

An Analytical, Scholarly, and Critical Study of the Doctrines of the Zikri Faith

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Abstract

This research paper, titled “An Analytical, Scholarly, and Critical Study of the Doctrines of the Zikri Faith,” presents a comprehensive analytical study of the history, beliefs, social structure, and intellectual evolution of the Zikri sect, which originated in the Indian subcontinent, particularly in Balochistan. The main objective of this study is to critically and academically analyze the historical background of the Zikri religion, its political and religious factors, and its intellectual deviations from Islamic beliefs.

The foundation of the Zikri sect was laid around the fifteenth century A.D., when its early followers began preaching their ideas in Makran and the coastal regions of Balochistan. From the very beginning, it deviated from its original Islamic spirit and adopted a distinct religious identity. Later, under the influence of the Bilidi and Gichki rulers, this sect also gained political stability.

Abdul Ghani Baloch and Abdul Karim Dost have rejected this impression, declaring their religion to be a spiritual school within Islam that believes in monotheism, the Qur'an, prophethood, and the fundamental pillars of Islam. Regarding the deviant beliefs from Islam, it is stated that during the period of Mulla Murad Gichki, significant changes occurred in the fundamental doctrines of the Zikri faith, which transformed it into a new religious system distinct from traditional Islam.

With detailed references, the paper makes it clear that in the early Zikri beliefs, Muhammad Mahdi Atki was elevated to the rank of Mahdi al-Akhir al-Zaman and even to the status of a prophet. Their specific creed — “La ilaha illallah, Noor Muhammad Mahdi Rasul Allah” — became prevalent, and there were clear deviations from Islamic teachings regarding prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and the Qibla. However, contemporary Zikri scholars, especially this paper, deeply analyze the intellectual changes, political influences, and reform movements of this religious group in a historical context.

Keywords: Ghani Baloch ,Abdul Karim Dost ,Mulla Murad Gichki,Atki.

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Eras of Zikri Rule

Population

The history of the Zikri faith spans approximately six hundred years. Its followers are known as Zikris. They are mainly settled in Balochistan, particularly in the coastal areas of Makran. Since ancient times, some communities have migrated to Muscat and the United Arab Emirates. A significant population also resides in Karachi, while others live in Shahdadpur and Sanghar in Sindh. In southeastern Iranian Balochistan, there is also a considerable Zikri population.

Due to the absence of a proper census, their exact population is not known. However, according to records provided by the All Pakistan Muslim Zikri Anjuman, the official representative organization of the sect, the Zikri population is estimated to be around one million. This figure does not include the Mahdavis, who are said to number in the hundreds of thousands, but whose accurate statistics are unavailable.¹

Customs and Traditions

In Pakistan, most Zikris belong to Baloch tribes. With the exception of a few, nearly all Baloch tribes have members adhering to the Zikri faith. Their customs, marriages, celebrations, and mourning practices are entirely in accordance with Balochi traditions. There is no difference between Sunni Baloch and Zikri Baloch in terms of lifestyle, habits, language, or diet — often, members of the same family include both Sunnis and Zikris.

Genealogy of Zikri Spiritual Leaders

Most of their religious leaders come from poor or working-class families. Many earn their livelihood through manual labor; those living in coastal areas are mainly fishermen, while others in Sindh and Makran sustain their families through agriculture. In the Arab Emirates, they are often employed in labor or service sectors. Their participation in government or semi-government employment is negligible, and very few are involved in trade.

Ancient manuscripts preserved by the families of Zikri spiritual guides indicate that many of these Mullai (or Molai) families descend from Musa Zai, Isa Zai, Kiazai, or Sheikh lineages. The Zikri religious leaders are called Mullai or Sheikh (in Balochi, *Shah*). They are highly respected, and the Pir–Murid (spiritual master–disciple) relationship holds great importance in Zikri belief — every Zikri is a follower of some Murshid.

The main lineages of Zikri Murshids are divided into four groups:

1. Kiazai Murshid family
2. Kalanji Mullai (Musa Zai family)
3. Kiazai Mullai family
4. Ormarah, Kolwah, Greshak, and Jau (Isa Zai Mullai family)
5. Sheikh family

The Gichki family has been settled in Makran for about three centuries. Though of Rajput descent, they now take pride in their Baloch identity and have become an integral part of Balochi culture.²

Arrival of the Malik Dynasty

Before the Bilidi and Gichki dynasties, the Hot tribe ruled over Makran and was known by the title Malik. The Malik dynasty ruled Makran for eleven generations. It is believed that they arrived when, during the caliphate of Hazrat Umar Farooq (RA), the Arabs conquered Makran and incorporated it into their dominion. It is thought that the Maliks were descendants of Arab governors who later maintained autonomous rule. The word "*Malik*" itself means king or ruler.

The upper part of Balochistan remained under Kandahar's influence, while Makran, being remote, continued to function autonomously. During different periods, it was ruled by the Maliks, Bilidis, and Gichkis.

Malik Mirza was the last ruler of the Malik dynasty, defeated by Abu Saeed Bilidi. The poet says:

*Bo Saeed, in poverty, recognized Mahdi's faith,
From begging he rose, and in the end became a leader.*

Malik Shamsuddin, a ruler of the Malik dynasty, was defeated by Ganj Ali, the governor of Kerman, in 1613, and Makran came under his control. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Bilidis killed Malik Mirza and liberated Makran from Kerman's dominance.

Malik Farrukh Jahangir was a prominent ruler and counted among the close followers of Mahdi. The famous Zikri poet Ibrahim Kashani wrote in his praise:

*Like Farrukh Shah, humble and noble Abdul Karim,
With sincerity and purity, he turned your garden into paradise.*

Malik Farrukh Jahangir was both a ruler and a mystic deeply devoted to Zikri beliefs. The Qur'an and *Tafseer* (exegesis) written by his hand are still preserved among some Zikri families. Many historians believe that while the Zikri faith flourished during the Bilidi era, it also existed during the Malik dynasty. It is possible that the last ruler, Malik Mirza, was associated with this faith before Abu Saeed Bilidi overthrew him and seized power — as history shows, struggles for power often justify every means.

