

# ULEMA *of* DEOBAND

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# *Ulamâ of Deoband*

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## ULAMÂ DEOBAND AND AHLE SUNNAH WAL JAMÂ'AT

Hadrat Maulânâ AbdulHamid Ishâq Sâhib  
(*dâmat barakâtuhum*)

باسمہ تعالیٰ

نحمدہ و نصلى على رسوله الكريم

Allâh Jalla Jalâluhu has blessed the Ummah of Nabî-e-Karîm ﷺ with the absolute correct Aqâ'id (beliefs), A'mâl, Akhlâq, Mu'âmalât and Mu'âsharât and Allâh Jalla Jalâluhu completed His Dîn and perfected it for this honourable Ummah.

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

*Today I have perfected for you, your religion, and completed upon you My favour, and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion.*

So the Dîn that Allâh Jalla Jalâluhu gave from Âdam عليه السلام through all the Ambiyâ عليهم السلام came to completion and perfection with our beloved and honourable Nabî ﷺ. Then Allâh Jalla Jalâluhu favoured this Ummah with another great blessing when Allâh Jalla Jalâluhu promised.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

*It is We who revealed this admonition, and We are its protectors.*

That Allâh Jalla Jalâluhu will propagate and protect this Dîn forever

This perfect, complete Dîn has been transmitted to us and protected by the great Fuqahâ Mujâhidîn, Muhaddithîn, Mufassirîn, Mutakallimîn, Sufia, etc. in its perfect and complete form under the banner of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamâ'at.

In our circles, Ulamâ-e-Deoband is synonymous with Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamâ'at. This is the *Sawâde-e-*

*A'zam* (the main stream of the Ummah) which is flowing from Nabî-e-Karîm ﷺ till today and forever till Qiyâmah Inshâ-Allâh.

No matter how much *shukar* we make to Allâh Jalla Jalâluhu, Rasûlullâh ﷺ, all the Sahâbah رضي الله عنهم, Tabi'în, Tabe Tabi'în, all the Ulamâ, Mujâhidîn and Sufia for blessing us with this perfect and complete Dîn (lifestyle) i.e. the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamâ'at and inter alia Ulamâ-e-Deoband which guarantees true enjoyments of *dunia* in this world and eternal pleasures of Jannah, it is less.

Many *fitnas* (trials and tribulations) in the history of Islam have come and gone, but the main stream flow of the Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamâ'at has persevered and pulled through all storms and opposition from within and without.

Today we have our great Ulamâ-e-Deoband representing the Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamâ'at - the true Dîn of Islam.

Dârul Ulûm Deoband has not only produced Ulamâ but together with great, very great Ulamâ, Dârul Ulûm Deoband has produced Dârul Ulûms in the length and breadth of the world, from North America to Australia, from Indonesia, Malaysia to Southern Africa, from England and Europe to South America. Dârul Ulûm Deoband has produced Dârul Ulûms throughout the entire world.

Shaikh 'Abdullâh bin Subayyiel (*dâmat barakâtuhum*) of the Haram of Makkah Sharîf says that the Ulamâ of Deoband are serving at least 50% of the Ummah in Dîn.

Dârul Ulûm Deoband has produced luminaries of the calibre of Hadrat Maulânâ Ashraf Alî Sâhib Thânwî رحمۃ اللہ علیہ who has revived Tasawwuf according to the Sunnah of Rasûlullâh ﷺ, who is a Mujaddid and wrote over 1000 Kitâbs on every aspect of Islamic sciences, who has been acclaimed as the greatest reformist in the world in our times.

Dârul Ulûm Deoband has produced luminaries like Hadrat Maulânâ Muhammad Ilyâs Sâhib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ who started the work of Tablîgh and Da'wat in its present form, by which a great and tremendous change has come in the whole Ummah.

The stalwarts of Dârul Ulûm Deoband are luminaries like Hadrat Maulânâ Anwar Shâh Kashmîrî Sâhib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, the walking library whose memory cannot be matched and who dismantled the cloak of Qadianism and preserved the Dîn.

The stalwarts of Dârul Ulûm Deoband are luminaries like Hadrat Maulânâ Husain Ahmed Madanî Sâhib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ who was amongst the first to recognise the *fitna* of Maududiasm and unmasked it when others were supporting it.

A special quality which the Ulamâ-e-Deoband have been blessed with is to recognise a *fitnah*, to smell the rat of a *fitnah* in its initial stages, unmask it and oppose it tooth and nail while others support it.

The stalwarts of Dârul Ulûm Deoband are luminaries like Hujjatul Islam Maulânâ Qâsim Nânautwî Sâhib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ who fought the English and drove them out from the subcontinent after which their empire crumbled in the whole world.

Dârul Ulûm is an inspiration from Allâh Jalla Jalâluhu to protect the Muslims from evil forces of the British Empire who came with the intention of converting all the people of the subcontinent to Christianity. Dârul Ulûm is the manifestation of the Du'â of Hadrat Hâjî Imdâdullâh Sâhib Muhâjir Makkî رحمۃ اللہ علیہ.

The architect of Dârul Ulûm Deoband is Rasûlullâh ﷺ whom the first principal of Dârul Ulûm saw in a dream drawing the lines where Dârul Ulûm should be built and actually found those lines on the ground where the classes of Dârul Ulûm are and is famously known as Nodra. The same Principal saw Rasûlullâh ﷺ in a dream giving milk to students to drink from the well of Molsri, which was interpreted as the giving of knowledge, which each one took according to his own capacity.

Dârul Ulûm is the name of Tauhîd, following the Sunnats and simplicity.

Just the mere names of the Ulamâ of Deoband fill a persons heart with the *nûr* of Îmân, what then to say of their A'mâl, Akhlâq, Mu'âmalât and Mu'âsharât. Names like Hadrat Maulânâ Masîhullâh Sâhib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, Hadrat Muftî Mahmûd Hasan Sâhib Gangohî رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, Qârî Muhammad Tayyib Sâhib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, Hadrat Maulânâ Fakhruddîn Sâhib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, Hadrat Maulânâ Umar Sâhib Pâlanpûrî رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, Hadrat Shaikhul Hadîth, Maulânâ Muhammad Zakariyyâ Sâhib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and many, many others.

What is important today is to stick firmly to the Ulamâ of Deoband and guard ourselves and ward off all the present day *fitnas* like Salafiaism, Shiaism, Bid'ât, Qadianiaism etc.

May Allâh ﷻ guide us to the Sirâtul Mustaqîm (the straight path) and be pleased with us. Âmîn. ❁

## INTRODUCTION

"Amongst the believers, there are those who are true to the pledge which they have taken with Allāh ﷻ. Of them is he who has fulfilled his pledge and he who is waiting. They have not changed their resolve in the least." [Aḥzâb verse 23]

Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, "A group from my *ummah* will remain steadfast on Allāh ﷻ's commands. Those who do not assist them and those who oppose them will not harm them. They will continue in this manner until Allāh ﷻ's decision (*Qiyāmah* or *their death*) occurs." [Bukhārī]

Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, "Verily *dīn* began as something strange. Soon it will return to the condition as it began. Glad tidings to the strangers! They are the ones who will correct that which the people have corrupted from my *Sunnah* after me." [Tirmidhī]

Rasūlullāh ﷺ said, "Trustworthy people will bear this knowledge from every succeeding generation. They will eradicate from it the alteration of those who exceed the bounds, the lies of the falsifiers, and the false interpretations of the ignorant." [Bayhaqī]

The *ulemā'* of Deoband aptly fit these descriptions. The following booklet seeks to outline the history of *Darul Ulūm*, the services it has rendered in different spheres, its acceptance, the qualities of the savants of this *madrasah*, and a brief summary of its aims and objectives. Much of the subject matter has been drawn and edited from the *Al Muballigh* (Rajab 1429), a newsletter published by the students of the *madrasah*. Besides this, a reference has been

provided for whatever else has been mentioned. We make *du'ā'* that Allāh ﷻ accepts this meek effort, and grants us the ability to appreciate the sacrifices of our elders, to spur us on to study their lives, to make their object into ours, and to imbibe their qualities and characteristics! *Āmīn*.

