

Indian Muslim Theologians' Response to British Colonization of India and Introduction of Modernization: A Study of Deoband School of Thought

Published:

01-06-2022

Accepted:

15-05-2022

Received:

31-12-2021

Dr. Muhammad Naveed Akhtar

Assistant Professor, Department of History and Political Science,
Ghazi University, DG Khan

Email: mnakhtar@gudgk.edu.pk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0446-5986>



Dr. Nasir Ali Khan

Assistant Professor, Comsats University Islamabad, Abbottabad
campus

Email: nasirali@cuiatd.edu.pk

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2377-8101>



Asia Mukhtar

P.HD scholar Department of Islamic Studies University of Lahore

Email: gasia902@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3119-3442>



DOAJ

DIRECTORY OF
OPEN ACCESS
JOURNALS

Abstract

During the nineteenth century, the Muslims of India suffered from severe political decline, as the Mughal Empire was abolished in the wake of Great Revolt 1857. The British started a process of modernization of institutions as well as that of social setup. The Muslim theologians realizing it a serious threat to their religio-cultural values and norms resisted it through militant struggle, setting up educational institutions, making political parties and participating in democratic process, and forming missionary and reformist organizations. This paper explores and evaluates the contribution of the Muslim theologians who founded Darul Ulum Deoband movement and advocated for the orthodox religious educations by adhering to the religious and educational philosophy of Shah Wali Allah. It attempts at evaluating the socio-political circumstance of South Asia which became the rationale of this movement and identifies the major historical landmarks of this movement during the British Raj in India. It examines the factors which helped Deoband school of thought emerge to be one of the dominant sect of Islam. The paper however argues that although the Deoband theologians were severe critics of British imperialism and its initiatives towards modernization of Indian society and culture, yet they adopted British bureaucratic setup for the educational advancements, and gradually got convinced to be the part of democratic process demonstrate the political strength of South Asian Muslims. The methodology employed in the discourse is descriptive, analytical, and normative.

Keywords: South Asia, Islamic culture, British imperialism, modernity, religious education, reformation, and Deoband theologians.

Introduction

The Muslims splendidly ruled over India for the period of almost a millennium, which met its decline in nineteenth century CE for multiple reasons such as political conspiracies in the court, indifference of the ruling classes toward plight of working classes, remote institutionalization and technological setup, overdue taxation, breach of loyalty from various ethnic and religious groups like Marathas, Jatts and Sikhs. It however received a final blow from the East India Company after the Great Revolt 1857, and eventually seized by the British Crown. In the wake of Great Revolt 1857, India went through various radical political changes: the British East India Company appeared to be a victorious political power, and it became the dominion of Great Britain and Great Mughal Empire abruptly vanished. Indian Muslims community suffered the most. The British acquiring the political hold of India began the process of reforming and modernizing political, administrative, and educational institutions.

The response of Indian Muslim society towards all these highly crucial political developments was multifaceted. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), one of the towering Muslim ideologues, advocated the loyalism, liberalism, progressivism and rational thinking as the remedy to the reform the Muslim society and bringing them out of this very socio-political and economic decline. Committed to this philosophical orientation, he attempted at reforming South Asian Muslims by setting up many educational institutions and by authoring plethora of literature. Opposing the philosophical approach Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the ulema (theologians) associated with and representative of Deoband Madrasah came up with orthodox religious orientation and opted for contrary way of struggle as to uplift of the declined Muslim society. For a long, they got engaged into militant struggle against British imperialism and denounced the modernism introduced by the British Raj in India. They were utterly convinced of that the traditional religious education was capable enough to respond the challenges the Muslim masses had to encounter with.

Experiencing the failure of Silk Letter Movement, the theologians belonging to Deoband seminary felt the need of revising their strategy to respond British imperialism and renaissance of Indian Muslim society. They came into mainstream politics by forming a political party Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind in 1919 and appeared to be ideological supporter of Indian National Congress. They gradually reformed the structure of educational institution replicating that of the British. Developed the networks of similar Deoband madaris across the country appeared to be one of major sects of Islam. Deoband Madrasah is acknowledged to be the second largest educational institutional in the Muslim World, after Al-Azhar University founded by fourth Fatimid Caliph Al-Mu'izz li-Din Allah (r. 953-975 CE) in Cairo, Egypt, in 975 CE.

