Mosque Construction
or the Violence of the Ordinary*

Naveeda Khan

Introduction

I have been, for some time, preoccupied with how one can speak about
neighbourhood mosques, about which one can say no one thing but
having said a few things, see those propositions slip away into gen-
erality, even banality. Even works that praise mosques cannot seem
to avoid this fate. Many at my research site speculated that this
vulnerability of mosques to banality is equally that of my research
topic. Who works on mosques when the world talks incessantly about
madrasas? But it has dawned on me that this vulnerability is in the
nature of the mosque itself, in its ordinariness, the necessity that
guarantees its production to meet daily ritual needs but also threat-
en its reception by, in this instance, this scholar and her research
subjects — Lahori Sunni Muslims of all ages and genders and of all
walks of life. This article is an exploration of neighbourhood mosques
in Lahore and their mutual entanglements with ordinary life and
sectarian politics. I intend to draw out how mosques fall prey to a
certain ‘violence of the ordinary’, which may or may not underlie sect-
arian politics, but which still awaits a proper account in and of itself.

For me to take an account of the ordinary in its specific relationship
to mosques, I need to further explore how the ordinary forms the
backdrop to the building of a mosque, how the mosque inaugurates
newness and what nature of newness this is, and how conformity and
separation tracks these ongoing processes of mosque building. While
it is beyond the scope of this article to draw out how one is to fall
out of step with conformity and separation, I gesture to some of the
ways in which they are resisted to suggest the subterranean reserves
within the ordinary to be both productive and ameliorative of violence.
Finally, the figure of the mosque expresses my preoccupation with
material culture, of things, their production, collection and circulation,
and the narratives that accrue to them. At the outset, I would only
add that we do not yet know the full reach of things — in my case, of mosques — and what they can tell us about ourselves in relation to one another and to the world. Here, a quote from Stanley Cavell’s essay ‘The World as Things’ may be helpful in setting forth the inquiry that underlies my work.

Why do we put things together as we do? Why do we put ourselves together with just these things to make a world? What choices have we said farewell to? To put things together differently, so that they quicken the heart, would demand their recollecting (2005: 280).

**The Ordinary as Backdrop**

The closest anthropologists have gotten to the ordinary is through the concept of ‘everyday life’, which we have encountered in theorists such as Henri Lefebvre (1991) and Michel de Certeau (1984), but whose substantive contents have preoccupied us since anthropology first came to be formalised as a discipline. I am afraid that I cannot bring anthropology any closer to a definition of the ordinary. Cavell, the American philosopher most preoccupied with the ordinary, a preoccupation which he inherits from ordinary language philosophers, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Austin, never provides us a definition of the ordinary. It is only in the mouths of literary figures that Cavell finds statements on the ordinary in the nature of pronouncements on ‘how things are with us’ (Cavell 2003). He, in turn, corroborates the existence of the ordinary through our myriad modes of betraying it and of being betrayed by it, all of which he calls skepticism and which he understands to be a standing threat within the ordinary (Cavell 1988).

Moreover, he draws out the ongoing significance of the ordinary by showing us what we stand to gain or lose by it, differently understood in each iteration of the problem. In some instances people court madness, in others death and in others, even contemplate murder. And these may take expression in no more or less than a dizzy spell, the taste of bile in one’s mouth and the rough gesture of pushing someone aside respectively (Cavell 1982).

If I cannot bring anthropology any closer to a definition of the ordinary, I will certainly try to bring out a variegated sense of it. Here, I take my cue from Cavell in seeking this sense in contemporary Urdu literature pronouncements of the ordinary, in so far as they relate to mosques in modern-day Pakistan, and in using my ethnography of three mosques in Lahore to further nuance these pronouncements.

Let me further explain how this division of labour is to work in my
article. If literature tells us that to be ordinary is to breathe air, then ethnography shows us that that air may be poisoned. If literature tells us that to be ordinary is to affect conformity, then ethnography shows how conformity comes at the heels of the aspiration to change. Finally, if literature tells us that a condition of being ordinary is to perceive things as separating from us, then ethnography shows us how we struggle to weigh things down, to hold them in place, so that we may secure our place in the world.5

Let me explain briefly how I came by these descriptions of mosques in contemporary Urdu writings, sometimes no more than a few sentences, scavenged from a short story, a novel, an autobiography and a travel account, in that order. I did not undertake a survey of Urdu literature as that was not within the scope of my research. Instead, friends, teachers and interlocutors would break into words of poetry or gesture towards specific passages of prose by way of helping me to understand something. I would take their interjections as archetypical signposts to navigate the fractured urban landscape in which I found myself in Lahore in the late 1990s, in which each mosque I took up for research seemed embroiled in some version of what is referred to in common parlance as qāba (seizure).6 Newly informed of the nuances of these sectarian struggles within mosques and reeling from the affective intensities that moved these struggles, I was puzzled by the literary accounts of mosques for they seemed to verge on the impressionistic or the naîve. Could this writer really show the building of mosques to be like breathing? Could this other author really think that only an aspiration to change was at stake in this violent scene of mosque construction? Could this author really be so naîve as to be shocked by the presence of policemen guarding mosques? But I have since come to see and respect in these accounts a determination to make wide-eyed pronouncements on the ordinary, on ‘how things are with us’, to draw out the strangeness that resides within that to which we are most accustomed. In this, the mosque is the perfect foil for the ordinary, the qāba of a mosque an occasion to explore standing threats within the ordinary. Moreover, I see my ethnography as providing a few further insights into the workings of the ordinary in order that we might ‘put things together differently, so that they quicken the heart’ (Cavell 2005: 280).

To be Ordinary is to Breathe Air...

Yasmeen, my Urdu teacher and good friend, showed up one day with Ghulam Abbas’ short story ‘Anandi’ saying that I had to read it. In it
she had found the most astonishing scene, astonishing in its simplicity, which had revealed to her that mosque-building should be ‘like breathing’. This was a pointed criticism of the contemporary mosque scene in Lahore, perhaps all over Pakistan, in which elaborate buildings were going up, although it was never made clear if they were authorised, who was funding them and for whom they were being built. This mixture of elaborateness and secrecy gave these partially built mosques a vague air of disrepute. Yasmeen implied that the mosque-building scene in ‘Anandi’ would set the record straight for me.

The story begins with municipal authorities in an unnamed city during an unspecified time in history hotly debating the merits and demerits of having a red light district in the centre of the city. To the assertion that prostitutes have a historical claim upon the city, that to remove them would in no way rid society of the institution of prostitution, the counter assertion is made that it is not possible for upstanding citizens to live alongside such creatures of depravity. The prostitutes threaten to poison the morality of future generations while currently poisoning the air with their loud chatter, bawdy behaviour and music and dance. Thus, the prostitutes find themselves displaced to the edge of the city, where the city comes face to face with jungles and to which no paved road leads. There they immediately get busy, setting up shop and hiring workers to clear the jungles, lay down roads and build lavish homes for the prostitutes and entertainment halls for their clients.

In the thicket of details of the work, which come to us in lyrical prose suggesting a tempo to the work that derives from nature rather than from an industrialised society, we learn that workers amass in this locality. If they are pulled to this locality by the economy of prostitution, a smaller economy builds up around their daily requirements of food and shelter. In time, they see fit to build a small mosque to attend to their daily ritual needs. Right there, a mosque is born with the greatest economy of words and gestures.

In time, and through the exertions of the prostitutes, the city grows to encircle them. In the final scene municipal authorities once again hotly debate the merits and demerits of having a red light district in the centre of the city. The future of the prostitutes is once again thrown into uncertainty. Rather, since we presumably know the outcome of this debate, the prostitutes are once again activated as catalysts for the growth of a city. Mosques, we are given to understand, naturally proliferate.
What is it about this picture of building mosques that strikes Yasmeen as being akin to breathing? One way to look at it is to say that, as breathing is to life so building a mosque is to living as a Muslim. This sentiment is certainly ever present in all the oral narratives I gathered on mosque construction. But, to borrow some thoughts from Eve Sedgewick speaking on Marcel Proust, in particular, on the importance he gives to breathing as the a-theological operation of reincarnation within the ordinary, breathing is the opportunity to give oneself a new life. Each breath marks the possibility for a fresh beginning. So it is with mosques. To build a mosque is to inaugurate a new life. It marks the possibility for a fresh beginning. But it is no more remarkable than breathing is to humans. And, through this picture of mosque construction as akin to breathing we are inducted into both the utter ordinariness of mosques and their remarkable capacity to register the communal desire and gesture of starting afresh. This is the newness that mosques inaugurate within the register of the ordinary.

...that is Poisoned

Masjid Noor in Ganeshtar, renamed Momin Town sometime in the 1970s, was built shortly after partition by Muslim immigrants and refugees who found themselves in a once Hindu neighbourhood of Lahore in what was now Pakistan. In addition to meeting the needs of this migrant population, the mosque was built as much to mark a new beginning in a new nation as to consolidate claims upon a Sunni enclave in what was quickly becoming a largely Shia-dominated neighbourhood. As the imam (prayer leader) of the mosque describes it, in 1952 some residents literally grabbed him, then a young maulvi (religious scholar) and a newcomer himself to Pakistan, placed him on an as yet bare patch of land and bid him to begin namaz ba jamaat (congregational prayer). He continued to do so while the mosque came up in fits and starts around him. He stayed the imam of Masjid Noor for over 40 years and claimed himself aptly rewarded for his services by the enduring love and respect of his neighbours.