Indeed, it is said: "*All is fair in love and war.*"³

The Bilidi Period

The Zikris experienced both prosperity and decline. It is believed that the sect originated under Abu Saeed Bilidi, the first ruler of the Bilidi dynasty in Makran. The rise of the Zikri movement and Bilidi rule occurred almost simultaneously. Abu Saeed Bilidi belonged to the royal family of Muscat. When he heard that a man had appeared in the region claiming to be the Mahdi and that people regarded him as a pious and

saintly person, Abu Saeed sought to meet his followers and learn the truth. Upon meeting them, he was deeply impressed and joined their community.

He later settled in the valley of Bilida in Makran, becoming the first Zikri ruler of Makran in the fifteenth century and establishing the Bilidi dynasty.

The rulers of the Bilidi family were:

1. Abu Saeed
2. Sheikh Qasim
3. Sheikh Hassan
4. Sheikh Abdullah
5. Shukrullah
6. Sheikh Zahri
7. Sheikh Ahmed
8. Qasim

The Bilidi family devoted about a century to preaching, education, and serving humanity. Initially, they distanced themselves from politics, earning great respect from the people. For nearly a century, they worked to spread the Zikri faith among the Baloch and Brahui tribes.⁴

The Era of the Gichkis

During the rule of the Bilidis, the Gichkis embraced the Zikri faith. The sect continued to grow rapidly, and due to its increasing popularity, more and more people joined it, thereby strengthening its influence. Gradually, the Gichkis became quite powerful, while the Bilidi ruler Sheikh Qasim grew weak and was unable to counter their strength. By 1740, the Gichkis had consolidated significant power. When Sheikh Qasim sensed danger and realized that he could no longer maintain control without external support, he sought military assistance from the Muscatis of Gwadar to fight against the Gichkis.

At Sheikh Qasim's request, Sheikh Bilal, with Muscati support, launched an attack on the Gichkis. However, by that time, the Gichkis had grown strong both militarily and territorially. Although they tolerated Sheikh Qasim's authority due to their religious affiliation with Zikri beliefs, they became enraged when he sought foreign help. In retaliation, Malik Dinar Gichki arranged the assassination of Sheikh Bilal, a relative of Sheikh Qasim. Seeking revenge, Sheikh Qasim appealed for help from Nadir Shah, the King of Iran. Nadir Shah's general Naqi Khan attacked Makran and captured Kech, but when Nadir Shah was preparing to invade India in 1739, Malik Dinar took advantage of the situation, defeated Naqi Khan's forces, and drove the Bilidis out of Makran. The Bilidis fled to Qasr-e-Qand and Sarbaz in Iranian Makran, while the Gichkis gained control of Gwadar, Panjgur, and Kech.⁵

The Attacks of the Khan of Kalat

1. In 1733, the ruler of Kalat, Amir Abdullah Khan, launched his first attack on Kalanch under the guise of religion but failed.
2. Mir Mohabbat Khan, ruler of Kalat (1730–1750), took advantage of internal conflicts among the Gichkis — particularly between Malik Dinar and his son Sheikh

Umar — and launched another attack, but again without success. (Abdullah Jan Jamaldini, *Political History of Balochistan*, Balochistan Study Centre, Quetta, 1995, pp. 145–150.)

3. The ruler of Panjgur, Mir Karam Shah, invited Mir Nasir Khan, ruler of Kalat, to attack once more. Nasir Khan managed to capture Panjgur but could not maintain his control for long.

4. Under Akhund Mulla Muhammad's command, Mir Nasir Khan dispatched a large army against the Zikris. After a bloody battle in Nasirabad, the Zikris were defeated.

5. The Zikris then sought help from Ahmad Shah Durrani, forcing Nasir Khan to withdraw his troops.

Later, Nasir Khan launched a third attack on Makran. The Zikris fought bravely but were eventually defeated by the stronger Kalat army. Malik Dinar was captured and executed. The Zikri community became angry with Sheikh Umar, deposed him, and appointed his brother Shukrullah as ruler.

Internal Conflicts among the Rulers of Makran

In reality, it was the internal discord among the Gichki rulers that enabled the Khan of Kalat to invade Kech. Without their disunity, Kalat could never have conquered Makran. Amir Abdullah of Kalat attacked the Gichkis under the pretext of defending Islam but was defeated. This battle took place in 1723. After Malik Dinar's death, his son Sheikh Umar abandoned the Zikri faith and adopted Sunni Islam. He allied himself with the ruler of Kalat, hoping to retain authority. Mir Nasir Khan of Kalat attacked Makran for the fourth time and reinstated Sheikh Umar as ruler.

Despite several attacks, the Zikri rulers continued to resist valiantly. Mir Nasir Khan was determined to expand his power. Despite repeated defeats, he did not lose heart. He became increasingly dissatisfied with Sheikh Umar's policies, realizing that without the cooperation of Zikri nobles, his rule could not be sustained. His hatred for them grew. Ultimately, Sheikh Umar's lust for power caused the downfall of Makran's strong government; otherwise, Kalat could never have conquered it. After Sheikh Umar's assassination, Makran came under the control of the Khan of Kalat, and subsequent governors ruled with his patronage.⁶

Reason for the Khan of Kalat's Attacks

Most historians portray Mir Nasir Khan, ruler of Kalat, as a hero of Islam, who attacked Makran to protect Islam's honor and supremacy from what he considered a false faith. However, Sheikh Umar advised Nasir Khan that it was not a time for war and suggested peaceful dialogue and mutual understanding, warning that ruling in hostility with the Zikris would be extremely difficult.