In the Islamic world and even outside it, the Deoband Madrasah,

owing to its reformist agenda and the philosophy it inculcated among the Muslims, has always been a matter of debate. It has also attracted the attentions of the scholars, intellectuals and academicians for its religio-political philosophy linking it with the incident of 9/11, as the Taliban and a myriad of other militant groups operational in Afghanistan and Pakistan ascribe Deoband teachings and philosophy. This study, nonetheless, discusses the genesis of Deoband Movement and its influence over the socio-political behavior of the common Muslim masses of South Asia during the colonial era. It goes into the socio-political dynamics of Indian politics which caused the foundation of Darul Ulum Deoband. It evaluates the factors for which Deoband school of thought appealed the Muslim population in South Asia and emerged to be one of the biggest sects of Islam in Muslim World. Furthermore, it focuses on the issues the political decline and plight of Indian Muslim community, political philosophy and activism of Deoband theologians, their strategy to approach the masses, and their response to modernization introduced the British Raj in India.

The Theologians and Religious Simonies in Pre-colonial Era

During the medieval era, the Muslims ruling classes realizing the need of educating common people had extended their patronage religious educational institutions called *maktab* or *madrasah*. In India, the Sultans of Delhi Sultanate, Mughal Emperors and their nobility followed the same path and provided the theologians and religious seminaries with economic assistance and land grants. They had also been associated with the courts of the rulers dealing with religious affairs and providing judicial services. In his enterprise *Madrasah Education in Pre-colonial and Colonial Era*, Ali Raza provide a comprehensive account of that the *ulemas* (scholars), *pirs* (teachers of mysticism) and *qazi* (jurists) were offered by Sultans of Delhi, Mughal Emperors, the *nawabs*, and the princes with *Jagirs* (i.e land grants), and other kinds of gifts in return to their services.¹ Reporting on the political patronage of the religious seminaries by the Mughal rulers, he evaluates to social and political challenges and underscore their significance for managing state affairs. He, thus, states:

“Two other factors contributed to the growth of the educational institutions under the Mughals, especially in the 16th century; first, the political stability owing to the consolidation of power at one center, resulting in a centralized bureaucracy; and second, the growing influence of the ulama vis-à-vis the Sufis as the dominant religious figures. Overall, madrasahs received patronage and respect from the emperors and common people alike.”²

For the dissemination of education among the ordinary people, the Sultans of Delhi Sultanate and Mughal Emperors patronized the theologians to found the *madaris* following the trend and pattern of those institutes which the other Muslim rulers had established in rest of the Muslim World – i.e. the Middle East and Central Asia.³ Those institute lacked the structure of

education and classes the West has introduced in contemporary world, yet the Muslim disciples then used to learn from their teachers by taking some oath of allegiance. Those were deficient of proper classroom, well-established syllabus, and system of testing the students' intellectual development. The similar model has been carried out by many of the religious educational institutions in South Asia until very recent past. For instance, the celebrated madrasah known as Firangi Mahal at Lucknow, though popular its educational quality and standard, followed same old fashioned methods of departing education to its students.

The Socio-political Rationale of the Foundation of Darul Ulum Doeband

Upset of the Mutiny of 1857, the British dealt with the perpetrators of this uprising ruthlessly. Those were particularly the Muslims whom the British blamed for initiate of the war. Consequently, they became intense victim of the wrath and revenge of the British Raj. Thousands of Muslims mutineer were shot to died, and many of them were blown by tying with artillery. The masques and madrasahs were given harsh treatment, many of them were demolished.⁴ The Mughal Empire, which used to provide financial assistance to the madaris, had officially been seized to exist, and consequently the Muslim students being educated in them, particular in those of Delhi, suffered a lot. Because of such an acute political decline to South Asian Muslim society, the Madrasahs went through immense developmental and financial crisis.