Other than those mosques that predate partition and may fall under care of the provincial Auqaf (Religious Endowment) Department or those built by the state, most mosques are built out of neighbourhood initiative in Pakistan. While in some instances the state may make grants of land, in most instances government land is simply seized. The head of the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) once
said to me that he thought that 90 per cent of all mosques in Lahore were built on illegally seized land (or at least land whose transfer had not been completed to satisfaction to meet the bureaucratic criteria of legality). These mosques are built and maintained by mosque committees through monthly donations collected from residents of the neighbourhood. In a few cases, a prominent resident may fully support a mosque. In an even fewer number of cases mosques are supported by waqf (religious endowment), or sponsored by foreign funds or political parties beyond the scope of the neighbourhood. More recently, urban neighbourhoods developed through private initiatives come with mosques, pre-built and fully operational, as part of the services provided by the developer. In sum, it is fair to say that there exists an unwieldy patchwork of financial sources and strategies, largely unconnected to and undocumented by the state, which underwrite the building and management of mosques.

The minimal bureaucratic requirement that a mosque has to meet is to have its mosque committee registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act. Even articles showing the legal acquisition of land on which mosques are to be built are not deemed absolutely necessary to commence construction. Moreover, such articles may be acquired legally (through state transfer of the land to the society) or illegally (through payment to potwaris [record keepers] to insert the name of one’s mosque into the records) after the fact of the mosque being built. While the state on occasion makes noises about centralising mosque construction and management, this is not its priority. The state shares with the average Pakistani Muslim the sense that mosques are necessary yet unremarkable aspects of being Muslim and, as such, residents should take the initiative as the need presents itself. Seen in another light, residents see it as their implicit right as Muslims to build mosques as they see necessary. It is not uncommon to find three or four mosques close together in a small neighbourhood each of a different maslak (a path within the Sunni fitqa [sect]).

Masjid Noor bore traces of the changing fortunes of its worshippers, largely storekeepers, local businessmen and civil servants who worked in the nearby Secretariat. In its early years, it was no more than a platform upon which the men in the neighbourhood congregated for Friday prayers. As monthly collections became regularised a concrete building took shape, consisting of a covered central hall, a courtyard outside of it with an area for toilet and ablution at the back.
of the courtyard. The mosque committee struggled to provide basic services, such as electricity to run the fans, most importantly those that hung over worshippers standing in the courtyard. Running water was a luxury until quite recently: tanks of water were placed at a little height above the ground to generate water flows from the taps that ringed the bottom of the tank. More recently, a generous worshipper had replaced the rotting jute carpet lining the hall and the courtyard with a presumably indestructible plastic one.

The most recent additions to the mosque were the aesthetic flourishes added to the façade of the building. A cement cut-out of a dome with a little minaret on each side adorned the doorway leading into the central hall. A black and white marble sign hung by the doorway bearing the name of the mosque. Underneath the name was a recent addition to the sign that stated that this mosque followed the tenets of the Ahl-i Sunnah wa jama'at exclusively. The head of the mosque committee explained to me that those words had been added to the sign very recently in order to discourage anyone other than those of the Berelvi maslak from entering the mosque. And so unravelled the latest turn in the life of Masjid Noor.

Before I describe the different forces that tore at this mosque as I found it between 1997–2002, let us go back to the image of breathing by which I explained the newness a mosque inaugurates within the register of the ordinary. Building a mosque is like taking a new breath, an opportunity to start afresh. But at what point does breathing become laboured? At what point does it not seem to hold the possibility for newness any longer? And what if the air one breathes seems to militate against breath itself? This describes an environment in the grips of qabza, when one's words are no sooner uttered that they are wrenched from one's mouth to take on a life of their own, when one is overheard or, conversely, when one simply cannot be heard. Qabza, more specifically one's vulnerability to slipping into a state of being under the qabza of another, I argue, is an imminent threat within the ordinary.

The imam of Masjid Noor, Imam Azim, now in his mid 70s, was very ill. His breath was belaboured. Yet, his quivery voice held forth in a diatribe from a body that was doubled in pain. He spoke to me about the new addition to the signage, done at his behest because he no longer felt that it was possible for those of the Deobandi maslak to pray alongside Berelvis. Before partition he had found much to recommend in Maulana Muhammad Ilyas's Tablighi Jamaat (the
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his mid 70s, was my voice held forth n. He spoke to me his behest because he Deobandi maslak had found much to blighi Jamaat (the
dawa (missionary) arm of the Deobandi maslak) and had steadfastly supported the presence of Tablighis in Masjid Noor over the years. He had allowed them to pray there, to give dars (lessons), to stay there overnight while on chilla (forty day trips), and to do gahrit in his neighbourhood (call the men of the household to pray in the mosque). But the Tablighi Jama'atis had betrayed the philosophy of the founder of their movement, that is, reconverting lapsed Muslims to Islam, and were no longer welcome in Masjid Noor.

I never did learn the specific instance of betrayal. There were dark hints from members of the mosque committee to the effect that some among the Tablighis had tried to seize the mosque. But from what I could gather afterwards from the local police, who were surprisingly loose lipped about mosque politics in their jurisdiction, and from Tablighi Jama'atis, who were long-term residents of the neighbourhood and worshippers at Masjid Noor, this story had been invented to impose police restraint upon Tablighi gatherings in the mosque.

The air from the perspective of the Tablighis was not much clearer. It was my Tablighi research assistant who had first taken me along to Masjid Noor to confirm to himself that it was the Berelvis, and not the Tablighis, who had done qabza on the mosque. After he made more inquiries and I had met and spoken with the imam and various members of the mosque committee, I was told by him that the largely Berelvi worshippers were holding Imam Azim captive. That is, in exchange for letting him stay on as an imam in the mosque in his frail state, they had imposed this new restriction on him to stop courting the Tablighi Jama'atis. Meanwhile, the Tablighis had been tagged as qabza agents, making them the object of local suspicion and fear.

Nor was the imam's reputation spotless amongst the Tablighis. I was told that he had given taqreers (lectures) in several Shia imambarah during the month of Muharram, which led to him being coded as a Shia sympathiser. He was drifting towards those Berelvi practices which most showed the influence of Shiism and were frowned upon by the Deobandis for being in excess of obligatory duties (weekly nat sessions in praise of the Prophet broadcast over the loudspeaker; qirw or monthly lavish distributions of food amongst gathered worshippers in the name of the Baghdadi saint Abdul Qadir Gilani who has a large following among the Berelvis; yearly celebrations of the Prophet's birthday, Milad un-Nabi; and commemorations of the death of Hazrat Hussain in the Battle of Karbala during the month of Muharram).
Ironically, it was during this time that, whilst sitting in another Berelvi mosque in Momin Town, I heard a young maulvi refer to Masjid Noor as Masjid Zarar. As an aside, Masjid Zarar was the name of the mosque built by hypocrites at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and which he was commanded to destroy by Allah. I had first become acquainted with this term in legal judgments involving the Ahmadiyya, a sect of Muslims who had been declared non-Muslims by a constitutional amendment in 1974 (Khan 2009, Asad in this volume). In these judgments, Ahmadiya places of worship were referred to as Masjid Zarar for attempting to pass as Muslim mosques. Clearly this term was not free of judgment. When I pressed the man on his use of the dreaded interpellation he explained that the imam’s past close association with Tablighi Jama’atis made the mosque not quite what it claimed itself to be, that is, a Berelvi mosque. The imam kept things close to his chest despite the young man’s repeated efforts to learn the real status of the mosque and to recruit the imam into Berelvi influenced party politics, specifically that of the JUP (Jamiatul Ulama-e Pakistan).

It is helpful here to recount how and why I came to study Masjid Noor. As I mentioned earlier, I only chanced upon the mosque through my Tablighi research assistant. However, I had an enduring interest in Momin Town because of its past as a Hindu neighbourhood. Given the long-standing concern within Islamic reformist thought in South Asia over the pernicious influence attributed to Hinduism upon Islam, I wondered how this influence was understood and mitigated in spatial terms by Muslims inhabiting a Hindu neighbourhood. Moreover, Momin Town had of late gained the reputation of being a Shia stronghold. There was a prominent Shia imambargah in the central market of Momin Town that had witnessed numerous events of sectarian conflict and was heavily guarded by the city police and the army during the Islamic month of Muharram. Within this setting, a Berelvi mosque that had once been open to Deobandi Tablighi Jama’atis and was now embroiled in a conflict with these very same Deobandis suggested a situation ripe for analysis of how sectarian politics, more specifically, Shia–Sunni conflicts, gets folded into the ordinary life of a Sunni mosque.

It soon dawned on me that despite all my efforts to learn about Masjid Noor in ways unrelated to the event of the qabza, I could not possibly grasp what was happening. Just the hint of the possibility of a qabza had had a volley effect on rumours, almost all of them about Imam Azim, setting contradictory ones off in different directions.
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A year later, on a return trip to Pakistan, this time working on how sectarian politics was implicated within the space of domesticity, I serendipitously found myself in a house in Momin Town belonging to a family of Ahl-e Hadith persuasion, the third prominent maslak in addition to the aforementioned Deobandi and Berelvi maslaks within Sunni Islam in Pakistan. In the course of my conversations with the mother and daughter it dawned on me that I was sitting at the back of Masjid Noor and that the imam they were complaining about was none other than Imam Azim. It turned out that Imam Azim had welcomed them to the neighbourhood now some 10 years ago by a loud shrill announcement over the loudspeaker that ‘wahbis’ had moved in. Ahl-e Hadith are commonly referred to as wahabis in Pakistan because of their ideological closeness to the Saudi Wahabis, but also because it is understood that the Ahl-e Hadith, in particular their political parties, research institutions, mosques and seminaries, receive funding from Saudi Arabia. Feeling sequestered in a largely Berelvi neighbourhood, the family assiduously avoided their neighbours forgoing attendance at Masjid Noor for a neighbouring Ahl-e Hadith mosque.14

The family had gained some intimacy with Imam Azim over the years through being barked by his daily announcements over the loudspeaker. The mother and daughter clucked to indicate their disapproval over his speech, in which he often lapsed into unsavoury details of how women ought to clean themselves after menstruation, how men and women ought to undertake ablution after sex and so on. Often, the mother said, she had had to cover her daughter’s ears with her hands as her own ears burned red.

