The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India
Author(s): Barbara Metcalf
Source: *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1978), pp. 111-134
Published by: Cambridge University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/311825
Accessed: 30/03/2011 19:58

Modern Asian Studies, **12**, 1 (1978), pp. 111–134. Printed in Great Britain.

The Madrasa at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India

BARBARA METCALF

University of Pennsylvania

A RECENT conference of specialists on the study of Muslims in South Asia identified as one of the neglected areas of their field the study of traditional religious institutions in the modern period. Such institutions as the sufi orders, the religious schools, and the system of pious endowments have been treated, if at all, only in their relation to political developments.[1] Thus the leading theological academy of modern India, the Dār ul-'Ulūm of Deoband, has been studied because many of its ulama played an important role in nationalist politics in India and opposed the foundation of Pakistan. That motive for study has seriously distorted the treatment of the nineteenth-century history of the school, endowing it with an anti-British and revolutionary character when, in fact, the school's concerns were totally a-political.[2] An investigation of the early history of the school suggests many other significant historical themes, notably an important incipient trend toward a formal bureaucratization of the ulama and their institutions. Studies of religious institutions outside India such as Gilsenan's study of the Hamidiya Shadhiliya order in modern Egypt[3] and Roff's study of the Majlis Ugama in Malaysia[4] suggest that successful functioning in the modern period has required such a transformation in organizational structure. This article describes the organization of Deoband in its initial decades.

The Organization of Deoband

The madrasa at Deoband began modestly in 1867 in an old mosque,

[1] William R. Roff, 'Islamization, "Communitas", Symbols, and Institutional Structures', in Dietmar Rothermund (ed.), *Islam in Southern Asia: A Survey of Current Research* (Wiesbaden, 1975), pp. 1–4.

[2] See, for example, Ziya ul Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan* (Bombay, 1963).

[3] Michael Gilsenan, *Saint and Sufi in Modern Egypt: An Essay in the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford, 1973).

[4] William R. Roff, 'The Origins and Early Years of the *Majlis Ugama*,' in Roff (ed.). *Kelanten: Religion, Society and Politics in a Malay State* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 101–52.

the Chatta Masjid, under a spreading pomegranate tree which still stands. The first teacher and the first pupil, in a coincidence deemed auspicious, were both named Maḥmūd: Mullā Maḥmūd, the teacher, and Maḥmūd Ḥasan, the pupil, who was later to become the school's most famous teacher. Despite the timeless atmosphere surrounding its inauguration, however, the school from its inception was unlike earlier madrasas. The founders emulated the British bureaucratic style for educational institutions instead of the informal familial pattern of schools then prevalent in India. The school was, in fact, so unusual that the annual printed report, itself an innovation, made continuing efforts to explain the organization of the novel system. The school was, notably, a distinct institution, not an adjunct to a mosque or home. As soon as possible, it acquired classrooms and a central library. It was run by a professional staff and its students were admitted for a fixed course of study and required to take examinations for which due prizes were awarded at a yearly public convocation. A series of affiliated colleges was even set up, many ultimately staffed by the school's own graduates and their students examined by visiting Deobandis. Financially, the school was wholly dependent on public contributions, mostly in the form of annual pledges, not on fixed holdings of *waqf*, pious endowments contributed by noble patrons.

In older schools, like the famous Farangī Maḥall in Lucknow, family members taught students in their own homes: there was no central library, no course required of each student, no series of examinations. After a student had read a certain book with his teacher, he would receive a certificate, a *sanad*, testifying to his accomplishment, then seek another teacher or return home. The Farangī Maḥall family depended primarily on revenue from their endowments and on the largesse of princes. The ulama of the school cultivated intellectual interests and trained students to become government servants. The Deobandi ulama, in contrast, sought to create a body of religious leaders able to serve the daily legal and spiritual needs of their fellow Muslims apart from government ties.

The structure of the school encouraged the effective pursuit of such a goal and the opportunity for influence over a wide geographic area. The founders had seen the efficiency of a variety of British institutions in pursuing specific goals. Many of them, including three Deputy Inspectors of the Education Department, were government servants; some had attended schools like the Delhi College; and now all confronted with concern the influential missionary societies. In dealing with these institutions, they learned their methods and chose to com-

pete with them on equivalent terms. They were familiar as well with a system of formal structure from the days of the Mughals. Then, however, the court had provided a framework of patronage and responsibility for the judicial and educational work of the ulama. Now the ulama had to create a structure themselves. In doing so successfully, they laid a foundation for effective influence in a modern society. The school produced ulama, recruited from a widespread area, who disseminated a uniform religious ideology to many Muslims who welcomed teachings that emphasized common bonds among Muslims rather than local ones.

In setting up the school on a formal basis, the founders faced two critical problems: the definition of a rationale for relations among members and the establishment of a secure system of financing. One of the leading founders, Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim, enunciated eight fundamental principles dealing with these issues for the guidance of the initial members of the school. The relations of those associated with the school called for special attention since the school was not in the hands of a single family, subject to the understood and accepted norms of kin behavior. The personnel consisted of the teaching staff, the administrators, and a consultative council. The staff comprised about a dozen members, ranked by learning with the entire Arabic faculty given precedence over the Persian. There were three administrators: the *sarparast*, the rector, the patron and guide of the institution; the *mohtamim*, the chancellor, the chief administrative officer; and the *ṣadr modarris*, the chief teacher or principal, the person responsible for instruction. In 1892 a fourth administrator, the *muftī*, was added to supervise the dispensation of judicial opinions on behalf of the school. The consultative council was composed of the administrators and seven additional members.[5]

The rules called on all to subordinate personal interests in striving for common goals. Members were to demonstrate openness and tolerance in dealing with each other, engaging in mutual consultation not on the basis of position but on that of the value of their ideas. The principles were as follows:

> The councillors of the madrasa should always keep in mind its well-being. There should be no rigidity of views, and for this reason it is important that they never hesitate to express an opinion and that listeners hear it with an open mind. So . . . if we understand another's idea [to be better], even if it is against us, we will accept it wholly. . . . For this same reason it is necessary that the *mohtamim* always seek advice of councillors, whether those who are

[5] Maḥbūb Rizvī, *Tārīkh-i Dēōband* (Deoband, n.d.), p. 116.

the permanent councillors of the madrasa or others who possess wisdom and understanding and are well-wishers of the school. . . . Let no individual be unhappy if on a certain occasion he is not asked for advice . . . . If, however, the *mohtamim* asks no one, all the councillors should object.

It is essential that the teachers of the madrasa be in accord and, unlike the worldly ulama, not be selfish and intolerant of others.

Instruction should be that already agreed on, or later agreed on by consultation. . . . [6]

The last principle was particularly significant, asking the teachers to forego individual inclinations in the interest of a common program.