The Muslim theologians realizing this socio-political plight of Indian Muslims and the threats to their religious and cultural traditions and values decided to deal with it by educating their people, and opened classes in the Chatta Mosque of Deoband in 1866. Mullah Mahmud (d. 1886) was its first teacher who accepted Mahmud Hasan as his first pupil. Mahmud al-Hassan Deobandi alias Shaykh al-Hind (b. 1851-d. 1920) later on led this Madrasah and appeared to be a leading figure of Deoband movement.⁵ The theologians and veterans of this movement who are acknowledged to be the founding fathers of Darul Ulum Deoband are as, Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (b. 1826-d. 1905), Maulana Muhammad Yaqub Nanautawi (b. 1833-d. 1884), Maulana Shah Rafi al-Din (b. 1836-d. 1890), Sayyid Muhammad Abid (b. 1834-d. 1912), Zulfiqar Ali (b. 1819-d. 1904),⁶ Fadhl al-Rahman Usmani (b.1831-d. 1907)⁷ and Muhammad Qasim Nanautwi (b. 1832-d. 1880). In his undertaking *Deoband Marassah Movement: Structural Trends and Tendencies*, Muhammad Moj explains the objectives of Deoband theologians to establish this madrasah and how speedily took their mission forward. He thus puts it:

'Since the founder's vision was to protect and preserve Muslim culture in India, one madrasah was not enough to achieve this goal. Therefore several new madaris were set up initially in the Upper Doab region of North India. By the end of 1880, at least fifteen madaris were operating on the pattern of mother school at Deoband. By the end of nineteenth

century more than fifty madaris had been established under DMM.’⁸

The founding fathers of Madrasah were convinced of imparting conventional and traditional religious education, yet the organization they setup for regulated to manage its affairs was highly modern, visionary and sophisticated in more than one.

In her well-elaborated research article on the subject matter titled “The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India,” Barbara Metcalf propounds that the organization and structure of Deoband madaris were certainly a transition from the traditional Indian system of education and it was predominantly based on English educational and bureaucratic model. It appointed the teachers who used to perform their duties in highly professional manner. The separate classroom, libraries and hostels were established as soon as this became feasible. It was first time that a well-designed curriculum was adopted to educate the students and timeframe for the completion of courses was implied. The issuance of annual performance assessment reports was indeed a breakthrough in the history of Indian Muslims educational institutions committed to deliver religious orthodox education to general masses.⁹

Deoband Ulema Going for Collect Public Donations and Its Implications

The Muslim theologians were conscious of the fact that the British government of India, have antagonistic feelings for the orthodox religious elements and institution, would not pay any heed to rehabilitation and progress of their madrasahs, and the Muslim dignitaries struggling to show their loyalties towards the British Raj had become indifferent of aspirations of general masses. They therefore decided to approach the masses who felt the intensity of the issue. It however was the first instance in Indian history that any educational institution was established by acquiring public contributions. Prior to that the tradition was to receive only royal grants from rulers and landowners for such arrangements. The trend settled by Deoband theologians to collect funds from general public had immense implications not only for religious education, but also for a myriad of other institutions aimed at imparting western-styled education.¹⁰ Approaching the common people for the establishment of madrasah helped increase the popularity of the theologians among the public and extended their mission as well. They thus following the same strategy opened another Madarsa named Mazahir ul Ulum at Saharanpur within a period of six months. The theologians who laid the foundation this new seminary on 9 November 1866 included Maulana Ahmad Ali Saharanpuri (b. 1852-d. 1927), Allama Mazhar Ali Nanautawi (b. 1823-d. 1885) and Maulana Sa’adat Ali Faqih.¹¹

Deoband theologians’ strategy of collecting public donation for establishing Darul Ulum Deoband had far-reaching social implications, as this developed a sense of association and ownership among the common people towards this seminary. The people belonging to all segments of the society demonstrated a great enthusiasm to contribute for the cause of Muslim

education and the preservation of their religious values and culture. They made contributed with a portion of their income and time no matter 'how big or small it was.' Another significant impact of averting from the acquirement of royal and influential people was that it stopped interference of elitist and influential classes in academic and administrative affairs of the madrasah. Thus, anyone having extraordinary social status could not violate the merits and standards the administration of the madrasah had setup for better educations. It enhanced the authority and stature of Ulema who were solely authorized and responsible to govern the administration and academics of the institution.