Yet, it was also in the course of my long acquaintance with this Ahl-e Hadith family that I observed how disoriented they were during
the time Imam Azim, now somewhat recovered, undertook a month-long trip to India to do *ziyarat* (pilgrimage) of an important saint’s shrine in old Delhi. They would stop in the midst of conversation with me to say that the *imam*’s substitute recited the Quran very poorly and that they missed Imam Azim’s melodious voice. They even acknowledged that, on occasion, they had learned important things from his announcements, for instance, what *dua* (prayer) to say to oneself before trying for a visa to travel overseas. Through his daily announcements they had come to imagine they understood what preoccupied him at the moment, thus gaining unexpected insight into the inner workings of a quixotic and complex man.

But for all that, the mother and daughter felt deeply resentful that Imam Azim had placed them under *qabza*, in their own words. They had been forced into a passive reception of his speech. They felt that his poisonous words about them disinclined their neighbours towards them. They steered clear of initiating sociality with their neighbours for fear that it would require their sons to pray at Masjid Noor — leaving them vulnerable to being publicly ostracised for the different style of prayer they adopted as Ahl-e Hadith.

I had heard before the use of the term *qabza* as meaning the usurpation of the freedom of speech, as censorship, for instance, when Naseem sahib, an Urdu teacher of mine, complained to me that the army and the *mullas* (a derogatory term for religious scholars) had done *qabza* on public speech. Through Masjid Noor I had come to understand *qabza* as the material seizure of a mosque, as productive of poisonous rumours. But, as I understood it, the mother and daughter used the term *qabza*, as in, the *imam* has done *qabza* on us, to mean the erasure of an individual’s singular words and gestures arising from her embodiment of her *maslak*. These cluster of senses around the term *qabza* suggested to me that there was traffic between a slight and silencing, and a situation in which words are ungrounded — rendering them into rumours; between a man who slights and silences and that very man as the object of rumours about whom anything can be said and believed. Yet the switch that flips one from one condition to the other, from that of overwhelming power to powerlessness, remained a mystery to me.

**To be Ordinary is to Effect Conformity...**

I return to literature to seek out another pronouncement on ‘how things are with us’. But I also stay the course of *qabza*, thus far encountered
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in the seizure of a mosque, in the un-grounding of words and in the
silencing of speech. Here we encounter qaba in its original sense of
seizing land. The following extract comes from the novel Khuda Ki Basti
(God's Own Settlement) by Shawkat Siddiqi. It is a novel located in
an unnamed urban dystopia in Pakistan in which we see the previously
interlinked lives of a group of youth, girls and boys, disentangle and
take off in sordid trajectories in which each in the group is preyed upon
by forces rife in the world. A young man along a particular trajectory
meets and befriends other young men. All seized by the passion to
do good for their country. We watch this development somewhat
circumspectly as we have already seen the young man fail a young
woman to whom he had promised love and freedom from the preys
of an older lecherous man. What does this man know about doing
good? A refusal to be taken in by the idealism of youth. Dogs Siddiqi's
descriptions of the boy's deepening relationship with the group, now
established as a society by the name of Skylarks, and their plans for
developing their nation.

The Skylarks decide to acquire land in a slum where they had been
providing literacy classes and medical treatment free of charge. The
youth in the organisation wish to build a hospital to consolidate
their deepening ties to the workers who live there in their ongoing
experimentation in participatory development. Shortly after they buy
the land an unsavoury politician representing the slum approaches
them. He asks that they acquire a license for buying medicine in
excess of what they need so that he can sell the medicine in the open
market. When they refuse him, he warns them of the dark forces that
lurk in men and that they may be surprised yet by their friends and
supporters in the slum.

Overnight a mosque is built on the society-owned land by forces
unseen working by cloak of darkness. The Skylarks appear at the site
to find people they know and respect praying in the mosque, although
by all evaluation this cannot be a mosque because it does not satisfy
the legal criteria by which mosques are built, that is, through the legal
acquisition of land, pious endowment and community participation.
They take the matter up with the local police but suspect that the
police are in cahoots with the politician. Although it should be noted
that what the police sagaciously say is that, once a mosque is built
one just has to go along with the fact of its being there. The young
men file a case and watch its slow progress through the courts.

Overnight, however, they have lost their closeness with the workers
in the slum who now chastise them for not recognising the miracle.
of the mosque coming up overnight. Just as it looks like the Skylarks may be in the cusp of a legal breakthrough, of getting back their land to do with it as they had originally planned, of possibly demolishing the illegal structure built there, they are viciously attacked in the commune where they live, teach one another and plan their activities. They are severely beaten up and their abode burnt. It is clearly the workers who have attacked them perhaps at the incitement of the politician or of their own volition. At the end of this story the Skylarks abandon all hopes of continuing their work in that slum and look to do their work elsewhere.

Shaukat Siddiqi never provides us an easy reading of the events that unfold in his novel. He is as cold in his description of the society of idealistic men as he is in rendering their betrayal at the hands of those they had hoped to help. We are in a dystopia in which the worst that can be imagined will occur and from which no respite is offered even in the form of a furtive hope that something unimaginable may yet stay the course of events. When the worst within a particular trajectory has happened, the trajectory loses steam and fizzles out more out of an exhaustion of possibilities than exertions countering its tendencies. This novel is, I would argue, a powerful statement on the state of conformity in which we find ourselves perpetually at home. By conformity I do not mean the condition of following convention as that is part of being in society. I mean instead a mode of thinking that re-produces the same, denying that difference may follow upon repetition (Deleuze 1995).

In this instance of the novel, conformity in thinking takes two forms. First, despite all their efforts, the Skylarks are not able to provide a vision of societal change and participation in change that can grip the collective imagination. So conformity takes shape in the form of failure of the imagination of development, of providing viable alternatives to a given mode of thinking. Second, although Shaukat Siddiqi does not make this link explicit, the workers who exalt the miracle of the mosque built overnight re-enact events that founded the anti-colonial insurrectionist spirit among Muslims in early twentieth century India. This is part of the collective imagination surrounding illegally built mosques (see Hull in this volume for a reference to this event). In 1930, Muslims from all over India stole by cover of night to Lahore to build an illegal mosque in flagrant transgression of a colonial order to demolish a praying platform. This platform, viewed by the authorities as an encroachment on a main street, was transformed by Indian
Muslims into a direct challenge to colonial authority. I would argue that the mosque that comes up on the Skylarks’ property activates and is animated by that earlier spirit. But when one remembers that it is this mosque that spells the demise of a possible line of flight for the workers from their circumstances, even if it be a mere amelioration of these circumstances and not their overturning, we see how conformity tracks the religious imagination to most pernicious effect. In this act we see the thoughtless abiding of a mode of thinking inspired by a once radical act.

...While Aspiring Towards Change

The *masjid* in Gulshan was unnamed. As the only mosque that had been allowed to be built in the neighbourhood by its residents, it went by the name of ‘the mosque in Gulshan’. Gulshan was your typical planned urban neighbourhood undertaken by the LDA (Lahore Development Authority) after partition with residential plots scaled to wealth, a central market place, provisions for public services, such as a post office, a police station, a mosque, schools and a public park, all placed on an identifiable grid. In the 1970s the colonial city jail, from which the main drag along the neighbourhood got its name of Jail Road, was cleared and moved to the outskirts of the city. The colonial mental asylum stayed although its walls were raised to mark it off from the rest of the area. The area newly cleared of the jail was divided into generous plots of land that were sold at subsidised rates to top-ranking civil servants, such as retired judges and ministers. Some built their homes there. Others preferred to sell their properties at a neat profit to Lahori businessmen seeking to move out of the Walled City, where most of the commercial wealth of the city and the families associated with it were once concentrated. Civil servants, cultivating a certain modernist cosmopolitan air and comprising educated, well-travelled and nucleated families, now lived cheek by jowl with Lahori businessmen who more readily espoused a Punjabi ethos in their way of life, living and entertaining in lavish scale within joint family set ups thickened by intermarriage. It was these two subcultures that clashed over the construction and maintenance of the mosque in Gulshan, although, as we shall see, there were other divisive forces at work as well.

As in such neighbourhoods, land had been allocated for a mosque in the design plans for Gulshan. Those who settled in the area in the early years of the 1970s set about registering a mosque committee and
applying for a transfer of the land from the state to the committee at a nominal rate. A retired judge of the High Court of Lahore took the greatest initiative in planning for the mosque, going around to each house in the neighbourhood every month to secure donations to help buy the land and begin construction. Each donor was cut a chit for his/her donation to keep financial flows into the coffers of the mosque committee legitimate and transparent. The judge also called monthly meetings of the committee, often in his own home, keeping meticulous records of attendance and decisions taken at these meetings. The committee was to run itself as a public minded society, attempting to be representative of the neighbourhood, securing the consensus of its members and maintaining proper records. A constitution was written up for the society along with an eight-page document of rules and regulations guiding all aspects of the society and the mosque.

