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A Short History of Deobandi Movement:Retrospect

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Abstract:*Deoband holds significant geographical and socio-political importance as the nineteenth-century town transformed via the introduction of railway, telegraph, post office, and educational institutions. As consequences revival movement started there; on which this paper is about. Deobandi movement undertook various reformations, via instruments of education. One of the major initiatives was providing an alternative form of knowledge and social consciousness against modern Western English education as well as against Hindu revivalist organizations like Arya Samaj. To what extent the reformation was on the margins of revivalist ideas is addressed in this paper. This paper further explains the religion and reformations of Deobandi movement in India and its effects on society. This research paper also draws on the Deobandi movement's supported Indian National Congress in opposing partition and supporting ideals of composite nationalism.*

Keywords*: Arya Samaj, Deobandi movement, Nationalism,Fatwa,Reformation,Ulema etc.*

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Introduction

The Deobandi is famous for Islamic education, culture, intellectual and spiritual centre. The Deobandi Islamic movement had started in Darul Uloom. The Darul Uloom Deoband learning

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centre was established on 30 May, 1866 by prominent Islamic scholars like Fazlur Rahman Usmani, Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi, Sayyid Muhammad Abidand and others. It is an Islamic seminary (Darul Uloom) in India and the largest in the world. Here, they strictly follow the Sunni orthodoxy of the Hanafi school and seek an intimate relationship with Turkish sultan Calip.[1] The Deoband school maintains a rigid and orthodox Islamic tradition. The Deobandi movement brought about different social and religious reformations. They introduced distinct Islamic education and law in the Indian subcontinent. They avoided western law and education. The Deobandi school of thought created awareness of South Asian Islamic identity. The *Ulamas* of Deobandi and religious thinkers' proponent that Muslims were of Indian origin, so Muslims are not foreigners, but rather indigenous. The majority of Deobandi *ulamas* supported in favour of composite Indian nationalism.[2] The education and thoughts of the Deobandi movement encouraged people towards composite nationalism. The prominent Deobandi thinker Husain Ahmad Madani proposed a composite Indian nation. His composite nation indicated a homeland for both Hindus and Muslims. But he did not want a separate nation or Pakistan. Iqbal also propagated composite nationalism through his poetry, prose and speech. The composite nationalism was important for keeping India undivided.

Religious Reformation of Deobandi Movement

The establishment of a modern religious educational institution was called Madrasa. This madras was an exception to British western education. In the early days, Deoband school was run by people who donated books, food for students and cash for teachers. This was indigenous donations; they considered the participation of the government and the wealthy to be harmful.[3] So the donors were only Indian. These were great feelings against British rule. This popular donation system was effective both financially and symbolically and it became a role model for new religious schools. Muhammad Qasim and Rashid Ahmad were two great patrons of Deoband School. This school was run in a modern way. Muhammad Nanautawi was the first principal, Zul Faqar Ali was a deputy inspector and Muhammad Munir Nanautawi was *Muhtamim* or comptroller of the education department of Deoband. The main goal of the school was to train well-educated ulamas, who would be dedicated to reforming Islam.[4] These *ulamas* had a duty to disseminate their learning and became writers or prayer leaders. Gradually, the branches of Deoband School spread to different parts of the Indian subcontinent. The students were trained in the Quran, Hadis, law, logic and philosophy. The Deobandi thinkers emphasised Hadis as a rational learning method. They considered the Hadis to be the correct practice and belief. They followed *fiqh* for popular teaching. Fiqh is an Islamic law or Sharia. They modified the ritual and ceremonial duties. This school used Urdu as a medium of instruction. They