Deoband Theologians' Strategies to Popularize the Religious Education

Realizing the importance to the indigenous culture and nomenclature, Deobandi theologians decided to adopt native languages for the dissemination of religious knowledge. They immensely conscious of the fact that the indigenous culture and languages were strongly linked with identity formation and social status of Indian Muslims.¹² Therefore, Urdu was adopted by them as a medium of communication instead of Arabic and Persian—i.e. the languages which had become a lexicon of religious elites as well as that of the bureaucracy of the court.¹³ Adoption of Urdu as medium of instructions for imparting theological education made it for general public intelligible and attracted their interest into it also. On the other hand, Persian and Arabic were assumed to be out of the grasp of non-Elite. Urdu as a language of the common people and a lingua-franca for Indian Muslims, hence, was an appropriate gape-filler then.¹⁴

Apropos of the production of theological literature in Urdu language, the contribution of the celebrated Deobandi scholar Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (b. 1863-d. 1943) is highly discernable. His books are regarded to be the first theological discourses on socio-religious issues written in Urdu for guidance of the general masses.¹⁵ Intended to provide the orthodox interpretation of Quranic verses to his Muslim country fellows, he authored an exigencies of Holy Quran which is titled as *Bayan-ul Quran*. Asharfi is appeared to be highly motivated to preach the basic Islamic value and their practice in daily life. His enterprise *Bhahishti Zewar* is one of those highly celebrated books which bring the issues of day-to-day life and provide the guidance what sort of the conduct and mannerism a Muslim should demonstrate towards them. His books used to be given as a present or a dowry to the newly married bride, for learning how to show a sophisticated conduct as to social dealings and daily chores. Those, until now, are revered as a guide by the majority of South Asian Muslims, since the Arabic texts in the original is not comprehensible to them. The theological literature Maulana Ashrafi has produced is, thus, a great contribution on the part of Deoband scholars as to popularizing Islamic education among the general public and preserving the Muslims culture in South Asia. The strategy adopted by

Deoband Ulema to make Urdu a medium of communication also helped this school of thought spread out in the area where this language was originated, for instance Delhi, Hyderabad, Lucknow and Banaras.

The Muslim community in South Asia reveres Darul Ulum Deoband for the high standards of education it delivers to its students. Consequently, the people across the subcontinent come to study Islamic theology in Darul Ulum, one of its dominant reasons is that it properly puts great emphasis on the Urdu language after Arabic.¹⁶ Thus, there is no denying in that the role and contribution of Darul Ulum Deoband in popularizing Urdu is far more than that of Aligarh Muslim University or any other educational institution in South Asia.

Historically speaking, the Muslim elite seems to acquire their dominance by producing texts and delivering education in Arabic and Persian merely. Darul Ulum Deoband's initiative to adopt Urdu as a medium of education, however, helped provide the common people among Indian Muslim community an opportunity to come ahead and get expertise in Islamic theology, challenging the supremacy of those who had been well-versed in Arabic and Persian. This challenged the elitist stature to Syeds, Shaikhs and those Ulema who had been educated from the religious seminaries in Middle East and Central. The madrasah's strategy of popularizing Urdu mobilized the backward and depressed sections of South Asian Muslim society, both politically and educationally.

Darul Ulum Deoband which emerged with a vision of spreading reformist version of Islam across the world attempted at succeeding and achieving its objectives through taking multiple dynamic initiatives such as: by establishing a myriad of madrasahs following similar vision, administrative and educational pattern, by accepting students from across the world, and opening its doors for the non-Muslim students even.

Confrontation with British Imperialism and Response to Modernity

The historians, political scientists and experts of International relations got dominantly attracted to the genesis and development of Deoband movement with reference to the incident of 9/11 and America's invasion of Afghanistan to crush the Taliban whom US declared the terrorists and a threat to world peace. Since the Taliban profess the Deoband version of Islam, the scholar attempted to explore the nature of political activism that theologians representing Deoband movements demonstrated during the period of British Raj. They are keenly interested in knowing what kind of political ideology it evolved and promoted to deal with British imperialism and the process of western modernism? Going through the historical developments, it however becomes evident that the founding fathers and exponents of Deoband movement had severely been engaged antagonist relationship with the East India Company and then British Raj in India. They perceived the process of process of modernization carried out by the British Raj in India a threat to

