

Chapter – III

MADRASSAS OF SURMA-BARAK VALLEY

Madrassa education is not a product of any historical event or occurrence but an in built system of Islam which worked for the spread of education among the Muslim through ages. According to some Muslim theologian madrassa education of modern form originated at Baghdad by Nizam ul-Mulk Tusi (the vizir or the Prime Minister) of Sultan Alp Arslan and the first Madrassa was ‘Madrassa-e-Nizamia’ Baghdad established in 1067 A.D.¹ But, available historical accounts show us about the existence of madrassa even before Nizam was born. Sultan Mahmud of Gazni build a mosque at Gazni in 1019 and also established a madrassa nearby the mosque. The scholars of eminence were employed to impart instructions in *tafsir*, *hadith* and *fiqh*.² He too established a library and for the maintenances of the madrassa, mosque and library ‘*waqf*’ (donated) certain area of land.³ Sultan Mahmud’s also encouraged his nobles to start madrassas and accordingly they too started several madrassas in their respective areas. It may be mention here that Gazni was then an advance centre of Islamic education and was contemporary of Baghdad.⁴

In India, madrassa education began even before the Muslim rule and was started centering round mosque in the form of *maqtab*. Initially it was started by the Arabian traders in the Malabar Coast of South India in the last part of 7th century. The conquest of Sind by Muhammad Bin Qasim in eighth century further spread the same in India.⁵ However, madrassa education of formal form began in India during the Sultanate period. Nashir-ud-Din Quabacha, the governor of Multan established the first madrassa in India in the year 1205 A.D. According to *Minhaj-e-Siraz*, this madrassa was administered and

¹ Ali Riaz, *Faithful Education: Madrassaahs in South Asia*, Rutgers University Press, New Jersey, 2008, p.54

² Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, “Madrassa Education in Medieval India”, in *Madrassa Education in India: Eleventh to Twenty First Century*, Edited by S. M. Azizuddin Husain, Kanishka, New Delhi, 2008, p.8

³ Maulana Tayeeb Qasimi, *Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond ki Sad Salah Zindegi*, Vol-I, pp.68-69

⁴ Ibid, p.69,

⁵ Prof. Zafarul Islam, “*Origin of Madrasahs in India Predate Muslim Period*”, published in “The Milli Gazette”, Nov.1 – 15, New Delhi 2010, p.28

maintained by Nashir Uddin himself.⁶ Madrassa-i-Muizzi was established at Delhi by Sams Uddin Iltutmish in the early years of his reign.⁷ During the period two other madrassas viz. Madrassa-e-Nasirya' and 'Madrssa-e-Maghira' were also established only in Delhi. Sultan Iltutmish named Nasiriya madrassa after the name of his deceased crown Prince Nasir Uddin Mohammad and made rich endowments for its maintenance.⁸ It may be mention here that madrassas were associated with great mosque and the salaries of the Maulavis and other expenditure were provided from the royal treasury.⁹ Among the rulers of the Tughlaq Dynesty Muhammad Bin Tughlaq as most enthusiastic founder of madrassas. There were nearly one thousand madrassas in Delhi during his rule.¹⁰ Firoz Shah Tughlaq improved his father's efforts and too started separate madrassas for female. The destruction of Baghdad in 1258, helped Delhi to emerge as the Chief centre of learning in the Muslim world. Ziauddin Barani writes that "now the ulema of Samarqand and Bukhara etc were consulting the ulemas of Delhi for guidance."¹¹ Thus it is seen that with the expansion of the Muslim state series of madrassas were established in different parts of the country.

Mughal rule further accelerated the tradition. This was basically due to the support provided by the royal courts irrespective of rulers. Moreover, the political stability and the influence of Ulemas contributed a lot behind the rapid growth of Madrassa education in Mughal period. Shah Jahan established the famous madrassa, 'Dar-ul-Baqa' nearby Jama Masjid in 1649 A.D. which was collapsed in early 19th century and was re-started by Mufti Sadar Uddin. Maulana Qasim Nanatawi was there in this madrassa for few years. But the madrassa was ceased and sealed by the British during the Revolt of 1857.¹² Ghazi Uddin Khan established a madrassa in 1710 nearby the 'Darwaja' (Ajmiri gate) which latter on became the famous Delhi College. Maulana Mamluk Ali Nanatawi was its Principal and Qasim Nanatawi, Rashid Ahmed Ganguhi, Yakub Nanatawi, Maulana Zulfikar Ali, Maulana Fazlur Rahman and others were the

⁶ Maulana Tayeeb Qasimi, p.71-72

⁷ Ali Riaz, p.58

⁸ Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, 'Madrasa Education in Medieval India', p.109

⁹ Maulana Tayeeb Qasimi, p.72

¹⁰ Ali Riaz, p.58

¹¹ S.M.Azizuddin Husain (ed.), p.8

¹² Maulana Tayeeb Qasimi, p.77

product of this college, who took active part in the Revolt of 1857 and then on the Deobond movement.¹³ It had been a popular practice of most of the Muslim rulers to make arrangements for the construction of mosques and setting up centers of religious education viz. *maktabs* and *madrassas* in the areas where they establish their supremacy. Besides, many Ulemas during that period were themselves took up the task of teaching of Islamic learning in local mosques or at their own houses which had flourished in the form of individual centers of teaching and functioned just like *madrassas*.¹⁴ The influence of Ulama on Mughal courts did not undermine the authority of the emperor or the general bureaucracy, the Ulemas were immensely important: “It was they who were responsible for the education of the entire nobility, who staffed the various level of judiciary; and who were oversaw the whole charitable establishment of the empire.”¹⁵ Therefore, *madrassas* received patronage and respect from the emperors and common people alike.

In medieval India educational facilities were available through three means: formal institutions like *maktabs* and *madrassas*, informal institutions which was teacher centered education and through private teachers and tutors. Among these, teacher centered education was more common, under which ulema or learned persons used to impart knowledge or give lecture on different subjects sitting in mosque or at their own houses. This system was in vogue at the primary as well as higher level.¹⁶

Institutionalizations of Islamic education in Bengal were the expansion of Sultanate and the Mughal structure. But its foundation was established in the earlier days with the arrival of Sufis and saints. Sufis and saints used to travel from outside the region and usually formed organized centers of learning in their *khanqahs* (i.e. their place of worship and residence). These *khanqahs* were the first informal centers for Islamic education in Bengal.¹⁷ These were not intended to provide literacy in any language, nor

¹³ Metcalf, p-80

¹⁴ Prof. Zafarul Islam, “*Origin of Madrasahs in India Predate Muslim Period*”, p.28

¹⁵ B. D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860 - 1900*, pp.18,19

¹⁶ Prof. Zafarul Islam, p.28

¹⁷ Dr. Md. Abdus Sattar., *Bangladeshe Madrassa Sikha O Samaj Jibane Taar Probhab*, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2004, p.106

designed for elementary education.¹⁸ The reign of Sultan Shams Uddin Firozshah of Bengal is known for its peace and progress in every field and it was during his reign Sonargaon in East Bengal was developed in to Centre of Islamic learning. He made Sonargaon his second capital and invited ulema of eminence from different parts of the world.¹⁹ Most of the Governors of Bengal patronized education and established mosques, *maqtab*s and madrassas. Gias Uddin – I, at Lakhnawti, Gias Uddin – II at Darsbari, Hussain Shah at Dinajpur and other Subedars patronized Islamic education and established number of mosques, madrassas and *Khanqah*s in different places with endowments of rent free land grant. Ala Uddin Hussain Shah, the earliest promoter of Bengali language and literature built a madrassa at Gaur in 1502 and another one at Pandua was founded by him as a memorial to the famous saint Nur Qutb-i-Alam. He invited scholars from far and near to disseminate the lessons of Quran and *Sunnah* and settled the grants of land for their support.²⁰ In 1765, when the East India Company got the Dewani of Bengal, they found one-fourth of the province comprised rent free estates. The revenue of which was used for the maintenance of mosques, *maqtab*s, *khanqah*s and other Islamic institutions.²¹

The institutions that were established in pre-colonial period were mainly catered to the needs of the society and the state. They turned out scholars, theologians, judges, administrators, technicians, and professionals men of all fields. Educational institutions were generally attached to the mosques or *Khanqah*s and sometime independent buildings were also built. Although, general subjects were there in the curriculum but study of Quran and Hadith always occupied the foremost place in Bengal as well as in India. It may be mention that the Sonargaon Madrasa under the Rectorship of Sheikh Sharaf Uddin Abu Tawwama became the great centre of Islamic learning with special stress on the study of exegesis and tradition.²²

¹⁸ Ali Riaz, pp.59-60

¹⁹ Iqtidar Husain Siddiqui, 'Madrassa Education in Medieval India' p.16

²⁰ Dr. A. K. M. Ayub Ali, Dr. M. A. Aziz, Prof. Shahed Ali (Ed.), p.230

²¹ Ibid p.226

²² Ibid p.229

Madrasahs under British Colonial Rule:

The nature, scope and role of madrasahs in colonial India were significantly shaped by the colonial administration's policies towards education, endeavours of Muslims to locate their position within the changing political structure after the demise of Mughal Empire, and the rise of the identity politics within the Muslim community in India. During the mid 19th centuries there existed only few madrasahs in India and most of them were only in name. The secular western system of education introduced by the British replaced the traditional system of education established by the Muslims. The plight of the Muslim to whom all the avenues of legitimate rights and honourable careers were denied during the British rule was so deplorable that WW Hunter, in summing up the socio-economic condition of the Muslim peasantry and aristocracy of Bengal observed, "*A hundred and seventy years ago it was almost impossible for a well born Musalman of Bengal to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich.*"²³ Warren Hastings established Calcutta Alia Madrasah in 1781 for producing officers to carry on their administration. S. M. Hussain in his "*Report of the Islamic Arabic University Commission*" stated "*The History of Madrasah Education in Bengal under British rule is bound up with the history of Calcutta Madrasah, round which the system gradually grew up in Bengal.*"²⁴ The Madrasah was maintained by the British Government extensively as a seat of Islamic learning and culture as a model of madrasah education. But their inner motive is clear from the way of its administration and instruction imparted in it under successive English Secretary, Resident Professor and Principal.²⁵ In 1885, there were ten madrasahs in Bengal, both government and private with 1386 students of whom 1057 were in the government and the rest in the private madrasahs.²⁶ However, the foundation of Calcutta Alia Madrasah although described as the beginning of the modern era of madrasah education in Indian Sub-continent, its role in producing Muslim consciousness and encouraging political activism was limited.