The engineer put in charge of the construction plans for the mosque was similarly infused by the public spirit. Like many in the 1970s, for whom restrictions upon travel to the Middle East for work and for pilgrimage had eased, he had been to Mecca and Medina several times and had been impressed by the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina. He wanted to build a mosque to look like it. But most importantly, the engineer wanted to re-found the spirit of the mosque from the era of the Prophet. Built within the compound of the Prophet’s own residence, the mosque was famous for its openness to all, Muslims and non-Muslims, a place of public congregation, communal exchange, learning and contemplation. Towards these ends, the engineer sought to have a large mosque compound with numerous doors to encourage the flow of people in and out of it. Raised pathways smoothly delineated movement in and through the mosque of those who had undertaken ablution from those who were as yet unpurified. There were lavish provisions for ablution and toilet, different ones for those who came for daily worship and those who stopped overnight or came for longer study trips. A balance was sought between the built form and the natural environment, with gardens surrounding the mosque and a grassy courtyard to take the overflow of worshippers from the central prayer hall. Looking into the mosque from any of the doors one saw an alluring blend of architecture and greenery.

The mosque committee envisioned a thorough reform of mosques in Pakistan. They wanted to hire religious scholars to run the mosque
The committee of Lahore took more than a month to secure donations for the mosque. The judge also donated his own money, in support of the project. The judge also took on the role of procuring materials and labor for the mosque.

The plans for the mosque were based on Islamic principles. The mosque would be located in the heart of the community, surrounded by schools and residential areas. The mosque would be open to all, regardless of religion or background.

In addition to the mosque, the society planned to build a community center with classrooms and a library. This would provide educational opportunities for children and adults alike.

The mosque would be run by a board of trustees, elected by the community. The board would be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the mosque, including maintenance and security.

The society also planned to hire a full-time imam, who would be responsible for leading prayers and delivering sermons. The imam would be assisted by a muezzin, who would call the faithful to prayer.

The mosque would be built in accordance with Islamic architecture, with a large courtyard and a minaret. The mosque would be open to all, regardless of religion or background.

The society was also planning to create a fund to support the poor and elderly members of the community. The fund would be managed by a committee of trusted members of the community.

The mosque would be open to all, regardless of religion or background. The society was committed to creating a welcoming and inclusive space for all members of the community.

The society was committed to creating a space for the community to come together and worship. The mosque would be a place of peace and tranquility, where people could find solace and comfort.

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of employees it has. For instance, Masjid Noor had enough funds to pay for a full-time imam and muezzin, with a qari coming by several times a week. At the mosque in Gulshan, there was a full-time khatib, an imam and a muezzin staying at the premises supplemented by a part-time qari who came on a daily basis to teach children from the neighbourhood.

As mentioned earlier, most mosques nowadays have committees responsible for garnering governmental recognition for the mosque, such as acquiring the land and raising funds. There is always some tension between the committees and the employees. Some mosques are clearly dominated by their committees in which the employees defer to committee members in all decisions. In others the religious leaders may dominate the management of mosque affairs, having released themselves from committee influence by securing their financial independence. They may do so by dint of being independently wealthy, owning land in their village homes and running local businesses. Given that the mosque committee of Gulshan had such a strong reformist agenda and that they had erected an extensive hierarchy of employees in the mosque, it was not surprising that some tensions would develop between the two groups, if one can even think of them as two unified groups. One prominent form this tension took was class tension.

When I arrived on the scene in 1997, I saw mosque committee members grit their teeth in frustration that the current khatib and imam were getting ahead of themselves by inviting people to attend dars (lessons) in the mosque, letting Tablighis stay in the mosque and daring to invite religious political figures to come give talks in the mosque. Yet the khatib and imam, who did not necessarily see eye to eye on things despite being of the Deobandi maslak, both felt that the committee members regularly belittled them in seeking to put them in their place. Their salaries had been frozen for years. There was an unrealistic cap on how much the committee would pay towards monthly electricity and water charges. And if this was not humiliation enough the two employees were expected to stand for hours outside the gate of the committee member in charge of paying them their salaries. Since they were given measly salaries, both had stopped going to collect them, preferring to seek employment outside. One taught Islamiyat in a local school and another worked as a qari in a posh school for boys in Lahore where he was also the cricket coach. Even so the imam remained quite deferential to the mosque committee, who spoke approvingly of his
ough funds to ing by several ull-time khatib, lamented by a dren from the ve committees or the mosque, ways some ten- ne mosques are the employees ers the religious e affairs, having securing their of being inde- nes and running of Gulshan had ed an extensive surprising that oups, if one can minent form this committee mem- tib and imam were xed dars (lessons) ue and daring too the mosque. Yet e to eye on things at the committee hem in their place. an unrealistic cap monthly electricity nough the two ide the gate of the salaries. Since they ng to collect them, Islamiyat in a local for boys in Lahore am remained quite /approvingly of his

loyalty, read by some as his tenacious hold on his position, while the khatib was more openly dismissive of the committee.

Although the qabza of the mosque in Gulshan took concrete forms, it offered no clearer narrative than that of Masjid Noor. Yet it was clear that while the eye of the storm in Masjid Noor was Imam Azim, in the case of the mosque in Gulshan it was the mosque itself and through which social reform had been attempted that fell prey to the force of conformity. In what follows I move between the records maintained by the judge between 1975 and 1995 and conversations I had in 1999 with members of the mosque committee, the mosque employees, worshippers and neighbours to explore what form conformity took despite all efforts to put into effect genuine change.

The records — no more than a half-page typed report for each meeting of the mosque committee — made note of the rise of several aberrant practices within the mosque in 1979. People had begun to say nat (poetry in praise of the Prophet) and durud sharif (a prayer specifically for the Prophet) loudly in the mosque. The mosque committee met to discuss these practices and all, except for one dissenting member, decided to disallow them. In 1999, I found out from members of the committee that the one dissenting member was a Lahori businessman from the Walled City now living in the neighbourhood. I was told that he was intent on introducing his rasm-o rawaj (customary practices) into the mosque. However, the committee soon became nonplussed that these practices continued despite the fact that they had been banned.

By 1980, the mosque committee was discussing the possibility of filing a civil suit against certain unnamed neighbourhood resi dents who were not a part of the committee but who were seen to be interfering with the administration of the mosque through the con tinued propagation of disallowed practices. In 1999, the judge’s sons and daughters-in-law informed me that the businessman — now identified by the committee members as being Berelvi — had made a successful bid of qabza on the mosque. He had encouraged the then imam of the mosque to force all the worshippers to abide by Berelvi practices. All those who opposed these norms were locked out of the mosque.

The records maintained by the judge note that in 1981 the committee had sought the resignation of all employees of the mosque after affiliating itself with the reputed Deobandi madrasa in Lahore, Jamia Ashrafiya. The report stated that this affiliation had been sought to secure help in finding dependable employees. I learn from the judge
and his family that in 1999 when members of the mosque committee found themselves barred from the mosque under threat of physical harm, they approached the seminary for help, having now identified that Deobandis were the rivals of Berelvis. Help from the police had not been forthcoming. The rector of the seminary advised them not to pursue a civil case as it was unclear what constituted help from the government on such matters. Instead he helped mastermind a counter-qaibza of the mosque. One day a truck pulled up in front of the mosque. It was filled with young men bearing arms, who forced their way into the mosque, ejected its imam — presumably loyal to the Lahori businessman — and replaced him with the current Pathan imam. This was because the rector had advised the committee that they would do well to place a person known for his loyalty and tenacity in such a position. The records meanwhile tell us that the previous imam tendered his resignation and that the Jamia Ashrafia had provided a suitable replacement.

However, it appears that the committee decided to file a civil suit after all. This was met by a counter suit against the new employees of the mosque by the defendants of the civil suit. The police came and put the mosque under lock-and-key and later released it to the hold of the Lahori businessman, who, I am told by members of the committee, curried favour with the then District Commissioner (DC). The committee, clearly strong in legal expertise, responded by filing a writ petition against the Provincial Government, naming the police and the defendants of the civil suit. The records made no mention of the outcome of this writ petition although later I heard from the judge’s son — himself a judge — the petition was upheld and the mosque was returned in the care of the committee.

The previous narrative provides the basic facts on the events of qaibza between the years of 1979 and 1981 from the records and oral narratives available but those connected to the mosque continue to speak of qaibza as though an ongoing event, most clearly expressed in the growing sense of the mosque committee that it had somehow lost control of its mosque and misplaced its spirit of reform with which it initiated the project of mosque-building. It now resorted to frequent rule-making as a way to enforce its picture of reform, one that no longer made sense in the changed world of the 1990s as it once did in the 1970s.

In the 1980s, the records describe new struggles, this time between the mosque committee and the Pathan imam. Each complaint from
The committee identified the police as the mastermind of the incident, which forced the committee to the rector of the Jamia Ashrafia to beg and plead the case of the imam and promising to remove him as soon as new arrangements could be made. Meanwhile, the new khatib, also provided by the Jamia Ashrafia, started to give trouble. He had begun to give long political speeches during Friday prayers despite being asked to stick to the khutba and to keep it brief. In 1985, after such incidents were repeated, the committee members decided to throw out all its employees. The rector of the seminary interceded once again and helped to draw up rules of conduct for the employees asking them to refrain from party and factional politics, from the misuse of mosque property and from accepting external donations. This was the memorandum of understanding (MOU) in effect when I was there in 1999 although I heard that the khatib had long begun to scare the committee with his broadening alliances with sectarian politics. And the khatib's bias was made evident when, in 1991, the committee members learned that he was hosting Maulana Fazlur Rehman Farooqi, the leader of the anti-Shia Sipah-e Sahaba party, for Friday prayer.