## HISTORY

In 1601, an East India company trade delegation under the leadership of Vasco da Gama anchored at Bombay Harbour. They requested the government of that time for assistance. They promised to improve trade links with India by exporting Indian goods back to the British market and to then reinvest the profits back to India. The Mogul king of that time, Aḥmad Shāh Abdali was very short-sighted and failed to understand the policies of the English. He provided this trade delegation with a number of concessions. By 1701, a hundred years later, a number of territories were already under British rule.

The British came to India in 1601 and Shāh Walīyullāh رحمۃ اللہ علیہ was born in 1702. By 1740, Shāh Walīyullāh رحمۃ اللہ علیہ realized that the British had already seized control of four main territories. When Shāh Walīyullāh witnessed the British seizing authority from all four sides, he, for the very first time, translated the Qur'ān into Persian. He realized that if Islamic knowledge was not propagated, the British government will continue consolidating its rule over India. In 1762, after the demise of Shāh Walīyullāh, Shāh 'Abdul Azīz succeeded his father and for the first time in history planted the seeds of antagonism against the British. He was the first person to pass a *fatwā* on the validity of *jihād* against the British and their supporters in India. Due to the *fatwā*, Fatah 'Alī Sulṭān Tippu accompanied by his army eventually fought four battles in Mysore. Sulṭān

Tippu himself engaged in physical combat against the enemy. He was martyred in 1792 while fighting alone right up to the very end. This *mujāhid* was martyred at the fort of Mysore whilst his chief general, Mir Sādiq betrayed him for 22 000 acres of land by the British.

During the rule of Raja Ranjit Singh over Punjab, he initiated a spell of tyranny and oppression against the Muslims. He transformed the courtyard of the Shahi Masjid into a stable. His aggression did not even spare the honour of women. Eventually, news of this tyranny reached Ray Bareli. In Ray Bareli there lived a pious servant by the name of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd. When Sayyid Shahīd heard of this, he made an appeal to the Muslims to submit their names for *jihād*. He informed all his disciples that *jihād* against Rajah Ranjit Singh has become obligatory upon them. Finally in 1826, together with 750 *mujāhidīn* and 10 000 disciples, he set out from Ray Bareli. This force treaded its way through the mountain passes of Khaybar and Julan and finally landed in Peshawar in their very first attack. They continued advancing and on the 1st of May 1831, they landed on the mountains of Balakot and set up camp that night on the mountain. One of the local villages betrayed the *mujāhidīn* to the Rajah's forces who launched an attack at night from the rear of the mountain. On the 5th of May, whilst Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd was in *sajdah* in *tahajjud ṣalāh*, he was beheaded by the enemy. On the same day, his vicegerent, Shāh Ismail Shahīd (the grandson of Shāh Walīyullāh) took command and went on fighting for the next four days. When a Sikh verbally abused Nabī ﷺ, Shāh Ismail retorted, "By Allāh, I will not die till I have beheaded you". When Shāh Ismail was attacked by the enemy, his head got severed and fell to the ground. In spite of him being

decapitated, he miraculously still held onto his sword and ran after that enemy who spoke ill of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. From a distance of about a furlong (approx. 200m) he hurled his sword on the enemy. The sword found its way through the enemy's body and he fell to the ground. Thereafter, Shāh Ismail Shahīd also fell to the ground. 450 *mujāhidīn* were also martyred. Only about a 100 *mujāhidīn* returned. After 1831, when the '*ulemā*' realized that the British government was getting more and more fortified in the country, they called up a number of meetings first. Many warriors gathered from all parts of the country and many decisive battles were fought against the British. This continued for some time.

In 1856, a meeting of all the senior '*ulemā*' of India was called up in Delhi. This meeting was attended, amongst others, by Ml. Ja'far Thāneserī, Ml. Wilāyat 'Alī, Hājī Imdādullāh, Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī, Ml. Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī and Hāfidh Dhāmin Shahīd. In this meeting, Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī is reported to have said, "Aren't you aware that the British are sitting right on our heads? They have laid a snare of their rule throughout the country. Be prepared for some rather decisive battles against them. We will either be cut up into pieces or fight against them right up to the end. We will not allow the British to live in this country".

As a result of this meeting, the battle of Independence in 1857 was fought on two fronts, one in Ambala under the leadership of Ml. Ja'far Thāneserī and the other in Shāmli under Hājī Imdādullāh Makkī. However due to their limited resources and betrayal of a few people, the '*ulemā*' failed to win this battle. The spirit of freedom however still remained alive.

At the termination of this battle of 1857, the British viceroy to India requested his own ministers and counsellors of India to submit a report on how they can firmly secure the British government's hold over India in the post-war period. One of the leading politicians of India, Doctor William Yur submitted a report to the viceroy. He wrote: "Of the entire population of India, the Muslims are the most spirited and vigilant. The battle of independence was fought mainly by the Muslims. As long as the Muslims cherish the spirit of *jihād*, we will not be able to impose our rule upon them. Hence, first and foremost, the snuffing out of this spirit is imperative. The only way this can be achieved is by weeding out the '*ulemā*' and by eradicating the *Qur'ān*."

Acting on this advice, in 1861 the government launched a campaign against the *Qur'ān*. 300 000 copies of the Noble *Qur'ān* were set alight by the government. Thereafter, they made a resolution to eradicate the '*ulemā*'. An English historian, Mr. Thompson writes in his memoirs: "From 1864 to 1867, the British government firmly resolved to eradicate all the '*ulemā*' of India. These three years are one of the most heart-wrenching periods of Indian history. The British hanged 14 000 '*ulemā*' to death. From Chandi Chowk of Delhi up to Khaibar, not a single tree was spared the neck of the '*ulemā*'. The '*ulemā*' were wrapped in pig-skin and hurled alive into blazing furnaces. Their bodies were branded with hot copper rods. They used to be made to stand on the backs of elephants and tied to high trees. The elephants would then be driven away and they would be left hanging by their necks. A makeshift gallows was set up in the courtyard of the Shāhī Mosque of Lahore and each day up to eighty '*ulemā*' were hanged. The '*ulemā*' were at times wrapped up in sacks and

dumped into the Rawi river of Lahore after which a hail of bullets would be pumped into each sack." Thompson writes further: "As I got into my camp at Delhi, I perceived a stench of putrefied flesh. As I stepped out and went behind my camp, I saw a blazing fire of live coals. I saw a group of forty naked '*ulemā*' being led into the fire. As I was witnessing this scene, another group of forty '*ulemā*' were brought onto the field. Right before my eyes, their clothes were taken off their bodies. The English commander addressed them thus: 'O *Molvies*! Just as these '*ulemā*' are being roasted over this fire, you will also be roasted. To save yourselves, just one of you must proclaim that you were not part of the 1857 uprising of freedom. I will release all of you the moment I hear just one of you affirming this."

Thompson writes: "By the Lord who has created me! Not one of the '*ulemā*' said any such thing. All of them were roasted over the fire and another group was also brought and roasted over the blazing fire. Not a single '*ālim* surrendered to the demands of the British."

By 1867 not a single Islamic institute remained. One would be quite astonished to realize that in 1601 when the British arrived in India for trade, there were a thousand Islamic institutes in Delhi alone. It was around this time when Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī saw Nabī ﷺ in a dream in which he was instructed to build a *madrasah* in the village of Deoband. In compliance to the command, Ml. Nānotwī laid the foundation of the *madrasah* under a pomegranate tree on the 30th May 1866. When Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī informed Hājī Imdādullāh who had by that time already migrated to Makkah Mukarramah that we have just started a *madrasah*, Hājī

Imdādullāh رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ remarked in surprise, "What! Have 'you' founded the *madrasah*? No, this is actually the result of countless nights which we had passed crying before Allāh ﷻ."