²³ W. W. Hunter, *Indian Mussalman*, p.141

²⁴ Report of the Islamic Arabic University Commission, 1963-64, pp.56-57,76, B.N.A.

²⁵ Dr. A. K. M. Ayub Ali, Dr. M. A. Aziz, Prof. Shahed Ali (Ed.), p.240

²⁶ Report of the Islamic Arabic University Commission, 1963-64, p.40, B.N.A.

The loss of the lives of Ulema during the Revolts of 1857 and the critical situation of the Muslim and Islam led the foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond²⁷ and then other madrassas on the ideology of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond in several parts of the country. By roughly 1880, there were over a dozen madrassas that identified themselves as Deobondi; by the end of the century, at least three times increases the number and such madrassa had been established in the places as distant as Chittagong, Madras (Chennai) and Peshwar. By the celebration of Schools centennial in 1967, there were said to be 8,943 Deobondi Madrassas.²⁸ Therefore, the history of madrassa education in India under British colonialism is inextricably linked to the political dynamics of the country, particularly of the nineteenth century, and must be discussed in this context. It was the Deoband Madrassa, which in true sense, began the new era of madrassa education that have affect in every aspects of the Community.

Muslim awakening in 19th century:

1. The Deoband Movement

In the Revolt of 1857 both Hindus and Muslims participated and both the communities bore its consequences. But, to the British, the Muslims would have been most benefited, if the Revolt succeeded and considered Muslims as more dangerous of the two communities. They were repressed most ruthlessly and all were put to sword indiscriminately. Every member of a class of religious enthusiasts named '*Ghazis*' was hanged. In Delhi, the centre of the Revolt, wholesale destruction of localities had the sanction of the ruling authorities. The English looked upon the Muslims as their opponents, hostile to their rule and tried to suppress them. It was for this expansion of the new power and its continuance, Noman said, "The only course was to crush the Musalman and the government deliberately adopted policies, which had their aim, the economic ruin of the Muslims and their intellectual stagnation and general

²⁷ It was started in Satta Mosque on which an Arabi Maktab was started shortly after 1857 by Hafiz Sayad Abid Hussain, Maulana Mahtab Ali and Sheikh Nihal Ahmed. Sayad Abid Hussain was the chief of the Maktab, had never thought of erecting the grand edifice of the 'Dar-ul-Ulum' on its foundation. It is said that he strongly opposed the proposal of Maulana Qasim Nanatawi to shift the maktab out of the small and dark rooms of the mosque and install it in a proposed grand building, but finally he succumbed before the determined persuasion of Maulana Qasim Nanatawi.

²⁸ B.D.Metcalf, p.136

degradation.”²⁹ Jawaharlal Nehru also wrote in his autobiography that after 1857, the heavy hand of the British fell more upon the ‘Moslems’ than on the Hindus.³⁰

All these left deep mark on the memory of those who had witnessed the bloody proceedings of 1857. Maulana Qasim Nanatawi, and Syed Ahmed Khan were the two such eye-witnesses. Both were actively involved in the uprising. Their role in the uprising had determined the directions of their future political and educational activities. The former had revisited and the latter had supported them in their hour of distress, and both of them were disciple of Maulana Mamluk Ali who belonged to Wali-Ullah School of thought.³¹ Maulana Qasim Nanatawi, Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi and other like minded persons represented the rebellious spirit of the disgruntled Muslims who were far from making any compromise with the British. It is with their efforts Deoband Madrassa was established in 1866 and that were raised as Dar-ul-Ulum in 1867.³² The selection of the location of Deoband for Dar-ul-Ulum had its devine sanction. Maulana Rafiuddin saw in his dream that the Holy Kaba in the garden of Deoband. This dream inspired Nanatawi to start Dar-ul-Ulum at Deoband.³³

2. The Aligarh Movement:

Syed Ahmed Khan another disciple of Maulana Mamluk Ali, on the other hand, looked at things from different angle. In the beginning he too became disappointed due to the atrocities perpetrated by the British army and had decided to migrate to some other Muslim country. But he soon gave up the idea of migration and started thinking in different way. He was convinced like many others that British had come to stay in India and no amount of force would dislodge them from here. He realized the fact as stated Francis Robinson,

²⁹ Imam Hassan, *Indian National Movement*, Anmol Pub., New Delhi. 1999, p.4

³⁰ Peter Hardy, p.70

³¹ Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hashami, *Muslim Responses to Western Education*, Commonwealth Pub., New Delhi, 1989, pp.26-27

³² Ali Riaz, p.73

³³ B. D. Metcalf, p. 114

“In the late nineteenth century, those who wished to improve their position or to protect it against the effects of change were rarely rich or powerful enough to do so by their own efforts: they could achieve their ends only with the approval and assistance of government. But if their efforts to gain government’s aid and imprimatur were to succeed, it was important that they should represent interests which government believe existed , which it imagined needed help and which for political and other reasons, it wished to help. There was a tendency, therefore, for politicians to mould themselves in to the shapes which they thought their rulers wished to see.”³⁴

The political dominance of the British should therefore be accepted as a fact of life. Sir Syad Ahmed continued his efforts to bridge the gulf between the Muslims and the British and to tell them that they are not hostile to each other and pleaded to his co-religionists that the English rule was the best under the circumstances that appeared after the Revolt of 1857.³⁵ According to him Muslim could restore their honour and prestige in Indian society by winning the confidence of the British. Such change in behaviour could be brought about through education, education which ought to be western in content and character.³⁶ With this object in view he established Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh which became Aligarh Muslim University in 1920. It may be mention here that during this time WW Hunter published his ‘*Indian Mussalman*’ (1881) which convinced the British that Muslims are not the enemy of the British and felt the necessity for improving miserable condition of Indian Muslims. Syed Ahmed Khan was favoured by Mayo, Dufferin and Ripon as they too recognized the importance of winning the confidence of the Muslim, otherwise they would remain the most dangerous class in the ‘raj’.³⁷

3. Nadwat-ul-Ulama:

Another Muslim organization that was established in 1894 at Lucknow named ‘Nadwat-ul-Ulama’, does not seem to have any political stimulus in its origin. It was a

³⁴ Francis Robinson, *Seperatism Among Indian Muslims*, OUP, Delhi, 1994, p.85

³⁵ Sham Muhammad (Ed.), *The All India Muslim Educational Conference*, (Selected Presidential address 1886-1947), APH Pub. New Delhi 2003, p.xii

³⁶ Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hashami, pp.28-29

³⁷ Mushirul Hassan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India 1885-1930*, Monohar, New Delhi, 2000, p.53

theological seminary, standing between the liberal Aligarh and Conservative Deobond.³⁸ It was an effort to reconcile the differences and to bring together various strands of intellectual accomplishments and for the same an association of scholars – Nadwatul Ulama (the Council of the Ulama) was established in 1894 under the leadership of Maulana Muhammad Ali Mungari, Shibli Numani.³⁹

Aligarh stood for the restoration of a place of honour for the Muslims in Indian society by winning the British; Deobondis stood for the same but by *Jihad* (legitimate political and military action, the ‘Holy War’ known in the West, theoretically it points to the effort or the action required in conforming to the way of God). In other words Aligarh movement wanted to modernize Indian Muslims, while Deobondis objective was to Islamise in its true sense. On the other hand ‘Nadwa’ stood for the restoration of a place of honour for ‘Ulema’ in the Muslim society. ‘Nadwat-ul-Ulama’ was closer to Aligarh than Deobond⁴⁰ in the sense of their attitude towards the British government. But the significant fact is that both Dar-ul-Ulum and the ‘Nadwat-ul-Ulama’ was an attempt to bringing awareness to Muslims about their Islamic identity.⁴¹