In Khuda Ki Basti Shawkat Siddiqi provides us an understanding of conformity as a failure of imagination, the inability to provide alternatives to abiding modes of thinking or of unthinkingly partaking in such modes of thinking. In the case of the mosque in Gulshan, conformity, in relation to modes of thinking, arises from an impoverished picture of rule-following, of how people attach to rules or how they may be expected to attach to new rules (Cavell 1990). The efforts of the committee seem increasingly stringent attempts to generate new modes of thinking without expecting such change from themselves.

Caught in this conundrum, the judge had discontinued his visits to the mosque. He could barely speak about the mosque without getting teary-eyed and upset. At one point in our conversation it seemed that he cried for the mosque. He could not fathom why one would humiliate the mosque, and thereby Allah, by having the police place a padlock on its doors. His son, who was himself a judge and who had earlier served as the liaison between the mosque committee and its employees, no longer prayed there. The Lahori businessman now prayed at a Berelvi mosque at the edge of the neighbourhood. He had tried, unsuccessfully, to build a Berelvi mosque in the neighbourhood after the mosque in Gulshan came under Deobandi control. The committee had managed to block his efforts to do so, even if they could
not withstand the overt Deobandi influence in the mosque. The only person from the original committee who still prayed there was the engineer. He was driven to the mosque everyday by a member of his family where he parked his chair in the middle of the grassy courtyard if it was a sunny day or else dragged it into the prayer hall to perform his daily prayers. I attended prayers at the mosque on numerous Fridays and spoke with a number of worshippers. Unlike the days when the mosque was undergoing qabza and lay shorn of people, now worshippers flock there, drawn by the beauty of the mosque and the lively sermons and discussions. A few mentioned that they wished the khatib would exercise moderation on the political tone of his sermons.

**A Condition of Being Ordinary is to Fear Separation From Things...**

Intizar Hussain has, over the course of his career, published numerous autobiographical works — the keen observations of a bystander detached from the world around him. In a famous scene from his novel *Basti*, in 1971, young men lounge around a café table in Karachi, sipping sodas, while Dhaka burns. This dissociated self is a signature pose of several of his characters.

Yet his latest autobiographical piece, *The Smoke of Lamps*, is a little different. It is marked by a fierce disappointment that Pakistan has fallen from the heights it once occupied, that its cultural charms and intellectual vigour are no more. The chapters run alongside his observations on the declining decades. I focus on the last chapter titled ‘Those invalids amongst us have died’, in which a brief, startling reference to mosques comes up within the course of a long discussion on the revolution in the Lahori taste for food and the vanishing culture of the tea shop, that is, those things with which he put himself to constitute his world.

At the beginning of the chapter Intizar Hussain stands surveying the street bearing the once famous and bustling Tollington Market in Lahore, now fallen into sharp disrepair. In particular he considers the disappearance of the seller of local foods and drinks who was once part of the scene. Hussain recounts with loving details the food one could once savour in this city and the drinks that could tantalise one’s palate, and how he and his companions would peruse the streets to collect such experiences. Of late, a revolution in tastes has swept away the street seller and his carts. He first senses the onset
que. The only thing there was the member of his assy courtyard hall to perform on numerous like the days of people, of the mosque ioned that they political tone of

 hver of this revolution when a food item, for which he would go deep into the old city of Lahore and wait in lines to eat, is served to him within the comfort of someone’s home and starts to appear with absurd regularity on everyone’s table. He senses that his taste buds do not respond to the food as they once did. Then there is the blizzard of Coca-Cola in the marketplace, followed by her family of drinks, Seven-Up, Teem, and so on, exhibiting such flash and allurement that even street sellers, wishing to cash in on the cache of such drinks, start to rename local drinks as various colas. Soon the ubiquity of such drinks makes redundant local drinks and even water.

In the next shift in the chapter, Intizar Hussain surveys characters, those who once made up the social milieu within the coffee houses and tea houses in Lahore. The competent poet who goes mad, the poetess who draws everyone around her, the recalcitrant critic who seeks silence in the epicentre of the noise that pulsates in the cafes. Hussain wonders where these people, these melancholic types who are to him the bearers of culture and critique, have disappeared. Some, like local drinks vendors, have taken on the personas of the modern to survive, publishing books out of their own monies rather than awaiting the slow progress of one’s work past the usual critics. Others have dropped out to pursue and enjoy the fruits of neoliberalism. Yet others, weakened by their melancholia, have simply died. Thus Hussain is left with only a few of the companions with whom he began his journey in Pakistan. However, his lost companions are not replaceable as the law of substitution does not and cannot be allowed to apply to men of culture, each unique, even idiosyncratic in specific ways.

In the final shift of tone the chapter Intizar Hussain speaks of the growing number of guardsman at the sites he goes to worship. In recent years, the guardsmen have started to stand astride the mosques with guns exposed for all to see. If one takes account of the fact that in Pakistan, an Islamic nation, worship is the most insecure thing one can do then surely things have not worked out for the best in this country. The chapter ends with Intizar Hussain’s dark vision of Pakistan in an era of degeneration and devastation, as is appropriate of kaliyug (the age of devastation within Hindu mythology), with the threat of a cataclysmic end augured by what he calls the ‘bomb’.

It is only upon reflection on the possible relation of the three shifts in the chapter that I have come to think of the chapter as a meditation upon the value of things, of how things accrue and lose value. Here,
the tension lies between two understandings of value, that of esteeming and that of evaluating, the former abiding by the culture of uniqueness and the latter partaking of the logic of calculation, the former marking the present that is already the past and the latter the future that is now upon us. In a shift from melancholia to rage, Hussain suggests that if evaluation and calculation has come to mean all, then perhaps we ought to take proper stock of Pakistan. Exactly what have we 'earned' by it? The answer is clearly 'nothing'. The mosque, in its modern form, fearful and guarded, indexes the final era of degeneration and devastation that swiftly follows upon the first movement of value from an era of esteem to that of evaluation. Things that we once esteemed and then evaluated have separated from us and are now only moved by the destructive forces of time. New things, such as the bomb, draw us further into the vortex that is the end.

...Thus We Attempt To Weigh Things Down

The third settlement, Gauhar Town, was a more recently planned suburb in the outlying areas of Lahore in which land allocations were not yet complete. The settlement had a scattering of houses intermixed with empty plots of land. Also built to accommodate the bureaucrats in Pakistan’s civil service, it catered to people at different rungs of the official hierarchy from peons (office attendants) to officers. As such it was a locality still under construction and heavy negotiation over the sociality yet to be expressed through its final built form.

On one of my trips to the Lahore Development Authority, I met the potwari (registrar of land deeds) of Gauhar Town. I was told it was established in 1984 for low- to middle-income people. Like all such developments, the land was supposedly allotted in four ways: one portion was given to those individuals whose land was taken from them to develop the scheme, a second to individuals whose names were picked through lottery, a third portion was sold through public auction that brought in most of the LDA’s revenues, and the final portion, comprising 3 per cent of the total land stock, was given to the Chief Minister of the State to give away as he saw fit. In addition, the potwari claimed that there was a concerted effort to distribute the land amongst people of different occupations (although it was unclear to me how either lottery and public auction allowed for such careful demographic distribution), including those in defence, the High Court and the Supreme Court, government servants, lawyers, artists, media
persons, journalists, sportsmen, the ulama, authors, scholars, poets, engineers, doctors, businessmen, executives and industrial labour.

However, he confessed, very few plots had reached those they should have. After all, in a recent newspaper article Gauhar Town had been named as one of the new schemes with the most corrupt land allotment. In 1990, Nawaz Sharif, the then chief minister of Lahore, gave away 399 plots as political bribes of which 264 were located in Gauhar Town. Furthermore, as the potwari showed me, most mosques in this locality were built without the proper permission of the necessary authorities, whether the District Commissioner or the Lahore Development Authority and sometimes even without the knowledge and support of the residents of the various neighbourhoods. This was quite unusual for the mosques we saw earlier in the article were all built through local efforts even if these did not extend to acquiring the land legally or garnering the correct permits from the state. This suggested the intrusion of outside influence into new urban settlements such as Gauhar Town in a manner unprecedented elsewhere in Lahore.22

Thus a visit of the mosques in Gauhar Town could only be described as a journey through a regime of illegality. Some mosques were fully legal in that they were built on the plot of land allotted for this purpose with the proper articles and permits. The potwari showed me a few that were partially legal in that they were on the proper plots but built illegally. One in particular stood out as so basic as to call attention to its illegality. It comprised of an uneven platform with a single light bulb hanging by a string from a temporary thatched roof covering it. The potwari pointed out these features of illegality knowledgeably, cheerfully telling me the story of an illegal mosque that had been erected overnight on a friend’s plot in Gauhar Town. When the friend turned to him for help, the potwari showed up at the ‘two brick’ (do eent) mosque with the development plans of the Gauhar Town scheme. He opened up the map, pointed out the legally allotted space for a mosque to the mulla (religious figure) responsible for the illegal mosque and, after heavy negotiations, helped him ‘transfer’ his mosque to that site.

In my attempts to understand how legality or the lack thereof was perceived by Lahoris, if it was even a problem, I went to the District Commissioner’s office to find out whether residents of such places as Gauhar Town ever complained about these illegal mosques, their presence, their activities or even the sounds emanating from the
loudbspeakers affixed to these mosques. I was given to understand that although mosque related conflicts were rife, people approached the DC’s office only in the event that their approach to the local police did not yield the expected results or when they felt that the local conditions were so compromised as to make the later a superfluous gesture. So, in some ways, mosque conflict was very much a local matter. This was also partly why so few of such cases actually showed up in the civil courts or the high court. Moreover, the mode of approach to the DC was in stock bureaucratic language, complaining about the disturbance to ‘law and order’ and ‘public peace’, and expressing concerns over the harm delivered to recognisable beleaguered social types, such as, ‘the sick’ and ‘the working tired’ and ‘students’. They were much like the standard letters people wrote in to newspapers complaining about similar topics and were more in the nature of flagging a problem rather than filing a complaint.