Rafī' ud-Dīn, *mohtamim* from 1872 to 1889, further formalized Muḥammad Qāsim's guidelines for the institution by giving precedence to the council over staff and administration. He insisted that grievances be presented to the council directly. Moreover, he urged that the power of the *mohtamim* be limited by curtailing the amount of money available for use at his discretion. In 1887 he wrote: 'All decisions are made by the consultative council. Even I, though the *mohtamim*, present here in the school for twenty years, will be removed if they see fit.'[7] By having the council so central, the school was freed of both instability and personal whim. No one person either by virtue of his administrative position or by his seniority within the family, was to dominate the school.

A second cluster of principles dealt with the new system of financing. The system arose in part because the founders had no option but to find an alternative to the increasingly insecure princely grants. Muslim princes of states like Hyderabad, Bhopal and Rampur did, to be sure, patronize learning and extend their bounty across the border to their fellows in British India. Large landlords in an area like the United Provinces did dispense some of their wealth for religious causes. But such contributions could never be as substantial as those of the days of Mughal rule, nor could they be as certain in a period of economic, social, and administrative flux. Nor were the ulama willing to accept British grants-in-aid, for such help was precarious and carried as well the taint of its non-Muslim source. Therefore, the Deobandis solicited annual pledges from their supporters, a method learned from missionary associations. The system was complex, requiring careful records and dependent on the new facilities of postal service, money orders, and even the printing press. Thanks to the last, the annual proceedings were

[6] Muḥammad Ṭaiyib Qāsimī, *Dār ul-'Ulūm Dēōband kī Ṣad Sāla Zindagī* (Deoband, 1968). pp. 16–17.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

able to publish widely the list of donors who thus received recognition for their generosity. The donors were listed in the order of the size of their gift, but even the humblest contributor was included. The Deobandis also encouraged single gifts in both cash and kind. Especially in the early days of the school people donated books, food for the students, and household items to furnish the school. Groups of people also organized collections of hides of animals left from the 'Īd sacrifice, selling them and sending the proceeds to the school. People were encouraged to designate their contributions as *zakāt*, the obligatory alms which in other eras was collected by the state. The resultant network of donors formed a base not only for financial support but for dissemination of Deobandi teachings.

Five of Muḥammad Qāsim's eight principles dealt with this new financial arrangement. They stressed the obligation of all associated with the school to encourage donations of cash and food. They also pointed out the spiritual advantage of poverty in fostering unity by drawing the personnel of the school together.

> First, the workers of the madrasa should, as best they can, keep in view the increase of donations; and should encourage others to share this same concern. . . .
>
> The well-wishers of the madrasa should always make efforts to secure the provision of food for the students, indeed, they should try to increase the food.
>
> As long as the madrasa has no fixed sources of income, it will, God willing, operate as desired. And if it gain any fixed income, like *jāgīr* holdings, factories, trading interests or pledges from nobles, then the madrasa will lose the fear and hope which inspire submission to God and will lose His hidden help. Disputes will begin among the workers. In matters of income and buildings . . . let there be a sort of deprivation.
>
> The participation of government and wealthy is harmful.
>
> The contributions of those who expect no fame from their gifts is a source of blessing. The honesty of such contributors is a source of stability.[8]

In fact, many wealthy people were among the donors and many, no doubt, did expect and receive recognition in return. Still, the system of popular support was effective, both financially and symbolically, and became a model for new religious schools. Other schools, like Farangī Maḥall, which clung to support from landed wealth, have in part for this reason disappeared.

The formal organization of the school was supplemented by associational ties of origin, family, and educational experience. Such ties were

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

not incompatible with a formal system, for in India informal patronage and apprenticeship were characteristic of both the Mughal and the British bureacracy at least until the end of the nineteenth century. The formal organization of posts does not wholly reveal the lines of influence at Deoband.

The two dominant figures in the school's first decades were Muḥammad Qāsim and Rashīd Aḥmad, both of leading *shaikh* families of the area,[9] sometime students together in Delhi, and common disciples of Ḥājjī Imdādullāh in the Chisht order. Muḥammad Qāsim was *sarparast* until his death in 1879, but shunned an active administrative role for fear of tainting the school's reputation because of his participation in the Mutiny.[10] For the first three years of the school, he did not even come to Deoband but stayed at his printing work in Meerut. Nonetheless his influence was central. Rafī' ud-Dīn, the *mohtamim*, said: 'There was such closeness between Muḥammad Qāsim and myself that whatever was in his heart, I knew. . . . I did what was revealed to him.'[11] Rashīd Aḥmad did not initially hold any formal post but was absent in Gangoh, occupied as sufi shaikh, teacher of hadith, and jurist. However, he, too, was a great force in organizing and shaping the school.

A special bond existed between many because of common allegiance to a sufi order, particularly so for the many who were disciples of Imādullāh. In general, allegiance to the Chisht order predominated at the school. Moreover, most were *shaikh* in family and many closely related to each other. Muḥammad Ya'qūb Nanautawī, the first principal (1867–96) and Ẓu'lfaqār 'Alī, Deputy Inspector in the Education Department and a member of the council for forty years, were brothers and cousins of Muḥammad Qāsim. Muḥammad Munīr Nanautawī, who served as *mohtamim* for one year, 1894–5, was also a cousin of this family, as was Mahtāb 'Alī, a resident of Deoband and a member of the council. Shaikh Nihāl Aḥmad, a ra'is and scholar of Deoband descended from the Mughal diwan Shaikh Luṭfullāh was also a member of the council. His sister was married to Muḥammad Qāsim and he himself married Qāsim's elder sister in order to set an

[9] At least from the eighteenth century, Indian Muslims distinguished between the well-born or respectable, the *ashrāf*, and all others. The former category was further divided into four ranked grades, each claiming non-Indian decent: the *saiyids*, the descendants of the Prophet; the *shaikhs*, the descendants of his companions; the Mughals, who entered India with the Timurid rulers; and the Pathans or Afghans, who entered either as rulers or settlers.

[10] Manāẓir Aḥsan Gīlānī, *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī* (Deoband, 1955), Vol. I, p. 266.

[11] Ẓahūr ul-Ḥasan Kasōlī (ed.), *Arwāh-i Ṣulāṣa* (Saharanpur, 1950), pp. 239–40.

example of widow remarriage.[12] Faẓl-i Ḥaqq, a member of the council and briefly *mohtamim*, was a cousin of Saiyid ʿĀbid Ḥusain, a revered elder of Deoband and the first *mohtamim*. In a society where family and clan were so important, such relationships among members of a common enterprise were typical. At Deoband, however, they were to give way to greater diversity in geographic and social origin and to ties based not on kin but on personal achievement and interest. Such a development was implicit in the organization of the school.

The System of Instruction

The goal of the school was to train well-educated ulama dedicated to scriptural Islam. Such ulama would become prayer leaders, writers, preachers, and teachers and thus disseminate their learning in turn. To this end the school set formal requirements for admission and matriculation. Local students were admitted to study Persian or Qur'ān, but the Arabic students, roughly three-quarters of the whole, were required to have already studied Persian to the level of the *Gulistān*, to have completed the Qur'ān, and to pass an examination.[13] Only half of those examined were admitted. There were seventy-eight students in the first year, rapidly increasing to a constant two to three hundred for the rest of the century.

