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Influence of Deoband School of Thought in South Africa

Muhammadullah Khalili Qasmi^{*}

Introduction

The Deoband School of thought originated in the post-Mughal India as a revivalist movement and it derived its name from Deoband, a town in the state of Uttar Pradesh in northern India, where the world renowned Islamic university Darul Uloom Deoband is situated. The Deobandi movement developed as a counter response to British colonialism in India, which on the one hand snatched power from the Muslims and on the other hand was making an attack on the faith of the Indians by a huge army of Christian missionaries who were busy in executing their agenda under the direct supervision of the government. The British politicians very proudly expressed their determination to form a class who may be interpreters between them and the millions whom they govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, words and intellect.¹

At that critical juncture of time, there were a few fortunate Ulama (Muslim scholars trained in theology and jurisprudence) who escaped the deadly reprisal launched against them. They did not sit back quietly and hope to preserve the Muslim honour and Islamic heritage. So, a group of the Ulama and Mashayikh, the most prominent among them Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanotavi and Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi founded a Muslim seminary (*madrakah*) in Deoband with the sole purpose of educating the Muslim youth and safeguarding the Muslim culture and their heritage. This *madrakah* in Deoband was later called as Darul Uloom Deoband and became the centre of Muslim revivalist and anti-

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¹ Sayyid Tufail Ahmad Manglori Alig, *Musalmānon Ka Raushan Mustaqbil*, Mumbai, Maktabah Al-Haq Jogeshwari 2001, pp. 167-172.

imperialist ideology which was later known as Deobandi School of Thought.

The Deobandi School of Thought is nowadays followed primarily in South Asia (also referred to as the Indian subcontinent that includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka), as well as in Afghanistan, Burma, Malaysia, South Africa, United Kingdom and many other parts of the world.

Darul Uloom Deoband

Darul Uloom Deoband was the centre of Deobandis which was started in Deoband on 15 Muharram, 1283 AH, Thursday (31 May 1866). Seeing the simple and ordinary manner in which Darul Uloom had been started, it was difficult to visualize that this *madrakah*, which began so humbly with a lack of equipment, was destined to become the centre of the Islamic sciences in that part of the world.

Darul Uloom Deoband was the pioneering Muslim institution which relied chiefly on the public contributions without taking any help from any government. As its fundamental principle, it was committed not to accept any aid from any government and carried out its activities from the funds contributed by the public. This helped Darul Uloom to have close attachment with the masses. The second fundamental principle of Darul Uloom was to provide totally free education to all the students. This helped greatly the poor families of Indian community to get their children educated without bearing the burden of educational expenses. Darul Uloom and its allied *madrakas* have played a great role to promote literacy and eradicate ignorance.

The third fundamental principle was to establish Muslim seminaries (*madrakah*) and manage its activities through Majlis Shura (Executive Council) selected from among the prominent personalities of Muslim society. This principle helped the *madrasa* system develop in democratic way with utter transparency and reliability.²

² Maulāna Qāri Muḥammad Ṭayyib Qāsmi, *Dārul Uloom ki Sad Sālah Zindagi*, Deoband, Daftar-e-Ihtimam, 1965, pp. 17-18.

Deoband's Expansionary Model and Its Ideological Formations

The model of Deoband madrasah was followed in different parts of South Asia where they began to mushroom numerically. The madrasah Mazahir Uloom in Saharanpur was established just six months after Darul Uloom and this was followed by a chain of *madrasas*. The Deobandi scholars, who migrated to other countries established madrasas in their places on the Deoband model; this model was even replicated in Arabia where Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanwi (1818-1891) started Madrasa Sawlatiyah in Makkah in 1875AD/1292 AH that was attended by a few South Africans.³ And later Maulana Syed Ahmad Faizabadi (1876-1939) founded Madrasat al-Uloom al-Shariyah in Madinah in 1921AD/1340AH. These two seminaries later on became educational centres and played key role in educating the Arabs for quite some time; this was particularly so during the last years of Ottoman rule and during the early decades when Saudi Arabia was created as an independent state.⁴

Right from the beginning, Darul Uloom Deoband attracted students from distant western and eastern states of India as well as from neighbouring and distant countries like Afghanistan, Iran, Bukhara, Samarqand and Burma; while in latter periods there were students from the Malay Archipelago, others came from Africa, Europe and the Americas. Having acquired the knowledge of Islam and its culture from Darul Uloom Deoband, these accomplished graduates, in accordance with the demands of the time, rendered valuable services in spreading correct religious beliefs, imparting religious sciences and doing social reform.⁵

In this way, Darul Uloom Deoband and its allied madrasas produced hundreds of thousand graduates who went out to represent Islam among Muslim communities throughout the world. The majority of personalities, well-versed in the religious sciences, who find mention in the history of post-Moghul Indian subcontinent

3 Sayyid Maḥbūb Riḍwī, *History of Dārul Uloom Deoband*, Deoband, Idārah Ihtimām, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 349, 374.