Yet, a few such letters did express grave concerns over the threat to personal safety posed by mosques, more specifically by those who ran these mosques in various areas. Furthermore, I noticed that a large number of complaints to the DC’s office were anonymous, simply pointing to offending mosques. People were clearly concerned not to identify themselves. What, if anything, did they fear?

I went to the Environmental Protection Agency to find out if noise pollution was a possible rubric under which complaints against such mosques were filed. However, the EPA had not received nor was it particularly receptive to complaints related to noise emanating from the mosques. The DC’s office, with the police force under it, was unofficially authorised to intervene in any disputes of this nature in a way that the EPA did not feel itself empowered. But it was through my meeting with an expert in the EPA that I was introduced to Dr Khan, her husband, a fellow scientist who was deeply enthralled by, if not implicated, in a qabza situation in their local mosque in none other than Gauhar Town. And thus I came to study this mosque in Gauhar Town, one built legally but which was undergoing qabza the entire time I was in Lahore.

In what follows, I provide an account of qabza solely from the perspective of Dr Khan. I do this in part because by this time in my fieldwork, I had learned that it was not possible to get a fully fleshed out account of qabza from different positions and that attempting to do so only contributed to tensions on the ground. Furthermore, this qabza was ongoing whereas in the previous cases the qabzas were
completed by the time I showed up. Second, what interested me in this account was Dr Khan who, by Intizar Hussain’s criteria, would appear to be a shrewd person, constantly weighing and evaluating each decision, action and outcome. Thus, according to Hussain, he was a man very much of the present era in a way contrary to Hossain who saw himself as being out of step with the times. Yet, like Hossain, he also experienced the world as that of things separating from one. However, unlike Hossain who contributes to the centrifugal nature of the era by affecting a chiliastic perspective, Dr Khan attempted to weigh things down, to put them in perspective, so as not to be similarly swept away. His faith in ‘common sense’, ‘education’, and ‘good breeding’ seemed to prevail in each turn. Yet, as in Intizar Hussain’s narrative, a thread of becoming mad, of being subsumed by the moment also ran through Dr Khan’s account, suggesting the darker undercurrents of the ordinary.

Dr Khan, a short excitable man, rattled off the story of how he had come to be in Gauhar Town. He and his wife had been delayed in entering government service due to the time it took them to get their doctoral degrees. They had not been able to conceive and had legally adopted a daughter, a very unusual move within the South Asian context suggesting a couple with progressive views and a modern commitment to having nuclear families. Dr Khan calculated that if he had to wait for the seniority necessary to be offered a subsidised plot of land within an urban scheme, whose size and subsidy would be commensurate to his level within government service, then he and his wife would not be able to start their lives as an independent family until much later. Consequently, in the early 1990s they bought someone else’s plot in a private scheme in Gauhar Town, called the Punjab Government Employees Welfare Society.

To explain this briefly — when plots of land of a newly developed settlement are sold in public auctions a private developer may buy up a number of them, put a wall around them, and a gate to regulate access to what is now a colony. Although this private development went by the name of Punjab Government Employees Welfare Society, it was probably comprised of plots allotted by the government for its own employees, it was the case that the government had sold the whole series of plots to private developers. This was done possibly to accelerate readiness of the area for inhabitation (for the government is notoriously slow in providing public services to new settlement) as well as to generate funds for the government coffers upfront rather
than the piecemeal way which is how monies would have trickled in if the government had sold the plots individually. Moreover, the private developer had to give the first choice of plots to government employees, the employees could do with the plots as they wished after buying them.

The person from whom the Khans bought the plot was lower in rank in government service than them. Consequently, his plot was small. But the Khans calculated that this was the most they could afford as they were forced to buy the land at market rate rather than the subsidised rate at which the owner had bought it. Although this put them among a class of people with whom they did not commonly associate, they wagered that others like them would buy into the private colony and that the final neighbourhood would be more variegated than what was originally planned.

As the colony became more inhabited, people needed a place to pray. The Punjab Government Employees Welfare Society, or the colony administration, had allotted a plot of land for a mosque and had collected considerable funds through monthly donations from its residents. When requested by the residents, the Society took it upon itself to build it. Being a private development, the Society had access to engineers and an extensive labour force. Here Dr Khan broke off to say ruefully that it was through his mediation, in his capacity as an educated person of high professional status held in high esteem by all, that the Society was convinced to hold elections to put together a mosque management committee. It was this action of his that created the conditions of a possibility of people to enter the committee to try to seize the mosque. At some point in time, the management of the mosque had taken on such violent overtones that the Society had to step back in and disband the committee. And now a single engineer unassociated with the colony sat in a small office in side the mosque overseeing the daily running of the mosque. One had to go to him to ask to have even a bulb replaced.

The qabza was undertaken by none other than the chairman of the committee, a seemingly simple pious old man with whom Dr Khan had good relations prior to the construction of the mosque. This qabza was in the nature of a slow introduction of changes and followed by a perceptible shift in the atmosphere of the mosque and the inclinations of its committee. Dr Khan saw himself as being attentive to these slow encroachments and attempting to stave them off.
have trickled. Moreover, the government had wished to keep the rate lower in order to attract more donations. Although this was not commonly done, it could be more common in society where the mosque and donations from the Ahmadi community were perceived as not common. Here, the matter was complicated. The mosque was established with the intention of promoting the Ahmadi community's presence in society. However, the community had to be careful in its approach so as not to alienate the larger Muslim community.

Dr Khan, who respected and trusted the man he had asked many times to lead prayers before the actual selection of a permanent imam, began to introduce 'unsavoury practices' into the mosque shortly after his appointment as head of the mosque committee. Among those practices, to which Dr Khan claimed he had never before been witness, included 'decorating' the azan with prayers to the Prophet, 'dressing up' the mosque in lights, and hosting nat sessions after prayers as well as celebrating Milad-un Nabi (the Prophet's Birthday) to which he would invite prominent Berelvi politicians. Although Dr Khan was not of any of the particular religious paths within Sunni Islam in Pakistan, he knew of their existence, but it was as irrelevant to him as the fact that he knew a member of the committee was an Ahmadi. According to the law of the land, an Ahmadi in a Sunni mosque committee would suggest that he was trying to pass himself off as a Muslim, which was a punishable act. It had never crossed Dr Khan's mind that such things should be made public. Now, upon encountering Berelvi politicians, he found them to be very distasteful. They seemed to him as signs of jahiliyya recalling pre-Islamic times when idolaters were preoccupied with pleasing the material manifestations of the divine.

On one such public occasion within the mosque Dr Khan ripped up a poster among those liberally plastered on its walls and threw it into the waste bin. He told me that it was no more than an advertisement for a public lecture by a religious scholar turned politician, Dr Tahirul Qadri. However, relations among the worshippers had deteriorated to such a point that someone in the committee charged him with blasphemy claiming that the poster had had the Quranic script on it. By throwing the poster into the bin Dr Khan had effectively disrespected the Quran. It was at this point that Dr Khan, a man of science, with progressive views of democracy and representative government, confident of his social status and trustful of his own instincts and analysis, felt the ground fall from beneath his feet.

First, the crowds brayed at his gates. Were they humans or monsters? He picked up the phone to call the police but found the line continually busy. Was this phone turning against him as well? Were the police in on this? Then the police came to pick him up. Was he going to rot in jail somewhere? He had written an anonymous letter to the DC. Would they use that letter against him now? Dr Khan's descriptions of experience of being charged of blasphemy resonated...
with Intizar Hussain’s description of things separating from oneself even carrying with it more ominous undertones as much more than his reputation and life was at stake here.

Dr Khan recounted thankfully how common sense had finally prevailed. He was able to convince the police officers of his innocence. His education and good breeding manifest in his reasoning powers and his sober manner put into sharp contrast the jahaliyat of those who had filed a complaint against him. And it was not simply a matter of the well off against the poor, because Dr Khan was not rich whilst there were many among the worshippers in his mosque who were very rich and politically powerful. Rather, it was a case of the righteous against the resentment of the powerful and weak alike. However, he was not sure if he could as easily convince the police the next time such an event happened.

At a point when most people I knew who had experienced similar seizures of their mosque would have withdrawn, Dr Khan threw himself into the struggle for the mosque heart and soul. He asked the Society, which had taken over management of the mosque, that an imam be installed who was acceptable to everyone and not just a few. He had taken to reading the religious books cited by Berelvis to be able to engage in polemics with his opponents. They were no longer simply enemies of the mosque, they were also his enemies. As he showed me the impressive book collection that he had amassed he told me that he was actually quite thankful for this terrible experience because it had brought him closer to the richness of Islamic thought.

Each time I got in touch with Dr Khan, I found him further and further entrenched in the struggle. Once he told me that a whole group of Berelvi mullas had gathered in the mosque one evening apparently to take it over. By this time he had renewed his university day association with the political party Jama’at-i Islami. His political contacts sent over a few young Jama’at boys with guns who came and sorted out those mullas once and for all. Just before I left Pakistan, I called Dr Khan to say goodbye. He said that he was sorry I was leaving because the ‘drama’ was only just beginning. A case had been filed and the fight was going public. He would not tell me more over the phone. Meanwhile I kept wondering how his wife and adopted daughter were faring. A long time ago Mrs Khan had shrugged her shoulder when I had asked her opinion of all this as if to say she couldn’t care less. She was much more preoccupied with playing with her adopted daughter. The daughter had a male caretaker, another
unusual practice in this family. Young and sweet, he was very tender towards both the mother and daughter. It was as if a surrogate family was taking shape in the blind spot in Dr Khan’s growing surveillance of the neighbourhood and the mosque.