Students were expected to study a fixed and comprehensive body of learning in the course of a program of studies originally scheduled for ten years, later reduced to six. They were not to come informally, sit at the feet of a particular teacher, then move on to another master and another center of learning. Rather, in this one place, the school claimed, students would be trained in the specialties of the three great intellectual centers of North India: *manqūlāt*, the revealed studies of hadith or tradition and Qur'an associated with Delhi; and *maʿqūlāt*, the rational studies of *fiqh* or law, logic and philosophy associated with the two Eastern cities of Lucknow and Khairabad.[14] Basically, the school taught the *dars-i niẓāmī*, the curriculum evolved at Farangī Maḥall in the eighteenth century that spread throughout India. They made, however, important modifications, particularly in their emphasis on the two subjects of hadith and *fiqh*. These were to be the basis of their

[12] Muḥammad Mīyān, *ʿUlamā-yi Ḥaqq* (Delhi, 1960), pp. 67–8.

[13] Muḥammad Āyūb Qādirī, *Maulānā Muḥammad Aḥsan* (Karachi, 1966), pp. 200–2.

[14] Maḥbūb Rizvī, *Dēōband kī Taʿlīmī Khaṣūṣīyāt* (Deoband, n.d.), p. 24.

popular teaching. In law they stressed not jurisprudence but correct performance of ritual and ceremonial duties. In hadith they greatly expanded the offerings of the Niẓāmī curriculum. Instead of requiring only a summary (the *Mishkāt ul-Masābīh* of al-Ghazālī), they included in their entirety the six classical collections of the precedents of the Prophet. They deemed hadith, the basis of correct practice and belief, the crowning subject. The most influential teacher was the *shaikh ul-hadith* at the school; and only good students were encouraged to study the subject. 'Once a follower asked Rashīd Aḥmad to inaugurate a student's study of Tirmiẓī . . . for the student's understanding was deficient. Rashīd Aḥmad answered: "When that is the case, teach a student *fiqh* or Urdu or Persian [but not hadith]." '[15] Moreover, the school de-emphasized the so-called rational sciences, logic and philosophy, that had been the chief distinction of the Niẓāmī teaching.

There was actual opposition led by Rashīd Aḥmad to teaching these rational sciences at all. He felt that the subjects were a waste of time and that the only merit in studying them was preparation for their refutation.[16] Muḥammad Qāsim, in sympathy with this position, felt that students should study, if anything, the 'new philosophy' of the West, not that derived from the Greeks. Rashīd Aḥmad even argued that philosophy was opposed to the shari'a, but he primarily emphasized that such study was trivial in contrast to study embodying the revealed truth of religion. Many of the staff and council were cautious, however, and wanted students to read the books of logic and philosophy to ensure their getting jobs. Despite Rashīd Aḥmad's indignant response—'Would you clean latrines to get a job?'—the books that had initially been eliminated from the curriculum did gradually creep back.[17]

There were no spokesmen for including English or Western subjects. Muḥammad Qāsim insisted that the school was not opposed to such study, but simply wanted to avoid duplication of government efforts.[18] Students could, he insisted, continue in government schools after completing their studies at Deoband, but even when the curriculum was reduced to six years, few continued beyond that long course. Thus, with no new subjects and philosophy gradually restored, the curriculum was not dramatically innovative. It was, however, to become famous for its emphasis on hadith, a subject that provided material for popular teaching and influence.

[15] Muḥammad 'Āshiq Ilāhī Mīraṭhī, *Taẕkirāt ur-Rashīd* (Meerut, n.d.), pp. 94–5.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 153.
[17] Gīlānī, *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī*, Vol. I, pp. 291–8.
[18] Dār ul-'Ulūm Dēōband, *Rū dād-i Sālānah 1290* (Deoband, 1873–4), p. 16.

In technique of instruction there were modifications. Indeed, many thought the school to be a continuation of the old Delhi College, not only because of the continuity of personnel and the modern organization of the school, but also because of the style of teaching.[19] The technique of Arabic instruction, for example, was the British one of translation into Urdu and from Urdu into Arabic. Later, the exercise of monthly compositions written in Arabic was added in order to improve fluency and command of the language.[20] Most important, the school continued the use of Urdu, not Persian, as a medium of instruction and thus shared in the general trend of the times toward the development of the modern vernaculars. Students came, even within the first years of the school's existence, from places as distant as Afghanistan and Chittagong, Patna and Madras, but all were to return with a common language in Urdu.[21] Even those who were of North India often spoke a dialect in their homes and now acquired a standard form of the language. Like the Westernizing college at Aligarh, Deoband was instrumental in establishing Urdu as a language of communication among the Muslims of India. Such a change was obviously central to enhanced bonds among the ulama and between them and their followers.

An abortive innovation on the part of the school was the inclusion of training in crafts and trades. There was hope that students, thus trained, could support themselves in villages and small towns and, simultaneously, share the benefits of their religious training with their neighbors. This would, no doubt, have furthered the influence of the ulama, but the plan came to nought because the students deemed such work unsuitable. There was also talk of teaching surveying and cartography in order to provide students with skills for jobs with the expanded public works department of the government.[22] But even this plan did not materialize. The preference for intellectual work and its concomitant status was too strong. Only two kinds of vocational training had any place at the school: calligraphy and *ṭibb* or *yūnānī* medicine. Both were considered suitable activities for the ulama, related to the religious activities of copying manuscripts and healing their followers. In 1873 a skilled calligrapher joined the staff to train students for work at the increasingly important lithographic presses.[23] As for *ṭibb*, some,

[19] H. R. Nevill, *Saharanpur: A Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1903), p. 214.

[20] Dār ul-'Ulūm Dēōband, *Naql-i Kitāb Taḥrīrī-yi Jalsahah-yi Ahl-i Mashwara* (Deoband Mss, *c.* 1894–5), p. 132, and Gīlānī, *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī*, Vol. I, p. 290.

[21] Maḥbūb Rizvī, *Dēōband kī Ta'līmī Khuṣūṣīyāt*, p. 10.

[22] Muḥammad Ikrām, *Mauj-i Kauṣar* (Lahore, 1968, 4th ed.), p. 209.

[23] Gīlānī, *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī*, Vol. I, pp. 321–4.

like Rashīd Aḥmad, opposed its inclusion, for they saw it, like philosophy, as distraction from more important matters.[24] However, the school did make *ṭibb* a part of its curriculum at the end of the century. It was the religious sciences, unchanged in substance, which the school primarily taught.

