

ESTABLISHMENT OF WIFAQ UL MADARIS ARABIA, PAKISTAN AND ROLE OF KHAIR UL-MADARIS, MULTAN

Dr. Fakhar Bilal*

Abstract:

Since independence the number of madrasas in Pakistan has grown remarkably. The madrasas growing enormously were in need of a central authority and control which can help them in their organisation, curriculum development and other day to day matters. The establishment of wifaq (board) was not an easy task. It required a lot of thought process and convincing all the stakeholders on one point to give it a physical structure. Maulana Khair Muhammad of Jamia Khair ul Madaris, Multan took this lead initiative to gather all ulama on one platform. The establishment of the education board was a right decision to bring peace, harmony and tranquillity among the madrassas scattered all over Pakistan. Interesting fact is that Jamia Khair ul Madaris and Education Board both established in Multan. Thus the reliable growth of the Board and substantial expansion of the physical structure supported lots of Deobandi madaris in Pakistan. Khair ul Madaris. Multan's continuous social and economic growth from colonial times to postcolonial Pakistan played a vital role in establishment and expansion of Education Board in the city of Multan.

Keywords: Islam, Madrasa, Education, Deoband, Wifaq ul Madaris, Multan.

After the partition, many madrasas and institutions were established in Pakistan but there was a dire need to bring all these institutions and madrasa on a unified platform. In this regard, Maulana Khair Muhammad gathered the ulama of Deoband school of thought (*maslak*) in Pakistan and invited them to Khair ul Madaris in 1957.¹ This initial meeting of ulama constituted an administrative committee and finally on October 18-19, 1959 *Wifaq ul Madaris Al Arabia Pakistan* was created as an organisation. The new constitution of wifaq was approved with members of the administrative committee for three years.² The objective of the wifaq's creation was to coordinate the activities of Deoband madrasas throughout Pakistan. Wifaq ul Madaris since its inception served as madrasa education board for Deobandi madaris throughout Pakistan. The headquarters of the wifaq is based in Multan.³ Maulana Khair Muhammad was the one who continued his dominance and attachment to Wifaq till his death in 1970 in various capacities.

Maulana Khair Muhammad through the platform of Khair ul Madaris also supported "Majlis Tahfuz Khatm-i-Nabuwat Pakistan" as

* Assistant Professor, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

member of the *shura* and advisor to it.

Multan's growth not only supported establishment of Khair ul Madaris but also enabled its remarkable growth after partition. Khair ul Madaris attracted the refugees from the East Punjab at the time of partition. Khair ul Madaris not only attracted students but the initial teachers were also some refugees those who know Khair Muhammad and were looking to settle in Pakistan. The early students were of different backgrounds and localities which included Afghans and Central Asians but also from different parts of India. Maulana Khair Muhammad and Jamia Khair ul Madaris continued serving Multan, its people and particularly Deobandi Islam in various capacities which I will discuss in this paper with focus on institution building in shape of *Wifaq ul Madaris Al Arabia Pakistan* and obtaining support and strength for Khairul Madaris and himself. This paper will provide a glimpse into the birth, growth and establishment of Wifaq as platform for Deobandi madrasas of Pakistan and directly or indirectly supporting the base of Khair ul Madaris since 1957 onwards.

This paper will explore aspects of the structure of madrasa education board Wifaq ul Madaris Al Arabia (onwards as Education Board), how it was established by Maulana Khair Muhammad, how Khair ul Madaris became the beneficiary of the Board's establishment and how later on it became the sole voice of Deobandi madrasas in Pakistan. In highlighting these points, my focus will be on Khair ul Madaris to that how it gained popular strength and became voice of Pakistani Deobandis. This will also explain the nature of the relationship between Khair ul Madaris and the Board from the time of its establishment till the death of Maulana Khair Muhammad in 1970. Since independence the number of madrasas in Pakistan has grown remarkably.⁴

Before Independence, religious education was marginalized as it had been under the colonial rulers.⁵ The British introduced a secular education system and since then, it was heavily promoted by Government, while the religious education and schools were neglected and ignored.⁶ This support for modern education system and governance failure to the traditional way of education created a gulf between *ulama* and government. The rift between the *ulama* and politicians goes back to the nineteenth century and was exacerbated after the birth of Pakistan where the politicians were reluctant to give rights and privileges to clergy.