Thus, in 1778, a peace treaty was concluded between the Khan of Kalat, Sheikh Umar, and the Zikri community. According to the agreement, half of Makran's revenue would be paid to the Khan of Kalat — a condition the Zikris reluctantly accepted, though they considered it a great insult. Enraged, the Zikris began to call Sheikh Umar

“faithless” and “dishonorable.” The resentment intensified until Sheikh Umar was ultimately killed by the Bilidis.

To avenge his death, Nasir Khan launched another attack, devastating Makran completely. During this time, the port of Gwadar was handed over to the brother of the ruler of Muscat. Historians believe that if the rulers of Makran had remained united and Sheikh Umar had not committed treachery, it would have been impossible for Kalat to conquer Makran.

As long as Mir Nasir Khan lived, the Zikris could not rise again. But after his death, their passion and religious fervor revived because his successor was a weak ruler. In 1816, after Mir Mehrab Khan ascended the throne, his deputy sent to Makran was killed by the Zikris.

During this period, the Zikris began to reorganize their strength, and Sheikh Qasim rebelled against Kalat. When Faqir Muhammad Bizenjo was appointed as the new governor by Kalat, the situation changed dramatically. Being a skilled politician, Bizenjo married into the Gichki family, realizing that without the cooperation of the Zikri rulers, governing Makran would be impossible.⁷

The Beginning of Changes in Zikri Beliefs

According to *The Mahdavi Movement in India* (pp. 226–227), after the Bilidi rulers, the Gichkis took control of Makran. During the eighteenth century, Mulla Murad seized power from the Bilidis and became the ruler. He reshaped the doctrines of the Zikri faith, giving it a distinct form separate from Islam. Until then, the Zikris claimed adherence to Islamic principles, but Mulla Murad, by force of arms, spread Zikrism as a new religion parallel to Islam. He declared Koh Murad (Mountain of Murad) as the site of pilgrimage (*Hajj*) instead of the Kaaba, and compelled Zikris to perform their pilgrimage there. Near the fort of Turbat, he constructed a large reservoir named Chah Zamzam and gradually introduced several innovations.

With the spread of education, people’s understanding of Koh Murad changed, and they realized that these practices were distortions introduced by self-serving Zikri rulers who altered the true spirit of religion. According to some traditions, Malik Dinar, the former ruler, also followed the path of Mulla Murad, thus promoting distortions within Islam that were unknowingly continued by later generations of Zikris.⁸

These accounts indicate that the Zikri movement had no direct connection with Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri, the founder of the Mahdavi movement in India — a fact now also acknowledged by Zikri scholars themselves.⁹

Commentary on Zikri Beliefs

According to *The Mahdavi Movement in India* and *Haqiqat Noor Pak wa Safar Nama Mahdi* by Sheikh Aziz Lari, based on Akhund Darwesh Baba’s work *Al-Ashrar*, it is evident

that Muhammad Mahdi Atki did not believe in the Finality of Prophethood (*Khatm-e-Nabuwwat*). His debate on this subject with Akhund Darwesh Baba took place in Peshawar in 997 A.H. It is assumed that after losing this debate, he chose to settle in a region of less literate and religiously unaware people, where he could easily propagate his ideas. The Kech region proved ideal for this purpose. There, he claimed both Mahdihood and Prophethood, gathering a considerable number of followers. His close companion, Sheikh Aziz Lari, narrates the following beliefs:

Belief No. 1:

Muhammad Mahdi claimed that he was a guest in the divine court of God, where the archangels and bearers of the Throne saw his light and fainted for seventy thousand years. When they awoke, they asked God who he was and how he was created. God replied: "I created him from My own light." The angels asked, "O Lord, who will be his followers?" God answered: "His followers will come in the last age; they will be the poor, the humble, and the people of God. Their title will be 'The Believers.'"¹⁰

As proof of his claim, he cited the following Qur'anic verse:

"O you who believe! Whoever among you turns back from his religion, Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He loves and they love Him, humble toward the believers, stern toward the disbelievers, striving in the way of Allah, and not fearing the blame of any blamer. That is the grace of Allah; He grants it to whom He wills; and Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing."¹¹

Belief No. 2:

Muhammad Mahdi claimed that God commanded the angels to recite his *Kalima* (creed): "*La ilaha illallah al-Malik al-Haqq al-Mubeen, Noor Muhammad Mahdi Rasulullah Sadiq al-Wa'd al-Ameen.*"

Belief No. 3:

He taught that whoever recites this *Kalima* sincerely will have seventy thousand sins forgiven, seventy thousand good deeds recorded in their book of deeds, and will be saved from the fire of Hell. However, those who oppose this creed will be consigned to the lowest depth of Hell (*Asfal al-Safilin*).

Belief No. 4:

When the angels asked God about the difference between Himself and Mahdi, God replied: "*He is from Me, and I am from Him.*"¹²

Belief No. 5:

Regarding the Holy Qur'an

According to Muhammad Mahdi's claim, God Almighty commanded him to travel throughout the universe. During this celestial journey, he reached a realm where all

the sacred scriptures were kept. From the Torah, Psalms, and the Gospel, he extracted only four matters, while the Furqan-e-Hameed (Holy Qur'an), which originally consisted of forty (some sources say twenty-seven) parts, was reduced by divine command to ten selected portions that contained the "secrets of divinity" and the "essence of the Qur'an." These ten parts, called Burhan or Kanz al-Asrar ("The Treasure of Secrets"), were said to be preserved only by his special disciples.¹³

Muhammad Mahdi is reported to have said:

"I have taken the essence of the Qur'an,
leaving behind the bones before the dogs."

This couplet is attributed to Muhammad Mahdi Atki himself.

Belief No. 6:

The Worthy of Paradise

According to Muhammad Mahdi, the community of Noor-e-Pak (the Pure Light) — meaning the followers of Muhammad Mahdi (peace be upon him) — are the only ones entitled to Paradise. Those who join this group will enter Paradise without reckoning or judgment. Furthermore, it is said that even an angel beneath the Throne was granted inclusion in this community by divine permission; this angel continually seeks forgiveness for the Zikris and says "Ameen" to their supplications.¹⁴

Belief No. 7:

The Celestial Bird and the Zikri Creed

During his cosmic journey, Muhammad Mahdi Atki reportedly saw a bird on the seventh heaven, upon whose body the following *Kalima* (declaration of faith) was inscribed:

"La ilaha illallah Noor Muhammad Mahdi Rasulallah."