Students were tested on the results of their study. The examinations were an innovation in Arabic madrasas and hence extensively described in the school's annual reports. During a student's first two years, they were simply oral; in the subsequent four years, they were written. The staff took pride in the difficulty of the exams, for there were no optional questions, only five required ones on each book with each answer accorded twenty points. The students were supervised to prevent cheating and identified their examination by number only to ensure objectivity on the part of the examiners. The school was not organized by classes, but by books, so that if a student failed one book he would repeat that but not the others. The students, in fact, did well in their exams and few failed.[25]

At an annual convocation, prizes were awarded to those with the highest grades. *Sanads* were also distributed, describing the books each student had completed during the year, and commenting on the character, capacity, and skill of the student as well. Those who had completed the entire course and were considered truly outstanding were sometimes awarded a *dastār*, a turban, which was wound on their head by the *sarparast*. The granting of turbans took place on only four occasions, at irregular intervals, and was finally given up after 1909. Those who received turbans were considered to possess both brilliance and exemplary personal qualities, including mastery of cultured language.[26]

As the criteria for distinction indicate, the school sought to shape the character as well as the intellect of the students. A regimen was instituted for their personal lives. They were required to promise that they would be devoted to their studies and obedient to their teachers. Should they nonetheless miss classes, they were deprived of food and if they generally failed to work, they were simply expelled.[27] John Palmer, a government official who toured the school in 1875, reported that teachers treated their students with severity but was impressed by the

[24] Dēōband, *Rū dād 1313* (1895–6), and *Tahirīrī Kitāb 1301* (1883–4), p. 66.

[25] Maḥbūb Rizvī, *Tārīkh-i Dēōband*, p. 116, and *Dēōband kī Ta'līmī Khuṣūṣīyāt*, p. 12. Also Dēōband, *Rū dād 1285* (1868–9), p. 8. *Rū dād 1305* (1887–8) reports that 88 per cent passed their exams.

[26] Dēōband, *Rū dād 1290* (1873–4), pp. 15–23.

[27] Dēōband, *Rū dād 1287* (1871–2), pp. 6–7.

explanation that the staff deemed it beneficial to train students while young to have a sense of work.[28] Except for the Friday holiday and one month each year, the students did indeed work continually.

They were expected to live respectably but modestly. The school provided not only books and instruction free of charge but a collection of necessities for each boy as well: four suits of clothes each year; two pairs of shoes; a cotton quilt; money for laundry; oil and matches for light; and medicine and care when sick. At the end of the century the school established a boarding house. Previously, students had lodged in homes and mosques and received food from individuals or from the residents of a *moḥalla* jointly. In the boarding house, modelled on those newly established at Aligarh and the government schools, their daily life was put under the close supervision of the staff. In that setting, moreover, the students formed close bonds with each other. Such bonds transcended those of kin and locality and prepared the students for mutual cooperation and participation not only in religious activities but in government, voluntary associations, and politics.[29]

The faculty was, of course the chief influence on the students. They were as a group dedicated to their work. Almost all of the leading teachers were offered positions in princely states or government service, but stayed at the school in return for small salaries of ten or fifteen rupees each month. In 1872, a year of few contributions, the teachers simply reduced their salaries and advanced students voluntarily took on the burden of aiding them with lessons.[30] Not all the teachers were of equal skill, and those entrusted with the rational sciences—not surprisingly, given the emphasis of the school—tended to be less distinguished. Logic was taught for many years by an Afghan, Maulānā Ghulām Rasūl, whom the students claimed to be unable to understand.[31] But there were always a few outstanding teachers. Among them in the early years was Rashīd Aḥmad who taught hadith to students in Gangoh.

He was the true successor of Shāh Walīullāh and people came from places like Bengal, Madras and Punjab to study from him. He would begin his

[28] Maḥbūb Rizvī, *Tārīkh-i Dēōband*, p. 113.

[29] For a contemporaneous example of the influence of school organization on forging new social bonds see Dàvid S. Lelyveld, 'Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity and English Education in North India, 1875–1900' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1974).

[30] Dēōband, *Rū dād 1289* (1872–3).

[31] 'Abd ul-Hayy, *Dehlī aur us kē Aṭrāf: Ēk Safarnāma aur Rōznāma 'Īswīn Ṣadī kē Akhir Mēn* (Lucknow, 1958 reprint), p. 142–3, records the complaints about the teaching of *ma'qūlāt* made by Maulānā Mashīyatullāh Bijnūrī, then a student, later a member of the council.

teaching of hadith with Tirmiẓī and impress on each student the interpretation and meaning of the work in simple words. He was very patient, and often repeated his explanations. For example, he would take a simple word like *'aṭṭārah*, perfumer's wife, which I recall him defining three times for an Afghan student, each time in simpler language. He always taught after ablution and required the same of his students. If they got tired he would amuse them with jokes and anecdotes until their stomachs hurt. Then, refreshed, they would be able to go on. He would tell a story so seriously that others laughed the more. Then he would become formal again, maintaining that respect and awe necessary for a teacher. His teaching was unique in that he spoke in accordance with each student's capacity. . . . His memory was so extraordinary that he could cite the page of a relevant hadith in the *ṣaḥīḥ* collections. . . . His students became his lovers, but he considered himself nothing.[32]

After Muḥammad Qāsim's death, Rashīd Aḥmad became *sarparast* of both Deoband and its sister school, the Maẓāhir ul-'Ulūm in Saharanpur. Like the other great elders of the school, despite his eminence, he was known for his kindness to the students and was not above chiding those he felt did not treat the students generously.

A second great teacher long associated with the school was Maulānā Maḥmūd Ḥasan. He had sought out Muḥammad Qāsim in the printing houses of Meerut and Delhi in order to be one of the few to undergo his demanding teaching of hadith.[33] When Maḥmūd Ḥasan completed his education in 1873 he joined the staff of the school and for the next forty years was a dominating influence in its teaching and administration. He was a man of extraordinary energy, teaching ten lessons each day, writing, caring for Muḥammad Qāsim in his final illness. He was devoted to the school and resisted all invitations to leave it. His fame was especially great in hadith; and, his biographer notes, in the course of his career he taught over a thousand students from such distant places as Kabul, Qandahar, Balkh, Bukhara, Mecca, Medina, and Yeman.[34] Among them were Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, Shabīr Aḥmad Oṣmānī and Ḥāfiz Muḥammad Aḥmad, the leaders of the third generation of ulama at the school.

For the students the years at the school were intensive and formative, providing them not only with intellectual skills, but shaping their personalities and relationships. Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī, a student at the school at the end of the century, wrote a description of his experiences:

[32] Muḥammad 'Āshiq Ilāhī, *Taẕkirat ur-Rashīd*, pp. 85–93, paraphrased.
[33] Asghar Ḥusain, *Ḥayāt-i Shaikh ul-Hind* (Deoband, 1920, 2nd ed.), pp. 11–13.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

I took up residence with my brothers in a room near the home of Maulānā Maḥmūd Ḥasan. My brothers asked him to initiate my studies as a blessing; and he, assembling a group of ulama, directed Maulānā Khalīl Aḥmad to begin my instruction. I was then in my twelfth year, but I was very small. Because a boy so small, from such a distance, was unusual, I was treated with great kindness. I would go to my teacher's houses to help with writing and accounts and received great kindness from the wife of Maḥmūd Ḥasan in particular.

But whatever small freedom I had at home was now gone. My eldest brother beat me often, and never showed me even the occasional kindness my father had. My brother taught me Persian and I also studied from Maulānā Maḥmūd Ḥasan after hours.