Ayub Khan's Modernization Plan

The dispute between government authorities and the religious leadership increased under Ayub Khan (1958-1969). Ayub Khan tried to introduce a modernist version of Islam through public policies. His efforts to modernize Pakistani society led him to introduce constitutional, legal and social changes.⁷ Ayub's regime also focused on religious education and produced a report on Madrasa curriculums in 1961. Ayub Khan was clear that only the name of Islam could not create a positive change and new content in the shape of these social and legal policies was introduced.⁸ In addition to this Ayub Khan also addressed a couple of madrasa congregations one at Dar ul Uloom Islamiah, Tando Allah Yar (Sindh) in 1959 and one in Jamia Talimat-i-Islamia, Karachi in 1962.

The Government's attempt to modernize the traditional Islamic education system was not accepted by the *ulama* who were unsettled by his modernization plans, and Ayub's rapid development of the creation of new institutions. Ayub Khan faced criticism and resistance from the *ulama* towards his modernization agenda. Following words of Ayub Khan's speech on the occasion of the foundation-stone laying ceremony of *Jamia Taleemat-e-Islamia* in Karachi alarmed *ulama* about his intentions: "Religious thought has lost its original dynamism and is bogged down in the quagmire of stagnation."⁹

Ayub Khan further said in the same speech that

"The only way out of this crisis, to my mind, is that our highly educated sections as well as our Ulema should, in their own way, try to find out the ultimate objective which has been lost in the welter of confused thought and both should try to understand each other's point of view."¹⁰

Ayub Khan always employed a modernist stance to rationalize and legitimate innovative changes while arguing the need to "liberate the spirit of religion from the cobwebs of superstition and stagnation which surround it and move forward under the forces of modern science and knowledge."¹¹ In addition, the Government was planning to bring a new reformed madrasa curriculum and changes, which were considered by leading scholars and *ulama* a great threat to their existence and authority. Ayub Khan's statements and policies showed that he was convinced of the importance of Islam as the basis of the Pakistani nationhood¹² and its role in keeping East and West Pakistan together.

Ayub Khan tried to curtail the powers of the religious elites and to maintain his own authority and supremacy, therefore, he went on to

create new institutions. The religious leadership was not happy with all these moves and Ayub Khan's strategies paved way for the creation of uniform platforms in shape of madrasa education boards for all the sectarian orientations.

Madrasa Education Boards in Pakistan

The gradual growth of madrasas in Pakistan over the decades have been explained in previous pages. This growth kept rising with each passing year. Madrasas in Pakistan are usually independent community initiatives run and organised by *ulama* and local community with the help of popular subscription. However, there are some madrasas run and managed by the government under *auqaf* system. Madrasas also vary in terms of their location (urban, rural), size, available resources, education level and their ideological attachment with a specific sectarian orientation. For having proper check and balance and control over the madrasa activities and curriculum, enriching madrasas with modern subjects as well as standardized examinations, each sectarian orientation has established its own education board which is called *Wifaq*.

There are five madrasa education boards in Pakistan, three are Sunni, one is Shia and one is associated with Jamat-i-Islami, a known religious political party. Each madrasa education board represents its own sect or affiliation.¹³ The three Sunni boards are *Wifaq ul Madaris al Arabia*, *Tanzim ul Madaris* and *Wifaq ul Madaris al Salafia*. The Shia madrasa education board is called *Wifaq ul Madaris Shia* and *Rabitatul Madaris al Islamia* is one associated with Jamat-i-Islami.¹⁴ Out of the existing large number of madrasas, only registered madrasas have been controlled by their respective central boards and organizations (*wifaq*). These boards set the syllabi, collect student registration details, forms, fee and examination fee in addition to arrange examination in both Urdu and Arabic languages and later on declaration of their results.

