second son from his second marriage. The Mawdudis claimed a proud heritage. They were descended from one of the most prominent branches of the Chishti Sufi order,[1] a lineage that was later an important aspect of Mawdudi's claim to authority.[2] In 1932, he wrote "I belong to one such family that has a 1,300-year history of guiding, asceticism and Sufism."[3] The Chishtis traced their origins back to a family of sayyids (descendants of the Prophet) of the *ahlu'l-bayt* (descendants of the Prophet through his daughter, Fatimah)—a mark of nobility among Muslims of the subcontinent—who in the tenth century initiated "the exalted Chishtiyah Sufi *silsilah* (lineage)" in Afghanistan.[4] Mawdudi traced his lineage directly to Khwaja Qutbu'ddin Mawdud Chishti (d. 1133), from whom the Mawdudi sayyids took their name, and whom Mawdudi described as the *shaikhu'l-shuyukh* (master of the masters) of all the Chishti orders of India.[5] Later, Chishti spiritual luminaries such as Khwajah Mu'inu'ddin Muhammad Chishti (1132–1246), buried at the shrine of Ajmer, came from the spiritual line of Qutbu'ddin Mawdud.[6] The progeny of Qutbu'ddin Mawdud, known as the Mawdudiyah, played an important role in the history of the Chishti Sufi order in India. Noteworthy among them was Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (d. 1527), Mawdudi's namesake, who moved to India from Afghanistan in the sixteenth century.[7] Mawdudi credited this ancestor with establishing the Chishti order in the Indian subcontinent and, therefore, by implication associated himself with the very provenance of India's preeminent Sufi order, which had also been instrumental in the spread of Islam in northern India.

Little is recorded of the history of the Mawdudis following their migration to India. Mawdudi reported that in the eighteenth century they settled in Delhi, a city with which the family has continued to identify itself closely. Mawdudi,

who was six generations removed from those of his ancestors who first settled there, never ceased to live according to Delhi's traditions.

Mawdudi's father, Sayyid Ahmad Hasan, was born in 1855 in Delhi to Mir Sayyid Hasan, a well-respected notable of the city, a man of learning and piety, and a Sufi *pir* (spiritual master) of modest stature.[8] Mir Sayyid was also a man of worldly influence and had been close to the courtiers of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar (d. 1862).[9] The British sack of Delhi in 1858 and the subsequent fall of the Mughals reduced the Mawdudis socially and politically. This fall from grace left an indelible mark on the family.

Because the Mawdudis were related to the renowned modernist thinker Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d. 1898) through Ahmad Hasan's mother, many of the young men of the family, including Ahmad Hasan, were recruited to attend the Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh. In fact, Mawdudi reported that his father was among the college's very first students and boasted that he was the contemporary of Sir Muhammad Rafiq and Sir Buland Jang.[10]

The family's commitment to the Aligarh experiment, which was designed to empower Muslims by giving them an education in modern subjects just as it reformed their faith to accommodate modernity,[11] was far from firm. Because the Mawdudis were from Delhi and thus loyal to the various institutions of Mughal rule, they had suffered under the British Raj, established in 1858, and harbored anti-British sentiments. As a leading family, they had remained detached from the culture and mores of the colonial establishment. It was therefore with great reluctance, and because of the respect that the family had for Sayyid Ahmad Khan, that Ahmad Hasan's father acceded to his son's enrollment at Aligarh.

The family's suspicions about Sayyid Ahmad's experiment, characteristic of the attitude of traditional Muslims, remained unabated,[12] and Ahmad Hasan was not allowed to stay there long. His father called him home when he learned that he had played cricket, wearing *kafir* (unbeliever, English) clothes.[13] Ahmad Hasan never finished his modernist education and was sent instead to Allahabad to study law, but the imprint of Aligarh modernism remained with him for some years.

When he had completed his law degree and a brief stint as the tutor of the Rajkumar of Deogarh, Ahmad Hasan moved in 1896 to Awrangabad, where Mawlvi Muhyu'ddin Khan, a relative of the Mawdudis, was the chief justice. He took a special interest in Ahmad Hasan and helped launch his career. Under the influence of Mawlvi Muhyu'ddin, who was also a Chishti *pir*, Ahmad Hasan "abandoned his British ways, and adopted the ways of his religion and native culture."[14] In 1900 he, and possibly his wife, embraced Sufism, and took *bai'ah* (an oath of allegiance to a Sufi master)[15] with Mawlvi Muhyu'ddin, and pursued the mystical path. So much of Ahmad Hasan's time was spent in meditation and ascetic practices that his legal profession began to suffer. In 1904 he sold all his property and left Awrangabad, taking his family to Delhi, where they settled at the Arab Sara'i village near the shrine of Nizamu'ddin Auliya'.[16] For the three years Ahmad Hasan was in Delhi, he remained completely immersed in his mystical pursuits while his family fell into destitution.[17]