4 Ibid vol. 2, pp. 57-58.

5 Ibid vol. 1, p. 196.

have either quenched their thirst from this very great river of knowledge or benefited from the educational institutions established at the pattern of Darul Uloom.

These graduates went out to their areas zealously to revive true Muslim spirit, reform the social and religious innovations through establishing Muslim seminaries, imparting authentic Islamic knowledge, preaching the masses and presenting a role model life on the pattern set by these Muslim luminaries. In this way, the class of scholars was recognized with its attribution to Deoband and the masses started to associate themselves with those Ulama.

Thus the term Deobandi term slowly came into being. Though the Deobandi School started out in South Asia, it had since spread to Central Asia, Southern Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Americas.

Deobandi Paradigm

The Deoband School is a revivalist and puritan movement within Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaat (Sunni Islam). The Deobandis are not different from the Ahle Sunnat, in fact, their lineage and chain reaches in the same direction. Hence, insofar as their methods and ideologies are concerned, they are not any new sect, nor are they a sect which has been initiated afterwards. In reality, they (Ulama of Deoband) are from the actual Ahl al-Sunnah which has come down and transmitted from before. Thus, the Deoband School inherited these distinct features and promoted them in the shape of a movement. They, in the tenets of faith, followed in principle the Maturidi School of Islamic theology attributed to the Imam Abu Mansur Maturidi (853-944 AD), but in many issues they adhered to the Ashari school of theology attributed to Imam Abu al-Hasan Ashari (874-936 AD).⁶

The Deobandi movement was mainly inspired by the School of Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (1703-1762 AD), the celebrated Muslim thinker, towering philosopher and genius Muslim scholar of India in the eighteenth century. The School of Shah Waliullah had three

⁶ Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyib Qasmi, *Ulama-e-Deoband ka Dini Rukh awr Maslaki Mizaj*, Lahore, Idarah-e-Islamiyat, 1988, pp. 100, 183.

distinct features: (1) bringing back the Muslim Ummah to the original teachings of the Quran and Hadith, (2) avoiding exaggeration and imbalance in *Fiqh* issues and (3) discarding all un-Islamic traditions and innovations in religion. While with regard to *Fiqh* (Muslim Jurisprudence), the Deoband School held that the safest way for the people in this age of carnal desires is to adhere to any of the Four Schools of *Fiqh*. So, the Deobandis predominantly belong to Hanafi School of *Fiqh* and they are strong proponents of the doctrine of *Taqlid* with full respect to the opinions of other schools.⁷ The Ulama of Deoband also emphasized the need for self-reform and spiritual refinement; a process that is undertaken through taking a pledge of allegiance at the hands of a *Shaykh* (spiritual guide). They call it as *tazkiya* or *ihsan* and endorse all the four sufi orders namely Chistiyya, Naqshbandiya, Qadriya and Suhrawardiya. They believe in a reformed and balanced form of *tasawwuf* which is centered in purification of heart in the light of Quran, Hadith and Sahabah. Their *tasawwuf* is very much different from the traditional mysticism and Sufism which has accepted *bid'a* (innovations in religion).⁸

Deobandis' Salient Features

Moderate Religious Ideology: Moderate and balanced religious ideology is the most distinct feature of Deoband School. In theological issues, Deoband kept itself perfectly on the straight path of Ahl al-Sunnah by focusing *tawhid* (oneness of Allah) along with full respect to the Prophet (SAW) and regard to his Companions. With regard to *Fiqh*, it regarded following a particular *Fiqh* as necessary due to conditions of the people, but did not advocate rigid *taqlid* that disrespects difference of opinion and rejects the expediencies of the masses. Similarly, the Ulama of Deoband neither rejected *tasawwuf* outright nor accepted many new things which were added to it in the name of religion. So, they chose the Sufi orders in order to purify their hearts and adorn themselves with high morals,

7 *ibid* pp. 142-146.

8 *ibid* pp. 126-138.

but they shun practices and notions that were added to the original ways of purification that were drawn from the original Islamic sources and were in accordance with the ways of pious *salaḥ*. Likewise, with regard to innovations and customs, on the one hand they very fairly rejected them and showed the true face of Islam, but on the other hand they argued with the opponents respectfully and academically without transgressing the limits in regarding them astray or *kafir*.⁹

Strong Education System: The curriculum of Deoband proved to be the most fascinating thing which shaped their intellectual and academic strength. The Deoband system of education imbibed all the more useful aspects of the three education centres that were prevalent in the last days of Mughals i.e. (1) Shah Waliullah School which focused more on Hadith, (2) Firangi Maḥal School of Mulla Nizamuddin of Lucknow (b. 1678) who introduced the famous Dars-e-Nizami syllabus, this school was known for its interest in Islamic Fiqh (jurisprudence), (3) Khairabadi School which focused more on rational sciences. So, Darul Uloom Deoband absorbed the good aspects of all the three schools and prepared a balanced syllabus which was capable to produce farsighted ulama and in-depth scholarship. Moreover, along with educating the students, they paid greater attention to their Islamic nurturing and moral upbringing.¹⁰ This resulted in producing highly qualified ulama and Islamic scholars in the fields of Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh and other Islamic sciences. These Ulama rendered matchless contributions to Islamic sciences especially they wrote voluminous works in the science of Tafsir, Hadith and Fiqh.