I rapidly advanced beyond those in my classes. During the years from 1890 to 1898 I studied from Maulānās Ẓu'lfaqār 'Alī, 'Abd ul- 'Alī, Khalīl Aḥmad, Maḥmūd Ḥasan, Muftī 'Azīz ur-Rahmān, Ghulām Rasūl, Manfa 'at 'Ali, and Ḥabīb ur-Raḥmān. We studied the books of the *dars-i Niẓāmī* . . . which was used in the Arabic schools of Hindustan. There were some books of literature, mathematics and medicine which I could not complete because of our departure for Medina.

I never had much enthusiasm for study and would not review my books. I did well in the beginning books on which there was only an oral exam, but did not do so well in the later written ones. . . . The night before the exam I would study the whole book, drinking tea and having snacks whenever I felt sleepy; for I always needed much sleep, and especially felt sleepy when reading. After my first failure, I did better, and I often attained distinguished marks. The exams were very hard in comparison with those of the government schools where there was a choice. Deoband was unique among the Arabic schools in enforcing such a high standard, supervising exams to see that a student had no help. . . . Unfortunately the education in many of the other schools was defective. When students from here entered other institutions or studied English they were always most distinguished.

Although I never liked work, gradually my intellectual inclination and balance of character grew. At first my interest was logic and philosophy, then literature, and finally hadith.[35]

This account tells much about student life. There appears to have been a closeness between teachers and students, illustrated by the attention of teachers to their students' well-being and, in this case, by the services rendered to the teachers by the students. There was, moreover, a sense of being unique, of being in a school that was better than the others, harder even than the English schools. From this closeness and discipline, Ḥusain Aḥmad indicates, he was encouraged to shape his intellectual interests in the direction of those dominant at the school.

[35] Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī, *Naqsh-i Ḥayāt* (Deoband, 1953), Vol. II, pp. 44–8, paraphrased.

At the school, moreover, he received his first spiritual training, taking a member of the staff as guide. Both he and his eldest brother were disciples of Rashīd Aḥmad; his other brother, of Maḥmūd Ḥasan. In later years all three would return to the school from Medina whenever they came to India in search of brides or in connection with other family business and would always seek advice from their sufi shaikhs and even undertake further study. Ḥusain Aḥmad went on to be a pillar of the school, a distinguished scholar, and a leading figure in nationalist politics. In ulama like him the school fulfilled its goal of preserving the learned tradition and providing a structure of religious leadership for Muslims without the support of the state.

Two controversies

Despite such success on the part of the school, there were people who opposed its style of organization. As a result, two major crises arose in the initial decades of the school's existence. The first, in 1876, concerned the issue of erecting separate buildings for the school; the second, in 1895, of opposition to the school's administrative personnel. Both, generally speaking, were resolved in favor of those who supported the original bureaucratic conception of the institution.

At issue in the first quarrel was the question of the school's existence as a distinct institution. At first it did operate in mosques and rented buildings. But the founders—or most of them—held to the idea that the school should have a building of its own. The idea was a new one, and even Muḥammad Qāsim initially felt that a fine building might encourage pride.[36] He was ultimately persuaded of the value of a separate building by the insistence of his teacher, Maulānā Aḥmad 'Alī Sahāranpūrī, that it would be conducive to the independence and efficient running of the school. Muḥammad Qāsim himself recognized the problems of lodging students in mosques when there were hundreds of them, not just an occasional few. The *qaum* of students, he noted, was a free one, and there would be endless complaints of broken vessels, lost lanterns, and other such problems.[37]

Practical considerations aside, there was a symbolic motive in establishing separate buildings for the school. With Mughal decline there were no princes to construct the grand tombs, city mosques, ceremonial gateways and forts which had been the material statement

[36] Muḥammad Ṭaiyib, *Dēōband kī Ṣad Sālah Zindagī*, p. 92.
[37] Ẓahūr ul-Ḥasan Kasōlī (ed.), *Arwāh-i Ṣulāṣa*, pp. 248–52.

on the physical landscape of the existence of Muslim culture and society. Rather, through the efforts of the ulama and other pious people, madrasas and mosques became not only the loci of the organization of their religious life but also the concrete evidence of the Muslim presence. Separate madrasas had heretofore not been characteristic of Muslim architecture in India, perhaps because the ulama and their law schools had not been central in organizing Muslim communal life. Now schools like Deoband served that function and symbolized Muslim culture. The early buildings at Deoband were domed and arched in the style of imperial structures. Early in this century, for example, the school used money donated by the Amir of Afghanistan to construct a grand ceremonial outer gate which particularly evoked an imperial motif.[38]

The leading opponent of constructing the first building was Saiyid ʿĀbid Ḥusain, the first *mohtimim* and a man of such great influence that one associate observed that even the sultan of the Turks could not control Deoband without his aid; and another suspected that even the jinn obeyed him.[39] He preferred an informal associational style of education, with no formal buildings. He mainly argued that a separate building would be too expensive and urged instead the building of additional cells, *ḥujras*, in the new Jāmiʿ Masjid. In 1871 when he returned from hajj he took up the supervision of the building of that mosque instead of his previous post of *mohtamim*. He used this position to build *ḥujras*, despite the decision of the council in favor of a proper building.[40] He thus differed with the council not only on a matter of substance but on the legitimacy of their authority to make binding decisions on all associated with the school.

A contemporaneous account claimed that Ḥājjī ʿĀbid had the support of the townspeople in this dispute. The nature of this support is difficult to analyze since, the account continued, because of Muḥammad Qāsim's stature 'even though peoples' faces changed, they said nothing.'[41] Presumably Ḥājjī ʿĀbid's support was based on his deep personal influence and not on the issue itself. Those active in the dispute, however, were united by a position of principle, not by kin or personal ties. The entire administration supported the cause of a new building. Rafīʿ ud-Dīn even dreamed of divine indications of the precise spot where it should be built.[42]

[38] I am indebted to Renata Holod of the University of Pennsylvania for comments on Mughal architecture that prompted this interpretation.

[39] Gīlānī, *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī*, Vol. II, p. 253.

[40] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 32–4.

[41] Muḥammad Ṭaiyib, *Dēōband kī Ṣad Sāla Ẓindagī*, p. 92.

[42] Anwar ul-Ḥasan Hāshimī, *Mubashshirāt-i Dār ul-ʿUlūm* (Deoband, 1955), p. 23.