Muslim culture and values and responding to it they attempted at popularizing orthodox Islam. The anti-imperialist political activism of Deoband theologians went through three historical phases: first, they took an active part in Great Revolt of 1857; second, at the time of World War I, they conspired with international powers – Turkey, Germany and Afghanistan – to overthrow British Raj in India which is known as Silk Letter Movement; third, they entered to main stream nationalist politics, formed a political party, i.e. Jamiat Ulema-e Hind, and came into collaboration with Indian National Congress.

In the upcoming segments of this article these three historical junctures of Deoband movement are being discussed in detail.

1. Deoband Theologians' Participation in Great Revolt of 1857

The sources on the participation of the founding fathers of Deoband movement such as Maulana Qasim Nanautwi (b. 1832-d. 1880) and Mualana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (b. 1826-d. 1905) in the Great Revolt or the War of Independence of 1857 express the contradictory views and made it a subject of controversy among the scholars and historians. A Deoband religious scholar and historian Maulana Muhammad Tayyab has produced a book titled *Tarikh-e Darul Ulum Deoband* (1972) [History of Darul Ulum Deoband] wherein he admires the jihadist services of the above mentioned veterans of the movement,¹⁷ stating that they fought against the British East India Company along with their teacher Imdadullah Muhajir Makki (b. 1817-d. 1899) who led the insurgent campaign. They nonetheless were captured by the British troops at Shamli, a small town of Muzaffarnagar district. Following the failure of war, they were arrested, faced the trail and sentenced for imprisonment. Tayyab's reporting of this incident speaks a lot of that the founding fathers of Deoband madrasah were immensely respondent to the political developments taken place on the land of Indian subcontinent, and that they retained and demonstrated anticolonial sentiments at very initial stages when the East India Company was engaged in making political encroachments. Another historian Muhammad Tariq Moj explains at length that Deoband movement, indeed, ascribed the philosophy and ideology of Shah Walli Allah who aspired to make India an Islamic state.¹⁸

Opposing the narrative stated above, some of the historians within Deoband school of thought negate notion that Qasim Nanuatwi and Rashid Gongohi staged an insurgency against British East India Company during the Great Revolt. Accordingly, Mawlana 'Abd al-Hayy al-Hasani in his article titled "The Proof of Islam: Shaykh Qasim al-Nanotvi," which Darul Ulum Deoband has been published on its website, expresses that it was just an allegation on Qasim Nanautwi that he rebelled against the British. He thus puts it that:

"When the great civil war erupted in India in the year 1273 H, they [the British] accused him [Shaykh Qasim Nanutawi] of rebellion against the

English government. Thus, he hid from the people for a period of time. Then he emerged, and Allah (Glorified is He) saved him, and proved his innocence from what they said.”¹⁹

Similarly, the author has attempted to vindicate Rashid Ahmad Gangohi from the allegation that he took part in the war. He writes a biography note on Ghangohi titled as “The Epitome of Shari’ah and Tariqah: Shaykh Rashid Ahmad al-Gangohi” states it that:

“He [Rashid Ahmad] then took up teaching in Gangoh and was accused of participating in the rebellion against the English in the year 1276 AH. So, the authorities arrested him and imprisoned him for six-months in the town of Muzaffarnagar. When his innocence became clear, they released him from captivity. He then, for a short time, occupied himself with teaching and imparting knowledge.”²⁰

Sternly being critical of the perspective negating these veterans’ jihadist contribution, Maulana Muhammad Tayyab propounds that “the people who intended to conceal their political and jihadist services either for their unawareness or for their some other foresighted justification. Their foresightedness, nonetheless, is irrational and their unawareness, an absurdity.”²¹

It however becomes evident that after the commencement of Darul Ulum madrasah, the theologians and the rest of exponents of the movement stayed away from the active politics in order that they could circumvent themselves from British aggression and antagonism. Partly, they did so because of the realization that they could not succeed in their mission without strengthening Muslim community first. Thus, they focused on the educational development of the community highlighting how the modernism introduced by the British Raj was hazardous to their cultural values and norms.