In 1907 Mawlvi Muhyu'ddin summoned his disciple back to Awrangabad, where he chastised Ahmad Hasan for his excesses.[18] Acting on the advice of his *pir*, Ahmad Hasan returned to his law practice but vowed never to defend a case based on deceit. He would review each case thoroughly and would agree to represent only those whom he deemed to be in the right.[19] Although this sanctimonious attitude gave him great peace of mind, it meant that his clients dwindled. He did manage to obtain a modest income from his practice and collected about 100 rupees a month from the rent of the family's buildings in Delhi.[20] He continued to practice law in Awrangabad until 1915, when he moved to Hyderabad and subsequently to Bhopal.[21] In Bhopal, he suffered a stroke that paralyzed him, and four years later, in 1920, died at the age of sixty-five.

In its social limitations, cultural confusion, and the tendency to "return to Islam"—Sufism in his case—for solace, Ahmad Hasan's life was somewhat symbolic of the fate of the Muslim gentry during colonial rule. These lessons were not lost on his son.

Mawdudi's mother's family, being of Turkish origin, also carried a mark of nobility; they had migrated to India during the reign of Awrangzeb and had served the Mughals and later the Asifiyah nizams of Hyderabad as military generals. As a result, they had risen to prominence in Delhi, and later in Hyderabad, and had become a family of nawabs (Muslim princes and nobility) and *jagirdars* (landlords). In his autobiography, Mawdudi boasted of the glorious tradition and the aristocratic heritage of his maternal family.

Mawdudi's maternal grandfather, Mirza Qurban 'Ali Baig Khan Salik, had been a poet and a writer and close to the Delhi circle around the renowned Urdu poet Mirza Asadu'llah Ghalib (1796–1869).[22] In 1862, Salar Jang 'Azam put Salik in charge of Hyderabad's educational affairs. In that capacity, and under the aegis of Nawab 'Imaddu'dawlah Bilgirami, he wrote an article entitled "Makhazin al-fawa'id" (Sources of benefits), in praise of which Mawdudi later wrote, "Although Hyderabad had, since olden times, been a center of literary activities, it [Makhazin al-fawa'id] is one of its most important accomplishments."[23] This literary heritage, of which Mawdudi was so proud, gave him a taste for scholarship and letters that was instrumental in shaping his later career. The young Abu'l-A'la, enamored as he was of his Chishti lineage and his mother's aristocratic background with its tradition of chivalry, statesmanship, and literary accomplishment, was all the more distressed at the visible decline of Muslim power, especially in Delhi and Hyderabad where Mawdudi's family had been associated with Muslim courts.[24]

Abu'l-A'la had been born to Ahmad Hasan and Ruqiyah Begum just before his father committed himself to mysticism. His birth, wrote Mawdudi in the style of hagiographers, had been augured well by a "great man" who had visited Ahmad Hasan three to four years earlier and had advised him to name his son Abu'l-A'la after his great ancestor who had brought the family to India.[25] Abu'l-'Ala, a beautiful child, was the favorite of his father and the recipient of much paternal attention.[26] Mawdudi's autobiography suggested that his father was a great influence on him, especially in his idealism, piety, and humility. In the

Khud niwisht, Mawdudi wrote of his father's interview for employment at Deogarh in such a way that there is clearly a moral lesson to be learned:

> The Maharaja of Deogarh had called two prospective tutors from Delhi in order to choose one to oversee his son's education. One of the two was my father and the other a former professor of my father. Upon arriving in Deogarh my father found out that his professor was also summoned by the Maharajah. He immediately sent a message to the Maharajah that he was not able to compete with his professor and asked permission to return to Delhi. On the other hand his professor responded to the situation by saying, "He [my father] has been my student and is but a child before me, how could he teach like me?" Having seen glimpses of the characters of the two, the Maharajah said, "We are not in need of the professor. We prefer his student."[27]

Mawdudi was impressed with his father's religiosity, and his character was shaped as much in compliance with, as in contrast to, his father's approach to religion. The hardship that it inflicted on the family augmented the sense of deprivation already present in a sharifian (noble) family of Delhi displaced by the fall of the Mughals and living a life of exile in the Deccan, where Muslim power again was on the decline.[28] Mawdudi's somewhat ambivalent attitude toward his father and his early childhood is best captured in the following passage:

> A year after I was born my father washed his hands of the world, and for three years lived like an ascetic. Later on, although he had returned to the world, it was not to his old world which he returned, but to a purely religious one. The result of this revolution in his life was that as I opened my eyes and gained my senses, I found myself in a religious setting. My father's and mother's lives had a distinct religious coloring. Their example and our upbringing imprinted my heart and mind with religious fervor.[29]

It was in Mawdudi's education, more than anywhere else, that Ahmad Hasan's influence was apparent. Despite his religious preoccupations, he took a great interest in the education of his sons and supervised them personally. Ahmad Hasan had wanted Abu'l-A'la to become a *mawlvi*, a theologian and religious scholar.[30] Mawdudi initially was educated at home. His early education began with the study of Persian and Urdu and soon included Arabic, *mantiq* (logic), *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and hadith (traditions or sayings of the Prophet). English and Western science and thought were deliberately excluded from this curriculum.[31]

Ahmad Hasan emphasized ethics and proper behavior in the education of his sons, and he took pains to inculcate in their young minds an understanding of their heritage. At nighttime Ahmad Hasan would sit at their bedside and tell them stories about the great men of Islam and the glories of Islamic history. Mawdudi wrote, "These interesting stories filled my mind with a deep feeling for religion."[32] Ahmad Hasan also read to his children from the emotional articles of *Al-Hilal*, Abu'l-Kalam Azad's (1888-1958) widely read exordium to contemporary Islamic revivalism in India.[33]

The Mawdudis viewed themselves as "Delhiites," and life in the Deccan only reinforced their devotion to the culture and mores of Delhi. Ahmad Hasan sought to implant a loyalty toward the city of his origins in his sons. Wrote Mawdudi,

"Special attention was paid to our speech and accent. I lived in the Deccan for twenty years without adopting a single local pronunciation, and continued to speak in pure Urdu."[34] To achieve this, Ahmad Hasan forbade his sons from mixing with other children, encouraging them instead to fill their hours of loneliness with reading and studying. His vigilance in this regard was such that "if he heard any of us or the bearer utter a wrong word, or pronounce a word incorrectly, he would make us stop, and would correct us."[35] Ahmad Hasan's discipline was reflected not only in Abu'l-A'la's fidelity to his cultural roots and his self-reliant and distant demeanor but also in his lucid style and powerful command of Urdu.

Although Abu'l-A'la harbored a desire to write, chances for doing so seldom presented themselves; his father encouraged him to read instead. In 1914, when Mawdudi was eleven, he was enrolled in the eighth grade at the Madrasah-i Fauqaniyah of Awrangabad.[36] This school was affiliated with the 'Uthmaniyah University of Hyderabad, which taught both traditional and modern subjects. A few months later, he was compelled to take the required examinations and did well in all subjects except mathematics, which had not been included in his curriculum. In spite of that shortcoming, the principal of the school allowed him to enroll in the more advanced *mawlvi* section. It was there that Mawdudi for the first time became acquainted with the natural sciences.

Mawdudi continued his education in religious subjects as well. At the *mawlvi* section he studied the *Book of miqat* in *mantiq*, the *Book of Quduri* in *fiqh*, and the *Book of shama'il-i Tirmizi* in hadith.[37] His mastery of Arabic, which he had been studying when he was still being schooled at home, was such that, at the age of eleven, he translated Qasim Amin's *Al-Mir'ah al-jadidah* (Modern women) from Arabic into Urdu. This celebrated work of the renowned Egyptian modernist thinker criticized the treatment of women in Islam and argued for such reforms as abolishing the insistance on head covering. The translation confirmed Mawdudi's great talent. He recollected:

> During this period [1914] my brother encouraged me to translate Qasim Amin's book, *Al-Mir'ah al-jadidah*, from Arabic to Urdu. God knows where the pages of that translation are today, but I remember that the lucidity of that translation made my father very happy, and even encouraged my brother [Abu'l-Khayr] to write. This was my first work.[38]

For a child who had hitherto been raised in seclusion, attending school proved difficult.[39] His command of Urdu, his knowledge of public issues, and his ability to master difficult texts exceeded the expectations of his teachers and set him apart from his classmates. Reticent and reluctant to engage in games, Mawdudi found himself isolated from others of his age. In retrospect, he viewed this seclusion as a boon:

> Since I had originally been kept secluded, in this there existed benefits as well as drawbacks for me, such that when I became involved in society I was conscious and aware. My father in his talks and education had taught me how to distinguish between good and evil. My early education at his hand had left an indelible mark upon me such that I would not easily fall under the sway of various influences.[40]