Finally, in 1876 Muḥammad Qāsim announced that there would be a new building without indicating whether it would be separate or part of the Jāmi' Masjid. He hoped that once the announcement was made Ḥājjī 'Ābid would accept its being separate. Muḥammad Qāsim set the date for the foundation stone to be laid after a Friday congregational prayer at which he would preach. At the end of his sermon he announced that the school had purchased the *maidān* in front of the *maḥall-i dīwān* and that the new building would be built there.[43] Ḥājjī 'Ābid cried out in shock. Muḥammad Qāsim, insisting that the decision was a correct one, urged him to join the throng which was then moving to the *maidān* to lay the foundation stone. But Ḥājjī Sāḥib left, enraged, and retired to the Chattah Masjid. Muḥammad Qāsim followed him there, touched his feet with his hands, and said to him, 'You are our elder, and we, your younger. You cannot leave us, nor we, you.'[44] Both wept. Reconciled by Muḥammad Qāsim's moving act of personal humility and by the inevitability of the new building, Ḥājjī 'Ābid agreed to attend the ceremony. Three distinguished elders then laid the foundation stone: Ḥaẓrat Mīyānjī Munē Shāh, a revered *saiyid* and elder; Maulānā Aḥmad 'Alī, the great hadith scholar of Saharanpur; and Ḥājjī 'Ābid himself, as representative of the council. The decision made and the work begun, 'everyone's heart felt a strange joy', concluded a historian of the event.[45]

This first building was completed within five years. Like many later buildings, it was financed by a special group of donors, in this case one organized in Hyderabad.[46] The mosque was the special contribution of a wealthy trader, Seṭh Ghulām Muḥammad 'Azam. The hostel, completed in 1898, was built through the support of the princes of Hyderabad, Chattari, and Bhopal. Ḥājjī 'Ābid and the people of the town came to accept and take pride in these buildings. There were other occasions when Ḥājjī 'Ābid differed with other members of the school.[47] The annual reports account for his occasional withdrawal from the school by his preoccupation with his many followers. In fact, he long failed to appreciate the formal, modern format of the school and its extra-local character.

These issues reappeared in the dispute of 1895, a crisis that lasted

[43] Ibrahīm Fākhrī, 'Dār ul-'Ulūm Dēōband' (*Āj Kal*, Delhi, June 1969), p. 40.

[44] Gīlānī, *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī*, Vol. I, p. 228.

[45] Ẓahūr ul-Ḥasan Kasōlī (ed.), *Arwāh-i Ṣulāṣa*, p. 252.

[46] Gīlānī, *Sawānīḥ Qāsimī*, Vol. I, p. 326.

[47] Ẓahūr ul-Ḥasan Kasōlī (ed.), *Arwāh-i Ṣulāṣa*, p. 380 Here is noted yet another occasion when 'Ābid Ḥusain had withdrawn from the school but its personnel maintained affable relations with him.

longer and was of potentially greater danger to the school. The opponents in this case were leaders of the town whose attempts to gain control of the school were perhaps not unexpected. Muḥammad Qāsim had early set the rule that the councillors should be ulama and not 'respectable people', *arbāb-i wijāhat*, in order to ensure that the religious quality of the school would be preserved and that the school itself would not merely be an institution of the town, subject to its local problems and constraints.[48]

Internal problems gave the townsmen an opportunity to criticize the school. In 1892 Ḥājjī 'Ābid Ḥusain, again unwilling to accept a decision of the council, resigned from his post as *mohtimim*. He objected on this occasion to the decision to reduce the pay of a recalcitrant teacher who was felt to compromise the school by resorting to government courts. He also used the occasion to argue in vain that most of the dozen teachers at the school should be fired and only two or three of the very good ones kept. Maḥmūd Ḥasan, who, by this time, was clearly the school's best teacher, supported the continuation of a proper staff and simply insisted that if anyone went it would be he.[49] New crises built on this one.

The council next appointed Maulānā Faẓl-i Ḥaqq Nanautawī, an original member of the council and 'Ābid's sometime aide, as the new *mohtimim*. He was discovered shortly after his appointment to have been guilty of a minor embezzlement of some seventy rupees. Rashīd Aḥmad, as member of the council and *sarparast*, prevailed in his opinion that whatever the repercussions, he be asked to resign. The campaign of the dissidents then began with letters to Rashīd Aḥmad objecting to Faẓl-i Ḥaqq's removal. Rashīd Aḥmad answered them by explaining that he was answerable only to the contributors, an assertion of the non-local character of the school.[50]

Once Faẓl-i Ḥaqq had resigned, the council appointed the venerable Maulānā Munīr Nanautawī, of Muḥammad Qāsim's family, to take his place. They also added two new members to the council: Muḥammad Aḥsan Nanautawī, the teacher and publisher who was also a member of the family, and Ḥājjī Shaikh Ẓahūr ud-Dīn Dēōbandī, a favored disciple of Muḥammad Qāsim. They joined two others who had been appointed during the previous decade, Maulānā Ziyā' ud-Dīn Rāmpūrī, a revered shaikh, and Ḥakīm Mushtāq Aḥmad of Deoband.[51] Despite the presence of such distinguished elders, the

[48] 'Abd ul-Hayy, *Dehlī aur us kē Aṭrāf*, pp. 98–9. [49] *Ibid.*, p. 144. [50] *Ibid.*, pp. 101–2.

[51] See Muḥammad Ṭaiyib, *Dēōband kī Ṣad Sāla Ẓindagī*, for the tenure of members of all administrative and teaching positions at the school.

dissidents continued to speak of the school's decline and bad management. Not surprisingly, active among the critics were relatives of Faẓl-i Ḥaqq, prominent citizens of the town who chafed at his disgrace.

The opposition crystallized in the formation of 'The Reform Committee of the Arabic Madrasa of Deoband' which sent out five hundred copies of a complaint against the school which invited supporters to be present at a meeting.[52] It charged that the 'waqf' of Deoband had become the private property of the council members who included two brothers as members and four of their sons as teachers at the school.[53] The pamphlet argued that by the standard of either the shari'a or of the government such nepotism was inappropriate. They reminded their readers of the importance Muḥammad Qāsim had attached to the cooperation of the people of the town, for whom they claimed to be the spokesmen, and insisted that they had no personal antagonism to the school. The statement had twenty-six signatures, headed by three members of the 'municipality,' i.e. men who had attained influence through the new local government institutions inaugurated by the British. Two were wakils, one a former revenue official, another a ziladar. One identified himself as a maulavi, three as *ḥāfiẓ* who had memorized the Qur'ān, and four as *ḥājjī*. Eight began their names with *shaikh*. The group was thus, presumably, drawn from the most influential of the town's residents, led by men who filled the local councils set up by the British.

Among those who attended the meeting were a dozen men from Delhi, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar, who were staunch defenders of the school; and they, in the end, dominated the meeting. They accused the critics of seeking their own personal goals against the welfare of the school and of engaging in such despicable tactics as going from *moḥalla* to *moḥalla* to encourage the townsmen to stop their contributions for the students. They also accused them of spreading reports against the

[52] The fullest report on the meeting is Mohī ud-Dīn Khān Morādābādī, *Taẕkirat-i 1312: Waqā'i'-i Ḥālāt-i Madrasa-yi Islāmiya-yi Dēōband* (Delhi, 1894–5). The volume included the statements of both sides. The compiler, a ra'is of Moradabad, entitled himself 'the servant of the ulama', and offered the volume for the benefit of his fellow Muslims. He called Deoband 'the mother of madrasas' and praised it for spreading religious knowledge throughout Hindustan. A companion of Muḥammad Qāsim, he also had a son enrolled at the school at the time of the dispute. He was appointed to the council at the conclusion of the quarrels.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 15. The brothers were Ẕu'lfaqār 'Alī and Faẓl ur-Raḥmān who were *khālazād bhā'ī* or cousins. Maḥmūd Ḥasan was the former's son and his brother taught briefly at Deoband at a different time. The brother of 'Azīz ur-Raḥmān, the school's first mufti, taught at the school on a voluntary basis.

school in the newspapers as, indeed, one extant item in the *Tūtī-yi Hind* of Meerut confirms. In it was reported a sermon given in the Jāmi' Masjid by Munshī 'Abd ur-Razzāq, a member of the municipality and signatory of the circular, who claimed that Ḥājjī 'Ābid had severed his connection with the school and asked that the government intervene in the interests of reform.[54] The defenders also accused the critics of circulating a false announcement in Saharanpur that Rashīd Aḥmad had resigned and that contributions should now be sent to 'Abd ur-Razzāq as the new *mohtamim*. When this failed, the critics had distributed an announcement entitled 'For the Attention of the Government,' a scurrilous attack which claimed that the school educated students for religious warfare and drew students from the frontier particularly for this purpose.