2. Silk Letter Movement 1913-1923

The head of Deoband movement, Shaykh al-Hind Mahmud Hasan observed World War I as an opportunity to overthrow the British Raj in India by acquiring the help of international players fighting against British alliance.²² On October 9, 1915, he met Ghalib Pasha at Makkah, who was then one of the most powerful Governor of Ottoman Empire. The governor asked Shaykh al-Hind to extend the assistance by provoking Indian Muslim against the British Empire. Finding commitment of the reciprocal assistance from the governor, he wrote a letter urging the people to fight against British imperialism, assuring that the time had come to snatch the power back from the unjust rulers. The freedom fighters saw it an opportunity to sweep the British power away from India. Shaykh al-Hind Maulana Mahmud Hasan sent Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi as his representative to Kabul, and he himself returned to Arabia.²³

From Afghanistan, Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi wrote a letter to Shaykh al-Hind Mahmud Hasan who was staying in Arabia, telling him about his activities in Kabul, and the details about exiled freedom fighters and

mentioned names of those who would lead fight against the British in India.²⁴ The details were written on a piece of silk cloth, which was unrevealed by the British administration and they dubbed it as "Silk Letter Conspiracy."

Mahmud al-Hasan's attempt to overthrow British rule from India by acquire assistance from Turkey, Germany, Afghanistan and Indian princely states went failed. Turkey and Germany were defeated in World War I. Mahmud al-Hasan and Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani were arrested and sent to jail in Malta.²⁵

3. Entering into the Mainstream Politics and Formation of Jamiat Ulama-e Hind

The paradigm shift in the pragmatic struggle of Deobandi theologians against British imperialism come after unrevealing Silk Letters Movement and the fall of Ottoman Empire at end of World War II. At this juncture, the *ulema* decided to enter inter into mainstream politics, they therefore made a vigorous participation in Khilafat Movement and extended their support for Non-Cooperation Movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in September, 1920.²⁶ This was the third historical phase in the political struggle of Darul Ulum Deoband movement when they decided to confront with British imperialism through being a part of democratic process. This decisive change in the mode of theologians' political activism brought them into a collaboration and coordination with Indian National Congress.

So as to demonstrate their political strength and to streamline their political activism, a group of Deoband theologians decided to form a political party named Jamiat Ulama-e Hind (literal meaning Party of Indian Muslims Theologian). The towering personalities who formed this party included Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani (1879-1957), Kifayat Allah Dehlawi (1875-1952), Maulana Ahmed Ali Lahori (1887-1962), Anwar Shah Kashmiri (1875-1933), Abdul Haq Akorwi (1912-1988), Abdul Halim Siddiqui, and Abdul Bari Firangi Mahal (1878-1926). The objectives and nature of the political struggle of party expresses through the fact that these theologians held a meeting in Peshawar in 1917 and demanded for self-independence, well before the Indian National Congress. Jamait Ulema-e Hind, nonetheless, promoted Indian nationalist ideology being allied to Indian National Congress. It denounced "Two Nations Theory" and All India Muslim League's separatist agenda of creating a separate homeland for Indian Muslims. It thus endeavored to urge Indian Muslims to support the cause of Indian National Congress and cost vote of it in the elections held in 1946.

Working on Regulating the Social Organization of the Muslim Societies

The *ulema* associated with Darul Ulum Doeband have shown a great involvement in streamlining the socio-cultural order of the South Asian Muslims or those living elsewhere in Europe and America. For this, it introduced a system of individual Fatwa. During the Mughal era, the Mufti had issued fatwa to the Qazi or Judges as a guide, as the rulers did not want

the people had direct guidance. The greatly debated problem of individual fatwa in its present form is also a contribution of this Deoband movement, which now is also followed by others ulema and religious institutions. Fatwa has had a tremendous influence on the general masses and has sometimes motivated people to organize economically and socially.