Zikri Creed and Doctrines

The Zikris believe that Syed Muhammad Atki is the Promised Mahdi of the Last Age, and they also regard him as a Messenger of God. Their *Kalima* (creed) differs from that of mainstream Islam and reads as follows:

*"La ilaha illallah Noor-e-Pak Muhammad Mahdi Muradullah."*¹⁵

Sometimes they recite it in another form:

"La ilaha illallah Noor-e-Pak Muhammad Mahdi Rasulallah."

They generally refer to their prophet as Muhammad Mahdi Iski, believing he was a luminous being from Punjab who appeared in Makran to guide their ancestors but later went into concealment. They believe that this event occurred about four to five centuries ago, and that the details are recorded in their sacred text "Mahdinama", written in Persian — a book they never show to outsiders.

However, this belief is historically incorrect. The so-called Muhammad Iski is the same Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri, the founder of the Mahdavi movement, who never went to Makran. Historical records confirm that when he left India, he traveled through Kandahar and Farah, where he eventually passed away. Thus, his arrival in Makran is impossible. The spread of this doctrine in Makran is instead attributed to Abu Saeed Bilidi, one of Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri's followers, during the 15th century, when the Bilidis ruled the region and the Safavid dynasty governed Iran.

In the modern Zikri creed, the phrase "Noor-e-Pak" (Pure Light) is emphasized. Sometimes, instead of "*Rasulullah*" (Messenger of Allah), they use "*Amrullah*" (Command of Allah) or "*Muradullah*" (Will of Allah). Their complete *Kalima* recited in daily devotions reads:

"La ilaha illallah al-Malik al-Haqq al-Mubeen Noor Muhammad Mahdi Rasulallah Sadiq al-Wa'd al-Ameen."

*(Translation: There is no god but Allah, the Sovereign, the True, the Manifest. The Light of Muhammad Mahdi is the Messenger of Allah, the Truthful and the Trustworthy.)*¹⁶

Rejection of Islamic Pillars

The Zikris deny the obligatory prayers (Salat). Instead of the five daily prayers, they perform a ritual called *Zikr* five times a day.

They justify their rejection by misinterpreting the Qur'anic verse:

*"O you who believe! Do not approach prayer..."*¹⁷

claiming it forbids formal prayer. They also reject fasting (Sawm) in Ramadan, arguing that God said "Eat and drink," claiming this command abrogates fasting. They spend the entire month of Ramadan eating and drinking, considering fasting unnecessary. However, they observe fasting for three months and eight days in a year — every Monday, the "White Days," and the first eight days of Dhul-Hijjah.¹⁸

They deny the Hajj to the Kaaba, considering Koh Murad (a mountain near Turbat, Makran) as their pilgrimage site. They visit it seven times a year, particularly in Ramadan and the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, and perform rituals akin to Tawaf (circumambulation) there.¹⁹

They also reject the Kaaba as the Qibla (direction of prayer), arguing that God said:

"Wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allah."

Therefore, they claim orientation toward the Kaaba is unnecessary.²⁰

Their Concept of Religion and Worship

To mislead common people, they distinguish between "religion" and "sect," writing: "All Muslims share the same religion — Islam — but differ in sects: Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, Shafi'i, Ja'fari, Zikri, etc. Our religion is Islam, though our sect is Zikri."²¹

This is deceptive, for though they claim Islam, their creed and practices differ fundamentally — they reject prayer, fasting, and the Kaaba, which are core tenets of Islam.

Their author of *Main Zikri Hoon* explains their form of worship:

“My worship is the remembrance (Zikr) of God five times daily — bowing and prostrating three times. We fast more than other religions — three months and eight days each year. We also pay one-tenth of our income or harvest, which we consider obligatory.”

They do not believe in ritual purification (ghusl) after sexual intercourse or nocturnal emission.²²

They do not perform funeral prayers; instead, they only offer supplications in their *Zikr-khanas*.

“Chogan” — The Religious Dance

The Zikris practice a communal ritual dance called Chogan, a social-religious dance usually performed in open fields under moonlight or on sacred nights. Men, women, and youth form a circle while a lead singer — male or female — recites verses in praise of Mahdi and God. The participants respond in chorus, repeating the final line rhythmically, moving up and down, forward and backward, keeping the circle intact. No musical instruments are used.

The chants (*bols*) are of three rhythms double-step, triple-step, and quadruple-step for example:

“Saadiya Mahdiya,” “Nazneen Mahdiya,” “Allah Yek,” “Mahdi Barhaq Yaraan,” “Mahdiya Baloteet,” “Mahdi Mani Dil Murad.”

Participation in this dance is believed to bring immense spiritual reward — even spectators earn merit.²³

Islamic Rulings Concerning Zikris

According to Mufti Rashid Ahmad Ludhyanvi, marriage with Zikris is not permissible, as they fall outside Islam:

“Marriage with idol worshipers, sun worshipers, Druze, Nusayris, or Zikris is invalid; their slaughtered animals are unlawful to eat since they are not People of the Book.”²⁴

Since a valid marriage does not exist, separation is required, and children born of such unions are deemed illegitimate (*walad al-zina*) and have no legal inheritance from their fathers.

Zikris are not People of the Book, because they attribute prophethood to Muhammad Mahdi, as seen in their *Kalima*:

“La ilaha illallah Noor-e-Pak Muhammad Mahdi Rasulullah.”