Preaching Zeal: Deoband's Ulama proved to be the most down-to-earth preachers and mass leaders; this is due to their unmatched association with the masses. This is more reflected in the phenomenon of Tablighi Jamaat which was started by Maulana Muḥammad

9 Maulāna Qāri Muḥammad Tayyib Qāsmi, *Maslak-e-Ulama-e-Deoband*, Lahore, Tayyib Publishers, 1997.

10 Muhammadullah Khalili Qasmi, *Madrassa Education: Its Strength and Weakness*, New Delhi, Manak Publications, 2005, pp 40-55, 86.

Ilyas Kandhlawi (1885-1944) in the region of Mewat around 1920 and which later on spread to the whole world.¹¹

Spirituality and Self-reformation through *tasawwuf* has also been a salient feature of the Deoband School. All the Ulama of Deoband have attached themselves to any of the *tasawwuf* order for purifying their souls and reforming their selves by giving *bayaah* (pledge of allegiance) to any *Shaykh*.

Sustainable Political Ideology: The Deoband *madrassa* was founded to counter the anti-Muslim policies in British India by arming the Muslims with true Islamic knowledge and creating awareness among them. The manifestation of their thought as a whole is reflected in the establishment of Jamiat Ulama-Hind which became a pioneering organization in India to avoid direct armed clash and instead prefer political solutions to the problems of Indians. Thus the Deobandis advocated the notion of composite nationalism according to which Hindus and Muslims constituted one nation and in fact were united in the struggle against the British colonialism. The dominant majority of the Deoband Ulama opposed the division of India on religious grounds; they favoured coexistence.¹² More recently, Darul Uloom Deoband and Jamiat Ulama have been at the forefront of the organizations which fiercely opposed terrorism of any sort and regarded it unlawful and unacceptable.

How Deoband School of Thought Reached African Coasts?

Darul Uloom gained academic centrality in the Muslim world from the time of its inception and the report of its fame, passing from Asia, had reached Africa and Europe. Similarly, the sphere of its beneficence, too, was not confined to India only. As there were students from different provinces and places of India present in Darul Uloom, students from Kabul and Iran, Balkh and Bukhara, China and Russia, and Syria and Hejaz used to undertake journeys to Deoband to acquire the knowledge of the Quran and the Hadith.

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tablighi_Jamaat.

¹² Manglori Alig, *Musalmanon Ka Raushan Mustaqbil*, pp. 509-522.

If, on the one hand, the compatriots of Imam Bukhari were busy in acquiring his old legacy and taking it back to Bukhara, on the other, those benefitted by the Darul Uloom, reaching Mosul and Hejaz, especially the holy Madinah, were cultivating relation with their original spring.¹³

The Deoband reached African coast through the Muslim traders from Gujarat who migrated and settled there in later 19th and early 20th century. The Gujarati students, especially from the Sunni Bohras community of Surat and Bharoch districts of Gujarat attended Darul Uloom Deoband in later 19th century. Some of these graduates from Gujarat became scholars and had notable social and religious contributions.

Of them is Maulana Ahmed Buzurg Surti (1880-1951) from Simlak in Surat district of Gujarat. He was enrolled in Darul Uloom in 1318 AH/1900 AD and graduated in 1321 AH/1903 AD. He also gave pledge of allegiance to Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi and stayed at his service for one year. Then he returned to his native-place and after some time went away to South Africa. Later, he was also designated the post of Mufti in Burma. After his return from Burma, he was appointed Rector of the famous Madrasa of Dabhel in Surat. He was a prominent Gujarati and South African scholar who was directly trained and educated by the great founders of Deobandi School i.e. Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905) and Shaikh al-Hind Maulana Mahmud al-Hasan Deobandi (1851-1920).¹⁴ Maulana Mufti Ismail Bismillah (1898-1959) was the second prominent graduate of Deoband who migrated to South Africa. He later moved to Burma and then started teaching in Dabhel madrasa in Surat.¹⁵

South Africa's Deoband Trained Ulama

The first direct student from South Africa to Deoband was Maulāna Muḥammad Bin Musa Afriqi (1322/1904-1382/1963) who

13 Ridwi, *History of Dārul Uloom Deoband*, vol. 2, pp. 196.

14 *ibid* vol. 2, pp 66-67.