The Council prepared a curriculum for the madrassas on the basis of common concern and for raising awareness of the Muslim identity. The beginning was praiseworthy and fruitful as it brought together almost all shades of opinion. The organizers expected the council to be the bridge between the old ideas and the new realities and thus create a common ground of activism for the entire community. But the expectation of unity soon faded, as many groups parted and Barelwi’s began scathing attack on the council and its ideas.⁴² Undeterred by these criticisms, the leading members of the council decided to establish a madrassa in 1896 and thus Dar-ul-Ulum Nadwatul Ulama (in short Nadwa) came in to existence. Later Shibli Numani and other eminent scholars also joined in it. Shibli Numani, Professor of Arabic and Persian, an ardent lover of poetry and Islamic history, never liked the Muslim League politics and wrote a

³⁸ Aziz Ahmad, *Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*, OUP, Bombay, 1967, p.109

³⁹ Metcalf, *Islamic Revival* pp.335-347

⁴⁰ Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hashami, p.2

⁴¹ Mushirul Hassan, p.153

⁴² Ali Riaz, p.76

criticism of the League in the ‘Muslim Gazette’ of Lucknow in 1912 remarking that “If our politics had been serious politics they would have evoked a zest for struggle and a readiness to suffer and sacrifice for an ideal.”⁴³

Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband, as mentioned earlier started as challenge against the western education as well as the British political mechanism. The British East India Company, despite its pronouncement of religious neutrality by the Company, the first direct involvement of the Company in education came in 1781 with the establishment of Calcutta Alia Madrassa by the Governor General Warren Hastings.⁴⁴ Ten years after the establishment of the Calcutta Madrassa, the Hindu Sanskrit College was founded at Banaras by the Resident Jonathan Duncan. It is a quite evident from the aims and objects with which these two institutions were established that co-operation of the Indians-Hindus and Muslims both was necessary in the smooth functioning of this new judicial administration. It appear that there was no desire on the part of the British administration at this stage to encourage the Indians to accept Western knowledge and English language.⁴⁵ They on the other hand appreciated the oriental system of education, Dr. A. K. M. Ayub Ali and others quoted from the statement of Genereal Sleeman in *Islam in Bangladesh through Ages*,

“All knowledge acquired by the youth of England through Greek and Latin was received by the young man of the sub-continent through Persian and Arabic and after a seven years course of study, the Muslim youth became as proficient in Grammer, Dialectics and Logic as an Oxford graduate of these days.....”⁴⁶

But with the passing of ‘Diwani’ in to the hands of the British began the continuous process of reversing the whole economic, judicial and educational systems of Bengal. The Permanent Settlement of 1793, Resumption Act of 1828 replacing Persian by English as the official language in 1837, appropriation of all educational funds for the cause of English education in 1838, abolition of Islamic judiciary and introducing in its

⁴³ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.50

⁴⁴ Ali Riaz, pp.68, 72

⁴⁵ Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hasami, p.2

⁴⁶ Dr. A. K. M. Ayub Ali, Dr. M. A. Aziz, Prof. Shahed Ali (Ed.), p.234

place western judicial system in 1864, misappropriation of Muslim educational endowments and foundations of all these policies and actions dealt a death blow to the political, social, educational and economic life of the Muslims. The British even annexed Islamic School of Hughli and turned it in to an English College. Farhat Tabassum quoted from the statement of the Commissioner of Sunderban made in a government gazette that,

“Only Hindu candidates should be recruited to the vacant posts in Sundarban and no Muslim should be appointed. If Hindus do not come forward, let the posts remain vacant.”⁴⁷

These actions and policies not only crushed them politically, economically and socially but also threatened their cultural, ethical and religious values seriously.⁴⁸ At the time of renewal of the Company’s Charter in 1813 a definite provision of one lakh rupees was broadly allocated, but it was not mentioned on which way it could be utilized whether education or for other purpose. After long debates and discussions by various omission and commission over the question of ‘Oriental’ and ‘Western’ language, Lord Macaulay’s Minute was submitted on 2nd February 1835 in favour of Western knowledge. Lord William Bentinck the Governor General in Council, satisfied with Macaulay’s arguments and adopted resolution on 7th March 1835 in favour of English language⁴⁹. Lord Macaulay in his minute bitterly criticized the whole oriental system of education and suggested for its total abolition. To him the study of Arabic and Persian language and literature was totally useless and maintenance of madrassas and other oriental institutions were nothing but just wastage of public money as he observed that “A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.”⁵⁰

The momentous decision in favour of western knowledge and English language was welcomed by the Hindus of Bengal who were already favourably disposed towards it. On the other hand the anti-orientalist views of Government created a strong misgivings

⁴⁷ Farhat Tabassum, p.38

⁴⁸ Dr. A. K. M. Ayub Ali, p.238

⁴⁹ Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hasami, *opcit*, p.5

⁵⁰ Dr. A. K. M. Ayub Ali, Dr. M. A. Aziz, Prof. Shahed Ali (Ed.), p.239

in the minds of the Muslim. They submitted a petition, signed by some 8000 Maulavi's and gentlemen of the city expressing their displeasure about the resolution which according to them, aimed at conversion of Indians to Christianity. Their fears were not totally unfounded. Encouragement to missionary activities could be seen and felt by the people. Governor General Lord Moira's visit to Serampur Colony in 1815, and the willingness of Marquis of Tweeddale, the Governor of Madras, for the inclusion of Bible in the course of study of the government seminaries of Madras, was too conspicuous an event to go unnoticed by the general public. The Christian Missionaries had never made it secret that the aim of their educational activities was propagation of Christianity.⁵¹

The fear of christening influence, if not conversion to Christianity, kept Muslim away from Mission and Government School and strengthened their view that the British intended to interfere with their religion. In 1852 there were 459 missionaries in India and their number increased to 606 in 1872.⁵² Lord Macaulay who was the President of the Education Committee insisted the adoption of English and suggested the closure of Sanskrit and Arabic College to divert the students to English Schools. He believed that this mechanism should promote prozelytization without asking Indians to accept Christianity.⁵³

As modern education was motivated directly or indirectly by the British for their own benefit, the 'Ulama' looked upon it with suspicion and alarm, particularly because Islamic subjects and the Islamic tradition of learning were completely ignored. To save Islam from oblivion in India and to maintain the continuity of Islamic faith and practice, 'Ulema' started Arabic Madrassas which were supported by private charity of which the most well-known were those of Deobond and Bareilly. Both Alia madrassa and private madrassas imparted education in traditional Islamic discipline.⁵⁴ The main objective in founding the Madrassa at Deobond was preservation and perpetuation of religion and culture. To them religious consciousness, religious education and religious sentiments are

⁵¹ Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hasami, p.28

⁵² Sham Muhammad, p.xii

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ H.H.Bilgram and S.A. Ashraf, 'Islamic Monograph Series, *The Concept of Islamic University*, Hodder and Stogthon, The Islamic Academy Cambridge, 1985, p.34

the basis of Islamic existence and if these things are lost, all hope of reconstruction would also be lost.⁵⁵ Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond was therefore, not only a response to the challenges that were posed before the Muslims in the 19th century, as a result of their exposure to western culture but also a platform that stood for safeguarding the Islamic culture, religion, leaders (Ulemas) and the society. Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan, the first student of the Madrassa wanted to convey the same impression, when he said,

“Did Maulana Nanatawi, my teacher established this Madrassa for teaching and learning alone? The Madrassa was established in my presence. So far as I understand this institution was established after the failure of the uprising of 1857.”⁵⁶

‘*Sheikul Hind*’, Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan also said,

“I do not stand in the way of those whose aim is learning and teaching only. But for me, I have chosen the destiny for the achievement of which Dar-ul-Ulum was established by my reverted teacher.”⁵⁷

The circumstances under which the Dar-ul-Ulum was established at Deobond justified the political under-current which occasionally surfaced itself during the Indian freedom movement. The institution had been anti-British since the day of its inception on May 30, 1866 to the end of the British rule in India in 1947.⁵⁸ The goal of the School was to train well educated ‘Ulema’ who would be dedicated to reform Islam. Such ‘Ulema’ would become prayer leaders, writers, preachers and teachers and thus disseminate their learning in turn.⁵⁹ The intentions of its founder were to know and to establish contact between the ‘*alim*’⁶⁰ and average Muslims and to re-orientate the community to its ‘original’ cultural and religious identity.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hasami, p.38

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.41

⁵⁷ Ibid,

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.42

⁵⁹ B.D.Metcalf, opcit, p.100

⁶⁰ Singular form ulema means Islamic Scholar.

⁶¹ Mushirul Hassan, p.149

The Dar-ul-Ulum was started at Chatta mosque of Deobond in 1866 with the following aims and objectives⁶² -

1. To educate Muslims in the Quran, the Quranic exegesis, the Hadith, the Kalam and such other skills and knowledge which are related to them.
2. To provide Islamic education to Muslims.
3. To serve Islam through its propagation and guide the Muslims on the right path.
4. To develop Islamic discipline in the life of the students and to generate Islamic spirit in them.
5. To propagate and protect Islam through writing and speeches.
6. To develop among Muslims the moral character of their personages of good old days.
7. To avoid the influence of the Government and to maintain the freedom of thought and knowledge.
8. To establish such Madrassas at various places for the dispersion of religious knowledge and to affiliate them to 'Dar-ul-Ulum' Deobond.