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi's Followers and Their Role in Creation of the Deobandi Education Board

Maulana Khair Muhammad wrote to the people who migrated to Pakistan and were associated and attached in one way or the other with Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi for getting support to establish the Education Board for Deobandi madrasas. Maulana Khair Muhammad was aware of the fact that Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi's disciples and followers would help him against the Ayub regime that was using Islam's name for maintaining his own political power and survival. The people who were willing to support Maulana Khair Muhammad and became part of first

committee included Maulana Ihtisham ul Haq Thanvi, Maulana Shams ul Haq Afghani and Maulana Muhammad Idress Kandhalvi who were influenced by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and many more religious students of Thanvi's followers. These were the same people who initially supported Maulana Khair Muhammad in establishment of Khair ul Madaris in Multan. All these learned scholars were member of the *shura* of Khair ul Madaris. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi's network worked in consultation with Khair Muhammad and the initial organisational committee started its functions with the support of people who were previously on the *Shura* of Khair ul Madaris and later on became the torch bearer of Board's establishment.

These religious leaders and their services towards Deobandi Islam continued since the partition of India. Maulana Ihtisham ul Haq Thanvi, Maulana Shams ul Haq Afghani and Maulana Muhammad Idress Kandhalvi migrated to Pakistan and the teachings and influence of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi gathered them on one platform through the ideas of Maulana Khair Muhammad.

Organisational Committee of the Board

Maulana Khair Muhammad called a meeting of leading Deobandi scholars on March 22, 1957 in Khair ul Madaris Multan to discuss the issues and problem faced by madrasas.¹⁵ The first structural and organising committee was given the task of bringing all the madrasas on a unified platform. Maulana Khair Muhammad was the President of this Committee and Maulana Ihtisham ul Haq was its convenor.¹⁶ The President of the Committee was given the right to increase or decrease the numerical strength of members to serve on the Committee. The initial members of the organising Committee were as follow:¹⁷

Sr. No.	Name of Member	Position	Address
1.	Maulana Khair Muhammad	President	<i>Muhtamim</i> , Jamia Khair ul Madaris, Multan
2.	Maulana Ihtisham ul Haq Thanvi	Convenor	Jamia Ihtishamia, Karachi
3.	Maulana Shams ul Haq Afghani	Member	Jamia Islamai, Bahawalpur
4.	Maulana Muhammad Idress Kandhalvi	Member	Jamia Ashrafia, Lahore
5.	Maulana Ahmad Ali	Member	Madrasa Qasim ul Uloom Sheeranwala Gate, Lahore

6.	Maulana Mufti Muhammad Sadiq	Member	Jamia Islamai, Bahawalpur
7.	Maulana Fazal Ahmed	Member	Jamia Mazhar ul Uloom, KhadaLiyari, Karachi
8.	Maulana Arz Muhammad	Member	<i>Muhtamim</i> , Jamia Matla ul Uloom, Quetta
9.	Maulana Mufti Muhammad Usman	Member	Madrasa Ahrar ul Islam, Karachi
10.	Maulana Abdullah Jalandhari	Member	Jamia Rasheedia, Sahiwal
11.	Maulana Mufti Muhammad Abdullah	Member	Jamia Khair ul Madaris, Multan
12.	Maulana Muhammad Ali Jalandhari	Member	<i>Muhtamim</i> , Madrasa Munawar ul Islam, Toba Tek Singh