15 *ibid* vol. 2, pp 94-95.

originally belonged to Simlak, adjacent to Dabhel, in Surat district of Gujarat but his family had migrated to South Africa some generations ago and had settled down in Johannesburg. He became prominent disciple of towering scholar of Hadith in Deoband, Allamah Anwar Shah Kashmiri (1875-1933). Having completed his education, he went back to Johannesburg and there, along with his very vast commercial business, continued to render religious services on a large scale. For the teaching of Islamic and contemporary sciences, he founded Watervall Islamic Institute in Johannesburg. He built a magnificent building for it and used to bear himself all the expenses of the Institute. According to the system of the Darul Uloom Deoband, along with free education, the provision for the students' boarding was also made by him. He was president of the Jamiat Ulama-e Transvaal for a long time. The construction and progress of the Madrasa of Dabhel owes largely to his huge financial help. He was always interested in academic works. Under the name of Majiis-ellmi he established a writers' guild at Dabhel in which rendered the remarkable achievement of publishing important books of great Indian scholars. He died in Johannesburg on April 16, 1963.¹⁶

The second prominent scholar of Deoband in South Africa was Ismail Mohamed known as Moulvi Cachalia (1908-2003). Moulvi Cachalia came from a family with a strong tradition of political activism. He was enrolled at Darul Uloom in Deoband in 1924 and completed his studies in 1930. Deoband played a part in molding his politics as most of his teachers were either members of the Indian National Congress or belonged to the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, an organization of Muslims in India which worked for the liberation of India in alliance with Congress. He was an eminent political activist in South Africa. He was a member of the Joint Passive Resistance Committee of 1946 and was arrested for leading a batch of women resisters. He was a member of the executive member of the TIC from 1946, vice-president from 1947, and secretary from 1951. He was also a member of the executive committee of the SAIC from 1947, founding member and secretary of the Transvaal Peace Council in

¹⁶ Ibid, vol. 2, pp. 111-112.

1950, and vice-president of the South African Peace Council. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the pattern was set for co-operation between the SAIC and the ANC.

Moulvi was a member of the National Action Committee and was seconded to Nelson Mandela during the 1952 Defiance Campaign. Along with Moses Kotane, ANC leader and chairman of the CPSA, Moulvi attended as a representative of the South African liberation movement at the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in April 1955. He did not have a passport, but Indian Prime Minister Nehru arranged their travel to the conference which focused on ending colonialism and bringing about better relations between the countries of Asia and Africa. On his return to South Africa Moulvi immersed himself in protest politics and was arrested and imprisoned for three months in the wake of state repression that followed the Sharpeville massacre (March 1960) and the banning of the ANC and PAC. Moulvi was served with restriction orders in 1963 and placed under house arrest. He escaped into exile in 1964 and established an ANC mission in Botswana. In 1967, he moved to India where he and Alfred Nzo launched an ANC mission in Delhi. India bestowed its premier honour, the Padma Shri, upon Moulvi Cachalia. Moulvi returned to South Africa in 1990 and participated in the ANC's election campaign in 1994.¹⁷

Shaikh al-Islam Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (1879-1857), Shaikh al-Hadith and Principal of Darul Uloom Deoband from 1927 to 1957, has a tremendous popularity among the Ulama of Deoband and his students spread across many countries teaching Hadith and imparting Islamic education. There are some students of him who either belonged to South Africa or later migrated to it. Among them is Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Pandor who runs a madrasa, and Maulana Bayazid Afriqi who is also a successor (*khalifah*) of him.¹⁸ Maulana Abdul Haq Umarjee, a senior Alim of South Africa who was the student of Shaikhul Islam Maulana Hussian Ahmad Madani and

17 Goolam Vahed, *Muslim Portraits: The Anti-Apartheid Struggle*, Johannesburg, Madiba Publishers, 2012, pp 58-59.

18 Mufti Muhammad Faruq, *Africa awr Khidmat Faqiah al-Ummat*, Deoband, Maktabah Nashr al-Mahmud, 1411 A. H.), p. 184.

served as president of Jamiatul Ulama KZN.¹⁹ There were several students of him who were enrolled in Darul Uloom Deoband as South Africans, they are:

1. Maulana Muhammad Qasim Afriqi graduated in 1948
2. Maulana Noor Ali Afriqi graduated in 1953
3. Maulana Muhammad Ismail Afriqi graduated in 1954
4. Maulana Abdul Khaliq Afriqi graduated in 1955
5. Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Pandor graduated in 1956
6. Maulana Muhammad Qasim Bharot graduated in 1957
7. Maulana Ibrahim Afriqi graduated in 1957

There has been considerable number of students from South Africa in Darul Uloom which reaches around 250 till the end of the 20th century. But, when the South African Muslims established big madrasas in their own country, they started to flock to those madrasas instead of taking pains to go to Deoband.

Deoband Darul Uloom Finds Supporters in South Africa

As the benevolence of the Darul Uloom widened and its expenses increased, the circle of its patrons and supporters also went on increasing, besides those of India, the charitable Muslims of other countries too took part in helping and supporting it. In 1910 AD, the charitable Muslims of South Africa had sent a tidy sum. This contribution went on increasing steadily since then and many sympathizers and helpers of the Darul Uloom rose up in many places of South Africa, like Durban, Natal, Transvaal, Stanger etc, and this mode which had begun from South Africa reached East Africa.²⁰ Likewise, in 1920, there was a fall in the donations and income of Darul Uloom from the Indian side, but the valuable donations from foreign countries especially South Africa compensated this deficiency.²¹

19 *Roznamah Al Jamiat Shaikh al-Islam Special Number*, Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind, Delhi 1957, pp. 15-17; *Hadhrat Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi, Life and Works*, South Africa, Ta'limi Board KZN, Isipingo Beach, 2011, p. 193.