Deoband Networking and Its Emergence to Be One of the Dominant Sect of Islam

This becomes evident that Darul Ulum Deoband Movement which started functioning in quite a small town named Deoband in North India flourished in such a way that it is now recognized as one of the popular sects of Islam. There are multiple factors behind this success of this school of thought. It has established a vast network of affiliated institutions not only in South Asia but across the world. Founded in 1926 by Maulana Alyas, The Tablighi Jamaat is an offshoot of the movement and a missionary non-political organization working on a reformist agenda. During last two decade, there has been intense debates on that it has affiliations and networking with Taliban and other militant groups. The scholars and researchers working on this area dominantly linked the militant and jihadist activities carried out in contemporary era with the ideology of the founding fathers of Darul Ulum. This can, however, be observed that Darul Ulum diverged from that militant discourse even during the colonial era, when Deoband theologians decided to participate in the mainstream politics by founding a political party called Jamiat Ulema-e Hind. Making its position as to the terrorist activities, it has issued a fatwa denouncing it that "all kinds of unjust of violence and breaching of peace."²⁷ Darul Ulum Deoband has made it clear that it has no link with any group which uses unjust means to achieve its political objectives and it disowns all the groups involved in militant insurgencies, unjust violent activities. The theologians during this crucial times reiterated their commitments as to promoting peace, tolerance and religious harmony between the people coming from diverse socio-cultural and religious backgrounds.

Conclusion

To sum up the discussion, it becomes evident that theologians belonging to the Darul Ulum Deoband Movement had demonstrated great interest and put their efforts in preserving Islamic culture and values in South Asia, and currently is a forum for the Muslims living across the world to streamline their socio-economic affairs in the light of Islam. The founding fathers of the Darul Ulum madrasah although initiated their anti-colonialist struggle with jihadist and militant activities, yet gradually they responded to the political challenges by adopting modern techniques and means. For the betterment of the South Asian Muslims, they showed ideological differences within the school of thought and remained committed to serves their respected community. The theologians belonging Deoband school of thought

denounced British process of modernization in socio-religious domains, but endorsed and adopted its institutionalization. They adopted modern techniques and methods to disseminate orthodox religious education, established diverse affiliated sub-organizations, all these strategies indeed helped it emerge as one of the major sects of Islam in the twentieth century.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

References

¹ Ali Riaz, "Madrassah Education in Pre-colonial and Colonial Era," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 68-86.

² Ali Riaz, *Faithful Education: Madrasahs in South Asia* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 61; See also, Riaz, "Madrassah Education in Pre-colonial and Colonial Era," 72.

³ Rahat Babar and Muhammad Qamar Ishaq (Comp.), *Directory of Muslim Institutions in India* (New Delhi: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 156-7.

⁴ Muhammad Moj, *Deoband Madrassah Movement: Structural Trends and Tendencies* (New York: Anthem Press, 2015),

⁵ Barbara Metcalf, "Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (1978), 112.

⁶ Maulana Zulfiqar Ali was the father of Mahmud Hassan, the first student of the Darul Ulum Deoband. <https://masjidebilal.com/2018/03/31/hadhrat-maulana-zulfiqar-ali/> (dated February 16, 2021).

⁷ Fadhl al-Rahman Usmani was the father of Aziz-ul-Rehman Usmani, the first Grand Mufti of Darul Ulum Deoband.

⁸ Moj, *Deoband Madrassah Movement*, 7.

⁹ Metcalf, "Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India," 112.

¹⁰ Another outright example of the educational institution setup with help of public donation was that of Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College that Sir Syed Ahmad Khan established in 1875. This very college was promoted to be a university, i.e. Aligarh Muslim University, in 1920.

¹¹ See, <http://mazahiruloom.org/SubMenu3.aspx> (dated Feb 20, 2021)

¹² The following books might help a great deal to get deeper insight into the role of language in formation of identity and dissemination of knowledge: Papiya Sengupta, *Language as Identity in Colonial India: Policies and Politics* (Singapore: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018); David Nunan and Julie Choi (Eds.), *Language and Culture: Reflective Narratives and the Emergence of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Om Prakash and Rajesh Kumar, *Linguistic Foundations of Identity: Readings in Language, Literature and Contemporary Cultures* (New Delhi: Akbar Books, 2020); Derya Iner and Salih Yucel (Eds.), *Muslim Identity Formation in Religiously Diverse Societies* (London:

Cambridge Scholars Publicans, 2015); John Edwards, *Language and Identity: An introduction* (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹³ See, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, *The History and Culture of the Indian People: The Mughal empire* (London: G. Allen Publishers, 1951); Neilesh Bose, *Culture and Power in South Asian Islam: Defying the Perpetual Exception* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

¹⁴ Moj, *Deoband Madrassah Movement: Structural Trends and Tendencies*, 43, 180.

