'An Analytical Comparison of the Aligarh and the Deobandi Schools', ***Islamic Quarterly*****, 1994, Vol. 38, No. 1, sh. 48-58**

Özet

Geleneksel ve modern düşünce biçimleri arasında sürekli bir gerilim olmuştur. Özellikle modernizmin İslam dünyasına girişi, felsefe ve modern düşüncenin taraftar bulması gelenekçilerin eleştirilerine hedef olmuştur. Bu tür gerilimler ve tartışmalar hemen hemen bütün İslam kültür coğrafyasında yaşanmıştır. Hint yarımadası müslümanları da benzer deneyimler geçirmiştir. Makale birisi modern diğeri geleneksel yaklaşımları benimseyen iki hareketin fikirlerini karşılaştırmalı olarak incelemektedir. Bu fikri hareketlerin düşünsel arkaplanları, etkilendikleri fikri akımlar, ortaya çıktıkları dönem ve coğrafyadaki konumları tahlil edilmektedir.

Islamic Quarterly, Vol: XXXVIII, 1994, No: 1, pp. 48-58

AN ANALYTICAL COMPARISON OF THE ALIGARH AND THE DEOBANDI SCHOOLS

Talip Küçükcan *

Introduction

The case of Islamic modernism and revivalism in the 18th and 19th century Indian environment is of considerable importance and significance in the making of modern intellectual Islamic history, for one can explicitly observe the fact that the modernist, revivalist or traditionalist socio-cultural and socio-political or socio-religious movements had a remarkable number of adherents and a long-lasting impact on the intellectual life of the individual and the community at large in Indian Islamic circles. Political, cultural, religious implications of these multi-coloured movements caused phenomenal social change in the society with respect to its religious and national identity and also its pattern of thinking and understanding of contemporary events. Neither did these movements suddenly arise in a social vacuum or emerge as a consequence of one single episode. In order to apprehend the very nature of social, political, cultural and religious movements, one should maintain a comprehensive approach, taking all kinds of variables into careful consideration in a given time and space. Correspondingly, in the 19th century Indian context, religious, political and socio-cultural developments of an Islamic nature should be studied with the same inclusive approach, for these movements had not come out in one night, rather they were inspired and motivated by various elements and effects of historical developments which had been in process in that period.

* Islamic Research Centre, Kisikli Cat. No: 7, Baglarbasi Istanbul Turkey.

This article will compare and contrast two outstanding movements which bloomed among Indian Muslims in the 19th century, the Aligarh and the Deobandi schools. I will employ a descriptive-analytical approach whilst presenting the doctrines, ideologies and methodologies of the Aligarh and the Deobandi seminaries. I assume that before the elaboration of different aspects of schools. It would be a beneficial preliminary to begin with some remarks on the socio-cultural and intellectual trends prior to these movements in order to highlight the historical circumstances in which the representatives of the Aligarh and the Deobandi schools felt the necessity of expressing themselves.

General Tendencies of Indian Muslim Illuminati in the 18th and the 19th Centuries

A number of modernist, reformist and traditionalist movements asserted their views on contemporary problems confronting Indian Muslims in different spheres of their lives. Each of them however maintained sometimes analogous, mostly contrasting characters of their own. Regarding socio-religious movements in Indian, one cannot help mentioning Shah Waliyyullah (1703-62) who was the forerunner of a novel and fresh methodology. His teachings had a persuasive and potent influence on subsequent generations.