20 *Ridwi, History of Dārul Uloom Deoband*, vol. 1, pp. 196-197.

21 *Ibid* vol. 1, p. 201.

In 1951, due to economic adversity that followed as a sequel of the war and partition of India, Darul Uloom was seriously affected as the big areas of income had gone over to Pakistan. So, a world-wide appeal for donations to the common Muslims of the world was published and this appeal was most heard in Pakistan and South Africa and donors from these countries particularly took greater part in it. Thus, Darul Uloom which was perilously swirled in the maelstrom of financial stringency escaped and sailed forth towards the shore of desire.²² Later in 1971, a hostel was particularly built for the African students and was named *Afriqi Manzil* (Abode of the African students).²³

Deoband's Presence: Southern and Eastern Africa

In 1383 AH/1963 AD, the Vice-Chancellor of Darul Uloom Deoband, Maulana Qari Muḥammad Ṭayyib embarked on a journey to South Africa which proved to be very helpful in strengthening and expanding Deoband's roots in South Africa. A representative gathering of Muslims consisting of nearly two thousand individuals from all the four provinces of South Africa was present at the Johannesburg airport to welcome him. The Afrikaner mayor of Johannesburg, Mr. Ober Holes and his wife were also present on this occasion as also a large posse of white police. The vice-chancellor stayed in Johannesburg for 15 days. From there he went to Durban and thence to Cape Town. During his sojourn at Durban, he happened to visit several places in its vicinage. The misunderstandings prevalent in South Africa regarding the Deoband School were removed to a great extent by this Journey and lasting impressions were made on the people. A great advantage derived from participation in the gatherings and conferences in South Africa was that Darul Uloom was given an extensive introduction.²⁴

During this journey, the vice-chancellor particularly made a move that the Muslims of these places who might be backward as

22 Ibid vol. 1, p. 256.

23 Ibid vol. 1, p. 306.

24 ibid vol. 1, pp. 290-294.

regards to religion should send their children to the Darul Uloom for education so that adorned with religious education they, on their return, become the means of transmitting Islamic teachings to the masses of their respective places, besides this they can establish schools for Islamic education. In 1379 AH /1959 AD, the Vice-Chancellor Maulāna Qāri Muḥammad Ṭayyib embarked on a journey to Reunion (off the East African coast) at the invitation of the sympathizers of Darul Uloom there. During this journey, he happened to visit Zanzibar, Dar es Salaam, Mauritius, Madagascar, and different towns of Reunion. The inhabitants of these places welcomed the respected vice-chancellor reverentially and held functions in his honour.²⁵

South African Students at Mazahir Uloom of Saharanpur and Other Madrasas

Apart from Darul Uloom Deoband, there were several other Deobandi madrasas in India which housed and educated the students from Africa as well as from Surat and Bharoch districts of Gujarat who later migrated to South Africa and contributed to educational and religious fields. Mazahir Uloom in Saharanpur was the other prominent madrasa which attracted flocks of foreign students from South Africa. Shaikh al-Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariya Kandhlawi (1898-1982), the Principle of Mazahir Uloom, was the person who influenced the South African students the most. Then, it was Mufti Mahmud Hasan Gangohi, the Grand Mufti of Mazahir Uloom and Darul Uloom Deoband, who had major influence on South African students.²⁶

Madrassa Masihul Uloom in Jalalabad near Deoband run by Maulana Masihullah Khan Jalalabadi (1912-1992), the successors of famous Deobandi scholar Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, also attracted students from South Africa.²⁷ Madrasa Talim al-Din in Dabhel of Surat (established in 1908) was the central madrasa in Gujarat which

25 *ibid* vol. 1, p. 274.

26 Mufti Fārūq, *Africa awr Khidmat Faqīh al-Ummat*, p. 149.

27 *ibid* p. 200.

was situated in the heartland of Sunni Bohra community which largely makes the major portion of Indian Muslims in South Africa. The madrasa reached to its heights when great Deobandi scholar of Hadith Allamah Anwar Shah Kashmiri was invited there as Principle. The glory of the madrasa was added by other great scholars who joined Allamah Kashmiri like the Grand Mufti of Deoband Mufti Azizur Rahman Deobandi, Allamah Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani, Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Banuri, Maulana Badr Alam Meeruti. The celebrated scholar of Hadith Maulana Badr Alam Meeruthi (1898–1965) later moved to Madinah where countless South Africans vowed allegiance to him and his spiritual grace spread sufficiently in South Africa.²⁸ Similarly, other madrasas of Gujarat like Jamia Hussainia Rander, Jamia Ashrafiya Rander, Darul Uloom Matliwala, Darul Uloom Tarkesar, Darul Uloom Kanthariya also produced graduates who went to South Africa and contributed to promote Islamic education, Tabligh and social reform.²⁹

Jamiat Ulama in South Africa

Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind is the largest and pioneering Muslim organization in India which was founded in 1919 by a group of scholars; mainly the students of Shaikhul Hind and the most importantly Mufti Kifayatullah who was elected the first president of Jamiat. Later, Shaikh al-Islam Maulana Hussain Madani also served as its President. Jamiat favoured unarmed struggle against the British occupation of India, and in this regard, it allied with the Indian National Congress for the independence of India. Jamiat favoured national integrity of India, opposed partition and propounded a theological basis for its nationalistic philosophy. After the independence of India, Jamiat busied itself in educational, social and political development agenda of Muslims.