Thus it appears from the objectives that the Dar-ul-Ulum was established to keep religious consciousness alive among the Muslims lest they should be carried away by the strong current of western culture that flourished in the wake of the British domination over India. The objectives related to the avoidance of government influence are quite explicit in this regard. Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond has two other special characteristics which are particularly striking the participation of people with kin ties and the system of popular financing. Dealing with these two institutional characteristics Maulana Mohammad Quasim enunciated '*Eight Fundamental Principles*':⁶³

- 1) The most important thing is that the authorities of Madrassa should always take the utmost interest in raising more and more funds from the public. Others also should exhorted to make efforts for constant increase in public donations. The well wisher of madrassa should never forget this obligation of theirs.

⁶² Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hasami, pp.42-43

⁶³ Maulana Tayeeb Qasimi, pp,153,154; Syed Masroor Ali Aktar Hasami, pp,58-59,

- 2) Constant and serious endeavours are to be made towards a permanent and decent boarding arrangement for the students.
- 3) The body of Councilors (*Shire*) responsible for the management of the madrassa should be devoted to its cause. Rigidity of views is undesirable. One should never try to maneuver in order to impose his opinion upon others. God forbid! The foundation of madrassa will be shaken when its Councilors cease to be tolerant of each others views. The Mohtamim (Rector) is bound to seek council in all advisable matters. Outsiders, also who entertain feeling of goodwill towards the Madrassa and have experience and intelligence, should be given an opportunity for constructive suggestion.
- 4) It is essential that the teachers of the Madrassa be like minded. Like the worldly minded 'Ulama' they should not be conceited and disrespectful to others. It will be a bad day for the Madrassa when such a situation arises.
- 5) The curriculum and the method of instruction, as already proposed or afterwards agreed upon by mutual consultations, should be strictly followed, otherwise this Madrassa will not flourish and if does flourish it will not serve the purpose.
- 6) So long the Madrassa does not have any regular and definite source of income, it will continue to exist – *Insha Allah* provided there is an honest reliance on and faith in His mercy and compassion; and when it comes to posses a definite source of income, e.g. some substantial property in the form of land or factory or a promise of permanent donation from some rich person of honest intentions, then it appears the Madrassa will be divested of the feelings of fear and hope – and, with this, will be deprived of the 'hidden' source unfailing assistance; and its workers will start quarrelling amongst themselves. Therefore, in matters of income and constructions there should always remain a certain lack of certainty of means.
- 7) The participation of government and rich person is also harmful.
- 8) The donations of persons who want to remain unknown, I believe, is a source of *barkah* (blessing). Their sincerity seems a more permanent means of income.

In fact, many wealthy persons were among the donours and many no doubt did expect and received recognition in return. Still the system of popular support was

effective both financially and symbolically and became a model for new religious schools.⁶⁴

The success of the Deoband School could be evaluated by the spread of Deobondi teachings through similar schools. The ulema of Deobond early tried to establish a system of branch schools that would be under its affiliation, following the pattern of British Universities, were to 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 Woods Dispatch of 1854 and they in turn, and set up a somewhat similar system of education. They founded many schools with the common goal of the propagation of reformed religious knowledge’s and the training of young men for professional religious careers. The school often submitted their records to Deobond for inspection, sought its approval of major decisions and received its *ulama* as both external examiners and distinguish visitors.⁶⁵

Many smaller madrassas were started with single patron and in co-operation with a Deobondi graduate. The madrassa at Thaana Bhawan was the special project of Hafiz Abdur Razzaq, who contributed Rs.30 each month to pay the salaries of the staff of three.⁶⁶ In Kairana district Muzaffarnagar, Hajji Shihab Uddin after performing Hajj from Mecca established such a Madrassa. In Galaothi, in Bulandshahar district Syad Mihrban Ali, a wealthy person sponsored a school staffed by Deobondi graduates. Maulana Fakhrul-Hassa Gangohi, a disciple of Rashid Ahmed established a school in Nagina in Bijnore.⁶⁷ The most successful Deobondi school was ‘Mazahir-ul-Ulum’ founded in Saharanpur, was explicitly modeled itself on the nearby Deobond Madrassa and was just twenty miles away from Deobond.⁶⁸ Another successful madrassa was in the town of Amroha founded by Syed Hassan Amrohawi, with the blessing of Hajji Imdad Ullah Muhajire Mecci, and thus Deobondi madrassa and its disciples and followers spread throughout the country. The extent of the Deoband Movement soon spread even in the

⁶⁴ B. D. Metcalf, pp. 94-96

⁶⁵ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.23

⁶⁶ B.D. Metcalf, p.126

⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 97,98,

⁶⁸ Ibid,p.128

remotest part of Bengal and Assam and madrassas with the same principle, ideology, aim and objectives started in these regions too. The policy of inviting public contribution followed as in Deobond on the basis of Maulana Qasim Nanawtawi's 'Eight Principles,' also followed in these madrassas. It may be mentioned here, in 19th and 20th centuries when the number of madrassas increased rapidly, the pattern of communication also became more complex and the madrassas provided the infrastructure to various religious and political movements, reformist, anti-colonial and nationalist.⁶⁹

TYPES OF MADRASSAS

Madrassas during colonial period were of mainly four types: Alia' Madrassa – government supported madrassa, modeled on the Calcutta Madrassa, Qaumi' Madrassa – privately managed madrassa modeled as of Deoband Madrassa, Furkhan/Hafizia' Madrassa – primary educational institutions provides basic Islamic education for about four years and exclusively meant for memorizing the Holy Qur'an and Nurani Madrassa's / *Maqtab*s which offered pre-primary education – literacy and fundamental knowledge of Islam.

Alia Madrassas: Alia Madrassas have five stages, viz. *Ibtdaye*, *Dhakil*, *Alim*, *Fazil* and *Kamil* - from primary education to the level of master's degree. *Ibtedayee* of primary level is equivalent to five years of primary school, *Dhakil* cover five years of secondary level education, *Alim* is equivalent to higher secondary education – is a two years course, *Fazil* is equivalent bachelor degree and is a two years programme and *Kamil* is equivalent to a master degree and takes two years to complete.

Qaumi Madrassa: The Qaumi Madrassas can be categorized in two broad strands: one that is subject based and the other which is divided in to five stages with two additional elective stages. In the former system, students are taught a variety of religious subjects over a period of at least six years. The sequence of these subjects depends on the institution as well as the ability of the student. The objective of the teacher is to make the

⁶⁹ Farish A. Noor, Y. Sikand, & Martin V. Bruinessen, (eds.), *The Madrasa in Asia: Political Activism and Transitional Linkage*, Monohar, New Delhi 2009, p.17

student proficient in subjects necessary to become an authority of the Islamic lifestyle. Within this system, some institutions have a final course, successful completion of which constitutes graduation for the student. The course is called *Daurah Hadith*. In the second strand of Qaumi Madrassas courses are sequenced in five stages: *Ibtedayee* (primary), *Mutawassitah* (secondary), *sanubiah ulyia* (higher secondary), *fazeelat* (bachelor), and *taqmeel* (master's). Two elective stages are: *I'imul qiraat wat taujid* (higher qiraat), and *Hifzul Qur'an* (memorization of Holy Qur'an).

Although these systems are widely followed there are several other practices as well. Some madrassas divide their entire curriculum in to fifteen years

Furkania / Hafizia Madrassa: Furkania / Hafizia madrassas are primary educational institutions offering basic Islamic education for about four years and are concerned almost exclusively with memorizing the Holy Qur'aan. Furkania Madrassas are often attached to mosques and operates as residential institutions. These institutions are run and managed by the local people and sometime by the Masjid Committee.

Nurani Madrassas and Maktab: Nurani Madrassas and maktab are also preprimary educational institution. They offers fundamental learning of Islam. These institutions are not residential and students are expected to spend three to four hours per day in such institutions.

Madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley:

Surma Valley being part of Bengal since long where Islamic education reached much earlier than present Barak Valley. However, as Karimganj was a part of Surma Valley here Islamic education started along with the rest of Bengal. In fact, Sylhet, which is considered now as the spiritual capital of Bangladesh, was the main centre from where Islam gradually spread out in to the other parts of Surma-Barak Valley and with this Islamic education also spread in to the different parts of the Surma-Barak Valley through different means. It has already been discussed in previous chapter how *sufi* saints preached and propagated Islam in Surma-Barak Valley. It was with them that Islamic education began in Surma Valley. Here education in the initial stage were teacher

centered rather than subject centered. Pupils used to learn Islamic knowledge by sitting before the *sufi* saints in *khanqas*, generally located near the place where they used to reside, or by staying in the residence of an *alim*. Some time they also used to preach Islamic knowledge to their *murids* (disciples) in *khanqas*. In subsequent days, we have plenty of archaeological evidences regarding the construction of mosques in Surma Valley and like other parts of the sub-continent *maqtabas* were attached along with these mosques, where basic education of Islam were imparted. However, madrassas of modern type began to grow from the mid-nineteenth century.