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emphasised the development of the modern vernacular language. Students came from long distances, like Afghanistan and Chittagong. The school initiated technical courses and students were trained in crafts and trades. They had hope that this kind of training would help students support themselves and also these students share the benefits among their religious neighbours.[5] They also initiated teaching surveys and cartography in order to provide students with skills for jobs in the governing sectors. But these kinds of initiatives were not completely implemented. Deoband School had to give vocational training to the students in calligraphy and *tibb*. The system of medicine derived mainly from the classical Greek.[6] The students also trained in lithographic presses. In Islam, calligraphy was considered as a manifestation of spirituality and it was practiced by Sufis. Religious science was an important issue at this school. Deoband was the precursor of the modern school. The examination was conducted carefully and to prevent cheating, they identified their exam by number. After finishing education, an annual convocation was held and prizes were awarded to those with the highest grade. Those who completed the entire course were considered outstanding and awarded a *dastar* and a turban. Deoband became a central university where people came from Bengal, Madras and Punjab to study. Maulana Ghulam Rasul was an important teacher at this school. Husain Ahmad Madani was an important student of Deoband. This school maintained a close relationship between teachers and students. Deobandi maintain Shariat or the law and *tariqat* or the path. The aim of the Deoband movement Was to follow the law and path. They sought to teach all the Islamic sciences and to represent all the Sufi orders. They followed Shah Waliyullah. Mufti gave opinions on the law. They followed the Hanafi school of law. The Deobandi represented the jurisprudential position of taqlid or conformity.[7] Rashid Ahmad defined the Shafi position as fatwa. The Deobandi school studied the fundamental sources of the Quran and Hadis. They also practiced ijtihad. They followed *fatawa* in order to circumvent the British courts. The Muslims would not be taken by the government courts. The government courts took a year to solve a case, but Muslim courts take a minute. They preserved religious law. Their religion was saved from potential insults. Although many Muslims preferred British courts. The ulama discouraged their followers from using the British courts. Many individual Muslims followed the advices of *fatawa*. In the late 19th century, the collection of printed *fatawa* influenced the ulama. These *fatawa* limited the matters of belief, ritual and relation to other groups. Another *fatawa*, applied to individual cases in matters of family law and property. Ulama avoids issues related to court procedure, the conduct of state and issues cognizable under British law. The ulama focused on belief and ritual, *aqaid* and *ibadat*, which they explored with remarkable depth and range.[8] The *fatawa* deals with the manner of ablution, the correct time of prayer and the manner of *namaz*. By the enforcement of *fatawa*, the *ulamas* prohibited the funeral prayer from being recited in either a graveyard or mosque. They prohibited ceremonies on fixed days after the death of a Muslim person. The Deoband ulama opposed the celebration of *mauludu'n-nabi*, the birthday of the prophet. Because, it encouraged the belief that a dead person was actually present and it also elevated the importance of a fixed

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day that resembled the practices of the Hindus. The *fatawa* reflects three principles. These are to revive lapsed practices such as undertaking the hajj and allowing widows to remarry. Secondly, to avoid fixed holidays. The third is to prevent optional practices from being made obligatory, like the distribution of sweets after the completion of reading the Quran. The Deobandis tolerated differences among themselves and they criticised the practices of others.[9] This tolerance in society creates a social milieu and a dimension of *akhlaq* or the civility characteristic of respectable people. They held that the Shia denied the singularity of God, the humanity of the prophet and the finality of revelation. The Sunnis were aloof from the celebration of Muharram and avoided praying for them. The Deobandis criticised the two emerging groups of rival Sunnis, the Ahl-I Hadis and the Barelwis. From 1880, Rashid Ahmad issued *fatawa* that discouraged social and business intercourse with Hindus, forbade attendance at Arya Samaj lectures and deemed illegitimate the appearance of being Hindu, whether in dress, hairstyle, or the use of brass instead of copper vessels. He and other ulama opposed the customs of *sama* or music, recitation of the Fatihah, urs, pilgrimage, elaborate weddings and funeral ceremonies. These rituals were similar to Hindu festivals. They were concerned about British law because it affected them. Rashid Ahmad condemned British financial institutions for contravening the norms of sharia. He urged his followers to give up British institutions. He accused the missionaries of stopping corrupt practices. He advised Muslims to not attend missionary schools and to withdraw their daughters from them. He believed the British trafficked in offensive and polluting products like medicine, biscuits, and even dyes, all of which they mixed with alcohol. He forbade the use of foul-smelling British matches in mosques. Shah Abdul Aziz urged his followers not to dress like the English. The *fatawa* of Deobandi encouraged the Muslim community to have an attitude of moral and spiritual self-confidence. The *fatawa* was also imposed on the camera, telegraph, toothbrush and phonograph. Mohammad Qasim urged Muslims to cultivate their own cherished education. He said that through knowledge, you know the real Ruler and His will.[10] They did not accept the British colonial view that their motives were selfless and superior. The Deobandi movement focused on a correct and purified Islam, fostered a sense of confidence and moral worth among themselves and their followers.[11] The Deoband school was clearly influenced by Naqshbandi practice. The core of the meditational practices of the Deobandi, like Sufis everywhere, was zikr the recollection of the name of God. There are two kinds of zikr. The first one of zikr is the name of God alone, *zikr-i-ism-I zat*. The other one was *la ilaha illa llah*, which enshrines the fundamental truth of the nature of God and people. The aim of Zikr was the symbolic cleansing of the heart of all distraction and the impression on it of the single name of God. The Deoband ulama treated their followers and other people according to the Islamic medicine known as Yunani *tibb*. Medicine was widely understood to be not an objective science but an ancillary dimension of religion. *Amiliyyat* was the efficacy of cures was understood to depend on the will of God. The ulama studied the body of traditional medicine knowledge that was based on Greek principles. The *ulamas* had practiced