The Muslims in South Africa also established Jamiat Ulama in 1923 for the social and religious upliftment of Muslims in their country. The Jamiat is rendering remarkable services in the fields of

28 *ibid* pp 202; Ridwi, *History of Dārul Uloom Deoband*, vol. 1, p 102.

29 Mufti Fārūq, *Africa awr Khidmat Faqīh al-Ummat*, pp. 202-203.

education, dawah along with other religious activities.³⁰ Similarly, Jamiatul Ulama (KZN) established in 1955 is also working with primary objective was to preserve, protect and propagate Islam.³¹ Many eminent Ulama are associated to these Jamiats and they are contributing to educational, religious and social betterment of the Muslims as well as other countrymen.³² Jamiatul Ulama of Gauteng is another major organization which was founded by Maulana Ayob Kachwee in 2006.³³

Tablighi Jamaat in South Africa

Tablighi Jamaat, the Muslim preaching movement, began as an offshoot of the Deobandi movement. It was started by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi (1885-1944) who was a prominent graduate of Mazahir Uloom of Saharanpur and Darul Uloom Deoband. He started this movement in 1920 initially to revive Islamic awareness in the Mewat region near Delhi which was reeling under dark clouds of ignorance and religious unawareness. Later, this movement expanded to other parts of India and then to other parts of the world. Nowadays, records its presence and influence in nearly every country in the world where a considerable Muslim community lives.³⁴

Tablighi Jamaat is one of the major sources of Deoband's influence in South Africa on mass level. The second Amir (Head) of Tabligh, Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Kandhlawi (1917-1965) was very much interested to expand Tablighi activities in Africa. It was in 1956 that first Tablighi mission reached Kenya, Uganda, Tanzaniya, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Eastern Africa, Rhodesia, South Africa and Mauritius. the Jamaat comprised Gujaratis who were led by Molvi Musa Surati. Later in 1965, South Africa received a chain of Tablighi groups and it became the hub of Tablighi movement.

30 <http://www.jmtsa.co.za/about-us/history/>

31 <http://jamiat.org.za/about-us/>

32 Mufti Fārūq, *Africa awr Khidmat Faqīah al-Ummat*, pp 308-309

33 <http://www.thejamiat.co.za/>

34 Maulāna Asīr Adrawī, *Dārul Uloom Deoband: Ihyā-e-Islam ki Aẓīm Tahrik*, Deoband: Dārul Mualifin, 2003.

Thus countless Muslims joined this movement and spent their time, energy and wealth to promote it in their country.³⁵

South Asian Muslim 'Ulama: Their South African Footprints

Shaikh al-Hadith Maulana Zakariya Kandhlawi (1898 – 1982)

There are some personalities who influenced the Indian Muslims in South Africa to the core and the most prominent of them was Shaikh al-Hadith Maulana Muhammad Zakariya Kandhlawi. He was among the most distinguished Hadith scholars of India and a great contributor in the service of Hadith. He was given the honorary title of Shaikh al-Hadith (Great Scholar of Hadith for his extensive knowledge in the subject. Besides being a teacher of generations, he was a prolific writer and contributed around one hundred books in Urdu and Arabic. His masterpiece work is *Awjaz al-Masalik* (commentary of Muwatta Imam Malik) in eighteen volumes. He is also the author of *Fazail Aamal*, the handbook of Tablighi Jamaat for Da'wah, which has been translated into major languages of the world. Apart from being Shaikh al-Hadith in Mazahir Uloom in Saharanpur, he was a shaikh (spiritual guide) and many South African Muslims vowed pledge of allegiance (*bai'ah*) on his hand and he granted the status of *khalifah* (successor) to some most important personalities among them who are as follows:³⁶

- (1) Maulana Yusuf Tootla, Stanger
- (2) Haji Ibrahim Tootla, Stanger
- (3) Maulana Mufti Muhammad Suleiman Pandor - Madrasa New Town, Johannesburg
- (4) Maulana Ahmad Darwesh - Madrasa New Town, Johannesburg
- (5) Maulana Mufti Ahmad Mia - Al Ma'had al-Salafiya, Watervaal, Johannesburg
- (6) Maulana Mufti Bashir Hasan, Durban
- (7) Maulana Muhammad Ibrahim Pandor, Johannesburg

35 Sayyid Muhammad Thāni Ḥasani, *Sawāniḥ Maulāna Muḥammad Yūsuf Kāndhlawī*, (Karachi: Shāhīb Trading Company, 1978), pp 504-514.