Islamic modernist and reformist movements were undertaken by Shah Waliyyullah, and his orientation was further developed by his followers such as S.A. Aziz (1745-1823), S.A. Shahid (1786-1831), M. I. Shahid (1779-1831) and Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898)

Shah Waliyyullah described Islam in a simple paradigm "*Sharī'a* plus *Sunna*, minus innovations". He strongly condemned and attacked accretions that came into Islam, especially those of Hindu practises. He said that:

1. Muslims should not abandon the acts and customs of the Companions and immediate successors of the Prophet Muhammad.
2. Muslims must not adopt the traditions of Hindus and others such as funeral ceremonies or the mystical concept of annihilation in God. (Malik, 1980, p. 43)
3. Muslims should avoid participating in Shi'i ceremonies in Muharram, mourning the death of Hasan at Karbala. He also condemned the veneration of Ali and his descendants. (Metcalf, 1982, p. 42)

Shah Waliyyullah asserted that the *'Ulamā'* should play an important role in the restoration of a stable Muslim rule in which their function would be

complementary to that of the ruler i.e. Muslim governors should be guided by responsible *ʿUlamā'*. He rejected unquestioning adherence to and blind imitation of the legacy of the past, arguing that the door of *ijtihād* was open and must stay open for those who are skilled in traditional sciences. With regard to logical and traditional fields of learning, he held the view that the former subjects were mere intellectual exercise and a source of confusion, thus the latter should be concentrated on as they would bring people to the central teachings of Islam. Analogous to Ghazzali, he endeavoured to reconcile reason and revelation, adding a new dimension to that of Ghazzali's attempt; the inclusion of mystical knowledge in that synthesis (Metcalf, 1982, p. 37-39). In a nutshell, Shah Waliyyullah tried to inaugurate a new starting point on the eve of contemporary social and political developments for Muslims; those who have been living in a stagnant intellectual predicament, under the domination of ignorance, innovations, unreasoning adherence and alien Hindu practices.

Shortly after Shah Waliyyullah, in the following decades, different schools of thought asserted their views on various aspects of the religious, political and cultural lives of Indian Muslims, trying to appeal to the Muslim community at large. One can enumerate the Aligarh, Deobondi, *Ahl-i Ḥadīth*, Barelwis and *Nadwatu'l ʿUlamā'* as movements of that nature. Leaving Aligarh and the Deobandis for detailed elaboration, in what follows I will try to portray the other schools taking their most general and distinctive features into account.

Of these, the *Nadwatu'l ʿUlamā'* was founded in 1891 and shared with Aligarh the vision of active involvement in politics and administrative affairs, keeping in touch with the ruling power. A large number of its students associated themselves with the Nakshbandi order (Metcalf, 1982, p. 335).

As for the *Ahl-i Ḥadīth*, which was represented by Siddiq Hasan Khan and Nazir Husayn (Ahmad and Grunebaum, 1970, p. 6), emerged in the late 19th century. Their main concern was constant insistence on a return to the norms of the original *Sunna*. The members of the *Ahl-i Ḥadīth* seem to have committed themselves to revitalisation of the law by reform of customs denying the validity of medieval schools of jurisprudence. They asserted their preference in favour of direct use of the textual sources of the faith; the Qur'an and the *Sunna*. Regarding Sufism, the *Ahl-i Ḥadīth* maintained that it was a dangerous threat to true religion. Accordingly, as opposed to the Deobandis and Barelwis, they discouraged the institutional forms of the Sufi tradition. Ibn-Taymiyya had an important influence on their understanding of popular religion and its manifestations (Rahman, 1979, p. 205).

When it comes to the Delhi college, which was founded by M. Ishaq in 1825 and was closed after the mutiny of 1857, it can be portrayed as a peaceful reformist movement. In this college the study of modern rational sciences

was encouraged along with traditional subjects, and Western works were translated into Urdu in order to promote a rational contribution to the revival of Islamic thinking (Metcalf, 1982, p 65).

Regarding the Barelwis, Smith observes that it is an important school in India following the Hanafi school and permitting no reinterpretation of the Law (Smith, 1979, p. 15). Metclaf argues that the Barlewis appeared as an opposition group rather than as a genuine school to transform standards of practice and belief prevalent in the society. What made them different from the rest is the fact that they ventured to justify the intercession of the Shaikhs and Pirs of the shrines (Metcalf, 1982, p. 267, 296).

