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**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE IDEOLOGICAL  
ORIENTATIONS AND METHODOLOGY OF DAR UL  
ULOOM DEOBAND, NADWATUL ULAMA AND  
ALIGARH SCHOOL**

*Dr. Shazia Ramzan\**

*Ainee Rubab\**

*As the British consolidated their rule over India in the late 18th century, they triggered significant changes in the indigenous system of education. These policies were bound to create a reaction among the Muslims. Muslims were generally averse to these changes as they thought that the new educational policies were in fact an attempt by the British to alienate them from Islam. It was a general realization that the educational affairs of Muslims must be managed by the Muslims, themselves. Muslim intellectuals on their respective fronts started various reform movements. This research paper provides a comparative analysis of the underlying thought and philosophy of the reform movement initiated by Madrasa Dar-ul-uloom Deoband, Madrasa Aligarh and Nadwa-tul-Ulama, during the 19th Century British India.*

**Key words:** *Sir Sayed Ahmad, Moulana Qasim, Ulema*

**Introduction:** After the War of Independence in 1857, the Muslims were the major victims of the British wrath as they were considered as traitors. The English considered the Muslim as responsible for the mutiny/rebellion of 1857 and according to them the next generations of the Muslims should bear the brunt of it. It was quite frequent that one would be asked to identify himself and on revealing that he was a Muslim, he was shot dead instantly (Zaka Ullah, 1916). The inimical attitude of the English for the Muslims continued and they were kept away from the higher government jobs. Due to their financial crisis under the British Raj, the indigenous educational institutions were also facing tough time (Chatterjee, 1976; Sinha, 1978).

Very limited avenues were open to the Muslims. It was also described in the advertisements for the jobs that the Muslims were ineligible. The educational system was amended to such an extent that the Muslims could barely get benefit from that (Law, 1915). Rather than participating actively in the national arena, they were spending their energies in clarifying their position in self-defense (Nadvi, 2003). Under the government patronage, the activities of Christian missionaries intensified, and these were bound to

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\* Assistant Professor, Dept. of Islamic Studies, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad.

\* Lecturer, Dept. of Islamic Studies, Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi

demoralize the Muslims intellectually as the missionaries openly expressed their desire to see India crowded with Christians (Bari, 1969; Basu, 1934).

Islam was the life and blood for the Muslims and they were very proud of their civilization. However, in the changed scenario, the very core of their civilizations was becoming shaky. All the movements for reforming the Muslims were aimed with these orientations. The reformers had also realized that the political, social and economic progress of the Muslims was linked with the fact that they should get mastery in the field of education so that they are at par with other nations. This research paper makes a comparative study of the ideological orientations, thought and the methodology three important educational institutions established during that period for the reform of the Muslims.

**Methodology:** This is a library based research. An extensive review of literature has been made and a combination of descriptive and analytical methods has been used in the interpretation of literature.

**Ideological Foundations:**

*Dar ul uloom Deoband:* There was a general consensus among the ulema that the establishment of religious schools was necessary for safeguarding their religious values and religion itself. Dar ul uloom Deoband was established with same ideology. *Moulana* Syed Manazir Ahsan Gilani writes in the *Sawanih Qasmi* that after the failure in the battle of 1857, the returnees from the ground of Shamali, did not gave up in despair; rather they started thinking that they must strive hard to protect Islam and their *Deen* (Gilani, 1373AH). According to *Moulana Syed Abu Al Hasan Nadvi*, the real motive of establishment of Dar ul uloom Deoband, was the spirit of safeguarding the religion of Islam (Nadvi, 1981).

The Deoband School focused on the theme that in the changing scenario, no change should occur in the religion and way of living of the Muslims. It tried to preserve the culture and moral values of the Muslims. It was all accomplished with a great wisdom so that the expectations from Islam, in the changing circumstances, were realized fully. Till the War of Independence, the Muslims had a thought that they will be able to preserve their culture forcibly. However, after their failure in 1857, they understood that the circumstances were not favorable for any revolutionary movement. The basic need of the time was to safeguard the religious thought.