Since Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri was not a prophet, they cannot be considered Ahl al-Kitab. Their slaughtered meat is unlawful, as lawful slaughter requires the one who performs it to be Muslim or from the People of the Book.²⁵

General Zikri Beliefs

Zikri scholars, by altering the meanings of Qur'anic verses, attempt to prove the prophethood of Muhammad Mahdi Atki. For example, in the Qur'anic verse "*Hatta ya'tiya Allahu bi amrihi*" ("until Allah brings His command"), they interpret the word "*Amrihi*" (His Command) as referring to the person of Mahdi.²⁶

Example of Distortion in the Translation of Surah al-Asr

They interpret Surah *al-Asr* as follows:

"By the time of Asr (i.e., the last age). O mankind! If you have complete faith in the person of Mahdi (peace be upon him), believe in him, and do good deeds, then by truthfulness and steadfastness you shall be saved from the torments of the Day of Judgment and the fire of Hell."²⁷

This is a clear example of semantic distortion (tahrif ma'nawi).

Claims of Superiority of Mahdi in Zikri Writings

Shaykh Muhammad Qasr Qandi writes in his book:

"God Almighty said, 'O Moses! In the Torah We have said that Mahdi is superior to all the prophets. If Mahdi had not existed, I would not have created the Throne, the Chair, the Tablet, the Pen, Paradise, Hell, the Sun, the Moon, and all that exists in the universe. If you do not affirm Mahdi, I will burn you in the fire of Hell.'"²⁸

"Allah said, 'O Moses! We have said in the Torah that Mahdi is better than all prophets. Were it not for Mahdi, I would not have created the Throne, the Chair, the Tablet, the Pen, Paradise, the Sun, the Moon, or anything in the universe. If you do not acknowledge Mahdi, I shall burn you in Hellfire.'"

He further writes:

"Allah said, 'O Moses! Mahdi is My beloved, and you are My speaker. The beloved is superior to the speaker. In the Torah, We have said: *al-Mahdi noorun minni* — Mahdi is a light from Me.'"²⁹

Moses then asked, "O Lord! How did You create Mahdi first and yet send him last?" God replied, "His name is the Light of the First and the Last." Moses said, "Will You raise another prophet after Mahdi?" God said, "O Moses! After Mahdi, no other prophet shall be created. The Light of the First and the Last is he whom I will bring forth."³⁰

Zikri Belief in the Ascension and the Dialogue Between the Prophet (PBUH) and Mahdi

Another Zikri scholar writes:

"One day, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reflected that he was the Light of the First and the Last, the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds, and that no prophet would come after him. On the eighth night of the week, a Friday, he went from his chamber to the Sacred Mosque and engaged in worship. The Archangel Gabriel came and said, 'O Muhammad! By the command of Allah, I will now take you

to the heavens, to the Great Throne of Allah.’ When the Prophet reached the Throne, Allah said, ‘Since you proclaimed among your companions that you are the Light of the First and the Last, now behold the chosen Light — My beloved at My Court. Recognize him and never again call yourself the Light of the First and the Last, for that Light belongs to My beloved, the Mahdi of the Last Age.’ Then the Light of Muhammad asked, ‘Are you Ahmad or Muhammad?’ Mahdi replied, ‘I am Ahmad, not Muhammad; the Light of Mahdi, the Seal of the Prophets, is you.’ The Light of Mahdi then said, ‘O Prophet of Allah! From a drop of sweat on My forehead, Allah created your pure soul.’ The Prophet replied, ‘O Light of Mahdi! Grant me permission to derive part of your blessed name so that I may be honored in both worlds.’”³¹

Poetic Expression of Mahdi’s Prophethood

Even in poetry, the Zikri belief in Mahdi’s prophethood appears frequently:

“Mahdi, who is the final Light and the leader of all messengers,
I submit before you, O Mahdi of the Last Age.”³²

This verse is by Syed Abdul Karim al-Tofi (1988), the central Zikri leader.

Another Zikri poet, Mulla Izzat, expresses similar views:

“O heart, rise and recite the praise of the Prophet of mankind and jinn,
The intercessor of the Day of Judgment, the guide and master of the world.
God appointed him to reveal the religion of the Qur’an,
The crowned king of all kings, the Mahdi of the Last Age.
He ended doubts and illuminated the world as the Seal of the Prophets.”³³

Mulla Shahd Dost bin Mulla Kamalan also writes:

“I shall recite the praise of the leader of the prophets,
The messenger of mankind and jinn,
The intercessor of all nations.”

And elsewhere:

“The time of Ahmad has passed,
That radiant Light has appeared to the world.
Listen, O worshiper! Whoever denies that Light of Prophethood is astray.”³⁴

Similarly, Shaykh Muhammad Qasr Qandi writes:

“The Messenger who is the chief of all,
The trustee of God, the crown of all prophets.
Had your Light not been manifest,
The eighteen thousand creations would never have appeared.
You are the Seal of all Prophets,
The crown of all sovereigns,
The one whom all prophets take pride in — the chosen servant of the Lord.”³⁵

Qazi Ibrahim further elaborates:

“After praising the Almighty and Beneficent Creator,
I praise the Messenger, superior to all creation.
All jinn, angels, and humans exist by the grace of Mahdi,
The cupbearer of Kawthar.”³⁶

Transformations in Zikri Doctrines Over Time

In modern times, as research and critical inquiry have grown, Zikri scholars have begun to publish written material about their faith. Facing accusations of disbelief (*takfir*), they now reinterpret their doctrines, claiming:

“There is nothing in our religion that takes us outside the fold of Islam. We hold the same beliefs as ordinary Muslims. The books that attribute un-Islamic doctrines to us were not written by our scholars but by conspirators seeking to defame us.”

Among such reformist scholars are Abdul Ghani Baloch and Maulvi Faqir Muhammad. In his book *Tareekh-e-Zikri Firqa* (The History of the Zikri Sect), Abdul Ghani Baloch writes:

“Every school of thought produces both good and bad people. The intoxication of power and lust for authority can make man lose his humanity. Within the Zikri community, alongside great reformers, there also appeared ambitious individuals who, for the sake of power, damaged the movement, altered its principles, and deviated people from true Zikri teachings. They fabricated baseless stories to mislead others, opening a new chapter of corruption.