36 Mufti Fārūq, *Africa awr Khidmat Faqīh al-Ummat*, pp 222-223.

- (8) Maulana Muhammad Musa Pandor, Johannesburg
- (9) Maulana Ibrahim Abd al-Rahman Mia - Jame' Masjid, Lenasia, Johannesburg
- (10) Maulana Muhammad Gadi - White River, Eastern Transvaal, South Africa

Maulana Masihullah Khan (1912-1992)

Maulana Masihullah Khan was a prominent Deobandi scholar and spiritual figure of India. He was one of the prominent successors of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi. His Madrasa in Jalalabad District Muzafarnagar (UP India) attracted many students from South Africa and many South African Muslims gave bai'ah (vow) of allegiance to him for spiritual self-reformation. He granted successor-ship (*khilafah*) to five persons from South Africa.³⁷

Mufti Mahmud Hasan Gangohi

Mufti Mahmud Hasan Gangohi (1907-1996), born in Gangoh India, was the other person who influenced the Muslims in South Africa to the core. He was the most senior successor of Shaikh al-Hadith Maulana Zakariya. Mufti Mahmud was among the great luminaries of Deoband School. He was grand Mufti and Professor of Hadith in Darul Uloom Deoband as well as Mazahir Uloom Saharanpur. He was an exemplary teacher, mentor, prolific writer and prominent spiritual leader. His fatwa compendium entitled *Fatawa Mahmudiya* was published in 25 volumes and is considered to be one of the best reference book on Hanafi Jurisprudence in Urdu language.

There have been hundreds of South African and Gujarati students who studied at Mufti Mahmud Hasan Gangohi in Deoband and Saharanpur. Thousands of South African Muslims took pledge of allegiance (*bai'ah*) to him as a spiritual guide and he awarded his successor-ship (*khilafat*) to 30 personalities from South Africa who attained perfection in spirituality and achieved the high status in

37 Mufti Rashid Ahmad Mewati Miftāhi, *Hayat Masīh al-Ummat*, Mewāt, Idārah Tālifāt Masīh al-Ummat, 1995, p. 668.

rectifying their inner selves and purifying their souls. All these successors have great influence in their circle and area while some of them are famous across the Southern Africa, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.³⁸ His khalifahs³⁹ are as follows:

1. Maulana Muhammad Ebrahim Pandor (Germiston)
2. Mufti Ebrahim Mahmood Salehjee (Isipingo Beach)
3. Mufti Ebrahim Desai (Durban)
4. Maulana Ebrahim Dadabhai (Jo'burg)
5. Mufti Ismail Abdur Raheem (Springs)
6. Maulana Ismail bin Ebrahim Pandor (Aazadville)
7. Maulana Ismail Gaardi (White River)
8. Maulana Qaari Ismail Eshaaq [RA] (Aazadville)
9. Maulana Ismail bin Mahmood Pandor (Jo'burg)
10. Haji Ismail bin Yusuf Pandor [RA]
11. Doctor Haji Ismail Docrat (Jo'burg)
12. Maulana Iqbal Hasan (Cape Town)
13. Mufti Radhaaul Haq (Darul Uloom Zakariyah)
14. Mufti Muhammad Sa'eed Mutaara (Azaadville)
15. Maulana Mufti Sulaiman Qaasim [RA] (Lenasia)
16. Mufti Shabir Ahmed Salooji (Darul Uloom Zakariyah)
17. Mufti Shabir Fakhrud Deen (Roshnee)
18. Haji Shabir Ahmed Lambaat (Palm Ridge)
19. Mufti Abdul Jaleel (Isipingo Beach)
20. Maulana Abdul Khaaliq Bhoola (Jo'burg)
21. Haafiz Abdur Rahman Mia [RA]
22. Maulana Muhammad Desai (Isipingo Beach)
23. Maulana Hakeem Muhammad Hafejee (Palm Ridge)
24. Haafiz Muhammad bin Musa Mia (Mias Farm)
25. Mufti Muhammad Ali Bopali (Darul Uloom Zakariyah)
26. Maulana Muhammad Musa Menk (Harare, Zimbabwe)
27. Maulana Musa bin Ebrahim Pandor (Elsburg)
28. Maulana Musa Memi
29. Maulana Musa bin Ismail Pandor (Hazeldene)

38 *Hadhrat Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi, Life and Works*, South Africa, Ta'limi Board, KZN, Isipingo Beach, 2011, pp. 238-239.

39 *Ibid* p. 193.

30. Maulana Yunus Patel (Durban)

Mufti Mahmud travelled extensively across South Africa and people flocked to him and took pledge of allegiance (*bai'ah*) to him. He even breathed his last in South Africa during his tour in 1996 and was buried in Elsburg near Hazedene.