Very little is known about the education of Barak Valley Muslim during the rule of the native Dimasa Barman kings and early British rule. Asking about the report for general education, the Agent of the Governor General addressed letters to all the district officers of Assam in 1834. Fisher in his Report wrote, “*There does not exist any provision either public or private in any part of Cachar for the instruction of public.....education is very backward in Cachar.*”⁷⁰ Even in the second half of the 19th century when the government took initiative to start government School, Muslim kept themselves away from such schools although economically they were in better position than the Hindus of Cachar.⁷¹ It is considered that the following the pattern of Surma Valley, the primary religious education was given to Muslim children in *maqtabas*. The teachers were generally from the Sylhet adjacent to Cachar. From oral sources, however it can be gathered that some people crossed those borders and attended institution of higher learning in Sylhet and even in United Province, though their number was very small. After completion of their study they were motivated to start such institution on the areas they reside with their own initiative. Their zeal and eagerness started to capitalize the situation looking at the advancement made by their fellow brethren in other parts of India especially northern and western part of India who were leading from front. The result was that gradually a network of Madrassa was established by these people which

⁷⁰ Birth of Centenary Journal, Government Boys School, Silchar, p.3

⁷¹ Habibullah Mazumder, “*Nationalist Vs Communalist: A Study of Politics of the Muslims in Assam 1920 - 47*”, unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, Department of History, Assam University, Silchar, 2007, p.41

covered this region.⁷² It may be mentioned here although a few Madrassa were established in Surma-Barak Valley before the foundation of the Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond in 1867, but it was only after 1868 that number increased towards the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. For convenience of study during its colonial rule, the madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley has been divided in to two phases viz. Madrassas from 1850 to 1900 and Madrassas from 1901 to 1947 of which it is noticed that some madrassas were established basically for meeting the social needs of the locality and many others madrassas established with the inspiration of Deoband Movement and following the pattern, principle, ideologies of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband.

Madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley from 1850 to 1900:

In its first there are some prominent Madrassas that were established through private initiative by the local Muslims in the different areas Surma-Barak Valley of which Dar-ul-Hadith Ashraful Ulum Madrassa Ratanpur, Hailakandi (1856) and Fulbari⁷³ Aziria Alia Madrassa,⁷⁴ Golapganj, Sylhet (1860) were most important madrassas established before the foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband. Both these madrassas were established basically for the social requirement of the local Muslims. Mosques, *maqtabs* and Madrassas were the only means of education for rural Muslims of Cachar and broader Sylhet. It has been stated earlier that although some of the government Schools were established, the rural Muslim kept themselves away from the government schools. Dar-ul-Hadith Ashraful Ulum Madrassa Ratanpur was the first madrasas of colonial Barak Valley which is situated at about 6 km. north east of Hailakandi town. The Madrassa was established with the effort of Maulana Azfar Ali of Jayantia (presently located under Sylhet district of Bangladesh). He in consultation with Indani Choudhury of Barhailakandi, Arjod Ali Mazumder of Bandukmara, Irfan Ali Laskar of Nitainagar decided to establish a madrasa in Ratanpur for the development of Islamic education

⁷² Abul Hussain Mazumder, "Madrassa Education In Barak Valley: A Short Account of Historical Perspective" an article published in *Neda-e-Din*, a journal published from Hailakandi, Sept.,2006, p.26.

⁷³ It is believed that name of the village came after the name of the residence of Raja Fulmallik and Queen Fulmoti. When Mir Hazra captured the area they left the place and took shelter in Pratapgarh.

⁷⁴ Madrassa was named Aziria Madrassa after the name of its founder (one of the founder) and donour Maulana Azir Uddin.

among the Muslim children and for the preservation of Muslim culture and community against the eroding effects of ‘Christian system’ of education. Indani Choudhury, Arjod Ali and Irfan Ali purchased the land and donated it for the establishment of Madrassa. The Madrassa initially begun in a nearby mosque and after a few months it shifted to its own location where some rooms were framed with bamboo. Later, Khaladhan Mia Barbhuiya of Ratanpur, Hazi Mozaffar Ali of Bandukmara and Gulam Rabbani Mazumder of Ratanpur have contributed to the madrasas and re-constructed it with wood and tin.⁷⁵

The teachers of the madrasas during the colonial period were⁷⁶

1. Maulana Azfar Ali of Jayantia Basti,
2. Maulana Sadar Ali of Ratanpur
3. Maulana Ahad Uddin Laskar, Ratanpur
4. Maulana Ahmmad Ali of Ratanpur
5. Maulana Abdur Rashid
6. Maulana Main Uddin Laskar of Bondukmara
7. Maulana Abdul Mannan Mazumder of Bandukmara
8. Maulana Masaddar Ali of Narayanpur
9. Maulana Akil Ali of Bojantipur
10. Maulana Mubarak Ali of Purba Sunapur
11. Maulana Tasaddar Ali of Ratanpur
12. Maulana Abdur Rashid of Ratanpur
13. Maulana Abdur Nur of Chepti Brajapur,
14. Maulana Habibur Rahman of Bahadurpur
15. Maulana Jia Uddin Laskar of Bandukmara.

Fulbari Aziria Alia Madrassa is located about 13 km. south-east of Sylhet town. It was established with the collective efforts of Maulana Mohammad Azim, Shah Mohammad Israil, Shah Abdul Qadir, Shah Abdul Nur, Abdul Kaher, Maulabi

⁷⁵ Interview with Maulana Jia Uddin Laskar, aged about 95 years, Head Maulana of the Madrassa, Date of interview 16.10.2011, Place of Interview – Office of the Madrassa.

⁷⁶ Interview with Maulana Jia Uddin Laskar, aged about 95 years, Head Maulana of the Madrassa, Date of interview 16.10.2011, Place of Interview – Office of the Madrassa.

Mohammad Ibrahim, Maulana Azir Uddin, Maulavi Khalilur Rahman and Sufi Habibur Rahman.⁷⁷ Maulana Mohammad Azim, son of Mohammad Fateh was the disciple of Ahmad Ullah of Dakha. He was a great sufi saint in broader Sylhet and resided in the village Fulbari. He inspired his disciples to establish madrassas. One of his disciple composed a poem about him,

*“Pir taajia kohu Dhihaner Rahabar,
Irpaner Akasher Chandra Borabar,
Nakshbandi Gharer ek chitara ujala,
Jaar kripa pai Sylheter jila.
Peer taan Shah Ahmad Ullah Dakhar shahar
Murid taan Muhammad Azam Dhihaner Rahabar
Maulana Mohammad Azim sarbaloke jaane
Poob shohorer kutubi Allai diyachila taane.
Shariyater Maarefater Brikker chila fool,
Fulbarite goddochilo Allahar moqbul.
Adhya jabat she fooler khusbu aase bhora.
Bichar korile mile jila Sylhet juda.”⁷⁸*

(English translation)

In the sky of God he is similar to moon,
In Nakshbandi School of Thought, he is
like a shining star and
District of Sylhet receives his blesses.
His master is Shah Ahmad Ullah of
Dakha city, Mualana Mohamad Azim
Is known to all.
God blessed him as the Kutub of east town
He was the flower of the tree. of *shariat*
and *marifat*.
Gods blessing was grown in Fulbari,
Till to day this flower is full of fragrance
If judged, its smell is found all over the
district Sylhet.

Maulana Mohammad Israil, son of Karim Khan studied in Delhi and Agra and after that returned to his own village, Fulbari. Pupils even from the distant places started gathering to his home for learning. He used to teach them, provided books and food to them. His son Maulavi Muhammad Ibrahim continued his service and taught the students at his residence till the foundation of the madrassa.⁷⁹ Shah Abdul Qadir son of Anuar Mohammad, was the disciple of Maulana Ahmad Ullah of Dakha and was also the son in law of Maulana Mohammad Azam. He has also contributed a lot to the foundation of the

⁷⁷ Mustansirur Rahman Choudhury, “*Anchalik Itihas: Fulbari Aziria Alia Madrassa*”, Published by himself, Sylhet, 1999 p.11

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.12-13

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.16

Fulbari Madrassa. His eldest son Shah Abdun Nur also taught and imparted spiritual knowledge to his father's followers. The youngest son of Shah Abdul Qadir, Shah Abdul Qaher also did the same job as his brother.⁸⁰ All of them used to teach the pupil of other places at their own residence before the foundation of Fulbari madrassa. Maulavi Khalilur Rahman, son of Mohammad Azam was a great scholar. He was one of the founder teachers of the Fulbari Madrassa.⁸¹

Maulana Azir Uddin was the chief of Fulbari madrassa. He was the son of Jahir Uddin, Lawyer of Sylhet Judge Court. He was a great scholar in Arabic, Persian and Urdu literature. His works on interpretation of *Hadith*, were also included in the madrassa curriculum. He contributed a lot to the foundation of Fulbari Madrassa. He was a wealthy and landed person but he had no heir and hence one-fourth of his total property was donated for the foundation and maintenance of the madrassa and it is because of this that madrassa was named after him.⁸² He was popularly called '*Chuto Maulavi*' and Maulana Mohammad Israil as '*Bodo Maulavi*'.