THE ALIGARH AND THE DEOBANDI SCHOOLS

Founders and Forerunners:

Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), founder and ideological father of the Aligarh movement, appears as a modernising leader after the mutiny of 1857, committing himself to co-operation with the British and emphasising; 1) rationalism in Islam, 2) social reforms patterned after Western culture, 3) modern education through English, 4) Muslim nationalism and 5) universality of civilisations (Malik, 1980, p. 15-16).

During his formative period he was influenced by his grandfather Farid and by his mother. Despite his family being exposed to western ideas, traditional values were preserved and internalised by Sayyid Ahmad Khan. His early education seems to have been strictly traditional, including religion and Greco-Arab science. He published several books on different aspects of religion and a commentary on the Bible. Nevertheless, after the mutiny he saw the utter defeat of Indian Muslims and became not only an admirer of the British, but also a Muslim nationalist. When he was in England, Sayyid Ahmad Khan developed an awareness of his own authentic cultural identity and committed himself to defending Islam against the attacks of the West and to updating the religious doctrines of Islam in the light of reason and natural law (Malik, 1980, p. 99). For the advancement of knowledge in the field of education, he played a leading role in the establishment of the Anglo-Muhammadan Oriental College (the Aligarh College) in 1875, which created a long lasting, effective tradition in the Indian intellectual milieu. The Institution was modelled on Cambridge University but soon assumed a form and personality of its own (Ahmad, 1967, p. 37). The main purpose of Aligarh College, as Fazlur Rahman puts it, was to disseminate modern Western culture and science along with the Islamic religion (Rahman, 1958, p. 82).

As for the founders of the Deobandi School, one can mention three outstanding figures:

1- Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1813-1887), whose family had long been connected with the Delhi *'Ulamā'*, was influenced by Imdadullah. Later he came into contact with the Sufi tradition and this mystical experience left an important mark on his thought. Whilst studying, Nanautawi met Rashid Ahmad with whom he co-operated for the establishment of the Deobandi seminary.

2- Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1827-1905), whose father was influenced by Shah Waliyyullah's teachings, inherited the same line of thought from him, and Gangohi's understanding was characterised by traditional orthodox elements of Shah Waliyyullah's religious thinking.

3- The third person in this line was Imdadullah (1817-1899) who shared the same experience and understanding with the other two. He is reported to have joined the Nakshbandiyya order (Metcalf, 1982, p. 72-79).

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE ALIGARH AND THE DEOBANDI SCHOOLS

Administration and Curricula

The Madrasa of Deobandi: After the mutiny of 1857 political quietude dominated the atmosphere of intellectual life in India. Having seen the disastrous results of the mutiny, a large number of Muslim *'Ulamā'* were inclined to establish a communist observant and committed to the religious laws and spiritual dimensions of Islam. At that time Rashid Ahmad, Muhammad Qasim and some others set up a pattern of intellectual approach and an educational policy by gathering in Deoband. The school they set up was an independent one without any association with a particular group, sect or political lobby. It was dependent on public contributions and donations, not on fixed holdings of particular endowments or government's financial assistance (Metcalf, 1982, p. 87, 92, 94). Financial administration of the school prevented allegations that it was controlled and used by a power-source.

The Anglo-Muhammadan Oriental College in Aligarh on the other hand depended on government's financial aid from the very beginning of the inauguration of the college. Financial dependence on British economic sources aroused a debate that the administration and the staff had become subservient to the British (Ahmad, 1967, p. 108). This controversy, to some extent, harmed the reputation of the college in Islamic circles.