During the 18th century, instead of focusing on true Zikri doctrines, political influences dominated the movement. Leaders like Mulla Murad Gichki and his son Malik Dinar Gichki, through their authority, introduced forced changes that shattered the original essence of Zikrism.

During the Bilidi dynasty, no one dared to attack Zikri beliefs, but later rulers used the pretext of ‘holy war’ to justify invasions — particularly Mir Naseer Khan Noori, who exploited religious rhetoric to conquer Makran, calling his attack a jihad against ‘false doctrines.’

Opportunist rulers hijacked Zikri teachings for personal gain, replacing authentic beliefs with innovations. As a result, the gap between Zikris and Sunnis widened, leading to mistrust and division. Instead of progress, decline followed. If we fail to resist such deviations, we will sink further into deterioration.

Our history is luminous; if we return to the original Zikri teachings and present them to the world, this ideology — being moderate and balanced — can play a major role in reviving the moral spirit of Islam. Even today, Zikris claim to uphold the same message that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) brought.

Reformers like Waja Abdul Karim, who resisted false doctrines and insisted on continuing Mahdi’s true message, were martyred along with hundreds of companions by the Gichki rulers with the help of outsiders. Such oppressive rulers imposed their

ideas upon Zikris by force. Therefore, it is essential that we expose these conspiracies and revive our original teachings.”

Some Baseless Tales:

Those who have worked day and night to distort the beliefs of the Zikris fabricated certain stories, spread them among the Zikris, and then attributed them to them. However, the original Zikri literature is entirely free from such baseless events. As Zikri preachers and leaders, we completely reject these stories and declare that they should not be associated with us. A brief mention of these stories is necessary so that people may know which fabricated incidents have been falsely propagated to distort the facts.

Mi'raj Nama (The Ascension Narrative):

It is said that when Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ascended to the heavens (Mi'raj), he met Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) there and was informed that this was the primordial Light (Nur) through whose grace all other existences came into being — the “First Light.” Though this story is often repeated, it is a historical fact that no such account exists in authentic Zikri literature or Islamic history. It is purely fictitious.

The Mi'raj Nama story is absent in all early Zikri manuscripts. In truth, this story appeared only after the time of Shaikh Muhammad Darafshan and his grandson Shaikh Jalal. Even Wajah Mir Abdullah Jangi, who was the maternal grandfather of Shaikh Muhammad Darafshan, did not mention it — and who could have been a better narrator? Had such an event been known at that time, he surely would have recorded it. However, neither Shaikh Muhammad Darafshan, Qazi Ibrahim, Shaikh Suleiman, Shaikh Jalal, nor other eminent Zikri poets ever mentioned the Mi'raj Nama in their writings.

This false story originates from a handwritten manuscript authored by a Zikri opponent named Faqir Muhammad, son of Baran Sarbazi, written around 1176 AH. The manuscript later came into the possession of Mulla Ahmad Parwardi. Both men were non-Zikris who, under the guise of an anti-Zikri campaign, fabricated and attributed this narrative to the Zikris. In fact, even a hint of this story is impossible to find in Zikri literature. Therefore, it is merely a fable falsely ascribed to the Zikri faith a baseless accusation by its adversaries.

Musi Nama (The Story of Moses):

Another story, besides the Mi'raj narrative, is also circulated under the title *Musi Nama*. It claims that when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) fainted upon witnessing the divine manifestation on Mount Sinai and regained consciousness, he conversed with God and asked for more knowledge. God, it is said, instructed him first to recite the *Kalima* of Mahdi, after which He would reveal the rank and station of Mahdi. Then, God allegedly described Mahdi as the First and Last Light, through whose blessings the heavens, earth, time, and space were created — superior to all prophets, the

Beloved (Habib), while Moses was the Conversant (Kalim), and the Beloved was greater than the Conversant.

This too is a baseless story. Like the Mi'raj Nama, it was fabricated and attributed to the Zikris by opponents seeking to defame them. Otherwise, why is there no mention of it in the works of Mir Abdullah Jangi, Shaikh Darafshan, Shaikh Suleiman, Shaikh Jalal, or Qazi Ibrahim Panjguri? Hence, attributing this narrative to the Zikri faith is entirely unjustified.³⁷

Their Current Position on the Fasting Belief:

The Ten Days of Dhul-Hijjah Fasts:

According to Zikri scholars, fasting is a means of spiritual discipline and social balance — just as prayer cultivates obedience to God, and zakat purifies wealth. Humanity has always faced economic inequality; thus, fasting serves to awaken empathy among the wealthy for the poor and hungry.

Fasting trains the affluent, who are used to comfort, to feel hunger and thirst. This awareness promotes compassion and social harmony. Therefore, fasting was made obligatory in Ramadan as a spiritual training course for all believers.

Some Zikri scholars consider fasting during the last ten days of Dhul-Hijjah to be an act of great merit, though not obligatory. Others, however, regard it as compulsory based on their interpretation of the Qur'anic verse:

*“O you who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, that you may become righteous — for a few numbered days.”*³⁸

Some interpret “few numbered days” (*Ayyaman Ma'dudat*) as referring to the ten days of Dhul-Hijjah, while Sunni scholars generally interpret it as the days of Ramadan or the middle “white days.” According to the Zikri scholar's argument, context shows that the verse refers only to Ramadan fasting. Hence, the Dhul-Hijjah fasts are *supererogatory* (*nafl*), not *obligatory* (*fard*), but highly meritorious.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) regularly fasted during Dhul-Hijjah, especially on the Day of 'Arafah, of which he said:

“I have hope in Allah that fasting on the Day of 'Arafah will atone for the sins of the previous and coming year.”