Students used to gather in the residence of the teachers mentioned above and each teacher used to teach on the subject on which he had specialization. Students, after completing each subject used to change teacher one after another and there was no curriculum or syllabus. Course was classified on the basis of books. Teachers used to provide free lodging and foods to the students. When the number of the students increased gradually, it became difficult to maintain discipline and then the teachers realized the need of a madrassa. Considering this, in 1860 a madrassa was established with bamboo at the extended house of Maulana Azir Uddin.⁸³ Maulana Sharafat Ali of Gangokul village was the first Head *Mudaris* (Teacher) of the madrassa. Then in 1883 it shifted to its present location after constructing the building.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid p.15

⁸¹ Ibid p.16

⁸² Ibid p.17

⁸³ Ibid, p.6

⁸⁴ Ibid p.18

Hamid Bakht Mazumder of Mazumder family Sylhet⁸⁵, eldest son of Syad Bakht Mazumder was the '*Mutwalli*' (Director) of the Fulbari madrassa. After his death Maulana Shafiqul Hoque Choudhury⁸⁶ of Bahadurpur village became the second *Mutwalli* of the madrassa in 1889.⁸⁷ His father Abdul Khalik Choudhury established a madrassa at Bahadurpur, and was named Wahidia Madrassa after his father Abdul Wahid but the madrassa did not last for long.⁸⁸ In 1923 Fulbari Aziria Madrassa was brought under Assam Educational Board and a financial sanction was made to the madrassa and thus *Qaumi* madrassa converted in to Aziria Senior Madrassa. The head of the madrassa during the colonial period were Maulana Sharafat Ali, Sufi Habibur Rahman, Maulana Romiz Uddin Ahmed and Maulana Abdul Mannan.⁸⁹

Thus both the Ratanpur Madrassa and the Fulbari Madrassa were the two prominent Madrassas established before the Deoband Madrassa where good number of *talebas* (students) learned and became the *Imam* of different mosques, *Muhaddis* of different madrassas during colonial period. Politically both the madrassas played mixed role in the peak hours of the freedom movement and that will be discussed in the fourth chapter of the thesis.

Deobandi Madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley:

It has already been mentioned that for higher education people of Surma-Barak Valley used to visit United Province and it was because of this the medium of

⁸⁵ Mazumder family of Sylhet had great name and fame and was related with the Pathan, Mughal and the Britishers. Ancestor of this family Sarbananda of Borshala village converted in to Islam and assumed the Islamic name Sorwar Khan. During the reign of Hussain Shah he married Muslim woman of Jaunpur. He was appointed as the *Kanungo* (administrator) of Sylhet. He was succeeded by his son Mir Khan and the later was given the title 'Mazumder'. Mohammad Bakht Mazumder was the last *kanungo* of this family.

⁸⁶ It is said that Maulana Shafiqul Hoque Choudhury was the descendent of the Pala Dynasty of Bengal. The genealogical record is thus Mahipala II imprisoned his two brother Rampala and Surpala II. Nobles started rebellion and in a battle Mahipala was killed. After his death Kalidas Pal and others of his family left the kingdom and settled in Panchakhanda Pargana of Sylhet and thus Kalidas Pal was the founder of the Pala dynasty of Panchakhanda. He did a lot of welfare activities for the benefit of the public. His descendent Yadav Chandra Pal's youngest son was Pratap Chandra Pal. Pratap Chandra converted in Islam assumed the Pasanda Khan. He shifted his home to a nearby place and named the place *Baage Pasanda Khan* i.e. Garden of Pasanda Khan. Later on the term 'Pasanda' was sanscritized and made 'Prachanda'.

⁸⁷ Mustansirur Rahman Choudhury, p.20

⁸⁸ Monir Uddin Choudhury, '*Itihas kota koi*' an essay published in *Dainik Jalalabadi*, dated 2nd June 1986 from Sylhet.

⁸⁹ Mustansirur Rahman Choudhury, pp. 75,76

instructions in the Madrassas of Surma Barak Valley was Urdu although the region is Bengali dominant. The scholars who studied in the madrassas of United Province and Delhi developed an emotional attachment with their institutions and maintained their relations with the teachers and friends of other regions. Thus within a decade of the foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband, Deobandi Madrassa, Madinatul Ulum Baghbari Alia Madrassa (1873) was established in Surma-Barak Valley which is located in the remote corner of the country. The wave of the Deoband Movement soon spread in the other areas of Surma-Barak Valley and thus it is noticed that a good number of madrassas were established following the principles, ideologies and pattern of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband. The prominent Deobandi Madrassas that were established in Surma-Barak Valley till 1900 were, Madinatul Ulum Madrassa, Baghbari, Kaliganj (1873), Cheragia Qaumia Alia Madrassa established in 1882 in Karimganj sub-division. In Sylhet, Jamia Islamia Dar-ul-Ulum Dar-ul-Hadith, Kanaighat (1893), Imdadul Ulum Madrassa, Umarganj (1898) were established. In Cachar, Dar-ul-Ulum, Sahabad (1895), under Hailakandi sub-division were established, Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi (1897) under Silchar sub-division. Most of these Madrassas were patronized by the Deobandi ulemas.

Madinatul Ulum Baghbari Alia Madrassa, was located in Baghbari village, about 15 km. away from Karimganj town. Its founder Maulana Najib Ali Choudhury of Kaliganj under Karimganj subdivision was in United Province during the time of the Revolt of 1857 and actively participated in the Revolt at Shameli. He then fled to Mecca along with others, and it is for this that he has been regarded as ‘Najib Ali Muhajire Makki’. He participated in the Deobandi movement and after returning home he started this Madrassa with the same aims and objectives as that of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband.⁹⁰ It may be mentioned here that Najib Ali Choudhury was the disciple of Imdad Ullah Muhajire Makki, and follower of Chistiya-Nakshbandiya sufi order.⁹¹ After nine years of its foundation Cheragia Qaumia Alia Madrassa, Cheragi, (Sherpur) Karimganj was established in 1882 by Munshi Sharif Hussain on his own land, following the ideologies

⁹⁰ It is believed that while in Mecca one night Najib Ali in his dream had seen that he returned to his native place and founded a madrassa, accordingly returned and founded the present madrassa. The same information was also gathered through an interaction with Kamal Uddin Ahmed, Karimganj, Ex-Principal, Karimganj College, Dated 20.10.2008

⁹¹ Kamal Uddin Ahmed, *Karimganjer Itihas*, Natun Diganta, Prakashani, Silchar, 2013, p.236

of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband. Maulana Abdul Latif of Bardhanpur was the first Head Maulana of the Madrassa.⁹² At present the madrassa is located in Cheragia bazaar. There is a short story behind the foundation of the madrassa and it is very popular to the common people of the locality. Munshi Sharif Hussain, a reliable person of Arjunpur (nearby village) had seen in his dream that a *chirag* (lamp) has been lighting and people were moving around for collecting its light. He arranged a meeting and called the important personalities of the area and expressed his dream. And it was explained that this dream indicated the need for the foundation of a madrassa in this place. In Persian language lamp is called '*Chirag*', and thus the name of Madrassa was named Cheragia Qaumia Madrassa and subsequently the area has also been named after it.⁹³

With the passing time the tide of the Deoband Movement became more frequent and the foundation of Madinatul Ulum Baghbari, Cheragi Madrassa gave the spirit among the local Muslims. Fresh Deobandi graduates of Surma-Barak Valley returned to their localities with full enthuse that they developed during their stay at Deoband under the Ulemas who were strongly against the British from the very beginning and thus in the last decade of the 19th century three prominent Deobandi Madrassas were established at Cachar, Hailakandi and Sylhet. 'Jamia Islamia Dar-ul-Ulum Dar-ul-Hadith', was established in 1893 on the western bank of the river Surma at Kanaighat bazaar of Sylhet as Kanaighat Islamia Madrassa. After few years of its establishment it was renamed as Kanaighat Mansuria Madrassa and subsequently Hadith course were started in the madrassa and was again renamed as the Jamia Islamia Dar-ul-Ulum, Darul Hadith Kanaighat. Maulana Mushaid of Bayumpur, Sylhet who was the product of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband taught eighteen years in this madrassa.⁹⁴ Although madrassa was established on the principles, aims and ideologies of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband, the founders of the madrassa also set some specific objectives of the madrassa. These were⁹⁵ -

- a) To attain the satisfaction of God.
- b) To follow the *Sunnah* of Prophet Mohammad.

⁹² Interview with Maulana Ala Uddin (68), teacher of the Madrassa, dated 26-07-2010

⁹³ Kamal Uddin Ahmed, p.237

⁹⁴ Office Diary of the Madrassa.

⁹⁵ Constitution of the Madrassa and also mentioned in the souvenir of the Madrassa 'Aal - Mushahid' published in 2010.

- c) To teach the *taleba* (students) as said and practiced by Prophet Mohammad and his *Sahabas*.⁹⁶
- d) To enable the *talebas* and other Muslims to practice and maintain Islamic way of life from the very beginning of life.
- e) To enlighten the life through implementing the acquired Islamic knowledge.

The spark of the Deoband Movement soon touched Cachar district of Barak Valley and just two years after the foundation of Kanaighat Madrassa of broader Sylhet a madrassa of similar character ‘Dar-ul-Ulum, Sahabad’ was established under Hailakandi subdivision in 1895. Dar-ul-Ulum, Sahabad is located at Sahabad village of present Hailakandi district and is about 25 km. far from the district head quarter Hailakandi town. There was no *maqtab* (primary Islamic school) or school in the village. Two people came to this village from Sylhet and settled there, after few months of their settlement they proposed to the ‘*Murabbis*’⁹⁷ (leaders) of the village to start a *maqtab* in the in the village. Local people agreed with the proposal and decided to start a *maqtab* first in the village. Maulana Abbas Ali of Sylhet then advised that it should be a madrassa and not just a *maqtab*. The *murabbis* of the village provided their support and then under the initiative of Maulana Abbas Ali Dar-ul-Ulum, Sahabad was established in 1895 on the land donated by Manchab Ali Laskar and his brother Rashid Ali Laskar. Both the brothers donated 48 *khatas* with equal proportion for the establishment of the madrassa.⁹⁸

Maulana Abbas Ali of Sylhet was the founder and was also the first Head of the madrassa. The other teachers of the madrassa during colonial period were, Maulana Hakim Ali of Rongpur, Hailakandi, Maulana Moshaid Ali, Sylhet, Mualana Makkaram Ali, Maulana Nasir Uddin, Maulana Sheik Sayid Ahmed, Maulana Sheik Motosin Ali, Maulana Soman Ali, Maulana Jonab Ali, Sheikh Abdul Hoque, Maulana Nur Mohammad

⁹⁶ Companion of Prophet Mohammad.