¹⁵ Mualana Ashraf Ali Thanwi was a revered theologian and Sufi mentor and wrote various books for the Muslims of Subcontinent, the most renowned of which are *Bayan-ul Quran* and *Bhahishti Zewar*. His discourse is reformist and revivalist.

¹⁶ Jamia Millia Institute of Education, *The Jamia Educational Quarterly*, Vol. 8, (Karachi: Jamia Millia College Press, 1967), 35.

¹⁷ See, Maulana Muhammad Tayyab, *Tarikh-e Darul Ulum Deoband* [History of Deoband], (Karachi: Maktabah Darul Ulum, 1972), 53-54.

¹⁸ Muhammad Tariq Moj, *Deoband Madrasah Movement: Countercultural Trends and Tendencies* (Thesis Master in Public Policies, Australian National University, 2007), 21, 276.

¹⁹ Mawlana ‘Abd al-Hayy al-Hasani, “The Proof of Islam: Shaykh Qasim al-Nanotwi” Zameelur Rahman (Trans. Eng.) at <https://www.deoband.org/2013/03/biographical-notes/the-proof-of-islam-shaykh-qasim-al-nanotwi/> (dated February 21, 2021)

²⁰ Mawlana ‘Abd al-Hayy al-Hasani, “The Epitome of Shari’ah and Tariqah: Shaykh Rashid Ahmad al-Gangohi,” Ismaeel Nakhuda (Trans. Eng.) at <https://www.deoband.org/2009/04/biographical-notes/the-epitome-of-sharia-and-tariqa/> (dated: February 21, 2021).

²¹ Tayyab, *Tarikh-e Darul Ulum Deoband*, 54.

²² In 1877, Darul Ulum Deoband’s first pupil Shaykh al-Hind Maulana Mahmud Hasan, began his political movement and founded an organization giving it name “Samratut Tarbiyat” (Award of the Training). The object of the organization was to prepare armed rebellion against the British Raj. This campaign persisted at least for thirty years. In 1909, Shaikh al-Hind restructured his followers under a new banner ‘Jamiat al-Ansaar’ which after a short period outlawed by the colonial masters. Shortly after the banning of Jamiat al-Ansar in 1913, with the new name “Nizzaaratul Ma’arif,” freedom fighters arrived in Delhi. The prominent figures behind this new arrangement were Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi and Shaykh al-Hind Mahmud Hassan. None more than the independence of India was the passion, spirit and intent of this new setup. In 1914, when Germany and Britain launched the World War I, the freedom fighters altered their course of action. They restricted their domestic operations up to a minimal level and focused entirely on endorsing the cause of Germany. Maulana Muhammad Miyan (Comp.), *Silken Letters Movement: Accounts of ‘Silken Handkerchief Letters Conspiracy Case’ From British Records*, Muhammadullah Qasimi (Trans. Eng.) (New Delhi: Shaikhul Hind Academy, 2012), 3-4.

²³ Miyan (Comp.), *Silken Letters Movement*, 3-4.

²⁴ Miyan. *Silken Letters Movement*, 4.

²⁵ See, Barbara Metcalf, *Husain Ahmad Madani: The Jihad for Islam and India's Freedom* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2012).

²⁶ See, David Hardiman, *Noncooperation in India: Nonviolent Strategy and Protest*

Indian Muslim Theologians' Response to British Colonization of India and Introduction of Modernization: A Study of Deoband School of Thought

1920-22 (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2021); Fozia Jabeen, *Khilafat, Hijrat and Gandhi's Non-cooperation Movement* (GRIN Verlag, 2017).

²⁷ Bappa Majumdar, "Darul Uloom Deoband Issued Fatwa against Terror," *Reuter* (June 1, 2008). At: <https://www.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-33848320080601> (dated: February 22, 2021).