To Be Out of Step With Conformity and Separation

The ordinary is like breathing poisoned air. The ordinary is being conformist while aspiring towards change. The ordinary is to fear things separating from you and thus to attempt to weigh them down. These are the perspectives that emerge from my exploration of the ordinary in relation to the neighbourhood mosque caught in the grips of qabza. Qabza itself contracted and swelled several times in my narrative, from the seizure of mosques to a certain vulnerability to being silenced and to having one’s words lose grounding; from the seizure of land to being held captive to conformity, in particular, the failure of imagination and expression; finally, from the seizure of everyday life, now on security alert at all times, to fearing for one’s life and sanity. These are dark perspectives indeed. What would it be to be out of step with conformity and separation? What would it take to refuse qabza in its myriad unfoldings?

Let me briefly focus on three tiny gestures captured in my narrative. I do not have any explanations for why I focus on these gestures as opposed to others and why I feel that some hope may reside in them except to say that they moved me in a certain way and I wonder if they might move others as well. I attempt an analysis of these gestures to suggest what I think they may be pointing towards within the register of the ordinary. In the first ethnographic profile, of Masjid Noor, I spoke of a mother and daughter who perplexedly found themselves at home in Imam Azim’s voice, despite how that voice slandered them sometimes and shamed them at others. What does it mean to be at home with the voice of the other, the one who silences you? In the second ethnographic profile, of the masjid in Gulshan, I was struck by the engineer’s efforts to continue praying at the mosque even after all his neighbours had effectively abandoned it. What did it mean for him to stake his claim upon the mosque through prayer? Finally, even as Dr Khan seemed to be getting increasingly involved in a bitter exchange of accusations and counter-accusations he stopped in the middle of his mudslinging to reassure an Ahmadi secreted into his mosque that he would not expose him under any circumstances.
Dr Khan seemed to feel that the way in which Pakistani Muslims had gone after Ahmadis was utterly unnecessary. What did it mean to guarantee secrecy to an individual in the middle of public exposure? In each of these gestures I find passivity as an act of resistance to the complete dissolution of social relations and modes of relatedness, as the nurturing of small enclaves of tendencies counter to the mainstream ones in the slim possibility that should circumstances change these enclaves could provide the grounds for a new beginning.

Notes

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1. There are many kinds of mosques differentiated by historical and symbolic importance, usage, size, patronage and architecture. The differentiation that I have found most useful and that was provided to me by my subjects in Lahore distinguishes among historical/ceremonial mosques (e.g. Badshahi Masjid in Lahore built by the Moghul Emperor Auranzeb or the Shah Faisal Mosque in Islamabad built by the Pakistani state), madrasa mosques (Masjid Banuri in Karachi or Jamia Ashrafia in Lahore where students take residence to acquire an education based on the dars-i nizami syllabus), mohalla mosques (built in neighbourhoods that pre-date the partition of 1947, such as, Masjid Noor in Lahore that I speak of below), new colony mosques (built as part of planned neighbourhoods after partition, such as the mosques in Gulshan and Gauhar Town that I also speak of below) and bread and butter mosques (contested mosques, usually illegally built by religious figures or parties in support of their personal or political interests, such as the mosque in Gulburg market, Lahore). In addition, there are prayer rooms in almost every institution or office building where people pray during their work hours. I focused my research efforts largely on mohalla and new colony mosques, these being most often built through community initiative. At present the distinction between a jami masjid (where people in a city would gather for Friday prayers) and other mosques does not hold as people most often congregate in mosques in their neighbourhoods on Fridays. I characterise a mosque as being a neighbourhood mosque for having been built through community initiative and for serving as the place for Friday prayers for those living in its vicinity.

2. Here I am thinking of statements such as, mosques are new meeting places for the community or mosques are places where men pray together, each of which seem inadequate to capturing the full force of ideas, affects, practices and effects that attend to these seemingly simple structures.

3. This phrase is borrowed from Stanley Cavell’s In Quest of the Ordinary in which he speaks of the mysterious indeterminacy of the ordinary. It is from Cavell
that I get my sense that certain things that slide too quickly to the banal yet also relate to the transcendental are located in the indeterminate zone of the ordinary. In speaking of the violence of the ordinary I do not have in mind large scale wanton or systematic destruction of lives but rather the wear and tear endemic to ordinary life, which may or may not come to blows but which retains the potential for physical and emotional harm. It is this hint of tensions underneath of things, this unspecified nature of violence, which bespeaks the mysterious indeterminacy of the ordinary.

4. ‘Newness’, ‘conformism’, ‘separation’ are concepts and precepts that I assume to cluster around the ordinary. Like the ordinary they are more amenable to demonstration than definition.

5. These perspectives on the ordinary are not as arbitrary as they may seem at first glance. It was after I had drawn these relations between specific literary pronouncements and ethnographic cases of mosques that I realised that each of these perspectives may be taken to be an attempt at answering the twentieth century question — What is society? Moreover, each mimics a distinct answer to the question that comes to us from our venerable ancestors within the social sciences. For instance, to say that the ordinary is like breathing poisoned air captures something of what Emile Durkheim said of society that it is a collective representation. By refracting Durkheim’s words through Cavell, one could read that articulation as being society is a collective illusion. To say that conformity tracks the aspiration to change captures something of Max Weber’s concern that modern society, this most revolutionary thing, could become cage-like, a prison house of the imagination. To say that a condition of the ordinary is to fear things separating from one is to capture the effect of commodity fetishism spoken of by Karl Marx wherein things appearing to have lives of their own. However, it should be noted that I am not exactly suggesting that the ordinary is society.

6. The word qabza (capture, seizure) is most often used to mean the illegal occupation of land, a distinction being maintained between professional land grabbers, said to belong to qabza groups, and those who are landless and have of necessity settled upon land other than their own, most often state owned land. However, the qabza I studied was that of mosques. Qabza applies to a mosque in two senses. A mosque may be known as a qabza mosque because it was built on land that had been illegally occupied. Or else it may have been legally (or for that matter illegally) built by a particular group of people but whose maslak (path within Sunni Islam) or in fewer cases fqrq (sect within Islam) affiliation, administration, make-up of worshippers, and worship styles had since changed through it being seized by those of a different maslak. This seizure may be undertaken through physical coercion, through the replacement of mosque personnel, or else through the implantation of worship styles distinct to each maslak and fqrq. I do not here go into the details around worship that delineate one maslak or fqrq from another except to list the central ones that commonly signal difference: azan style and timing, additions to the azan, nat, and prayer broadcast over the loudspeaker, loud zikr vs silent dua, and various hand gestures within the namaz (prayer) itself.
Mosques are more susceptible to seizure than, for instance, madrasas or masjids (shrines). Madrasas, if not under the Auqaf (Religious Endowment) Department, are well entrenched within families of the original sajadah nashin (guardian) of the shrines, whereas madrasa are usually manned by teachers and students who stay and study on the premises and are vigilant against intrusions from those of other maslaks or firqas. Mosques, on the other hand, are open to all for prayer. Being community initiatives, they are loosely networked and are very often understaffed. They are vulnerable to the differences that divide people over the right mode of approach to the divine. Religiously no form of ownership may be asserted over mosques, which technically belong only to God, so the originating maslak has few opportunities to secure a mosque to itself except to register the affiliation of the mosque committee and to continually perform its affiliation through mosque decoration, prayer forms and related activities. More recently, in the last two decades, mosque administrations have taken to paying for regular guards outside of mosques. At the same time the state has also stepped up its protection of mosques against sectarian attacks (which are usually of a different nature of violence than qabza, involving bombing or indiscriminate gunning down of worshippers) so it is not uncommon to see police and even army guards outside of mosques during times of prayer and other religious gatherings. Courts, usually civil courts and in a few instances, high courts, have had little legal reserve to decide whether a mosque should be administered by one or the other maslak because it is hard to accept arguments for usurpation of property if the mosque belongs to no one and to everyone. Consequently, once a mosque has undergone qabza it is hard, although not impossible, to legally restore it to the original caretakers (in the second of the mosques I discuss there is an instance of a counter-qabza to restore the old administration).

An important aspect of qabza which interested me was how it impinged upon the worshippers who used the mosque. I found this to vary depending on the worshipper’s relationship to the mosque. If it be a passersby then the issue of whether a mosque had undergone qabza or not was a matter of indifference to him. What was more important to the passersby was that the mosque undertakes ritual worship in the way he was familiar or at least allows for his form of ritual without disturbance. However, for those familiar with a mosque, its takeover, whether subtly implemented over time or forcibly enforced, was a matter of great grief usually resulting in him leaving the mosque to pray elsewhere or to build another mosque in the neighborhood more amenable to his form of worship. A few others risked personal discomfort through courting the displeasure of new mosque staff and worshippers by continuing on as before, although I found few who had done so in the qabza cases I observed or heard about (in the third and final mosque I discuss I explore the experience of one who continued to lay claim upon a mosque under such tense conditions).