The President and Convenor of the organising Committee called the first meeting of committee on May 1, 1959 at Dar ul Uloom Islamia Ashradabad, Tando Allah Yar. The meeting attended by all members continued its consultations for two consecutive days. The second meeting was held on May 26, 1959 and it was decided to establish an organisation of madrasas. A draft constitution of organisation was prepared. Third session of the committee was convened on June 24 and 25, 1959 to vet the minutes of previous meeting. Changes in draft constitution were proposed in this meeting. The fourth and final meeting of the committee was held on October 18, 1959. In this meeting approval of establishing “*Wifaq ul Madaris al Arabia*” was given after long deliberations. It was also decided that *shura* members would approve of Board’s constitution and its President would be elected by the *shura* members.¹⁸ The headquarters of the Board was to be situated in Multan. The *maslak* of Board was declared to be Hanafi, *AhlSunnatwalJammata* and following of Deobandi scholars.

First *Shura* Meeting and selection of Office Bearers for the Board

Maulana Khair Muhammad became the President of the committee. He chaired all four sessions of consultations and gave consents and approvals of the documents. In this way, Maulana Khair Muhammad and Jamia Khair ul Madaris got focal attention and got credit of the creation of Deobandi madrasa education board in shape of “*Wifaq ul Madaris al Arabia*”. Khair ul Madaris also got another feather in its cap by holding the first *shura* meeting of Board in its accommodation. The first *shura* meeting was held on the same date of the inauguration of the Board which was October 18, 1959.¹⁹ The simple procedure for taking *ulama* as

shura members was adopted. All those who were present in meeting and had filled and signed Board affiliation form were included as *shura* members and the initial strength of the *shura* members was one hundred and one.²⁰

The first *shura* meeting approved the Board's constitution and approved its annual budget. It also elected its first President Allama Shams ul Haq Afghani for the period of three years. First Vice President was Maulana Khair Muhammad and second Vice President was Maulana Muhammad Yousuf Binori. First *Nazim-i-Al'a* was Maulana Mufti Mahmud while Maulana Khair Muhammad and Maulana Mufti Mahmud proposed that Maulana Mufti Muhammad Abdullah be appointed the first treasurer of the Board.²¹

The following list of Presidents of the Board can help us in understanding that all the leaders of the Board came from different Deobandi institutions and in this way patronage of the Board was rotated and handed over to other Deobandi leaders who were followers of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi.²²

Sr. No.	Name of Board's President	Madrassa/ Jamia	From	To	Total time duration in Office
1.	Maulana Shamas ul Haq Afghani	Jamia Islamai Bahawalpur	October 19, 1959	January 12, 1963	3 years and 3 months
2.	Maulana Khair Muhammad	Jamia Khair ul Madaris, Multan	January 12, 1963	October 22, 1970	7 years
3.	Maulana Muhammad Yousuf Binori	Jamia'tulUloom Islamia, Karachi	May 30, 1973	October 17, 1977	4 years and 4 months
4.	Maulana Mufti Mahmud	Jamia Qasim ul Uloom, Multan	May 15, 1978	October 14, 1980	2 years and 5 months
5.	Maulana Muhammad Idrees Meeruthi	Jamia tulUloom Islamia, Karachi	November 30, 1980	1988	8 years
6.	Maulana Saleem Ullah Khan	Jamia Farooqia, Karachi	June 8, 1989	January 15, 2017	27 years and 7 months

Board's administrative hierarchy includes President, Vice Presidents, *Nazim-i-Alaa*, *Markazi Nazmin*, Provincial *Nazmin*, *Nazim*

Daftar and *Khazan* Wifaq. By the year 2000, Board had more than six thousand madrasas affiliated to it. It controlled the curriculum, examinations, the issuance of degrees and certificates.²³ A testament to the success of the Board is the Government of Pakistan's official approval and acceptance of the madrasa certificates and degrees, for which, the equivalence of *Shahdat ul Almiyah* is to Master of Arts.²⁴

Objectives of the creation of Wifaq ul Madaris

The elected office bearers (*Majlis-i-Amla*) met for the first time on November 16, 1959 and approval for the appointment of treasurer was given. As the first *Shura* of the Wifaq approved its constitution, following objectives of Board's establishment were explained in the meeting.²⁵