The first *ustādh* appointed was Ml. Maḥmudul Ḥasan and the first student also possessed the name Maḥmudul Ḥasan, who served the Muslims of India and later Muslims of the world. He was given the title, 'Shaykhul Hind', which he thoroughly deserved after his innumerable sacrifices and services to Islam.

It is the promise of Allah ﷻ to protect His *dīn* no matter how hard the enemies try to extinguish it. A manifestation of this came in the form of *Dārul Ulūm Deoband* whose rays extended throughout the world in the defence and spread of our great Din.<sup>1</sup>

### Maslak (Ideology)

\* Their *dīn* is Islam which incorporates 'aqāid (beliefs), 'ibādāt (worship), mu'āmalāt (social dealings), akhlāq (character) as well mu'āsharāt (social conduct).

\* Their group is that of *Ahl us Sunnah wal Jamā'ah* which is based totally on the *Qur'ān*, *Sunnah* and the understanding of *dīn* in the light of the *ṣaḥābah* ﷺ which has reached us through a direct *sanad* (chain).

\* Their *fiqhi madh hab* is *Hanafī* since the akābir (elders) of the *Dārul Ulūm* were *Hanafī*, but at the same time refrain from slurring or insulting any of the other imāms or their *madhāhib*

<sup>1</sup> Abridged from 'The 'Ulemā' of Deoband - their majestic past' by Maulānā Diyāur Rahmān

since all the imāms were on *Ḥaqq* (truth). They have preferred staunch *taqlīd* over giving their *nafs* a free reign and following their whims and fancy.

\* Their spirituality is based on *Tasawwuf* which conforms totally to the *sharī'ah*, comprising of purification of the soul, beautification of one's character and establishing a connection with Allāh ﷻ.

\* Their beliefs (in the field of *kalām* (beliefs)) are *Māturīdī*, a part of the *Ahl us Sunnah wal Jamā'ah* who are on *ḥaqq* (the truth), neither believing only in that which their intelligence accepts without considering the Qur'an, Sunnah and *Ijmā'*, nor denying that one's intelligence is a useful tool which clarifies the beliefs of Islām.

\* Their chain of *Tasawwuf* is mainly *Chishtī*, but in fact a combination of all chains which are on *ḥaqq*. They are generally given *khilāfah* (permission to accept pledge of allegiance) in all four famous chains i.e. *Chishtī*, *Qādirī*, *Naqshbandī* and *Suhrwardī*.

\* Their *fikr* (intellectual inclination) is according to the *fikr* of Shāh Walīyullāh which is a combination of *naql* (divine promptings) and 'aql (rational and intellectual promptings).

\* Their principles and ideology regarding *dīn* are according to that of Ml. Qāsim Nānotwī who had expounded on the beliefs of the *Ahl us Sunnah wal Jamā'ah* using logical and rational proofs and reconciled the differences between the *Ashāira* and the *Māturīdiyya*.



\* Their ideology regarding the *furū'* (subsidiary laws) of *dīn* i.e. *fiqh* is according to that of Ml. Rashīd Ahmad Gangohī who had figured out the intricacies of the field and expounded on it.

\* Their *nisbah* (connection) is *Deobandī* since their starting point was the *Dārul Ulūm* in Deoband.

To achieve the spread of this school of thought, the *Dārul Ulūm* was founded on these objectives:

# To spread the teachings of the *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* and to bring alive all branches of *dīn* through the system of *ta'līm* (teaching) and *ta'allum* (learning), since every facet of *dīn* is dependent upon knowledge. Thus the '*ulemā'* of Deoband gave greater significance to knowledge over all other branches of *dīn*.

# *Islāh* and *tazkiya-e-nafs* (spiritual reformation and purification of the soul) through the medium of *tasawwuf* and spiritual training

# To protect and establish the personal and social interests of the Muslims by giving importance to *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and Islāmic justice

# To keep alive the spirit of *jihād* and self-defence by continuous training

# To reform the society through the means of lectures and sermons which will aim to correct the incorrect beliefs of the masses, removing misconceptions regarding Islām and root out *bid'āt* (innovations)

# To bring alive the *Sunnah* by combining *fikr* (concern) for the reformation of the people and '*amal* (practice) by promoting the *Sunnah* lifestyle

# To spread Islām and its beautiful teachings to all foreign non-Muslims by explaining to them that true wisdom lies in

the way of the *ambiyā* (messengers), not in their superficial wisdom and so-called progress

# To fill the vacuum void of writing and authoring by presenting Islām according to the necessity of the hour

# To keep Islāmic brotherhood alive and to establish an Islāmic *Khilāfat*

# To maintain freedom and independence in their expression of knowledge so that their teachings remain free from the influence of strangers by avoiding any assistance from the state and sufficing upon the sincere assistance, albeit limited, of the Muslim public. Thus it is not the system of the '*ulemā'* of Deoband to limit *dīn* to a few aspects labouring under the misconception that this is the entire *dīn*. Rather every aspect and branch of *dīn* is firmly adhered to in a just, enveloping *maslak* (ideology).<sup>2</sup>

## CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The '*ulemā'* of Deoband have played a mind boggling role in spreading the knowledge of *dīn* in this day and age. Their efforts to preserve the pristine purity of Islām were mostly directed to spreading the knowledge of *dīn* in every facet.

**TAFSĪR:** One such field, in which the magnificent works of our '*ulemā'* stand out like a rose in a concrete floor, is the field of *tafsīr* (commentary of Qur'ān). All the various *tafāsīr* written by our '*ulemā'*, despite each having its own unique style, are unified in their objective, to simplify the understanding of the Noble Qur'ān for the *ummah*. A few of the more famous *tafāsīr* are:

**Tafsīr e 'Uthmānī :** After realising that the rut in the *ummah*

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<sup>2</sup> The *Maslak* of the '*ulemā'* of Deoband by Qārī Tayyib رحمة الله عليه

has set in due to abandoning the Qur'ān, Shaykhul Hind Muftī Maḥmūdul Hasan Deobandī decided to write a simple translation of the *Qur'ān*. Shaykhul Hind commenced the *tafsīr* while he was imprisoned in Malta by the British. After completing the translation, Shaykhul Hind began the foot-notes but only managed to finish until the end of *Sūrah Āl e Imrān* before death overtook him. Maulānā Shabbir Aḥmad 'Uthmānī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ thereafter took up the great task of finishing the footnotes, bringing the book to completion in 1350 A.H.

**Bayānul Qur'ān:** Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ completed Bayānul Qur'ān in 1353. This three volume masterpiece is unique in the following aspects: (1) Lengthy narratives and rulings were excluded, the object being a basic understanding of the Qur'ān. (2) In those verses in which many opinions occur regarding the meaning, only the preferred one is mentioned. (3) This *tafsīr* benefits both, the general masses and the 'ulemā'. For the 'ulemā', a special foot-note has been added in Arabic consisting of *balāghat* (eloquence), *nahw* (grammar), *fiqhī masā'il*, the different *qirā'āt* as well as *masā'il* of *taṣawwuf* extracted from the Qur'ān.

**Ma'āriful Qur'ān:** Maulānā Idrīs Kandehlawī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ wrote this *tafsīr* consisting of eight volumes in 1382 (1962). He had based his translation on that of Shāh 'Abdul Qādir رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ. He was known to have a special talent of pointing out the connection between the verses, which is an important aspect of *tafsīr*. *Masā'il* of 'aqā'id (beliefs) and *fiqh* have been explained in ample detail. Before he passed away, he was only able to finish till *Sūrah Sāffāt*. Later his son completed the *tafsīr*.