Shah Jahan Poori (2004) also observes that after the struggle of the whole century, the movement came to that point from where it started its journey, and now under new circumstances, practical steps of safeguarding the religious thought and preparation of a *jama'at* were mandatory. The first step in this regard was started the establishment of Deoband School. The leaders of that step were those people who were the torch bearers of the caravan of the last stage. These respectable people in this group were Moulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi, Moulana Muhammad Qasim Nanotvi and some other scholars. On the May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1867, Deoband School was established in the town of Deoband which was in District Saharanpur. Generally the world looks at it as an institution of Islamic knowledge, and no doubt the propagation of Islamic knowledge was considered its prominent and basic objective.

The movement and its leadership created love for religion, respect for Sharia and perseverance against the European civilizations. Deoband was the flag bearer of this tendency and the biggest Centre of ancient Islamic culture and civilization of India. The establishment of Dar ul uloom Deoband was a step forward in connection with the revolutionary thoughts of Hazrat Shah Waliullah (Tayyeb, 1988). Moulana Qasim Nanotvi also adopted the teachings of Shah Wali Ullah. After the death of Moulana Qasim Nanotvi, Moulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi was made the patron of Dar-ul-uloom who gave a *Fiqhee* colour to the Dar ul uloom. Under the 40 years headship of Moulana Mehmood ul Hassan the spirit of skill started to flourish and thousands of lovers of knowledge, were spread in the entire world, started quenching their thirst from school.

The political angle is further explained by Moulana Mahmood Al Hassan, the student of Moulana Qasim. AS quoted by Rizvi (2005), Moulana expressed that he had seen the school establishing and as far as he knew, this institution was established after the failure of the battle of 1857 and the main purpose behind it was to establish such a center as the people may be prepared to compensate the failure of 1857.

The most prominent quality of Deoband was its spirit of liberty. The Eight Principles laid down by its founder were aimed to keep this institution free from the aristocratic or bureaucratic control of the government. The main objective behind the establishment of Deoband School was not only the creation of a religious school but

it was a movement for the restoration of Islam. The religious and Islamic education was imparted in that School. The correction of the intellectual belief was also included in it. The preaching and propagation of Islam was also included in it. The creation of an Islamic society and the freedom of the country and nation were, however, the ultimate objectives.

Aligarh School: The second leadership, whose flag bearer was Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan, held the view that the Muslims be equipped to acquire the modern knowledge. His family was associated with Mughal court for a long time and during his early days; he had ample chance to see the entire system. Sir Sayed had, in fact, acquired the traditional Muslim education and had also seen the downfall of the Mughal Empire. He also remained the student of Moulana Mamlook Ali who was incidentally the teacher and uncle of Moulana Muhammad Qasim Nanutvi, the founder of Deoband School. It is a very strange fact, according to Syed Jalees Nadvi, (Nadvi, 2003) that after the mutiny, two quite opposite movements and school of thoughts came into existence at the same time from a similar foundation. The founder of both the movements got benefit from the same school and same teacher. Subsequently, Muhammad Qasim shifted the Arabic portion of Delhi College to Deoband and Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan shifted the English portion of Delhi College to Aligarh.

Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan had witnessed the plight of Indian Muslims in the post 1857 scenario and quite often, Muslims were ignored of the government jobs, because of their lacking in the English language. He had a vision that it was not possible to come out of the zone of inferiority unless the rulers treat them with dignity and equality. He advocated Muslims to acquire modern education and to adopt the manners of ruling elite.

He in a very impressive manner advised the Muslims to adopt the English civilization and social life. He writes in *Tahzeeb ul Akhlaq* (Volume 2) that the whole dress of the Turks besides cap is quite European. They sit on table chair, eat with forks and spoons. The decoration of their houses and their way of living is like Europeans. When Turks sit with their neighbor nations such as the English and French, they appeared to be of the same nation and it is hope that they will become more and more civilized by day after day. We want that the Muslims of India to leave their old opinions and take a step forward to the civilization and good habits.

In order to accomplish these aims, he established Muhammadan Anglo Oriental School which was inaugurated by Sir William Meor on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1875 and this school was upgraded to college in 1877 and finally became Aligarh Muslim University in 1921.