Maulana As'ad Madani (1928-2006)

Maulana As'ad Madani (1928-2006) son of Shaikh al-Islam Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani also had major influence in South Africa and had many followers and granted successor-ship to several prominent religious personalities in South Africa.

South Africa's Prominent Deobandi Madrasas

The Deobandi Muslims in South Africa established many madrasas on Deoband pattern. Some of them are very famous and attract students from near and far off countries. Here we mention some of them which we came across during this research:

Waterval Islamic Institute (Mia's Farm) - Watervaal Islamic Institute was opened in July 1940 at Halfway House (between Johannesburg and Pretoria) by Maulana Muhammad bin Moosa Ismail Mia, a graduate of Darul Uloom Deoband⁴⁰. It is one of the first Islamic boarding institutes and has had a major impact on Muslims in South Africa via the numerous Islamic publications. Later this madrasa was managed by Maulana Ibrahim Mia and Mufti Ahmad Mia.⁴¹

Darul Ulum Newcastle, Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal was founded in 1971 by Maulana Muhammad Cassim Mohammed Sema, a graduate of Darul Uloom Deoband.⁴²

Al-Madrasah al-Arabiyyah al-Islamiyyah, Azaadville established in 1981 by Maulana 'Abdul Hamid, a graduate of Darul Uloom Deoband.⁴³

40 Ridwi, *History of Dārul Uloom Deoband*, vol. 2, pp. 112.

41 Mufti Fārūq, *Africa awr Khidmat Faqīh al-Ummat*, pp. 258-259

42 Ibid p. 260.

43 Ibid pp. 261-262.

Darul Uloom Zakariyya, Zakariyya Park, Lenasia was founded in 1983 by Maulana Mufti Shabbir Ahmad Salooji, Khaliah of Mufti Mahmood Hasan Gangohi. The school is also important within South Africa as an educational centre and a site for activities of the Tablighi Jamaat.⁴⁴

Madrasa Jāmi'ul Uloom in New Town of Johannesburg was promoted by Maulana Mufti Muhammad Suleiman Pandor and Maulana Ahmad Darwesh, both graduates of Darul Uloom Deoband and successors of Shaikh al-Hadith Maulana Zakariya.⁴⁵

Madrasah In'aamiyyah, Camperdown, KwaZulu-Natal - This madrasa is recognized for its Dar al-Ifta (Department of Fatwa Research and Training) which runs a popular online fatwa service.

Some other madrasas and organizations are:

Darul Uloom Springs by Maulana Ismail

Darul Uloom Taleemud Deen, Durban by Mufti E M H Salejee
Darul Uloom Camperdown — Maulana Madani

Madrasa Lodium Transvaal by Maulana Muhammad Abbas

Madrasa Estcourt, Natal by Mufti Ibrahim Salejee

Madrasa Roshnee by Mufti Shabbir Ahmad

Darul Uloom Abu Bakr in Malabar, Port Elizabeth founded by Mufti Siraj Desai in 2003

Darul Uloom Nu'maniyyah, Chatsworth, Durban established in 2001.

Jameah Mahmoodiyah in Persida Springs founded in 1992 by Mufti Ismail Rahim

Madrasah Mu'ainul Islam lil Muslimaat in Zakariyya Park by Mufti Ismail Rahim (for girls)

Madrasa Tarbiyat al-Banat Azaadville (for girls)

Muslim Judicial Council — Maulana Taha Kiraan

Majlis ul Ulema — Maulana A S Desai

Lenasia Muslim association — Maulana Khalid Pandor

Qasimul Uloom, an Islamic College in Cape Town initiated in 1986 by Maulana Ismail Allie

44 Ibid pp. 263-264.

45 Ibid pp. 269, 278.

Conclusion

South Africa is the only country outside the Indian subcontinent where the Deobandi School of Thought is manifested in its full bloom. All the essential elements of Deoband School i.e. Muslim education system, Tablighi Jamaat, *tasawwuf* and socio-political organizations like Jamiat Ulama are functioning there perfectly. The madrasas in South Africa offer higher Muslim education and now have become centre of Islamic education for foreigners who aspire to learn on Deoband pattern. Several of their graduates are western students, especially from the UK and United States. Even some offer religious education through English language and textbooks from these madrasas are used in English-medium Deobandi madrasas in the west to teach the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum.

Some madrasas in South Africa offer *fatwa* services which are recognized across the world. Likewise, South Africa is now known for producing remarkable Islamic literature in English language through translation and compilation. Similarly, with regards to Tablighi Jamaat, South Africa is a hub of preaching activities which expand up to the whole of southern and eastern Africa. The madrasas of South Africa produce graduates who spend their time and energy in the cause of Tablighi Jamaat. Several seniors Deobandi shaikhs and spiritual leaders had their sizable followers and successors (*khalifahs*) in South Africa and these successors are outstanding persons of their areas and have influence among the masses. Thus *tasawwuf* tradition of Deoband flourishes in South Africa.

The Deobandi Muslims of South Africa have many important and influential educational and socio-political organizations which play significant role in educating the masses and offering marvelous religious and social activities.

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