**Ma'āriful Qur'ān:** In 1373 (1954), Muftī Muhammad Shafī

commenced lessons of *tafsīr* on Radio Pakistan. The lesson was delivered every Friday on a selected portion of the Qur'ān and was meant to cater for the needs of every average Muslim. However, upon receiving numerous requests from enthusiastic listeners to publish the *tafsīr* in a book form, he began its compilation and completed it in 1963. He mentions the specialities of the *tafsīr* as the following: (1) Most *tafsīrs* have such information which is only beneficial for 'ulemā', commenting on *nahw*, *balāghat*, and different *qirā'ats* etc. which are of no use to the masses. As a result of these intricate details, the public began to think that understanding the Qur'ān is very difficult. During the writing of this *tafsīr*, Muftī Ṣāhib kept in mind that it should be kept simple since the average Muslim is not able to understand technical terms and finer points. (2) Special importance was given to discussing those topics which generate the love and greatness of Allāh ﷻ and Nabī ﷺ in ones heart. Likewise, those points have been adequately discussed which encourage a person to correct his actions, and to practice on the Qur'ān. (3) Before the detailed *tafsīr*, an overview of the verses are mentioned which suffices for a busy person to understand the Qur'ān.

The above briefly proves that the 'ulemā' of Deoband did everything in their power to fulfil the need of the time i.e. to create in the masses an understanding of the Qur'ān. May Allāh ﷻ accept their concerted efforts and ignite in our hearts that same flame of desire to serve *dīn*.

## HADĪTH

'Allāmah Zāhid Kawtharī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes about the 'ulemā' of Deoband with regards to their achievements in the field of *ḥadīth* saying, "Their achievement in the field of *ḥadīth* in the

last century has been above all expectations. Their illustrative commentaries on the *Sihāh Sittah* are vast treasures of *ahādīth* pertaining to the laws of *sharīah*". He goes on to mention by way of example, *Fathul Mulhim*, *Faydhul Bārī* and *Badhlul Majhūd*. *Fathul Mulhim*, a commentary on *Sahīh Muslim* was compiled by MI. Shabbir Aḥmad ‘Uthmānī. ‘Allāmah Zāhid Kawtharī himself writes in *Maqālat e Kawtharī*, "It can rightfully be said that there hasn't been a commentary which fully expounds *Sahīh Muslim* in all aspects. If one finds a commentary which for example delves into *fiqh* or ‘*aqā’id* of one specific *madh hab*, it will overlook the views of all the other *madhāhib*. This method does not satiate a true student. In some, one will see that disregard was shown to a *muqaddamah* (preface); although the knowledge of *hadīth* and classification of authors are amongst those aspects which ‘*ulemā’* of *hadīth* have attached great importance to. The *muqaddamah* also serves as an introduction to technical terminology which the author employs throughout the *kitāb*. One will also find many commentaries which do not comment on the narrators albeit the dire need. I was immensely pleased by this bulky splendid commentary since I found it to be adequate in every aspect and it has successfully filled the void which I have mentioned".

*Badhlul Majhūd*, a commentary of *Abū Dāwūd* was written by MI. Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī. MI. Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī راجع الشافعي says, " I found this kitāb to be sufficient in explaining the subject of *sanad* (chain of narrators), satisfactory with regards to *fiqh* and detailed in the discussion of logical and *sharī* proofs."

‘Allāmah Kawtharī continues, "MI Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī advised

his nephew, MI. Zafar Aḥmad Thānwī that he should bring together the proofs for *hanafi fiqh* by gathering the *ahādīth* used as proof and commenting on their authenticity according to the laws of the field of *hadīth*. This zealous ‘*ālim* engaged in this difficult task and was perpetually engrossed in it for approximately twenty years until it was marvellously completed by the grace of Allāh ﷻ in twenty volumes. It was compiled in the very format of *Āthārus Sunan* and was named *l’lāus Sunan*. He also added an extra volume as an introduction to the laws of *hadīth* which is extremely beneficial in this subject. Actually, I was shocked at this compilation, the author's thorough research and complete discussion on every *hadīth* in compliance with all the laws, relating to both the text and the chain of narration without the slightest manifestation of establishing a biased view. Fairness was his guide whilst speaking about the view of other *madhāhib*. I was extremely pleased with this *kitāb*. This is the courage of the mighty and perseverance of the brave. This is just a small example of the achievements of our Indian brothers (i.e. the Deobandī ‘*Ulemā’*). For the like of this competitors should compete for".

‘Allāmah Zāhid Kawtharī commenting on MI. Anwar Shāh states, "No scholar the like of MI. Kashmīrī has graced the world since the demise of Shaykh Ibnul Hummām in the field of extracting extraordinary and rare delicate discussions from the *ahādīth*". The discourses of MI. Kashmīrī have been compiled into *Faydhul Bārī* (commentary on *Bukhārī*) and *Al ‘Urfush Shadhī* (commentary on *Tirmidhī*).

A renowned Syrian Scholar, Shaykh ‘Abdul Fattah Abū Ghuddah remarks about *Faydhul Bārī* in the following words, "This book is filled with abundant knowledge which one will

not be able to find in the previous commentaries of *Bukhārī*."

‘Allāmah ‘Alī Miṣrī Ḥanbalī who had memorised *Bukhārī* and *Muslim*, during a visit to India, attended the lessons of Shāh Ṣāhib. Shāh Ṣāhib rendered the lecture in Arabic. After witnessing the ocean of knowledge, he commented, "I've travelled the Arab countries and met the great ‘ulemā’ of this time. I myself have taught *ḥadīth* for many years in Egypt. I haven't seen a *muhaddith* or an ‘ālim the like of Shāh Ṣāhib anywhere, from Shām right up to India". Once ‘Allāmah ‘Alī exclaimed, "If I have to take an oath that Shāh Ṣāhib is more knowledgeable than Abū Ḥanīfah, I would not be lying". However Shāh Ṣāhib expressed great dislike to this statement and said, "We are completely unable to even understand the *ijtihād* of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. "

Ḥadrat Maulana Ḥusayn Aḥmad Madanī went to Deoband at the tender age of thirteen and was fortunate enough to receive the great affection of Shaykul Hind who insisted that he would teach MI. Madani the basic *kitābs*. Maulana studied sixty-seven *kitābs* over a period of six and a half years. He then moved to Madīnah Munawwarah. He began teaching in Masjidun Nabawī and was so engrossed in teaching that he would only rest for three hours. He delivered fourteen to fifteen lessons a day. Once en route to Madīnah, Ḥadrat Maulana was blessed with a dream of Nabī ﷺ. He asked Nabī ﷺ to make *du‘ā’* for him for he wished to remember the *kitābs* he had studied and understand the *kitābs* he hadn't studied. Nabī ﷺ replied, "That has been granted for you". He taught *ḥadīth* in Masjidun Nabawī for over ten years. From 1335 A.H to 1338 A.H he was imprisoned in Malta together with his Ustādh, Shaykul Hind. Upon his release, he returned to India

and took over the post of Shaykul Ḥadīth at Deoband in 1346 A.H and continued benefiting the *ummah* until 1377 A.H the year of his demise. During this period, 3865 students had the honour of studying under him.

Ḥadrat Shaykh Maulānā Zakariyyā Ṣāhib dedicated his entire life for *ḥadīth*, from the time he studied *Mishkāṭ*, until close to his death, approximately sixty-five years. He was constantly involved in teaching or writing. He studied under his father MI. Yaḥya and MI. Khalīl Aḥmad Saharanpūrī. He assisted his Ustādh in the compilation of *Badhlul Majhūd*, a commentary on *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*. On completing this, he began a commentary on the *Mu‘atta* of Imām Mālik titled *Awjazul Masālik* in six volumes, an astounding, unmatched commentary, surprisingly written by a non-Mālikī ‘ālim. *Fadā’ il A‘māl*, the most widely read *kitāb* after the Qur‘ān is one of his most accepted works. He remained the Shaykul Ḥadīth of Mazāhirul ‘Ulūm for approximately forty years.

These are just a few examples of our elders and their association with the knowledge of *ḥadīth*.

## FIQH

The ‘ulemā’ of Deoband contributed greatly to the spread of *fiqh*, particularly the *Ḥanafī Madh hab*, as this is the dominant *Madh hab* in the Subcontinent.

Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī was a *faqīh* of great standing. Maulānā engrossed himself in the acquisition of knowledge in his student days to such an extent that he devoted only seven hours daily to his other needs. His specialities in teaching were *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*. He taught the

kitāb *Al Hidāyah* fourteen times. Besides other works, he is the author of the famous *Fatāwā Rashīdiyyah*. Maulānā Kashmīrī said concerning Maulānā, "None from amongst the 'ulemā' of Deoband had reached such depths in *fiqh* like Hadrat Gangohī". Ml. Nānotwī gave him the title of, ' Abū Hanīfah of our time'. Hadrat Shāh Kashmīrī in spite of acknowledging the great knowledge of 'Allāmah Shāmī رحمته اللہ علیہ would not call him by the title '*faqihun-nafs*', regarding none other than Ml. Gangohī fit for this title. Once when Ml. Gangohī dictated an answer giving reference to *Shāmī*, an 'ālim objected that the ruling is certainly not in *Shāmī*. Hadrat asked for the *kitāb* to be brought to him whereas he was blind at this time. Passing his hands over the breadth of the *kitāb*, he roughly estimated, turned to a page and said, "Look to the bottom of the left page". It was exactly as Hadrat stated.

Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī رحمته اللہ علیہ was responsible for a great scholarly and religious awakening in India. He is probably one of the scholars in this century with the most written books. His *fatāwā* show his great depth of understanding and insight. His book, *Behishti Zewar*, explaining the basic rulings needed by all, has become one of the most famous books in the world.

Maulānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī رحمته اللہ علیہ acquired the necessary skills of Arabic, *fiqh*, *usūl*, *tafsīr* and *hadīth*, all of which he understood very well by the time he had reached thirteen years. He used to issue *fatāwā* while he was only twelve years old which were in agreement to those issued by the senior scholars of Kashmir. He contributed greatly to the *Hanafi Madhhab* and was able to provide substantial evidence from the *Sunnah* for almost any issue. His distinguished academic qualities in the sphere of *fiqh* may be summarized as follows:

He was not only proficient in the *Hanafi Madh-hab*, but was well-acquainted with the other *madhāhib*. He spent lots of time and effort explaining the texts of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* related to *fiqh*. He was well acquainted with the reasons for dispute and disagreement between the scholars, particularly in those matters that are practiced daily. He once said, "Alḥamdulillah, after thirty years of effort, I am now confident that our *fiqh* is totally in accordance to the Qur'an and *hadīth*".

Maulānā Zafar Aḥmad 'Uthmānī رحمته اللہ علیہ belonged to a noble and educated family, and is probably one of the most famous products of the *Hanafi Madh hab*. His book, *l'lāus Sunan* contains immense benefit in the science of *hadīth* and in providing proof for the *Hanafi* position. He also wrote several excellent books in connection to *fiqh*. Maulānā Thānwī was very impressed with his talents and used to say, "My nephew, Maulānā Zafar Ahmad is the Imām Muḥammad of this era and the fountainhead of *dīnī* knowledge".

Other great Deobandi *fuqahā* include: Mf. Muhammad Shafī', Shaykhul Hind, Mf. Maḥmūdul Ḥasan Gangohī, Mf. Kifāyatullāh (when his *fatāwā* were presented to the 'ulemā' of Egypt, submitted, "We have not come across an 'ālim of his calibre anywhere in the world"), Mf. Abdur Raḥīm Lajpūrī, Mf. Taqī 'Uthmānī and Mf. 'Azīzur Raḥmān who passed away whilst writing a *fatwā*.

## TAṢAWWUF

*Taṣawwuf* is an important branch of Islām, dealing with purification of the internal illnesses (like pride, jealousy, love for name and fame, love for wealth, excessive anger, etc.), imbibing of beautiful character (like the love and fear of Allāh

ﷺ, sincerity, generosity, humility, etc.), and attaining *nisbat* (connection) with Allāh ﷻ. Just as the *ṣaḥābah* ﷺ acquired outward knowledge from Nabī ﷺ, which was transmitted to us via the 'ulemā' and *fuqahā'*, the *ṣaḥābah* ﷺ acquired this branch of knowledge and transmitted it to us via the *sūfiyā*. However as time passed after the era of Nabī ﷺ, many innovations crept into *taṣawwuf*. Throughout the centuries, many reformers came and corrected the people's belief regarding the reality of *tasawwuf*. Regarding *taṣawwuf*, we encounter three groups of people.

For one group, *taṣawwuf* is something alien to Islām, something fabricated by some deviant mystics (*sūfis*), which has' absolutely no basis in *sharīah*. This is largely due to their lack of knowledge regarding the *sharī* standpoint regarding *taṣawwuf*, and their misgivings are generally founded on the excesses and innovations of many deviant and misguided individuals who claim to be adherents of *taṣawwuf*, but are in reality the slaves of their whims and desires, who ply their trade under the guise of their own concocted version of *taṣawwuf*. Then there are the second group of people who we will find on the other extreme. They are under the false impression, that once a certain level of love and recognition has been acquired, then the *sharīah* becomes irrelevant. This group is more dangerous than the former, because such beliefs often take a person out of the fold of Islām. For them, *dīn* consists mainly of *dhikr* and *wazā'if*, coupled together with various other forms of innovations and customs, very often imbibed from other religions due to frequent intermingling. Between these two extremes, we find a group of people who have drawn the middle path, combining both *sharīah* (the external acts of worship) and *tariqat* (*taṣawwuf* - the internal

acts of worship), and at the same time shunning all forms of rituals and customs which are foreign to the teachings of Islām. It is this very moderate path that the 'ulemā' of Deoband have adopted with regards to the various aspects of *taṣawwuf*. Starting with Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, many innovations which had crept into *taṣawwuf* were weeded out. This effort was then further enhanced by the writings and teachings of Maulānā Thānwī رحمته الله where *taṣawwuf* was fully explained and proven, directly from the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* of Nabī ﷺ, proving that *taṣawwuf* is an inseparable part of *dīn*. Let us now analyse a few pertinent issues of *taṣawwuf*, and appreciate the moderate stance that the 'ulemā' of Deoband have adopted.

Hadrat Shaykh ul Hadīth Maulānā Muhammad Zakariyya Kandeḥlawī رحمته الله in his autobiography Aap Betī, has mentioned the following regarding *taṣawwuf* and our *akābir* (pious predecessors), "*Taṣawwuf* was an extremely important activity of our pious predecessors. These great personalities on the one hand were true followers and vicegerents of the *fuqahā-e-mujtahidīn* and *muhaddithīn* in the sciences of *fiqh* and *aḥādīth*, and on the other hand in the field of *taṣawwuf* they had followed in the footsteps of Junayd Baghdādī رحمته الله and Imām Shiblī رحمته الله. These great luminaries engaged in *taṣawwuf* within the limits defined by *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*, and both verbally and practically demonstrated that this blessed science is in reality a science established from Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, whilst simultaneously putting a nail in the coffin of those customs and innovations which found their way into this blessed science due to the passage of time. Today there are certain ignorant people who, if they have not regarded *taṣawwuf* as something which is completely against *sharīah*,

then they have regarded it as something totally separate from it. This is a severe transgression of the limits and is complete ignorance."

Hadrat Qārī Muḥammad Tayyib Sāhib in his book entitled 'The Maslak of the 'Ulemā' of Deoband' mentions regarding *sharīah* and *ṭarīqat*: "The Deobandis accept and acknowledge the institution of perfection of character and purification of the soul through the medium of *bay'ah* (the pledge of allegiance). However, *ṭarīqat*, which has been passed on from bosom to bosom, is no separate entity from *dīn*. The internal and characteristic aspect of *sharīah* is termed as *ṭarīqat*. This is the path which is treaded for the rectification of the heart. The principles thereof have been proven from the Noble Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. However, those customs, unprincipled ways and fabricated methods which are alien to *dīn*, are not regarded as *ṭarīqat*. To accept these ways is contrary to the *Sunnah* and is completely rejected. The pious personalities are regarded as beacons of blessings and benefit, but they are not made objects of prostration."