⁹⁷ Murabbi is a Arabic word derived from the root ‘rab’ means care of. The term murabbi means the person who takes care of others specially his subordinates. In a family, the head of the family is considered as the murabbi of the family, for a village (present) Gaon Panchayat may be considered as the murabbi of the village.

⁹⁸ Interview with Maulana Monir Uddin, Aged about 65 years, Secretary cum Head Maulana of the Dar-ul-Ulum, Sahabad Madrassa, date of interview – 10.09.2011, place of interview – Office of the Madrassa, Dar-ul-Ulum, Sahabad.

and Maulana Ekram Ali. Most of the teachers were either from Dar-ul-Ulum Deobond or from Deobandi Madrassa of United Province.⁹⁹ In the same year two other madrassas were established in broader Sylhet. Laskarpur Madrassas was established under Habiganj Sub-division and Asimia Alia Madrassa was established at Asimganj, under Karimganj sub-division. Madrassa was started just as *maqtab* by Asim Shah.¹⁰⁰ It is said that it was established for the first time nearby the *mazar* of Hassan Shah, one of the companions of Hazrat Shah Jalal. Later on it was shifted to the village Bagorsangon, nearby Asimganj bazaar and after a few years it was again shifted to its present location on the south of Asimganj Bazar in 1921 on the land donated by Maulana Mohammad Alim.¹⁰¹ The Madrassa became a government madrassa and was named Asimia Senior Madrassa. Another such madrassa was established at Maulvi Bazar in 1896 with the name of Mualvi Bazar Islamia Madrassa. However, later with the initiative of *Anjuman-e-Islamia*, South Sylhet, the madrassa received Government's aid although monthly expenditure for maintenance were always met with private subscription and fees.¹⁰²

The most prominent Deobandi madrassa that was established in Colonial Cachar was the Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi which was established in 1897, 15 Km. away from Silchar, the district head quarter of Cachar located nearby 53 No. Silchar-Imphal National Highway. The madrassas was established thirty years after the foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband (1867) and had close contact with the Deoband Madrassa of United Province.

Madrassa followed the pattern of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond and was organized following the foot step of Deobond Madrassa. The reason behind this similarity was definitely because of its patron Hajji Imdad Ullah Muhajire Mecci (d 1900), who took active part in the Revolt of 1857 and left the country to Arabia and settled at Mecca but had very close contact with the Indians. Every year during the time of 'hajj', he mets

⁹⁹ Interview with Abdul Mannan Laskar aged about 60 years, neighbour of the madrassa, date of interview 10.09.2011, place of interview – his residence, Village & P.O. - Sahabad, Hailakandi

¹⁰⁰ Most probably the name of place Asimganj was named after the name of Asim Shah.

¹⁰¹ Kamal Uddin Ahmed, p.238, Interview with Maulana Sufian Saheb,(57) Principal of the Madrassa, Asimganj, Dated 10-10-2011

¹⁰² Education – B, Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam Secretariat, File No. E-114, 1912

Indians and exchanged views. He contributed greatly to the foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond; it was due to his blessing that many Deobondi Madrassas were established in India in the late 19th century. Besides, the teachers of the Madrassa during colonial period were either the products of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond or of a Deobondi madrassa of Sylhet.

Hafiz Akbar Ali, the eldest son of Dhonu Mia of Lamba Basti (d 1951), Banskandi, Cachar had his basic education at Fulbari Aziria Madrassa. He went to Mecca to perform '*Hajj*', in 1894 where he met Hajji Imdad Ullah Muhajire Mecci and became his disciple. He stayed there for three years with his master and in 1897 he returned with the blessing of his '*Murshid*' (teacher) to establish a Madrassa in his own place. Imdad Ullah blessed his disciple Hafiz Akbar Ali, "*Go back to your home and establish a madrassa in your locality and prepare Ulema to serve for the society and community*".¹⁰³ After receiving the blessing Hafiz Akbar Ali returned to his home and consulted with some other ulemas and wealthy persons of the localities. In a '*mashara*' (meeting for a decision with other companions especially used as religious meeting) at Lamba Basti, Nenadhan Mia Laskar, a local wealthy person extended his helping hand and donated one *bigha* of land for the establishment of the Madrassa. Miadhan Mia Laskar, brother of Nena Mia Laskar, also ensured for assistance.¹⁰⁴ Maulana Hafij Ali of Hatirhar, near Banskandi, who was the disciple of Rashid Ahmed Ganguhi, also extended his helping hand and he to a large extent assisted Hafij Akbar Ali during the time of the foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi.¹⁰⁵ In this *mashara* other people also promised to donate for the Madrassa, they provided their physical assistance and materials. The ulemas of neighbouring area also ensured to teach with minimum salaries or even without salary. In this *mashara* a Governing Body of the Madrassa was formed with Hafiz Akbar Ali as its President and Miadhan Mian and Nena Mian as its Secretary. The body is known as '*Majlish-e-Sura*', and its suggestions regarding the academic and administrative matters

¹⁰³ Maulana Tayeeb Qasimi, *Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskand*, an Arabic magazine published from the Madrassa (2000), p.1

¹⁰⁴ Ibid p.2,

¹⁰⁵ Maulana Abdul Jalil, *Shaiqul Hadith Shaiqul Masharekh Hajrat Maulana Masaddar Alir Jeeban Charita: Ekti Jeeban Ekti Aalok Bartika*, Aal Kuran and Aal Hadith Foundation, Silchar, 2008, p. 3

are binding upon the teachers and the functionaries of the Madrassa. It was decided that the 'Sura' would meet at least twice during a lunar year.

Hafiz Akbar Ali became the over all Supervisor and teacher of the Madrassa and also the President of *Majlish-e-Sura*. Other founder teachers of the Madrassa were¹⁰⁶ Maulana Nur Ali Sahab (d 1952), Ujan Tarapur, Banskandi, Hafiz Ali Sahab (d 1940), Hatirarh, Banskandi, Maulana Amir Ali Sahab (d 1952), Rupairbali, near Banskandi, and Maulana Wazid Ali Sahab (d. 1914), Kakmara, Banskandi. Their salaries were provided from the donations and collections of the Madrassa.

Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi started as Hafijia Madrassa in two small rooms made of bamboo. Gradually it developed and other departments were initiated. New courses were started and the name of the madrassa changed in to Islamia Madrassa, Banskandi, from Hafijia Madrassa. Subsequently, it included some other courses in to the madrassa curriculum and took the new name '*Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi*.' It followed the syllabus of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond and it was because of the instruction of *Sheikul Islam* Hussain Ahmed Madani that it flourished vigorously. His main objective was that the Madrassa would keep in contact with Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond, and show the local Muslims the path of Islamic society. For this mission Madani visited the Madrassa several times during his life time. He performed '*I'tikaf*' during the month of '*Ramadhan*' in last three consecutive years of his life in this Madrassa.¹⁰⁷

Development of the madrassas depended upon public donations and collections. The madrassa had no fixed source of income. The colonial government tried to raise its influence over the madrassa through its agent and in 1928 made inspection in the madrassa¹⁰⁸ and provided Rs.50 out of discretionary allotment of the commissioner, Surma Valley Hill Division.¹⁰⁹ In 1931, Rs.50 grant was provided to the madrassa for the

¹⁰⁶ Tayeeb Qasimi, p.5

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, pp. 13,14

¹⁰⁸ Education.-B, March 1928, Madrassa Banskandi, Nos. 309-311, State Archives, Guwahati

¹⁰⁹ Education-B, March, 1928, Nos. 1-5, State Archives, Guwahati.

purpose of books and furniture.¹¹⁰ Once again in the same year Rs.50 was provided out of discretionary allotment of Hon'ble Minister of Education to the Islamia Madrassa.¹¹¹ In 1935 a grant of Rs. 50 was provided to the Madrassa for furniture and equipment.¹¹² All these grants were due to individual efforts and devotion to the madrassa. The madrassa authority accepted these grants liberally. Large numbers of students were admitted in the madrassa, new departments were initiated, new teachers were appointed. For its maintenance, madrassa needed huge money. This led to a critical situation in the madrassa.¹¹³

Few years after the establishment of the madrassa, the colonial government proposed to make it a Government Madrassa but the proposal was refused by the Madrassa authority.¹¹⁴ During its critical situation Sir Mohammad Shadulla was the Premier of Assam. He wanted to take over its expenditure and with this proposal he visited the Madrassa but the madrassa authority vehemently rejected the proposal. To them Shadullah has very close relation with the British and hence, the offer was on behalf of the British Indian Government. As the British exploited and ill-treated the Muslims in general and Ulamas in particular, so they refused to receive British help. Ulamas of Madrassa also replied, "*Sooner or latter the British dominion would collapse from Indian soil, but our madrassa will overcome the present difficulties and will proceed on the way of development, Insha-Allah.*"¹¹⁵

Nena Mia Laskar and Miadhan Mia Laskar were the first persons who contributed for the Madrassa. Thereafter, going around in as vast area as possible for making collections, become a regular activity of the functionaries of Dar-ul-Ulum. Hazi Akbar Ali used to collect in cash or in kind from local people for the Madrassa. Sometimes local people also offered goods to the madrassa and Hafiz Akbar Ali used to sell these goods in the market himself or with the help of students. Madrassa authority also made number of

¹¹⁰ Education –B, September, 1931, Nos. 436-441, State Archives Guwahati

¹¹¹ Ibid, Nos. 252-254

¹¹² Education- B, September, 1935, Nos. 921-923

¹¹³ Interview with Main Uddin, Banskandi, Member of Majlish-e-Sura, Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi, Banskandi Bazar, dated 18.09.2009.