The political views of Sir Sayed aimed that the Muslims must shun from the politics and concentrate on their education. As a gesture of goodwill and further, in order to give the school a modern outlook, an Englishman, Mr. T. Beck, was appointed as the Principal of the school. He wanted the school comparable to the institutions in the West, though he was mindful of religious obligations and is reported to have said that just as the students of Oxford and Cambridge have to visit the church and attend the prayers regularly, so also the residents of this institution would be duty bound to visit the mosques and offer prayers. (Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq, Rajab, 1289 AH.)

However, after his demise the situation of the country took a dramatic turn which made it imperative for the Muslims to become active and be organized politically for a dignified survival and the protection of their rights. It was the alumni of the Aligarh that eventually was instrumental in establishment of All India Muslim League in 1906.

Nadwa tul Ulema: The divergent ideologies of both these schools were bound to create conflicting ideologies among the various sections of the Muslims. In order to bridge gap between the modern and traditional schools of thought, another section of Muslims thought of establishing the Nadwa tul Ulema in 1894. The Nadwa tul Ulema movement was started after the establishment of Deoband School and School of Aligarh. At that time, Deoband School had completed 26 years and the Aligarh School had completed 18 years of existence.

Nadvi (1981) observes that the movement of Nadwa was a blend of old and modern educational system and the rationale was to act as a bridge between the traditional and modern schools of thought existing within the Muslim society at that time. Manglory (1945) has stated the two main objectives of Nadwa as: the first was the settlement of mutual conflicts among various sections of the Muslims; and, the reformation of education curriculum that was stagnant, especially in the context of traditional system of learning. Akram (1952) also substantiates the Manglory and states that the main objectives of this institution were: the reformation of

educational curriculum, the progress of religious knowledge and the betterment of good morality; the settlement of mutual conflict of the scholars and to find the solution of various conflicting problems; the betterment of the common Muslims, but keeping them aloof from political affairs; and the establishment of a ground Islamic School in which both the knowledge and skills would be imparted.

Nadwa also identifies itself with the thoughts of Shah Wali Ullah and Mujaddad Alif Sani (Nadvi, 1982; 2005). Nadwa teaches a compromising attitude and instead of focusing much on controversial issues aiming at creating disarray among the Muslims, it advocates a conduct that takes into the collective wisdom of Islamic injunctions. Nadwa taught the Muslims a lesson of moderation. This voice of moderation was raised at that time when the whole Islamic world was busy in debating the controversial issues and was near to disintegration. All their faculties were being exhausted in declaring the others as on the path of the falsehood. Nadwa bridged these extremist tendencies and the scholar of the both the school of thoughts came closer to each other. The greatest benefit was that Nadwa prepared a class of people that were the models of the moderation and they raised the flag of the moderation through their good character and attitude.

It may also be clarified here that the slogan of moderation raised by Nadwa was not to create a new religion by the combination of all the sects but to remove the controversies present among the ranks of the Muslims in the name of sects and this was explicitly explained in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting of Nadwa. The Deputy Administrator of Nadwa, Hakim Sayed Abdul Hai Hasni while presenting the annual report of the 9<sup>th</sup> session also reiterated that it is the need of the time that our mutual conflicts remains subsided and to limit these controversies; and based on solid research, and we should strive for the commonalities.

Nadwa always got benefit from the educational heritage of all the sects and it broaden their vision and created moderation in their temperament. These tendencies broadened the outlook of the scholars emanating from Nadwa. Moulana Ali Mian Nadvi acknowledged before Sheikh Khalil i Arabi and Allama Taqi ud din Hallani and respected them as his religious leaders. Allama Taqi ud Din served as a teacher of Arabic for 3-years and he left deep impression upon the educational atmosphere of that

institution. Similarly religious scholars like Moulana Abu ul Arfan Khan Nadvi, Moulana Abul Salam Nadvi occupied the important chairs in the Nadwa. These scholars had different sect-wise inclination; yet played their best role in its progress. Nadwa got much benefit from the ancient and modern sources and great and experienced scholars accumulated in it. Allama Shibli, who had the experience of working in Aligarh, joined this institution. Thus Nadwa was thus just a reform movement and was independent of sectarian boundaries.