Regarding love for the *auliyā*, Hakīm ul Islām, Hadrat Qārī Sāhib, mentions the following: "It is the *maslak* (ideology) of the 'ulemā' of Deoband that the *auliyā* and *sūfiyā* are like the soul of the *ummah*, whereby the *ummah* gains spiritual enlightenment and guidance. It is for this reason that the 'ulemā' of Deoband regard *mahabbat* (love) and honour for them to be incumbent for the preservation of *īmān*. However, excessiveness in *mahabbat* (love) should not lead one to deitise them (i.e. to raise them to the rank of a deity). Whilst respect and honour for them is necessary, it should not be translated into acts of worship, where people prostrate at

their graves, circumambulation around their graves, take oaths on their names, make sacrifices on their names, etc. They should never be looked upon as being able to remove one's grief and sorrows. Their graves should not be made venues of festivities. On occasions when these saints are remembered, under no circumstances should singing and dancing form a part of such gatherings. To refrain from all such acts, thereby acting in obedience to the *Sunnah* and desires of *nubuwwat*, is not a matter over which one should be rebuked, but rather it is something praiseworthy. The *mashāyikh* are guiding lights whereby one gains spiritual upliftment, and are not pawns for satisfying one's *nafs* (carnal desires), whims and fancies."

From the above, we can see the moderate standpoint of the 'ulemā of Deoband, and the great sacrifices they made to keep alive unadulterated *taṣawwuf*.

## DA'WAT AND TABLĪGH

Everyone of our pious predecessors were concerned regarding the unfortunate condition prevailing on the *ummah* and each one had in his own way made efforts to rectify the rot which had set in, but M. Ilyās رَحِمَهُ اللهُ was the one chosen by Allāh ﷻ to carry out this rectification on a universal and general basis. Due to his concern and worry, this effort has now reached nearly every country in the world. Millions of people's lives have changed, practical Islām has come into the lives of people, and thirst has been created in the hearts of people. This work continues to grow very rapidly. Muftā Fāruq Mīrthī Sāhib writes, "Together with teaching, issuing *fatāwā*, engaging in spiritual purification, reformation and delivering lectures, Muftī Mahmūdul Hasan Sāhib regarded the effort of

*tablīgh* to be extremely important for the entire *ummah* and always encouraged and emphasised it. He advised many of the new graduates to spend a year with the *tablīgh jamā'at*. His heart-felt desire was that every individual adopts the effort of *da'wah* and *tablīgh* as the very purpose of their lives." [Muftī Mahmūd Ḥasan Sahib رحمۃ اللہ علیہ and the *Tablīgh Jamā'at* p.19]

### OPPOSITION TO FALSEHOOD

The '*ulemā'* of Deoband have surpassed the rest as far as preservation of *dīn*, opposition of rivals and the reformation of the Muslim *ummah* is concerned. They always held fast to the *sharīah* and were never influenced by external factors. The reality of the matter is that, had it not been for Dārul 'Ulūm Deoband, it would be very unlikely that we could have had this opportunity to witness Islām in this pure and pristine form.

Westernism and Christianity: The "East India Company" disguised behind the garb of being a business enterprise, in reality aimed to propagate Christianity and gain Christian political power over India. They constantly interfered in the political, educational, and administrative affairs of the country.

The 19th century brought with it a great tough challenge for the tenets of Muslims and Christians alike i.e. the cyclone of western arts, sciences and European culture which swept across the world, taking all into its fold. Our noble '*ulemā'* came to the rescue by establishing numerous Islāmic institutes (*madāris*), which to a great extent warded off the possible intellectual subjugation of the Muslims.

From another angle, Maulānā Raḥmatullāh Kirānwī, Maulānā

Muhammad Qāsim Nānotwī, Maulānā 'Abdul Mansūr, Dr. Wazīr Khān and others put up strong opposition to Christian missionaries, not allowing their dreams of converting the Indian Muslim population to Christianity to materialise. Maulānā Raḥmatullāh refuted the Christians by compiling the book '*Izālatul Awhām*' in which he challenged Christian priests. They suffered overwhelming defeats while debating with Maulānā. Maulānā also compiled the book '*Izhārul Ḥaq*' at the request of Sultan Abdul Aziz (Sultan of Constantinople 1860-1876) wherein Maulānā answered many objections which were raised against Muslims in the debates. The London Times, in a review of the English translation of '*Izhārul Ḥaq*' stated that if this book is to be read around the world, Christianity would cease to progress. The failure of English influence over this region brought an end to all debates.

Qādiyānism: A few notable personages who rendered an excellent service in combating the Qādiyānī movement include: Maulānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, Maulānā Murtada Ḥasan Chandpūrī, Maulānā Aḥmad 'Alī Lahorī, Maulānā Habībur Raḥmān Ludhiyānwī, Muftī Muḥammad Shafī' Deobandī, Maulānā Idrīs Kandehlawī, Maulānā Badre Alam Mīrthī, Maulānā Muḥammad 'Alī Jalandahrī, Qādihī Iḥsānullāh Shuja'ābādī and others. Maulānā Anwar Shah Sāhib Kashmīrī appointed a group of his students to write and lecture against this *fitnah* throughout the country. A conference was held annually at Qādiyān in this regard. Due to their efforts, the Qadiyānīs were finally legally declared disbelievers in Pakistan.

Shism: Shism, being one of the most successful enemies of Islām, presents itself world-wide under the banner of "true



Islām", capturing many innocent hearts from true, pure Islāmic beliefs into the indecent and immodest world of Shism.

Allāh ﷻ is presently using the Sipā' e Saḥābah and its members for the protection of *dīn*, the honour of Nabī ﷺ the saḥāba ﷺ, and the Qur'ān against Shism. The Sipā' e Saḥāba was founded and established in September 1985 by the great scholar of Islām, the mouthpiece and orator of the *Ahl us Sunnah wal Jamā'ah*, 'Allāmah Ḥaḡ Nawāz Jhangī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ . Ever since its inception, it has been under severe attack by the enemy. Many great leading 'ulemā' have been martyred by the Shia such as the founder himself in 1990, Maulānā Ithārul Ḥaḡ Qāsimī, 'Allāmah Diyāur Raḡmān Fārūqī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ, as well as the last president, Maulānā Muḡammad A'zam Tāriq. Many other members were also imprisoned and tortured. .

The 'ulemā' of Deoband have also opposed many other astray sects, including the rejecters of *ḡadīth*, naturists, *ghayr muqallidīn*, *barelwis*, modernists, and *maududis* etc.

## THE ACTUAL MARK OF DISTINCTION OF THE ULAMĀ OF DEOBAND

Ḥaḡrat Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ once remarked, "My allegiance to our elders is not because I regard them as the greatest and most learned 'ulemā' in the world. I know that it is very possible that there are some 'ulemā' present in the world, whom we do not know, that are more learned than them. But according to me, allegiance to them is because they were *Allāh Wālā* (men of Allāh), and not *dunyadār* (slaves of the world). They lived in this world but they were not affected by the winds of the world. Their work and efforts were

motivated by the desire to serve *dīn* even if it led to their own personal loss and destruction."

Muftī Taqī 'Uthmānī writes in his book '*Akābir 'Ulemā e Deoband kiya thé?*', (Who were the 'ulemā' of Deoband?) The answer in brief can be given that they were the memory of the best of eras, an example of the pious predecessors, and a living picture of an Islāmic temperament and thought. If one decides to explain in detail these few lines, then volumes will not be sufficient. The truth is that it is difficult, nay impossible to encompass their specialities and perfections in words. The reason for this is that these qualities are actually drawn from the temperament and thought found in the lives of the saḥābah ﷺ. Temperament and thought is something which can be perceived but cannot be explained clearly in words. The fragrance of a flower can be smelled, but to explain its reality in words is impossible. Similarly to understand the temperament and thoughts of these personalities can only be understood by staying in their company and by their life-incidents. To merely convey it verbally is not possible."