A final question about qabza involves its history. Cases concerning qabza are in evidence during colonial times. A common argument that has been
made is that the straitened nature of the public sphere under the colonial regime, later inherited by postcolonial states, lent itself to a politics of difference, played out between Hindus and Muslims in the national contexts and between Muslims and Muslims within the local. However, I do not have historical data to argue the precise nature of change under the postcolonial regime except to note that Pakistanis feel that the incidence and nature of qabza changed in keeping with changing political formations and allegiances within post-colonial states. What I am much more interested in exploring in this article is not the long durée of qabza or its relation to the politics of the moment, rather its durational qualities, that is, the multiple qualities of a single time opened up by the event of the qabza (see Henri Bergson Matter and Memory [1996] for an elaboration of the notion of duration). It is precisely the temporalities that run through the event of the qabza that helps me to draw out the violence internal to the ordinary, to see how qabza goes beyond the actual seizure of mosques to bring about the difficulty of breathing, the stranglehold on the imagination and the experience of things coming to life.

7. Ghulam Abbas (1907–1983) was an Urdu short story writer of considerable renown. He worked for the BBC Urdu Language Services during the time of partition and settled in Pakistan. He also worked as a publisher and editor of children’s stories and literary journals.

8. I have changed the names of mosques, localities and research subjects to protect their identities. However, I have tried to select pseudonyms carefully in keeping with the significance invested in names.

9. Sunnis and Shias constitute the two major firqas (sects) within Islam. In South Asia, there are three dominant maslak (paths) within Sunni Islam, notably, the Deobandi, Berelvi and Ahl-e Hadith, arising from nineteenth century reform movements in colonial India. In addition, there are four schools of legal thought and practice within Sunni Islam — Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi and Maliki — of which the Sunnis in South Asia adhere to the Hanafi school. See Metcalf (1989).

10. It was very late into my fieldwork (at the end of the first year) that I realised that there was a standing policy of getting mosques approved prior to construction through the auspices of the District Commissioner’s office, an approval process which required that all state institutions concerned (DC’s Office, LDA, Metropolitan Corporation Ltd. (MCL), Auqaf, local police) sign off on the application and attendant plans for a mosque. However, most of the mosques of my acquaintance had not gone this route. Moreover, the petitions for mosque construction at the DC’s Office were minimal and did not reflect the active projects of mosque construction around the city.

11. A quote from R. Nath succinctly informs us of the basic architectural constituents of a mosque: “Mosque’ is an aggregate of so many inspirations which it derived from divergent sources. It adopted and absorbed various elements drawn from ancient cultures of the Orient, and it is through a creative evolutionary process that such features as mihrab (niche on the wall in a mosque indicating the direction of Mecca), minbar (pulpit in a mosque, used for the delivery of the khutba, the Friday sermon), nave (the central square
hall of a mosque, iwan (a chamber that is roofed or vaulted and open on one side facing on to the courtyard of a mosque), dome, arch, and minar [tower from which the azan, call to prayer, is delivered by the muezzin] have become its constituents’, one would add, in various combinations (1994). In addition to Nath (1994), overviews of medieval and modern mosque architecture may be found in numerous places, such as, Wheatley (2001), Hillenbrand (1995), Fethi (1995), Pereira (1994), Prishman and Khan (1994), and Ardalan (1983). For a more metaphysical and philosophical exploration of Islamic art and aesthetics, see Gonzalez (2001) and Nasr (1987). The mosques I describe in this article varied greatly in architectural style, departing significantly from the grand Sultanate or Moghul mosque style of the Indian subcontinent, such as the Badshahi Masjid in Lahore with its onion-shaped dome atop the central prayer hall flanked by two tall minarets, but conforming, through the inclusion of some basic architectural elements, to mosques in functional use in the subcontinent. See Prochazka (1986) for floor plans of Sultanate and Moghul mosque architecture and Hughes (1885) for that of ordinary mosques in India and Central Asia.

Masjid Noor was a square building, open on one side onto a courtyard with the area for ablation at the back of the courtyard. A façade had been built above the central doorway into the mosque, leading directly into the built and roofed area, giving a profile of a dome with two little minarets on either side of it. It was this façade that signalled that this building was a mosque. Overall it was a generic style of mosque commonly found in the older, poorer neighborhoods that date prior to partition or immediately afterwards. Its most startling feature was the way a corner of the mosque protruded into the lane that encircled it. It was this protrusion that indicated that this mosque was built outside of the state’s imagination of the grid-like distribution of urban space, that is, it was effectively an ‘encroachment’.

The masjid in Gulshan was, as I mention later, inspired by the Prophet’s mosque in Medina although it was never clear to me what nature of inspiration it was as this mosque did not have the conical green coloured dome or a single minaret towering above the dome, which are the two distinctive features of the Prophet’s mosque. Rather, like Masjid Noor, it too had a rectangle building alongside one wall of the mosque compound, a courtyard onto which this building opened and an area for ablution and toilet at the back of the courtyard. A façade of a dome with minarets also graced the doorway into the mosque indicating that this was a mosque with this façade prominent and visible from far away. When I inquired into the absence of a dome above the roofed prayer hall, I was told that besides being expensive to build and maintain, a dome severely restricted the possibility of adding additional floors to the main prayer hall as a secluded space for women worshippers, to capture the overflow of male worshippers or to house a madrasa. However, the distinctive feature of this mosque was an upraised roofed walkway that encircled the grassy courtyard and beat a path around
open on one minar (tower) have become. In addition to architecture, may brand (1995), dalan (1983), Saimic art and society. I describe in significantly from subcontinent, d a dome atop minar, throughings, underlings of Sultanate of ordinary culture.

The third mosque in my ethnographic trio was completely modernist, a blunt square form built out of red bricks with a single row of blue tiles along its base and at an interesting angle to a very tall, also red brick minaret, whose distinguishing feature was that it was a square minaret rather than the round ones most in evidence amongst tall minarets in Lahore. There is considerable experimentation over modernist and now increasingly postmodernist mosque forms amongst Pakistani architects. These architects, largely drawn from the city’s elites, either advocate the careful conservation of built forms indigenous to the subcontinent or attempt experimentation in built forms in the spirit of building something unique that bears the signature of an architect. They tend to look askance at those mosques that are too clearly imitative of built forms foreign to the region or else display a heedless borrowing and pastiche of architectural elements. The depth of disdain for such ‘unplanned’ mosques is indicated by a dismissal of these mosques by a renowned architect whom I interviewed who called them ‘sodomized architecture’, a scornful reference to the mulla believed to engage in sodomy within mosques.

12. I have found Veena Das’s description of rumors, or rather what happens to language under conditions of political turbulence or moral panic (1998), to be very productive in thinking of what happens under conditions of qabza.

13. The first month of the Islamic lunar calendar, Muharram, is known as the month of mourning because of the commemoration of the martyrdom of Hussain at the Battle of Karbala on the tenth day of the month.

14. It is not clear that the Ahl-e Hadith family would have sought to be integrated with the Berelvi-dominated neighbourhood even if Imam Azim had been more welcoming. Besides the theological, political and ontological issues that keep members of the different maslaks differentiated in matters of conviction and worship, there is also a running distinction maintained along the register of refinement or adab. So I often heard Deobandis or Ahl-e Hadith disdain Berelvis calling them jahil (ignorant). This accusation of jahiliyat was lobbed equally at those who may be educated and well-placed in life but whose practices appeared un-Islamic for being excessive and extravagant to Deobandis and Ahl-e Hadith. This differentiation between having adab or being jahil is, however, different and perhaps older (see Metcalf 1984) than the twentieth-century political notion of jahiliyat (era of ignorance) espoused by Maulana Abul Ala Maududi of Pakistan, and later taken up by religious scholars and leaders across the Muslim Middle East, as a pointed analysis and criticism of the secularised nature of contemporary Muslim rule (Maududi 1976).

15. At the time I knew them the eldest son of the family was attempting to secure a tourist visa to London in order to move and work there. He finally succeeded on his third try.
16. Shaukat Siddiqi (b. 1923, Lucknow) worked for the Times of Karachi and Morning News. He was the editor of Anjum and Musawwat. He bid farewell to editorial work and journalism in 1984 and went into writing novels and short stories. Khuda ki Basti is now on its 46th edition and has been translated into 26 languages.

17. The now complete mosque exists intact in an awkward position to the main street in Lahore to this day.

18. This plays on the myth of the martial race and their code of honor maintained of Pathans since colonial times.

19. It is perhaps not coincidental that the 1980s mark the heyday of sectarian politics, most specifically anti-Shia politics, spearheaded by Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a Deobandi ailm (religious scholar) of Jamiat-ul Ulema-e Islam (JUI), the national political party, who founded the anti-Shia group named Sipah-e Sahaba (Warriors of the Prophet's Companions). See Ali (2000), Zaman (2001) and Jaffrelot (2002) for empirical detail and analyses of sectarian politics in the register of national politics.

20. The LDA, like many bureaucratic institutions in Pakistan, does not maintain a central database. Potwaris, such as young Shahed Iqbal, are responsible for the file on each development scheme, and appear with them whenever these files are called up.

21. This last practice was left over from the days of martial law when this quota usually went to the martial law administrator.

22. In one disputed mosque in Gauhar Town, to whose file I gained access in the DC's office, the residents complained and I myself witnessed that worshippers were bussed in from other parts of the city (clearly students from madrasas) to fill the space to give the impression of wide public support of the mosque. Although this is a rough classification, I would saw that Masjid Noor captures the experience with mosques in the 1950s and 1960s, while the Masjid in Gulshan captures the experiences of the 1970s and 1980s, whereas the mosques in Gauhar Town articulated the experiences of the 1990s and 2000s.

23. Another reason for why such cases do not typically show up in courts is because it is very hard to represent a mosque since it belongs to all and none. Even its management committees cannot claim back a mosque after the fact of its seizure by another group because the committee has no rights of ownership over it. Cases are filed either on grounds of adverse possession or prevention of entry, which are hard to prove in court. In most cases people accept the instance of qabza and either continue attending to the mosque or shift alliances to another mosque, even building another one if need be.