Thus, these fasts are considered a continuation of the practice of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), Prophet Musa (peace be upon him), and other prophets — a blessed tradition of devotion.³⁹

The Zikris – Their Identity and Beliefs:

Zikris believe in the true spirit of Islam, which teaches tolerance, discourages sectarian hostility, and forbids coercion or violence in religious matters. They emphasize unity and brotherhood among all Muslims, in accordance with the Qur'anic command:

“Hold fast to the rope of Allah all together, and do not be divided.”

The Zikri creed traces its origin to the Mahdavi movement founded in the 15th century by Syed Muhammad Mahdi Mau'ood of Jaunpur, India. His message of social equality and justice deeply influenced South and Southwest Asia, especially the region of Makran in Balochistan, where Zikri teachings spread rapidly — flourishing under the patronage of the Bulaydi rulers, notably Abu Saeed Bulaydi of Oman's royal lineage.

Zikris assert that their beliefs do not deviate from Islam's fundamental tenets. They follow the divine principles outlined in the Qur'an, with interpretations explained by Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him).

They believe:

1. Allah is their Lord, Muhammad (peace be upon him) their Prophet, and the Qur'an and Mahdi their guides.
2. Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the final Prophet, and Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him) the final Imam — the spiritual interpreter of the Qur'an.
3. They uphold all five pillars of Islam: *Tawheed*, *Salah*, *Sawm*, *Zakat*, and *Hajj*.
4. "Zikr" (the remembrance of Allah) is an obligatory act of worship, as emphasized in the Qur'an ⁴⁰
5. They believe in the six articles of faith — Allah, angels, divine books, prophets, the Day of Judgment, and destiny.
6. They practice marriage, divorce, burial, and other rituals in accordance with Islamic law (except that in funeral prayer, they combine *Zikr* and *Salah*).
7. They acknowledge *Jihad* as a struggle against injustice and oppression.
8. Their *Kalima* is the same as that inscribed on the Prophet's (peace be upon him) tomb in Madinah:

"La ilaha illallah al-Malik al-Haqq al-Mubeen, Muhammadur Rasulullah Sadiq-ul-Wa'd al-Ameen."

They also regard Mount Murad in Makran as a sacred place because of Imam Mahdi's stay and teachings there.

Most of their beliefs closely resemble those of mainstream Sunni Islam, and they particularly revere Imam Abu Hanifa, the founder of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.⁴¹

If these writings are carefully examined, it becomes evident that many of the objections raised against them lose their validity. However, even Zikri scholars themselves admit that *Mulla Murad* introduced these changes *by force*. Mulla Murad lived in the 18th century, and for nearly three hundred years before that, the Zikris held the same beliefs without any significant internal rejection of them — certainly not of the kind that has appeared publicly only recently, around 2019. This is a serious point of reflection for followers of the Zikri faith, as these beliefs are clearly recorded in their own foundational texts.

Below, we present a concise summary of Zikri doctrinal beliefs, as stated in their own books:

Zikri Doctrines According to Zikri Sources

1. Muhammad Mahdi Atki is the last prophet and messenger of God. (Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad, p.117; Sanaye Mahdi, pp.1, 13, compiled by Muhammad Ayub Shehzad Baloch, published by Zikri Mahdavi Students Organization)
2. Muhammad Mahdi Atki is the Seal of the Prophets (Khatam al-Nabiyyin). (Manuscript of Nuruddin bin Mulla Kamalan, Mi'raj Nama, p.23; Sanaye Mahdi, pp.10–12; Zikr-e-Ilahi, p.29)
3. All previous divine scriptures foretold the coming of Mahdi. (Zikr-e-Wahdat, p.11)
4. God took a covenant from all prophets to believe in and support Mahdi. (Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad; Sanaye Mahdi, p.99, 12; Mi'raj Nama, pp.7–9)
5. Muhammad Mahdi is superior to all previous prophets. (Sanaye Mahdi, p.12; Safarnama Mahdi, p.3; Zikri Kaun Hain, p.47)
6. Muhammad Mahdi was created from the divine light (Nur). (Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad Qasr Qandi, p.115; Safarnama Mahdi, p.4)
7. God loves Mahdi—He is the Lover, and Mahdi the Beloved. (Letter of Shaikh Shakar Tarjuman Baloch, March 7, 1937; Tabarr-e-Islam bar Kahur-e-Zikriyan, p.9)
8. Mahdi is free from the need for food or drink. (Zikri Mazhab aur Islam)
9. Mahdi has no parents or offspring.
10. Mahdi is alive and seated on a throne near God's Throne ('Arsh). (Manuscript of Nuruddin bin Mulla Kamalan, Mi'raj Nama, p.2; Zikri Kaun Hain, p.46)
11. Mahdi brought the final divine law (Sharia). (Manuscripts of Shaikh Muhammad and Nuruddin)
12. The Sharia of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has been abrogated. He was one among the many prophets, but now Mahdi's Sharia is in effect and will remain until the Day of Judgment. (Manuscript of Nuruddin, Mi'raj Nama: Shariat-e-Mahdi, Ummat-e-Mahdi, Deen-e-Mahdi)
13. The Qur'an, though revealed to Prophet Muhammad, was actually revealed for Mahdi, and only his interpretation is valid. (Sanaye Mahdi, pp.6–9; Zikr-e-Ilahi, p.39; Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad)*
14. The Prophet's true name was Ahmad, not Muhammad; wherever "Muhammad" appears in the Qur'an, it refers to Muhammad Mahdi. (Manuscript of Nuruddin bin Mulla Kamalan, p.23)
15. The correct declaration of faith is:
"La ilaha illallah Nur-e-Pak Muhammad Mahdi Rasulullah" — whoever denies it is destined for Hell. (Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad, pp.13, 58, 100; Safarnama Mahdi, p.4; Zikr-e-Tawheed, p.9; Mi'raj Nama, manuscript of Nuruddin)
16. Performing the five daily prayers, Friday or Eid prayers is forbidden and a sign of disbelief, as prayer (Salah) has been abrogated. (Manuscript of Nuruddin; Questions of Mulla Yar Muhammad Malang)
17. Fasting in Ramadan has been abolished; instead, fasting for eight days of Dhul-Hijjah is obligatory. (Main Zikri Hoon, pp.7, 37, 42)
18. Zakat is to be paid at the rate of one-tenth (10%). (Naukin Daur Makran, March 16, 1966; Kamil al-Qadri, Blochi Dunya)
19. Hajj to the Ka'bah has been abrogated; Mount Murad is the obligatory pilgrimage site. (Naukin Daur Makran, March 16, 1966; Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad, p.13)*