Amongst their outstanding qualities, some were:

**a) Sincerity** – Ḥaḡrat Thānwī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ writes, "When the people of Deoband wanted to be part of the Shūrā (consulting) board of the madrasah and Ḥaḡrat Gangohī refused, there was an uproar and fear of problems arising. I wrote to Ḥaḡrat Gangohī stating, "Ḥaḡrat, what harm will there be, just to stop the commotion? If one or two of them are placed in the board, we are still in the majority, and judgement passed according to the majority view." Ḥaḡrat Gangohī wrote back stating, "To appoint an unworthy person is a sin, which will cause the displeasure of Allāh ﷻ and His Rasūl ﷺ. Thus we cannot make

unworthy people members, whether the *madrasah* remains or not. Our aim is divine happiness, and not the *madrasah*." Similarly, once when Maulānā Khalīl Aḥmad Ṣāḥib and Shaykhul Hind were perturbed by opposition, he wrote a letter to them stating, "My beloveds, why are you perturbed? The *madrasah* is not the aim; the pleasure of Allāh ﷻ is the aim. There are many, many ways to attain this, one being the *madrasah*. If the *madrasah* remains, then continue doing work, and if not, then sit somewhere else and do work." [Tuḥfatul 'Ulemā']

Once Ḥadrat Thānwī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ called his Ustādh, Ḥadrat Shaykhul Hind to lecture in a *jalsah* in Kanpur. Some scholars there were experts in rational sciences. Ḥadrat Thānwī wanted to show them that the 'ulemā' of Deoband had expertise in this field also. Whilst lecturing, Ḥadrat started a discussion on some rational topic. Just then, these scholars entered. Immediately, Ḥadrat Shaykhul Hind completed his lecture and sat down. Ḥadrat Maulānā Fakhrul Ḥasan Ṣāḥib Gangohī uttered in surprise, "Ḥadrat, this was the actual time for lecturing. Why did you sit down?" He replied, "Yes, this thought also came to me." What he meant was that till now he had been giving the lecture solely for Allāh ﷻ's pleasure. Now the object would be to portray his knowledge, thus he stopped. [*'Ulemā' e Deoband kiyâ thé?*]

**b) Humility-** Mī. Maḥmūdul Ḥasan Deobandī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ was once asked to give a lecture. He attempted to excuse himself by insisting that he is unworthy of doing so. On their insistence, he finally conceded. While lecturing, he mentioned a *ḥadīth* and provided its translation. An elderly scholar who was also present abruptly corrected him, claiming the translation of a

certain word to be incorrect and scolded him saying, "It is not permissible for such a person to lecture". Immediately Maulānā stopped lecturing and said to the elderly 'ālim, "I knew from before that it is not permissible for me to lecture, I tried to excuse myself but these people wouldn't listen. Your observation has just proven what I had said earlier". It later turned out that Maulānā's translation was absolutely accurate. (*Ibid*)

Mī Qāsim Nānotwī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ was also an embodiment of humility. His clothing was so tattered and appearance so shabby that people mistook him for a farmer. He would not respond when called by the title Maulānā, instead he would be pleased if people would call him by his first name. He was also very informal with everyone. He treated his students and *murīds* as his equals. He would even straighten the shoes of students.

Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ was also an absolute example of humility. He once mentioned to Mī. Roshan 'Alī that when he hears about his disciple's spiritual achievements, he feels ashamed of himself that people have such a high opinion of him whereas he knows himself to be worthless. Our elders were those who had realised, 'How can I hold my head up in arrogance whilst I do not know what my condition will be in front of Allāh ﷻ!

**c) Taqwā** – It was the mutual predisposition of all the elders of Deoband that they would not give importance to book knowledge unless it was combined with establishing a relationship with Allāh ﷻ, *taqwā* and piety. When Maulānā Thānwī established Madrasah Imdādiyya in Thanabowan and he informed Maulānā Gangohī, he replied, "Very good.

However actual happiness will be when people who say 'Allāh, Allāh' gather there." [Arwāh e Thalāthah p.224]

The basis of Dārul 'Ulūm was *inābat illallāh* (turning to Allāh ﷻ). Maulānā Yāsin Ṣāhib states, "We saw that time of the *madrasah* when the highest to the lowest *ustādh*, and even the door-keeper and orderlies were *ṣāhib e nisbat* and *awliyā*. At that time, the *madrasah* was a place of knowledge during the day and a *khānqah* in the night. During the last portion of the night, the sounds of *tilāwat* and *dhikr* could be heard from most rooms. This in reality is the special distinction of Dārul 'Ulūm." [Ulemā e Deoband kiyā thé?]

Once Maulānā Munīr Ṣāhib, the second principal of Dārul 'Ulūm Deoband took 250 rupees of the *Madrasah* to Delhi to get the *madrasah's* report printed. By chance the money got stolen. Maulānā did not inform anyone about the theft. He returned home, sold one of his properties, took 250 rupees from its profit and returned to Delhi where he got the report of the *madrasah* printed and brought it back to Deoband. After some days the *madrasah*, came to know about the incident. They wrote to Maulānā Gangohī asking for a *fatwā* (legal ruling). The answer was that the money had been lost without any laxity on Maulānā's part. Therefore Maulānā is not liable. The *madrasah* pleaded to Maulānā to take the money back and also showed him the *fatwā* (legal ruling). On seeing the *fatwā*, Maulānā Munīr Ṣāhib remarked, "Has Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad studied jurisprudence (*fiqh*) only to find a loop-hole for me? Imagine if this incident had to occur to Maulānā Gangohī. Would he have agreed to take the money? Take this *fatwā* away. I will not even take 2 cents". [Akābir ka Taqwā p.42]

It was the habit of Maulānā Mazhar Ṣāhib Nānotwī that during

*madrasah* time, if anyone would come to meet him, he would look at the time before starting the conversation and again at the end of the conversation. A paper was kept in *Ḥadrat's kitāb* in which the date and the amount of time he had spent in speaking were noted. At the end of the month he would add up all the time used in speaking. If it would come to less than half a day, he would write in the *madrasah's* register that he had taken half a day off and if it worked out to more than half a day then he would write that he had taken a full day off. [Akābir kā Taqwā p.36]

Once, *Ḥakīm* Ummah Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī رحمة الله عليه was travelling from Saharanpur to Kanpur. Maulānā had sugarcane with him which he wanted to be weighed at the station. (Normally in India when travelling by train, luggage is weighed which must be paid for accordingly). But no one weighed Maulānā's sugarcane. Some non-Muslim workers, due to the respect that they held for Maulānā, said, "You may proceed freely without weighing it. We will speak to the guard (on the railway train) to permit you to pass through". Maulānā enquired, "Till where will the guard accompany me?" They replied, "Till Ghazi Aabād". Maulānā then asked, "What will happen after Ghazi Aabād?" The workers replied, "This guard will inform the next guard". Maulānā enquired, "What will happen thereafter?" The workers answered, "He will take you to Kanpur where your journey ends". *Ḥadrat* remarked, "My journey will not end, the journey towards the hereafter still remains. What arrangements will be made there?" On hearing this, the workers were astonished and were greatly affected by Maulānā's taqwā. [Akābir 'Ulemā' e Deoband p.131]

**d) Following of *Sunnah*** - *Ḥadrat* Shaykh Zakariyya writes,

"From amongst the pious predecessors, there were two great personalities who I had personally witnessed humbling themselves and crying abundantly in *tahajjud salāh* during the last portion of the night. One was my father, Ml. Yahya Khandehlawī, and the other was Ml. Husayn Ahmad Madanī. Ml. Madanī's first two *rak'āts* of *tahajjud* used to be short, thereafter he used to perform two long *rak'āts* of *nafl* in which he used to recite one and a half to two *juz* of the Noble Qur'ān. The recitation of *tahajjud* used to be a little loud so that if a person sitting close by wanted to listen to the recitation, he would be able to do so. Whilst reciting, there would be absolute humility and so much of crying that it seemed as if he was breathing out hot fumes. In a *hadīth*, the condition of the *salāh* of Nabī ﷺ is described in the following words, "Nabī ﷺ used to perform *salāh* in the condition that a sound similar to that of a boiling kettle would emit from within his chest due to excessive crying." [Abū Dāwūd] This is an example where the *salāh* of our *Akābir* resembled the *salāh* of Nabī ﷺ.

