

Prologue

During the last 15 years or so I have visited *Darul Uloom*, Deoband, numerous times. Based on my personal interaction with the faculty and students there and the leaders of *Jamiat Ulema-i Hind* in New Delhi, I have always wondered about the incorrect reporting on *Darul Uloom* or any incident involving a *madrasah* being referred as a *Deobandi Madrasah*. It set me pondering over the underlying reason and its prevalence, particularly in the West, and this is one of the foremost reasons for writing this book.

The book also tries to bring out the history and ideology of Shah Waliullah, which influenced philosophically the pioneer *Ulema* of Deoband to a large extent. The chapters have been designed to integrate and contextualise the contemporary political and cultural situation of Islam in India, while placing them in a historical perspective.

This book tries to bring out the unique character of *Darul Uloom*, its founders, the dominant Muslim thought of those times i.e. *Fikr-e Waliullahi*, contribution of its founders to the

national freedom struggle, how *Darul Uloom* shaped up in the subcontinent after the Independence of India. The spread of *Darul Uloom* in different counties, how the Western media viewed it through a misleading prism and declared it to be the spring of terrorism worldwide.

In the last 20 years or perhaps since the concept of clash of civilisations occupied the mental space of our rulers and administrators, reams have been devoted to the question as to what is a *madrasah*. But, unfortunately no one has tried to analyse the main perception of a *madrasah* in true Islamic sense, or even if they had tried to, the result was half-baked. Now, since the West was more concerned about the Taliban and its links with *Deobandis*, an effort should have been made to research, analyse and then offer some interpretation of what a true *Deobandi Madrasah* is. Perhaps, as most of the writers were from the West, they were unsuccessful in incorporating the basic ethos or mental make-up of someone living in the Indian subcontinent. Moreover, many had inaccurate frameworks to study them. The fundamental issue, when dealing with *Deobandi madaris* (plural of *madrasah*), is that one has to analyse the situation prevailing in India before the power was in Muslim hands and thereafter. The *Deobandi* leaders were born and brought up in Indian ethos and culture and their thoughts were shaped by true Islamic tenets. They were able to synthesise the two with the prevailing situation and came out to lay the foundation of an institution, premised on the Islamic principles but also taught about coexistence and tolerance, even when these words were not part of the common vocabulary. My effort through this book is to draw out those salient features of this great institution.

It has been my privilege to enjoy a good relationship with the leading *Ulema* of *Darul Uloom* and *Jamiat* such as Maulana Asad Madani and his son Maulana Mahmood Madani and other leaders of *Darul Uloom*. Perhaps, this close relationship with them was due to the influence of my paternal and maternal grandfathers and their blessings. My grandfather Hafiz Abdul Aziz Mirza Amrohvi was an alumnus of *Darul Uloom*, Amroha, and a very close confidante of the Late Maulana Abrarul Haq Saheb of Hardoi, while my maternal grandfather Shah Mushir Uddin Usmani (descendent of Bandagi Miyan RA of Amethi, Lucknow) received his *Fazilat* degree from *Nadwa-tul Ulema*, Lucknow, as a student of the revered Hazrat Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi RA. It was perhaps a result of their blessings that I was granted easy access to the leading scholars of Muslim thought in India and the warm welcome and cooperation, which I received from them, compelled me to undertake this book, a project which started in 2018 and finished in 2023.

I wish that after reading this book, the readers will realise the real essence of *Darul Uloom* and its leaders and project it in a more positive and real manner.

Asad Mirza

asad.mirza.nd@hotmail.com