20. During worship, facing any particular direction is unnecessary; the Ka'bah no longer holds any spiritual significance. The believer's heart is the true Ka'bah. (*Manuscript of Nuruddin bin Mulla Kamalan, final page*)

21. Ritual bathing (*ghusl*) after impurity is not obligatory.

(*Manuscript of Nuruddin bin Mulla Kamalan, pp.14–42; Umdat al-Wasa'il, vol.3, 1345 AH*)
22. Ritual ablution (*wudu*) is not required; true purification lies in piety and righteousness. (*Manuscript of Nuruddin, pp.40, 45; Umdat al-Wasa'il, p.33*)

23. It is obligatory to follow the religion taught by Mahdi; acknowledgment of Mahdi is mandatory for all prophets.

(*Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad; Sanaye Mahdi, p.12*)

24. All Zikris are followers (*Ummah*) of Muhammad Mahdi.

(*Haqiqat Nur-e-Pak; Safarnama Mahdi; Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad, p.13*)

25. Paradise belongs to Mahdi, who has granted the authority to Mullas to bestow it on whomever they please—for a year.

(*Armaghan-e-Digriyan, account by a new Muslim leader*)*

26. The Mullas have the right to declare things lawful or unlawful and can alter religious injunctions.

(*Zikri Kaun Hain, p.15; Tarjuman Baloch, March 7, 1937*)*

27. All prophets were helped by Muhammad Mahdi.

(*Sanaye Mahdi, p.12*)*

28. The appearance (*Zuhur*) of Imam Mahdi has already occurred; whoever denies him is a disbeliever.

(*Sanaye Mahdi, p.10; Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad, Musi Nama, pp.101–154; Naukin Daur Makran, March 6, 1967*)*

29. Mahdi will be the intercessor on the Day of Judgment.

(*Zikri Kaun Hain, p.47*)*

30. On the Day of Resurrection, Mahdi will be the standard-bearer (*Sahib al-Liwa*).

(*Sanaye Mahdi, p.11*)*

31. Mahdi is the cause of creation; had he not been created, the universe would not exist.

(*Haqiqat Nur-e-Pak, Safarnama Mahdi, p.3; Main Zikri Hoon, vol.1, p.6; Sanaye Mahdi, p.11*)*

32. The beginning and end of Mahdi are unknown; he transcends time and space.

(*Sanaye Mahdi, p.30; Zikr-e-Wahdat*)

33. The book of Mahdi is called *Burhan*.

(*Manuscript of Shaikh Muhammad, p.117; Safarnama Mahdi, p.5*)

According to Shaikh Aziz Lari's *Safarnama Mahdi*, the Qur'an originally had 40 parts; Mahdi chose 10 of them for his followers, and that book was named *Burhan*, which is now lost. Interestingly, in the regions of Khuzdar, Mashkay, Greshah, and Nal, Zikris believe the book's name was *Wahdana*, and they only accept handwritten Qur'ans by that name, rejecting printed copies altogether.

This was a brief introduction to their beliefs. Their declaration of faith (*Kalima*) is: "La ilaha illallah Nur-e-Pak Nur-e-Muhammad Mahdi Rasulullah."

In their gatherings of remembrance (*Zikr*), they recite:

"La ilaha illallah al-Malik al-Haqq al-Mubeen Nur-e-Pak Nur-e-Muhammad Mahdi Rasulullah Sadiq-ul-Wa'd al-Ameen."

In the Sher Shah area, where the Mianwali cemetery lies adjacent to the Motrah Zikri graveyard, these very phrases are engraved on the tombstones confirming their presence in Zikri texts and practice.

They *deny the ritual prayer (Salah)*, replacing it with *Zikr* because, according to the teachings of Mahdi, there is no room for prayer. They have no *mosques*; instead, they have *Zikranas* circular spaces where participants sit in a ring to perform collective remembrance. These places have *no mihrab*, though they sometimes feature a *minaret*. Based on these facts, the general and specific opinions and religious verdicts (fatwas) regarding the Zikris are considered fair and justified.

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- ¹⁷ (Umdat al-Wasa'il, Maulana Muhammad Musa Dashti, Tareekh-e-Makran)
- ¹⁸ (Main Zikri Hoon, pp. 381–383*)
- ¹⁹ (Mahdavi Tehreek, All Pakistan Muslim Zikri Anjuman, pp. 10–11; Umdat al-Wasa'il, p. 302)
- ²⁰ (Umdat al-Wasa'il, p. 100)
- ²¹ (Main Zikri Hoon, p. 1)
- ²² (Umdat al-Wasa'il, p. 3).

- ²³ (Mahdavi Tehreek, p. 70–76*)
²⁴ (Al-Shamiya, Vol. 2, p. 314)
²⁵ (Fatwa of Mufti Rashid Ahmad, dated 1st Rabi al-Thani 1396 AH / February 1976 CE)
²⁶ (Noor Hidayat, p. 36)
²⁷ (Noor Tajalli, p. 10)
²⁸ (Musa Nama Qasimi, Muhammad Qasr Qandi, p. 99)
²⁹ (Musa Nama Qasimi, p. 99)
³⁰ (Musa Nama Qasimi, p. 99)
³¹ (Mi‘raj Nama Qami, Mulla Kaman, pp. 21–23)
³² (Thana-e-Mahdi, p. ...)
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³⁴ (Makrani Persian Poets, p. 66)
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