The school's defenders answered these charges of resignations, nepotism, and disloyalty. They were quick to emphasize the influence of Rashīd Aḥmad and said of 'Ābid Ḥusain, as Muḥammad Qāsim had said twenty years earlier, 'he cannot leave us, nor we him.'[55] Mohī ud-Dīn Morādābādi, an important supporter of the school, argued that the familial links among the school's members were a virtue and stressed that members were 'united and the same sort of people.' He emphasized that appointments were made by the whole council and that the qualifications of a teacher like Maḥmūd Ḥasan, the son of a council member, were outstanding. He cited the important precedent of the Prophet who did not hesitate to appoint his own relatives.

Maulānā Ẕu'lfaqār 'Alī in particular addressed himself to the charge of disloyalty. He declared that as a 'salt-eater' of the government, he personally took responsibility for the school's loyalty. The district collector, Mr. Irwin, was invited to the school to confirm its integrity. He did come, and offered an Urdu speech in its praise.[56] Janāb Bābū Rājā Lāl, a former tahsildar, was asked to investigate the school and subsequently worked for several months, making inquiries in Nanauta, Rampur, and elsewhere. In conclusion he denied the critics' claims and in particular praised the fine students and Ẕu'lfaqār 'Alī, a man who had been honored at the Queen's durbar with chair and robe of honor.

[54] Government of India, *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers Published in the Punjab, North Western Provinces, Oudh, and the Central Provinces*, 1894, p. 513.

[55] Mohī ud-Dīn, *Tazkirat*, pp. 36–7 and p. 11. They pointed to two issues that particularly revealed Rashīd Aḥmad's influence: his opposition to the appointment of an official to supervise the collection of pledges and of an inspector of the branch madrasas; and his opposition to the introduction of medical studies.

[56] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Local newspapers reported these two investigations and concluded that the charges of the 'malcontents' had been finally laid to rest.[57]

Meanwhile, supporters of the school hastened to testify to their confidence in the school's administration. Their letters reveal the wide range of support the school now had. The association formed in Hyderabad to raise funds, consisting of princely employees, a publisher of religious books, and a religious teacher, used this occasion to declare its opposition to the residents and to send an additional contribution. Fifteen contributors from Bijnur sent a petition of support. A head maulavi in a government school in Banda in the east wrote an appreciation of the school. High officials from the state of Bhopal, including a wakil at the high court and the city munsif, who was from Deoband, added their support. Forty-seven contributors wrote from the qasba of Tandah, in Oudh, where most of them were posted in connection with government service.[58] Other letters came from a wakil in Jaunpur and the Deputy Collector of Eta.

So serious a dispute could not be resolved by a simple personal act like that of Muḥammad Qāsim's in 1875. The council did not, however, propose arbitration or compromise with their opponents, but rather, unilaterally, rallied support for themselves. In addition to the testimonials from presumably impartial Hindu and British officials and from the loyal donors, they summoned four of the most influential figures associated with the school to render a final opinion. They were Rashīd Aḥmad, *sarparast*; the Nawwāb of Chattari, the philanthropist; Shaikh Bashārat 'Alī, a former deputy collector; and Maulavī Muḥammad Ismā'īl, the successor of the revered Maulānā Muzaffar Ḥusain Kāndhlāvī. The great *sarparast*, the influential landholder and benefactor, and the representatives of the government bureaucracy, and sufi piety respectively, together inspected the school's finances and records and asserted emphatically that all was in excellent order. Then Rashīd Aḥmad, with the agreement of the council, expanded its membership. The six new members were all from outside Deoband and all known for their learning. The 'respectable people' of the city who had sought places were thus defeated.

The council then appointed a new *mohtamim* to replace Maulānā Munīr Nanautawī. The proceedings reported that he had resigned because of his brother Aḥsan's death, but, in fact, he had never been

[57] Government of India, *Selections* 1895. The *Mihr-i Nimrūz* of Bijnur on February 21, 1895, pp. 113–4, and the *Akbar-i 'Ālam* of Meerut on March 5, 1895, p. 138; both were enthusiastic in their defense of the school.

[58] Mohī ud-Dīn, *Tazkirat*, p. 31.

a strong administrator. Maulānā Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad Aḥmad, Muḥammad Qāsim's son, took his place, there to remain for forty years. He was, at times, a figure of controversy because of his willingness to jeopardize the school's well-being by political involvement, but he was, unquestionably, a strong and effective administrator. Moreover, his position as the son of the founder of the school was of great importance in establishing his claim to authority.

The controversy resolved, the school held its annual prize distribution and convocation, meeting for the first time not in the Jāmi' Masjid of the town but, significantly, in the school itself. The people of the town were invited on the day before the ceremonies for special speeches. Ẕu'lfaqār 'Ali and Ḥājjī 'Ābid himself presided. And the ceremonies closed with prayers for the wealth and spiritual well-being of the people of the town of Deoband.[59]

The dispute had been more ideological than personal. There were, to be sure, a cluster of relatives on each side. And personal ties certainly played a part in shaping the loyalties of some. One supporter of the administration, for example, simply wrote, 'What can I say, he [Rashīd Aḥmad] is my *murshid* [sufi preceptor] and guide.'[60] But kin did not wholly account for people's allegiances and some participants explicitly denied its importance. An official from Bhopal mocked the dissidents for sending their announcement to Faẓl-i Ḥaqq's brothers '. . . because they assumed that he would be in opposition. . . . He is not such a man'.[61] Place of origin did not define the two sides, since many residents of the town supported the administration. Nor did social differences, since both groups were composed of respectable people, largely *shaikh*, many of them associated with government and educated in religious studies.

The sides were, however, united by different positions. The opponents were not committed to the bureaucratic organization of the school and its concomitant broad network of support. Ironically, they, who accused the administration of nepotism, in fact wanted to make the school parochial by putting its control in the hands of townsmen instead of in those of the far-flung contributors and councillors. Most wanted a share in a successful enterprise without understanding the basis of its success.[62] Some few, like Ḥājjī 'Ābid with his proposal to eliminate most of the staff, felt a modest, old-fashioned school sufficient for the town.