- a. The Board will devise a complete and comprehensive curriculum for the following *darajats* (levels):
 - i) *Ibtadai* (Primary) ii) *Wustani* (Middle)
 - iii) *Foqani* (Advanced) iv) *DarjaTakmeel* (Final)
- b. The Board will try to provide a platform to *Ibtadai*, *Wustani* and *Foqani* madrasas to connect to each other and serve as organisational base for all of the madrasas.
- c. The Board will have a closer view of the needs and necessities of the latest religious trends in the curriculum and as per the need will produce books for the curriculum.
- d. The Board will be responsible for bringing harmony, unity and uniformity in the educational curriculum, examination system and regularity in all those madrasas who will affiliate themselves with this Board.
- e. The Board will be responsible for research and publication of Islamic studies according to the needs of hour and will produce and commission authentic and researched books on important topics.
- f. The Board will follow the right and effective path for the progress, prosperity and survival of the religious seminaries (*Madaras-i-Deeniah*).
- g. The Board will be responsible for providing funds for the above mentioned objectives.

While looking into the details of these objectives, a few things need to be clarified. The first and foremost point is the involvement of Maulana Khair Muhammad at each and every stage. No doubt, Maulana Khair Muhammad was the one who thought about an institutional base for all Deobandi madrasas but he was very influential and vocal in all the developments from the day one till the declaration of the Board's

establishment. The first meeting of *akabr ulama* (senior scholars) was held at Khair ul Madaris. Maulana Khair Muhammad was member of each committee and hence his role in Board's creation and promulgation of Khair ul Madaris as the mouthpiece of Board went to each and every corner of Pakistan. Maulana Khair Muhammad and his Khair ul Madaris gained ample support of the locals within the first decade of their relocation in Multan after they migrated from Jalandhar.

Another issue that needs to be clarified is the Board's financial position, and source of income of such a substantial institution. The appointment of treasurer for the Board was already made in initial meetings. It was decided that a bank account would be opened for the maintenance of funds in shape of cash deposits and withdrawal must be through cheques.²⁶ It was decided in the first *shura* that all the madrasas that are affiliated with Board will have to pay a registration fee and this registration fee was decided for *Ibtadai* madrasa twenty five rupees, *Wustani* madrasas fifty rupees and *Foqani* madrasas hundred rupees.²⁷ All madrasas would pay eight percent of their annual income to Board as donation for running its day to day routine matters and business. All madrasas had to mention their income in their registration form and whatever was mentioned in the registration form was accepted by the Board without question.²⁸ It was decided in July 1961 during a meeting held at Jamia Binori Town Karachi that the Board and its affiliated madrasas would submit to a government audit.²⁹

It was further decided in a meeting held under the leadership of Maulana Khair Muhammad on April 1, 1963 that Board will open a current account in Habib Bank and withdrawal of money from the bank will be with two signatures on the cheque. The authority to sign cheques was entrusted to the President, *Nazim-i-Ala'a* or President and Treasurer. The *shura* also decided to go for a public campaign for collection of donations from well-off people. This type of public subscription also supported many madrasas and other such initiatives. The *shura* decided that Maulana Muhammad Yousaf Binori would write public subscription appeal and it would be published with the signatures of Maulana Khair Muhammad as President, Maulana Muhammad Yousuf Binori as Vice President, Maulana Mufti Mahmud as *Nazim-i-Ala'a*, Maulana Shams ul Haq Afghani and Maulana Abdul Haq.³⁰

Taking an examination fee from the student was another issue which the *shurah* had to resolve. Initially it was decided that each student appearing for *Foqani* examination had to pay three rupees and

each *Wustani* student would pay two rupees. But on the request of madrasas which were already paying donations to Board, it was decided that only qualified and pass candidate would pay five rupees as examination expenses. The pass candidates had to pay a degree or certificate fee later when they applied for obtaining it.³¹