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tibb. They treated anyone, the rich or the poor, Hindus or Muslims. The Deobandi *ulamas* offered reformist guidance in matters of belief and ritual through the dispensation of fatwa. The ulama was teaching the rules of meditation to the disciples. They also provided guidance, understanding and material aid to their followers in times of personal crisis. The ulama provided their followers with a way to God, a tie to the great religious figures of the past and a sense of pride in their cultural tradition. Print technology has had a great impact on the Deobandi movement.[12] In the 19th century, reformers spread religious teaching through the printing press. Print capitalism had given the opportunity of cheap publication. Lithographic presses were established in North India. It published books in vernacular languages. Deoband school published writing in Urdu languages. Ulama began the publication of classical religious works like Hadis and translated the Quran. Darul Uloom Deobandi was established in 1866, but the political ideals and thoughts of Darul Uloom Deoband were founded up to ten years prior to its opening. The scholars and theologians of Darul Uloom Deobandi played an important role at the time of the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. They protest against British exploitation and misrule. They continued their call for the independence of India. An Islamic spiritual leader named Imdadullah Muhajir Makki and his disciples Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi, Muhammad Yaqub Nanautawi, Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi and others gathered at Thana Bhawan in 1857 to protest against British exploitation. In Thana Bhawan, the Sunnis declared Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki their ameer. In May 1857, the battle of Shamli took place between the forces of Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki and the British.[13]In 1913, Nanautawi's pupil, Mahmud Hasan Deobandi, was a leader in the independence movement. He incited revolution through a scheme that the Rowlatt committee called the Silken Letters. However, the scheme failed and Hasan and his followers were arrested and exiled. Mahmud Hasan Deobandi's group, Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, which included Husain Ahmad Madani, Kifayatullah Dehlawi, Syed Fakhruddin Ahmad, and others, joined with the Indian National Congress. Husain Ahmad Madani opposed the suggestion of the All-India Muslim League for the partition of India along sectarian lines. He also advocated democratic government with religious freedoms and tolerance. On 29 December 1929, Majlis-e-Ahrar-ul-Islam, a conservative Sunni Muslim Deobandi political party, was founded in Lahore. The founding members were disillusioned by the Khilafat Movement, which had aligned with the Indian National Congress. The party gathered support from the urban lower-middle class. It opposed Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the All-India Muslim League and in the early years of Pakistan wanted *Ahmadiyas* to be declared non-Muslims. In the pre-independence period, the Muslim League demanded separate territory and deteriorated Hindu Muslim relations. Riots had spread all over the subcontinent. In this political turmoil, the Deobandi Movement supported an undivided India. They reiterated the concept of composite nationalism. Deobandi *ulamas* tried to disseminate religious brotherhood and unity among Hindus and Muslims through composite nationalism.