Aligarh college accepted English as a language of instruction and taught modern sciences, including logic, philosophy and jurisprudence extensively,

along with Islamic sciences on a small scale (Smith, 1979, p. 14). In the Deobandi school the emphasis was on the study of *ḥadīth* and *manqūlāt* rather than the rational sciences, for they regarded the tradition as the basis of their popular teaching (Ahmad, 1967, p. 100). Thus they included in their curriculum six main collections of Prophetic *ḥadīth*. The Deobandi school did not denounce the Western type of education and the rational sciences. Its disassociation was not based on opposition to or rejection of the rational sciences, but on the plea that the traditional learning was on the verge of extinction in India (Ahmad and Grunebaum, 1970, p. 6). Unlike Aligarh's choice of English, they accommodated Urdu as a language of instruction.

THEOLOGICAL STANCE

1. On Rationalism Versus Traditionalism

The most prominent archetype of the Aligarh movement employed a rationalist, liberal and modernist approach to theological matters. Accepting Ibn Taymiyya's anti-traditionalist thesis that the door of *ijtihād* was still open and should not be considered closed (A. Ahmad, 1967, p. 108), S.A. Khan regarded traditionalism as obscurantism, that is, an attitude of mind which resisted the spirit of free inquiry and confined Muslims within the narrow limits of the days of yore (Malik, 1980, p. 21). Thus he denounced the four schools of law as agents of stagnation and intellectual decline by insisting upon blind adherence (Malik, 1964, p. 163).

The Deobandi *'Ulamā'* did not reject the validity and importance of the four legal schools in the formation of the Islamic system of jurisprudence. Unlike Aligarh, they did not see any *harm* in following one of the schools of jurisprudence, for all were based on four main sources; the Qur'ān, the *Sunna*, *Ijmā'* and *Qiyās*. *Ijmā'* was not accepted as a source of law by Aligarh. By adhering to a school of law, the Deobandi movement represented a jurisprudential position of imitation or conformity. While they were imitating the Hanafi school some of the Deobandi schools *'Ulamā'* exercised *ijtihād* within the same methodology, regarding the door of *ijtihād* as open. One of the Deobandi scholars tried to justify imitation as opposed to S.A. Khan's view. He argued that the world had declined from the time of Muhammad and there were simply no people alive as skilled as the Imams of the classical schools. When S.A. Khan argued that obedience to the lawyers compromised the authority of the Prophet, M. Qasim again rejected his argument by stating that the problem here was only a matter of difference in the degree of authority between the Prophet and the Imams (Metcalf, 1982, p. 145).

2. On the Prophetic Tradition

The Deobandi school was primarily concerned with the Prophetic tradition,

and the study of *ḥadīth* was given considerable weight in the design of curricula for teaching. Accordingly to them, the revitalization of *ḥadīth* would motivate the Muslims of India in their search for authenticity. Their attitude towards the collections was not critical of their methodology, authenticity and validity.

S.A. Khan, unlike the Deobandis, believed that the authenticity and validity of many *ḥadīth* should be questioned (Malik, 1980, p. 255). According to him only very few Prophetic traditions were reliable. He objected to the methodology of classical *ḥadīth* criticism, including that of Bukhari and Muslim (A. Ahmad, 1967, p. 104). All the traditions, he asserted, were subject to be tested on the touchstone of rationality, and each tradition should be accepted only after testing its conformity with rationality (Malik, 1964 , p. 165-166).

3. On Popular Religion

One can see analogous ideas, with regard to popular beliefs and customs, asserted by both the Aligarh and Deobandi schools. Aligarh mainly accepted Waliyyullah's understanding of Sufism and tried to eliminate non-Islamic practices. Similarly the Deobandis consistently denounced local customs that elevated the saints to the status of the Prophet. They rejected all sorts of superstition, saint worship and ignorance (Smith, 1979, p. 364). What differs concerning their opinion about mystical experience is the fact that whereas the Aligarh school denied the idea of annihilation in God, the Deobandis maintained that extinction in God could be achieved in a gradual process; first, annihilation in the Shaikh, then in the Prophet and finally extinction in God. S.A. Khan added a new dimension; in his opinion, regarding the concept of innovation, he urged Muslims that, in secular matters, where Islam was indifferent, modern ways should be accepted. Regarding Shi'i practices, both asserted a single view; Muslims should avoid participating in their ceremonies (Malik, 1980, p. 259-261).