The establishment of the Board in 1959 as an immediate response to Ayub Khan's policies from the ulama was to continue their struggle for the service of religion, Islam, Islamic education. This struggle for the creation of central education board was also the need of the hour for maintaining a close relationship, ties and collaboration among the Deobandi madrasa network throughout Pakistan. The creation of board continued providing direct and indirect support to Khair ul Madaris for its establishment and strengthening its position within the madrasa network. This strengthening and support of the Khair ul Madaris having the platform of Wifaq ul Madaris gave Maulana Khair Muhammad a central place and authority in deciding many important issues and appointments within newly established Board over the many years to come.

References

1. Abdul Majid, *Ta'ruf Wifaq ul Madaris Al Arabia Pakistan*. (Multan: Central Office Wifaq, 2016), 3.
2. Ibid., 4. The initial committee comprised of Maulana Shams ul Haq Afghani as President Wifaq, Maulana Khair Muhammad Jalandhari as Vice President I, Maulana Yousaf Banori as Vice President II, Maulana Mufti Mahmud as Nazim-e-Al'aa and Maulana Mufti Abdullah as Treasurer.
3. Ibid., 5.
4. Ali Riaz, *Faithful Education: Madrassahs in South Asia*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 93.

Sr. No	Year	Madrasas	Sr. No	Year	Madrasas
1.	1947	245	5.	1988	2,861
2.	1960	472	6.	1995	3,906
3.	1971	908	7.	2000	6,761
4.	1980	2,056	8.	2003	7,000

5. Jamal Malik, *Colonialization of Islam: Dissolution of Traditional Institutions in Pakistan*. (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1996), 122.
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12. Fazul Rahman, "Some Islamic Issues in the Ayyub Khan Era" in Donald P. Little (ed.). *Essays on Islamic Civilization* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 284.
13. Rohan Gunaratna and Khuram Iqbal, *Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero*. (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2011), 137.
14. Following are the major religious educational boards.

Sr. No	Name of Madrasa Education Board	Sub-sect	Headquarter	Established
1.	Wifaq ul Madaris al Arabia	Deobandi	Multan	1959
2.	Tanzim ul Madaris	Barelvi	Lahore	1960
3.	Wifaq ul Madaris (Shia)	Shia	Lahore	1959
4.	Rabitatul Madaris al Islamia	Jamat-i-Islami	Lahore	1983
5.	Wifaq ul Madaris al Salafia	Ahl-i-Hadith	Faisalabad	1955

15. Maulana Abdul Majid, "Wifaq ul Madaris Al Arabia ki Karkardgi Lamha ba Lamha Qadam ba Qadam," *Monthly Wifaq Al Madaris*, Multan, No. 7: April 2016, 24.
16. Ibid.,
17. Ibid.,
18. Ibid.,
19. Aftab Ahmed, *Khair ul Sawaneh*. (Multan: Idara Khair ul Ma'arif, 2006), 193.
20. Abdul Majid, "Wifaq ul Madaris Al Arabia ki Karkardgi Lamha ba Lamha Qadam ba Qadam," 25.
21. Ibid.,
22. *Tawrf Wifaq ul Madaris Al Arabia Pakistan*, (Multan: Wifaq ul Madaris, 2016), 27.
23. Aftab Ahmed, *Khair ul Sawaneh*, 193.
24. The Government of Pakistan's Higher Education Commission vide its letter No. 8-16/ HEC/ A&A/ 2004 accepts *Shahdat ul Almia* equal to Master of Arts (M.A) in Arabic and Islamic studies. For details of Government of Pakistan's recognition of these madrasa degrees see <http://www.wifaqulmadaris.org/downloads/NotificationLetters/4.pdf> (Accessed on July 19, 2017)
25. Ibid.,
26. Ibid., 29.
27. Ibid.,
28. Ibid., 30.
29. Ibid.,
30. Ibid.,
31. Ibid., 31.