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Composite Nationalism to Support Undivided India

Composite nationalism means a nation that is made up of people of diverse cultures, communities, castes and religions. Indian citizens have been maintaining distinctive religious traditions since ancient times. All the diverse faiths of the people are members of one united India. Many Indians had given the idea of composite nationalism. There were many contractions in their composite ideas. Bipin Chandra Pal said that Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other religious minorities should preserve their distinctive religious culture to fight against British rule. Before advent of British in India, there were less conflict Hindu-Muslim. A cordial relationship had prevailed between Hindus and Muslims. David Hardiman said that prior to the arrival of the British in India, there was no profound enmity between Hindus and Muslims. The British created division between the two religions. Jamal al Din Al- Afghani advocated for Hindu-Muslim unity. He opposed unity between Indian Muslims and foreign Muslims. The prominent persons were Hussain Ahmed Madani and Mohammad Iqbal, who propagated composite nationalism theory. Madani wanted the Islamic legitimacy of embracing secular democracy and cultural pluralism. It would be the best way to have a realistic future for Indian Muslims. On the other hand, Iqbal wanted a religiously defined and homogeneous Muslim society. Iqbal said that Muslims should not accept western political ideologies.[14] Muslim civilisation has its own unique ideas and visions. If they blindly accepted western civilisation, they would become perpetuated slaves and colonized. Iqbal revisited his view after closely studying and analysing philosophy and historical movements that paved the way for nationalism in western countries. He declared that nationalism is an enemy of Islam. Through his poetry and prose, he was critical of the League of Nations.[15] He considered nationhood in the Islamic paradigm rather than in culture, territory, or language. He differentiated between nationalism and patriotism. He said that patriotism can be a natural sentiment towards motherland. On the other hand, nationalism is a modern political idea that emerged from an atheistic and imperialistic world view.[16] Iqbal said that *wataniyat* as an idol carved by western imperialism and wanted to replace it with the love of *watan* in a prophetic tradition. In the religious sense, *watan* is completely different from the political meaning of *watan*. He said that what can unite mankind is *tawheed*, as the unity of God leads to the unity of mankind. His theory reduced the eagerness for the idea of a separate homeland for Pakistan. Iqbal wrote a letter to Edward John Thompson: You call me a protagonist of the scheme called Pakistan. Now, Pakistan is not my scheme. He proposed a Muslim province that was part of the Indian federation. Madani's composite nationalism and Islam were supported by Deobandi ulama. Through the book '*Composite Nationalism and Islam'*, Madani depicted a multi-religious Indian state that would be compatible with his vision of Islam.[17] Their priority was an independent India where they could practice Islam without hindrance or fear. Husain Ahmad Madani, the principal of Darul Uloom Deoband, was a staunch anti-colonial activist and an