[59] Muḥammad Ṭaiyib, *Dēōband kī Ṣad Sāla Ẕindagī*, pp. 102–3.

[60] Mohī ud-Dīn, *Taẕkirat*, p. 22. [61] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. 12. According to Mohī ud-Dīn, the council had restored the salary of the recalcitrant teacher in 1892. The townsmen then concluded that the council was susceptible to pressure. At that point fifty of them had made requests for membership.

The dissidents, moreover, seem not to have subscribed to the scripturalist reform that defined the teachings of the school.[63] A former revenue official, sometime tahsildar in Deoband wrote:

I got the announcement [of the meeting], I suppose, because I am of their *qaum*. I am; and I am well acquainted with all the gentlemen and *shaikhs* of Deoband. And I don't know who the people are who signed it. Look at them—'Deputy', 'Babu', 'Municipality',—not such as are involved in the work of God and his Prophet. Let them give their age, occupation and whether they fast and pray. I recognized the first two names. I think one of them is some relation of mine. The other carried a *ta'ziya* [Shi'a effigy] in the Muharram celebration.[64]

Even Ḥājjī 'Ābid, however beloved, was less committed to reform than the other Deobandis. Although he had been influenced by Imdādullāh to give up practices of extreme mortification and to be faithful to his religious duties,[65] he never took the active stance of some of the others. His resignation on this occasion, for example, suggests his lack of interest in the reformist cause of adherence to the judicial opinions of the ulama instead of the use of government courts.

Those who supported the administration favored a form of organization that de-emphasized purely local ties in favor of the separate unity and identity of the whole group of Deobandis, whatever their geographic origin. At the same time, they fostered a style of Islam that preferred universal practices and beliefs to local cults and customs. They were inspired by a belief in continuing divine sanction to their work[66] and felt that sanction confirmed by their record of training some six hundred

[63] One supporter claimed that they actually subscribed to the rival religious orientations of the day. He wrote a 'Mahabharata,' whose highlight was this Urdu verse:

> One will call following the four imams ill
> Another toward the leaders of *bid'at* incline will
> Another imitates *nēcharī* heart and soul
> Another thinks that worldly things are all. (*Ibid.*, pp 36–7.)

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

[65] Gilānī, *Sawāniḥ Qāsimī*, Vol. I, p. 239.

[66] Thus, at the time of the crisis of 1895, Rashīd Aḥmad reported that he had three times received the same illumination that the madrasa would prosper in the hands of Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad. Moreover, during a meeting to discuss the crisis, Rashīd Aḥmad had been inspired with the knowledge that the opponents would fail. Anwar ul-Ḥasan, *Mubashshirāt*, p. 18. Similarly, when Nawwāb Maḥmūd 'Alī Khān of Chattarī was leaving Mecca, he was instructed by Ḥājjī Imdādullāh not to oppose Rashīd Aḥmad. He was astonished since at that point there was no thought of his going to Deoband, let alone of any controversy. Shortly thereafter the great dispute in which he was to play an important role did indeed break out. Ashraf 'Alī Thānvī, *Karāmāt-i Imdādiya* (Deoband, n.d.), p. 72.

ulama by the time of the dispute.[67] Against such success the opposition could make little headway.

The Spread of Deobandi Madrasas

The success of the school was measured not only by events at the mother school but by the spread of Deobandi teachings through similar schools. The ulama of Deoband early tried to establish a system of branch schools which were to follow the pattern of British universities with their affiliating colleges and be subject to control of both curriculum and administration. The ulama were familiar with examples of such institutions, set up in India pursuant to the Wood Dispatch of 1854; and they, in turn, set up a somewhat similar system of education. They founded many schools, particularly in the Doab and Rohilkhund, which had much the same goals as the mother school: the propagation of reformed religious knowledge and the training of young men for professional religious careers. The schools often submitted their records to Deoband for inspection, sought its approval of major decisions, and received its ulama as both external examiners and distinguished visitors. But they were never formally and fully integrated into a single educational system, largely because personal ties were so effective in maintaining contacts. A proposal to appoint an inspector of schools in the British style was considered from time to time but simply deemed unnecessary.

In their first dozen or so years, the Deobandi proceedings included discussions of many of these schools, ranging in administration from one at Thana Bhawan, whose staff for a time was even paid from Deoband, to one at Lucknow which was 'like Deoband.'[68] Many of these smaller schools were the work of a single patron in cooperation with a Deoband graduate while others had complex administrations modelled on the mother school. Among the latter was the large and successful Maẓāhir-i 'Ulūm in Saharanpur. There was never any claim that it was a branch of Deoband, for in size and influence, it was to be second only to Deoband itself in the entire subcontinent. Founded only six months after Deoband, it explicitly modelled itself on the near-by school. Leading Deobandis contributed to the school, presided at prize distributions, and gave examinations. Rashīd Aḥmad was *sarparast* of both

[67] Muḥammad Ṭaiyib, *Dēōband kī Ṣad Sālah Zindagī*, p. 25.
[68] Dēōband, *Rū dād-i Sālāna 1297* (1879–80), p. 64.

institutions at the end of the century and many of the staff moved from one school to the other. The school was more locally based than Deoband. In a dispute similar to the one over control of Deoband, the city leaders of Saharanpur received some recognition of their responsibility for general administrative decisions and fund raising. The role of people of the city in financing the school was also more marked than at Deoband. The school also adhered longer and more consistently to family connections in making appointments. In part because of its more parochial style, its ulama in this century have not played the role in politics that the Deobandis have.[69] Whatever differences of emphasis, the Maẓāhir-i 'Ulūm called itself Deobandi.

Increasingly, the name of Deoband came to represent a distinct style, a *maslak*, of Indian Islam that emphasized the diffusion of scripturalist practices and the cultivation of an inner spiritual life. By roughly 1880 there were over a dozen Deobandi schools; by the end of the century, at least three times that many, some in places as distant as Chittagong, Madras, and Peshawar. Deoband had pioneered a non-governmental style of formal organization for madrasa education in India. Thanks to that structure, the school succeeded in training a large number of ulama in its reformist ideology and in establishing a network of ancillary schools further disseminating that teaching. Deoband thus offers a striking and successful example of the bureaucratization of traditional religious institutions that has made them effective in the modern world.

[69] Sources for the history of the Saharanpur school include its own printed proceedings. Available to me at the school were those for the years 1286–8 (1869–72); 1293–6 (1876–9); 1298–9 (1880–82); 1317 (1899–1900); 1318 (1900–01) and 1320 (1902–3). Also Muḥammad Zakariyya, *Tārīkh-i Maẓāhir* (Saharanpur, 1973 reprint), and *al-Balāgh* (Bombay, December–January 1374/1954–5), pp. 234–7. I visited the school in April 1970 and interviewed the school's venerable director, Maulānā Aṣadullāh, and a teacher, Maulānā 'Abd ul-Mālik, a B.Sc. in chemistry. The latter particularly stressed the similarity among Deobandi schools: 'Deoband is the elder brother and we are the younger.'