4. On Free Will

S.A. Khan argued that man's acts were free from being dependent on God. Man has been given right to choose and lead his life in the light of his reason. His actions are not determined by God. Otherwise it would be meaningless to speak about reason, rationality and responsibility. Unlike S.A. Khan, M. Qasim insisted on man's dependence on God. He held the view that man's actions were derived from God and man is no more free than a pen in one's hand (Metcalf, 1982, p. 146).

5. On Revelation and Nature

S.A. Khan asserted that there was nothing in the Holy Book of God disagreeing with the law of nature (S.A. Khan, 1982, p. 43). He denied the existence of miracles performed by the Prophet, arguing that the Prophet was a mortal himself (Ahmad and Grunebaum, 1970, p. 27). In his opinion,

all miracles mentioned in the scriptures must be interpreted as either symbolical or metaphorical or legendary (A. Ahmad, 1967, p. 47) because there is no proof of the occurrence of anything supernatural. Whereas the Aligarh school prefers a liberal and sometimes symbolic understanding of the Qur'ān, the Deodandi school seems to have maintained a literary approach to the scriptures. S.A. Khan gave primary importance to reason, accordingly he rejected everything which occurred to him as conflicting with reason, logic and nature (Smith, 1979, p. 106).

6. The Sacred and the Profane

The views of the Deobandi and Aligarh schools on the relationship of the religious and the secular were in sharp contrast. S.A. Khan appears as a decisive advocate of the idea of separation between religious and secular affairs. He felt that religious, political and social matters should be distinguished from one another, since spiritual and religious affairs cannot have any connection with worldly experience. He believed that separation between the sacred and the profane was followed by the first four Caliphs, but it was gradually abandoned and corrupted by their successors. He strongly criticises those who interpreted all aspects of life in the light of religion. According to S.A. Khan, the formulation of the *Fiqh* to cover all aspects of life posed serious problems within the body-politic of Islam. The law was formulated in such a way that Islam came to be accepted as relating to all secular problems (Malik, 1980, p. 240-241).

M. Qasim, a Deobandi Scholar, rejected S.A. Khan's arguments on the separation of secular and sacred affairs. He asserted that any attempt to introduce criteria of distinction among the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*, such as worldly and religious ones was not acceptable because Islam covers every domain of human life (Metcalf, 1982, p. 145).

Political Orientations

The Aligarh and the Deodandi schools seem to have maintain different attitudes towards politics. Whereas the former favoured active involvement in politics, the latter seemed to be reluctant to take part in political affairs. As one can see from S.A. Khan's writing, Aligarh College was associated with British officials in India.

Especially after 1857 S.A. Khan, developed a close alliance with the British rulers, admiring not only their political power but also the cultural manifestations of western civilization. After the defeat, he tried, on the one hand, to show British officials that the Muslims of India were loyal to them during the mutiny and both Muslims and Christians had a unique common semitic background. On the other hand, S.A. Khan urged the British rulers to recognize their lack of communication with their subjects, (Metcalf, 1982, p. 319).

In political affairs, the Deobandi *'Ulamā'* took rather a passive stance, ignoring new political changes which had taken place in India. Instead they concentrated on the study of the traditional sciences and on graduating well-educated religious scholars. Unlike the Aligarh movement, they were not admirers of British rule and Western values.

Silent disapproval of British domination reflected itself in favour of Muslim co-operation with the Indian National Congress when the first juristic *fatwa* was pronounced by a Deobandi *'ālim*. S. A. Khan did not approve of Muslim co-operation with Hindus (A. Ahmad, 1967, p. 47). In contrast with the Deobandi *'Ulamā'*, he supported the political separation of Hindus and Muslims (Ahmad and Grunebaum, 1970, p.3).