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Islamic scholar. Madani was actively associated with India's nationalist movement and joined the Gandhian non-cooperation movement at its inception, dressing in the handloom cloth that was its symbol and urging others to do so as well.[18] He opposed the demand for a separate homeland for Muslims and argued that they could live and do better in a religiously plural society. He played an important role in the attached Congress-Khilafat pact in 1920. Through a series of lectures and the distribution of pamphlets from 1920 to 1930, he made the ground for the cooperation of the Indian ulama with the Indian National Congress. In 1938, Madani wrote a book named '*Muttahid Qaumiya Aur Islam'*, which means composite nationalism and Islam in English. In this book, Madani advocates for a unified India, not a separate nation. In this book, he opposed the partition of India. According to him, the composite nation means a united India for Hindus, Muslims, and others. He opposed the religious partition of the Indian Subcontinent. Madani argued that the Indian nation is made of different people and diverse castes, communities, cultures, religion and faiths. So, based on this diverse phenomenon, it can be said that Indian nationalism can be defined by religion. While Indian people follow their diverse and distinctive religious traditions, they are members of one united Indian nation. Madani's composite nationalism opposed attempts to make Hindu nationalism, any religious chauvinism. Madani's composite nationalism and Islam put forth the idea that different religions do not constitute different nationalities. Rather, nationality is co-terminus with territory and both believers and non-believers in Islam can share the same territory and hence the same nationality. In his book, Madan says that a nation is formed on the basis of a common motherland, language, ethnicity or colour, which brings together Muslims and non-Muslims who share one or more of these attributes. The partition of India did have little religious relation, but was purely political. This book emphasises that those who wished to partition India were among the secular elite, rather than religious leaders. That is why separatists wanted to create a new country: they were aspiring for power and wanted their exclusive domain. To realise this true reality Madani, in his book, urged people and readers to join the Indian National Congress, because its aims were in accordance with Islamic teaching. Madani appealed to Muslim people not to join the pro-speariest All India Muslim League, which he called hypocritical. Madani insisted that the homeland be demarcated on the basis of national identity. The religious communities living in a particular area that is conceded as a *Qaum*, (*Quam* means nation). According to Madani, both Hindus and Muslims are part of the composite Indian nation. He considered that only a composite Indian nation could defeat British rule. The Convent of Madina provided the basis for alliances and cooperation with non-Muslim communities in the fight for imperialism. Naqsh-e-Hayat, a biography of Madani, explained how British rule exploited India. "*Hamara Hindustan Aurus Kay Fazail*" (our India and her qualities) a booklet in which he explained the significance and virtue of India. He also said that Muslims were originally inhabitants of Indian land and they have a legitimate claim to Indian soil. There was a debate between Madani and Iqbal ideologies of composite nationalism. Madani gave a statement in a political meeting in Delhi in 1938 that

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nations are defined by territory. After this statement, the Urdu newspaper declared that Madani's ideology of composite nationalism is related to the concept of Millet with land. Iqbal was opposed to the politics of the nationalist ulama. Iqbal theory does not accept territory. If he accepted separate territory for Muslim people, then his theory would become self-contradictory. According to Iqbal, Pakistani or Indian nationalism would be dangerous for mankind. That is why he was against all territorial nationalism. He wanted nationalism on the higher principle of Islam and it was not hatred towards other religions. He wanted to live in a world of global brotherhood based on higher moral and spiritual principles. Madani differentiated between *qaum* and millet. While *qaum* is based on culture, language and territory. Millet is based on religion. According to him, there is no contradiction between these two ideas. Madani said that millet is not based on *watan*. Iqbal said that *qaum* and *millet* are the same. However, the ideas presented in composite nationalism and Islam were upheld by the Deobandi movement, whose priority was an independent and undivided India where they could practice Islam without fear or hindrance. Deobandi movement severely opposed the partition of India.

Conclusion

Madani and Iqbal's ideologies about composite nationalism were perhaps slightly different. Madani was fundamentally a man of action. Iqbal was a man of contemplation. After the birth of Pakistan territory and *watan* became the foundation of Pakistani nationalism. Iqbal was seeking the world for the sons of Adam. He had hope that the Indian Muslim community would become the starting point of his universal brotherhood. This universal brotherhood can be achieved through Islam. Madani's ideology belongs to the tradition of ulama and was deeply associated with the struggle against the exploitation of Indian Muslims by the British rule. Nationalism cannot be defined by religion. Through the idea of composite nationalism, Madani wanted to keep India united, which would allow Muslims to illumine noon-Muslims with what they saw as the true faith. Madani travelled across colonial India, spreading the idea of composite nationalism. This composite nationalism opposed the concept of a partition of India. While Madani was spreading this united idea, pro-speariest 'All India Muslim League' members tried to intimidate him and disturb his rally. This idea of composite nationalism was influenced by the Muslim community living in British India. Deobandi movement's unique approach to Islamic education which comprised an established faculty, a set curriculum and regular examination was the initial factor and its impact was on socio-religious movement. Although, it was formed for the moral and religious regeneration for the Muslim community. But the objects of the movement were to abolish British rule and restore the Muslim community by educating them. The Deoband Movement had supported the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. They had issued fatwa against British English education, administration and Syed Ahmed

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Khan's organization in 1888. The leaders and ulemas of Deoband had supported the composite nationalism. They also opposed the partition of India.

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