Nadwa is credited to make improvement in the old and stagnant curricula of Muslim educational institutions. In the old curriculum there are very few books for the real knowledge. But the books of indirect knowledge were in abundance. Nadwa tried to remove this deficiency in the new curriculum. Interpretation of the Holy Quran and the orders of Sharia were given an important place in the curriculum. Moreover the modern philosophy and English language was also included in the curriculum. Literature and composition was given more importance than grammar. Much importance was also given to Arabic conversation. In this way a new curriculum came into existence in which efforts were made to remove the imbalance of the ancient and much space was created for the modern along with the ancient.

Research was also given importance along with different branches of knowledge and skill. The most important aspect of Nadwa was its great association with the Islamic world in connection with its educational and practical aspects. Nadwa remained a custodian of knowledge and research along with imparting education. Nadwa gave scores of writers to the nation. It is a reality that the great services in Islamic studies and especially the Islamic History made by the *Darul Musanfeen*, Azam garh were in fact due to Nadwatul Ulma. The persons prepared by Nadwa served this institution.

**Comparative Analysis:** These three movements started simultaneously for the educational, social and economic reformation of the Muslims. Some controversies, however, existed between Deoband and Aligarh Movement. Sir Sayed adopted a way of reconciliation and compromise towards the British and laid much stress for getting the English education for the betterment of the Muslims, while Deoband Movement insisted upon getting the religious education and regarded it imperative to abide by the Islamic principles for the betterment of the Muslims. In the

presence of these controversies, the relations of compromise and conflict existed between Aligarh and Deoband.

Commenting on these conflicts, Nadvi (2003), however, asserts the ulema never announced their *fatawa* against that the teaching and learning of English language; rather they were against the views and ideas, embraced by Sir Sayed and in their opinion, giving the lead for education to such a person was not appropriate. Nadvi (1981) highlights two week areas of Aligarh in the sense that Sir Sayed never tried to modify the British system of education to tailor the needs of the Muslim society and it's over emphasis on the learning of English language. However, when Moulana Mehmood ul Hassan was appointed as the Chancellor of Deoband, feeling of co-operation with Aligarh were openly expressed. On the other side, Nawab Mohsin ul Mulk also expressed such feelings, and under its influence an agreement was also signed about the mutual migration of the students of Aligarh and Deoband.

From political point of view, much difference of opinion found between two institutions. The scholars of Deoband participated in the war of 1857 against British's and due to this the feeling of liberty always dominated upon them. Aligarh was striving on the path of reconciliation towards the British and since the beginning of his political career; Sir Sayed was striving that the British should be cultivated as their friends. His book, *Tabyin-ul-kalam* points out similarities between Islam and Christianity. The *loyal Muhammadans of India* was aimed to prove that Muslims were not disloyal to British and to ask the British to end their hostility.

Niazi (1971) has quoted Dr. Muhammad Iqbal as having said that I appreciate the enmity of the religious scholars towards the English, but their policy lacks political insight. They do not know about the game played by the Hindus under the cover of political freedom. They should realize this fact that the issue of the liberty of Hindustan will remain constitutional. Therefore it is the need of the hour to create such a space in it that is worthy to us. We need the security of our traditions, civilization and ways of living. The scholars belonging to congress are going on a road which will give no result.

Compared to both these institutions, Nadwa adopted a moderate way and rejected the extremism of Aligarh and Deoband and tried to accumulate the qualities of Aligarh movement and Deoband.

Nadwatul Ulama claimed to prepare such students which were expert in Islamic teachings and were equally capable of meeting the modern challenges. In the beginning, there were very cordial relation between Nadwa and Aligarh and the scholars of Aligarh appreciated its existence. Sir Sayed also agreed with the objectives of the Nadwa. Both these movements come closer to each other due to the efforts of Moulana Shibli Noumani. However, Moulana Shibli and Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan did not see eye to eye with each other on religious issues that strained the relations between the both. Also at the time of the creation of Nadwa, there were much controversies with Deoband and both these movements criticized each other, but by the efforts of Sayed Sulaiman Nadvi both these movements were brought closer to each other.

Despite the differences on their ideological basis and methodologies, the services of these three movements for the Muslims of Hindustan are praise-worthy. These movements rendered great services for the progress and propagation of Islam and presented a leadership of first rank for the freedom movement of the nation.

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