Another side of S.A. Khan's view on the political existence of Muslims in India is related to his idea of Muslim nationalism. He felt that nationalism is an instinctive and natural solidarity, distinguishing man from animal. He believes that Muslims all over the world are of the same nationality because of their adherence to the same religion and spiritual values (Malik, 1980, p. 230).

S.A. Khan regarded the Caliphate as one of the political institutions which weakened Muslim nationalism in India. Although he defined the Ottomans as being defenders of the Caliphate, he changed his vision of the Ottoman Caliphate when the British changed their policy. He was pro-Turkish as long as this was British policy (Ahmad, 1960, p. 67). In his understanding, the attachment of Muslim Indians to the Ottoman Caliphate resulted in :

1) a lack of any significant Hindu-Muslim co-operation;
2) impeding the development of genuine nationalism among Indian Muslims.

S.A. Khan emphasised the differences between Muslims and Hindus in order to strengthen Muslim social and political solidarity. He also tried to shift the focus of political allegiance from the Caliphate to Muslim nationalism. This process played an important role in the development of Pakistani nationalism and its partition from India as an independent Islamic country. S.A. Khan did not accept the legitimacy of the Ottoman Caliphs on the basis that the institution of the Caliphate lost its original function 30 years after the death of Muhammad. Thus he discouraged the loyalty of Indian Muslims to the Ottoman Sultan, Abd al-Majid (1839-1891), proclaiming that Indian Muslims could not be the subjects of a Turkish Caliph, but should be loyal subjects of British rule (Malik, 1980, p. 236-277).

In contrast with the Aligarh school, the School of Deobandi explicitly supported the legitimacy of the Ottoman Caliphs as being universal leaders

of the Muslim *Ummah.* Accordingly, they tried to contact the Turks during World War 1 (Ahmad, 1967, p. 124).

Conclusion

The Indian Islamic atmosphere, with its rich diversity, produced various intellectuals, and socio-political and socio-religious schools with their own peculiarities, orientations and tendencies in the cultural, political and religious life of Indian Muslims. One can portray some of them as being traditionalist, conservative or radical, whereas some others can be pictured as modernist, reformist or rationalist in nature. Whatever the labels might be, these movements played an important role in shaping the socio-political and socio-cultural patterns of the Muslim mind and life in India. Though some trends did not last long, a number of them such as Aligarh and the Deobandis had a long-term effect on Indian Islamic circles. As Metcalf puts it, all contributed to awareness and self-consciousness of the period and encouraged an ongoing sense of unity in the British India.

The Aligarh and Deobandi schools emerged as two different representatives of the Indian Muslim intellectual search for a promising new formula by which cultural authenticity could be explored and transformed in a vivid sense. These movements, naturally, were influenced by the social, political and cultural heritage of their time. Although Aligarh and Deobandi sometimes asserted analogous ideas, as our study displays, the basis of their approach and understanding of traditional and contemporary values seem to be irreconcilable in general.

What makes them distinct from each other is the extremism of these two schools in their methodology. Aligarh seems to have represented an extremist secularist stance by drawing an absolute line between the profane and the sacred. They tended to confine Islam to the spiritual realm of life, putting aside its social, political and cultural implications. On the other side of extremism, one can see the Deodandi school with their fairly obstinate ignorance of new political developments and social changes. Unlike Aligarh students, they confined their studies to the traditional religious sciences, not denouncing, but excluding secular subjects from their teaching program.

The founders of the Deobandi school emphasized the elements of orthodoxy in Waliyyullah's thought, whereas those of Aligarh stressed the elements of religious speculation.

Spiritual experience had an important significance in the Deobandi synthesis between traditional intellectual learning and Islamic mysticism since they regarded the *Sharī'ah* and *Ṭarīqa* as interdependent. In the thought of the Aligarh school, spiritual experience seems to have been replaced by reason, rationality and western way of thinking.

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