During the era of political struggle against the British, a warrant of arrest was issued for Maulānā Qāsim Nānotwī. On the insistence of the people, Maulānā went into hiding. After concealing himself for three days, Maulānā emerged saying, "When the disbelievers were in pursuit of Nabī ﷺ on the occasion of *hijrah*, Nabī ﷺ and Abū Bakr ؓ, went into hiding in the cave of Thur. After three days Nabī ﷺ left the cave. Therefore it is not possible for me to remain in hiding for more than three days". The danger posed to one's life and freedom did not prevent them from strictly adhering to the *Sunnah*.

It has been reported that Maulānā Nānotwī on returning from any journey would proceed to the *masjid* and engage himself

in *nafl salāh*. The reason for him doing this action is because Nabī ﷺ always went first to the *masjid* on returning from a journey, then he would visit *Hadrat Fātimah radiyallāhu anha*, and then proceed to his home.

*Hadrat Maulānā Khalīl Ahmad Sāhib Saharanpūrī* was so particular with regards to the use of *miswāk*, that whenever he would undertake a journey he would always make sure that a *miswāk* was in his pocket or in his pillowcase. He would never perform *wudū'* without using a *miswāk*.

e) **Difference of opinion with respect** - Muftī Muhammad Shafī has written that difference of opinion is neither contrary to the unity of Islām, nor is it harmful to anyone. We find severe *ikhtilāf* between *sahāba* ؓ, the *tābī'in* and our pious predecessors, yet despite all their differences, they would still meet each other, have meals together and live with such love that at times, an outsider would never even perceive their differences. The '*ulemā'* of Deoband followed diligently in the *sahāba's* footsteps with regard to the etiquette which they displayed with their contemporaries in spite of great difference of opinion between themselves. Hereunder are some of the most wonderful examples of their beautiful character.

*Hadrat Hakīmul Ummah*, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī and *Hadrat Shaykhul Islām*, Maulānā Husayn Ahmad Madanī had great political differences. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī was a strong supporter of the Muslim League Party and regarded the Congress (opposition party) to be harmful for the Muslims while Shaykhul Islām considered support of the Congress as beneficial for the Muslims and supported it fervently. This was

quite a big issue in India, yet Shaykhul Islām would advise the people who wished to take *bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance) to him to go to Maulānā Thānwī saying, "He is the elder of our group."

Maulānā Khalīl Aḥmad Saharanpūrī and Maulānā Yaḥya Kandeḥlawī had different views in certain rulings. When people would ask Maulānā Khalīl Aḥmad the ruling, he would say, "According to me this is the ruling but according to Maulānā Yaḥya it is so. Go and find out from him and if he permits, practice on his ruling."

Besides this, they were imbibed with many other qualities. Due to brevity, we have mentioned only a few by example. May Allāh ﷻ imbibe these qualities within us!

### TESTIMONY OF AN ARAB SCHOLAR

Ḥaḍrat Muftī Muḥammad Taqī 'Uthmānī has written regarding his journey to Baghdad, "Baghdad is that city which for centuries had been at the centre of the Islāmic world. The mere sight of this city reminds one of the glorious days of the Abbāsī *khilāfat*. Upon reaching Baghdad I enquired whether there were any *madāris* present in which Islāmic knowledge is imparted in accordance with the ways of the pious predecessors. I was informed that all such *madāris* had now been converted into schools and universities. Now, the knowledge of *dīn* can only be attained from university faculties, such places wherein Islām is taught as mere theory, similar to ancient philosophy (*falsafah*). Islām cannot be seen in the lives of the students, nor in the *ustādhs*. Forget being religious scholars, on seeing their appearance, one wonders if they are even Muslim. This is just like how orientalist study

Islām today, in the universities of America, Canada and Europe. If you read their books and articles you will come across the names of such books which many of our 'ulemā' have never even heard about. It seems as if deep research (*taḥqīq*) is being made. But alas! In spite of swimming in the ocean of Islāmic knowledge from morning to evening they return dry as a bone. No effect of what they so rigorously study can be seen in their lives. The soul of this knowledge has been destroyed.

Muftī Ṣāḥib thereafter asked if they could at least direct him to an 'ālim of the old school of thought, so that he could present himself at his service. He was directed to a *masjid* close to the tomb of Shaykh 'Abdul Qādir Jilānī رَحْمَةُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ, in which was a *maktab*. Here he met an old pious-looking man. Muftī Ṣāḥib described his meeting with him in the following words, "On seeing him I felt that I was in the presence of a pious Allāh-fearing 'ālim. He was sitting on a straw mat, dressed in coarse clothing and eating dry bread. The light of the *sharī'ah* could be discerned on his forehead."

After making *salām* he enquired regarding my name and the place from which I had come. He also asked about the condition of the *madāris* of our country, its syllabus and the manner in which the *kitābs* (books) are taught. Tears flowed from his eyes as I mentioned the names of the *kitābs* found in the *Dars e Nizāmī* (syllabus). He asked, "Are these *kitābs* still being taught!?" I replied in the affirmative. He then explained, "Today, we have been deprived of even hearing the names of these *kitābs*. These *kitābs* create Allāhwālā (Allāh-conscious men), they create true Muslims. In our country these books are no longer taught. I beg you to convey this message of

mine to the 'ulemā' and the masses of your country, that for the sake of Allāh ﷻ, they should bear everything but should never allow the destruction of such *madāris* wherein these *kitābs* are taught!!!!" The enemies of Islām are fully conscious of the fact that as long as these simple *Maulānā's*, sitting on straw mats are present in society, they cannot remove *īmān* from the hearts of the Muslims. Therefore the enemies of Islām are making all out efforts to remove these *madāris*."

### EFFECTS UNDERSTOOD BY THE ENEMIES

After the division of Pakistan, many of the influential people of the country were gathered to discuss the way forward. At this juncture Sayed Husayn, who was at that time the chief engineer of Pakistan, narrated his personal experience. He explained, "Before the division of Pakistan I undertook a journey to America. While taking rest at a hotel lounge, two high- ranking Americans entered and sat nearby. During their light-hearted discussion that followed, I was surprised to hear them discuss the following topic:

**American A:** Why does religion influence the lives of the locals of Hindustan so greatly, so much so that such influence is not even found in the Islāmic countries of the Middle East?

**American B:** The reason most probably, is that the Middle East lies close to Europe and has thus, due to continuous intermingling with Europeans, taken to their ways and accepted their culture.

**American A:** No, that cannot be! Hindustan remained under British dominance and rule for almost a century, yet the conquering nation was still unable to separate the locals from the clutches of their religion.

**American B:** Perhaps it is due to the fact that Hindustan is a poor country and its poverty has prevented western civilization taking root.

**American A:** Rather, experience shows that attracting poor people is much easier. I have pondered over this matter for a very long time. As far as I understand, one of the main causes for religion controlling the masses of that country is due to an institute known as Deoband. Through their writings and lectures they have and continue spreading the teachings of their religion, thus ensuring that religion remains alive in those far away regions.

### ACCEPTANCE

Hadrat Maulānā Zul Fiqār Naqshbandī says, "Allāh ﷻ has granted this weak servant the ability to travel to more than 40 countries in connection with *dīn*. This servant has been to a place where there is six months day and six months night, he has been to Siberia where one can only see snow and howling winds -we even performed *ṣalāh* on the snow- , he has seen the place referred to as the end of the world. The government has written this there since during the month of June, there is one day in which approximately 100000 tourists gather to see a spectacular sight. The sun comes close to the ocean water ready to set, when instead of setting, it rises again. For this reason, scientists refer to it as the end of the world. This servant has seen the jungles of Africa and the cities of America. Wherever this weak one went, in urban areas or rural areas, on the tops of mountains or deep down in valleys, I have seen some spiritual son of Dārul Ulūm Deoband doing some effort of *dīn*. Dārul Ulūm Deoband has attained so much of acceptance." [Khutbāt e Faqīr]