¹¹⁴ Tayeeb Qasim, *Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi*, (Arabic), 2000, p.4

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p.5

small wooden boxes and kept them in certain public places of neighboring villages. The boxes were used to keep in locked position and local people used to donate in the box sometime for self satisfaction as it is ensured in Hadith that if people donate Rs.10, He will reward its ten-multiplication in the next life,¹¹⁶ i.e. .life after death and sometime for the fulfillment of particular ambition.

In several seasons of the year, Hafiz Akbar Ali, Maulana Hafij Ali and other ulemas along with students used to collect the seasonal goods from the family of neighbouring villages. Besides, the madrassa authority used to organize *waaz mehfil* annually, where ulemas used to give lectures on various relevant issues and on the importance of Islamic practices. In the *mehfil* certain ulemas approached the Muslim to donate for the madrassa, showings its rewards from God with reference of Koran and Hadith. In such '*mehfil*' people from neighboring areas used to assemble, many people donated on that occasion and most of the people promised a certain amount within a definite period.¹¹⁷

The Madrassa started with a few students of the locality. After few years of its foundation people from neighbouring areas also started taking admission to the madrassa. The strength of students increased in the madrassa. It became difficult for the students to attend madrassa regularly from his distant family in time. As there was no hostel in the Madrassa, the wealthy persons of the locality extended their helping hand. They took the responsibility of food and lodging of the students in their family. Generally one such family used to take one student's responsibility of food and lodging. The Students in exchange sometime used to impart religious teaching to the children of this family. This system is called '*jagir*'. The students sometime also used to give tuition to the children of other families for minimum fee and with that they maintained their personal expenditure.¹¹⁸ This '*jagir*' system and the method of collections for the madrassas were also in vogue in other Deobandi madrassas of the Surma-Barak Valley.

¹¹⁶ Aal-Hadith, "*Maanja aabil hasanati falahu aasruhu aamsaliha*".

¹¹⁷ Interview with Qari Rahmat Ali (64), Nagdirgram, Cachar, Assam. He was the former student and teacher of Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Main Uddin, Member of *Majlish-e-Sura*, Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi.

In the very next year of the foundation of the Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi another Deobandi madrassa was started at Umarganj under Sylhet sub-division named 'Imdad-ul-Ulum Madrassas, Umarganj in 1898 by Maulana Ibrahim Toshna, son of Shah Abdur Rahman Qadiri¹¹⁹ of Kanaighat, a Deobandi graduate. Like as Banskandi Madrassa, Imdad-ul-Ulum Madrassa was also patronized by Hajji Imdad Ullah Muhajire Makki and it was for this that the madrassas was named after the name of its patron.

Thus it is seen that the foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband brought a new era of Madrassa education. The spirit of the Deoband Movement soon spread in other regions of the continent and an informal system of network developed and within three decades following the foundation of Deoband Madrassa a good number of madrassas following its principles and ideologies were started. Surma-Barak Valley located in the Northeastern corner of the subcontinent also responded to the movement and numbers of such madrassas were established. However, in addition to the madrassas having Deobandi ideologies number of other madrassas were also established during this period.

Other Madrassas:

It has already mentioned that in *maqtab* and madrassas were the only source of education in the rural areas of Surma-Barak Valley. Very few numbers of Schools were established by the British Indian Government in Surma-Barak Valley. Although the Muslims were economically in better position but did not come forward to get school education¹²⁰ Guardians were also not interested for general education of their children and they were even was not willing to spend one anna per month for the education of their son.¹²¹ So, Muslim guardians preferred to send their sons to the religious educational institutions where education was free according to their religion both the sons and the parents would be benefited in the life after death in addition to the meeting the

¹¹⁹ Descendent of one of the companion of Sufi saint Shah Jalal.

¹²⁰ Habibullah Mazumder, p.41

¹²¹ Ibid

social requirements in this life. This urge led to the foundation of number of madrassas. Some time leaders of the community established madrassas for the education of his fellow neighbours under his private patronage. One such madrassa was established in 1866, 'Rabbania Madrassa' was established by the *Mirasdar* of Hasanpur estate Gulam Rabbani Choudhury of Mahakal, Karimganj. Though it was established with private patronage later on it became government aided madrassa. Madrassas other than Deobandi ideologies were independent in their course-curriculum and were selected by the authorities of the Madrassas. Similarly, Purahuriya Alia Madrassa was established in 1877 at the village Purahuria nearby Fokirabazar under Karimganj sub-division. It was founded by Maulana Firoz Ali, as Qaumi madrassa but later on it too became government aided madrassa with the name Purahuria Senior Madrassa.¹²² Jingabari Fazil Madrassa was established in 1874 at Jingabari of Sylhet by Maulana Abdur Rohim, Maulana Abdul Bari and other local people of the area. Originally it was established as High Madrassa on the bank of the river Surma but later with the coastal change of the river it was shifted to the present place nearby the Burhan Uddin Road. In its curriculum although major portion of subjects were based on Islamic theology, secular subjects were also included in the course from its very inception and so number of Hindu students also studied in the Madrassa.

In 1877, Borlekha Arabia Islamia Madrassa was established in Maulvi Bazar Subdivision of Sylhet whereas Gandhai Bazar Rofiul Islam Madrassa was established in Karimganj sub-division in 1890 and in Hailakandi sub-division, Algapur Gausia Ahmadia Islamia Madrassa was established in 1896 A.D. at the village Algapur. Madrassa is about 10km north-east of Hailakandi town, the district head quarter. Mubarak Ali and his brother had donated the land for the madrassa after being convinced by Maulana Sadar Ali, the founder of the madrassa.¹²³ The Madrassa was named as Gausia Ahmadia Islamia Madrassa. It is because the founder of the madrassa Maulana

¹²² Kamal Uddin Ahmed, *Karimganjer Itihas*, p.238

¹²³ Interview with Badrul Islam Barbhuiya aged about 55 years, of Algapur village, p.o. – Algapur of Hailakandi district, date of interview – 17.10.2011, place of interview – office of the madrassa.

Sadar Ali was the follower of the Abdul Kadir Gilani Gaus-e-Azam¹²⁴ of Bagdad. Following the title of his greatness madrassa was named as Gausia Ahmadia Islamia Madrassa.¹²⁵ Maulana Sadar Ali was the founder teacher of the madrassa and the other teachers rendered services during the colonial period were Maulana Formuj Ali, Maulana Haris Uddin, of Algapur, Maulana Abdul Wahid of Sonapur.

Thus in the second half of the 19th century, both Deobandi Madrassa and the Madrassas having independent character were established in Surma-Barak Valley. Most of the madrassas were small in size and the number of the students were also limited in 19th century, but there were madrassas like ‘Dar-ul-Hadith Ashraful Ulum Ratanpur’, Hailakandi, ‘Fulbari Aziria Alia Madrassa 1860’, Madinatul Ulum, Baghbari Alia Madrassa (1873) where good number of students were admitted. In the first half of the 20th century, a good number of Ulemas came out from these madrassas and other madrassas that were in small size in the last decade of the 19th century also became prominent. It was under this circumstances many new madrassas were established in the first half of the 20th century in Surma-Barak Valley.

Madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley from 1901 to 1947:

The seed that were sowed in 19th century started bearing fruits in the beginning of 20th century. During the period from 1901 to 1947, like as previous century both Deobandi and the independent Madrassas were established all over the Surma-Barak Valley region. During this period numbers of Muslim socio-political nationalized and region based organizations were formed of which some organizations were formed by the Ulemas themselves. Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan, Rector, Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband who took the charge in 1905, was a man of action. He laid stress on the formation of Madrassas to make the Muslim youths aware about Islamic teachings and these

¹²⁴ Abdul Kadir Gilani of Baghdad has been regarded as ‘Gaus-e-Azam’ or ‘Gausul Azam’ by his followers. He has been well known to the Muslim world as ‘Borpir-Dostogir’.

¹²⁵ Interview with Maulana Jalal Ahmed aged about 50 years, teacher of the madrassa, place of interview-madrassa office, dtd. 17.10.2011. Maulana Jalal Uddin was also the student of this madrassa.

institutions could become useful against the Britishers. He was the key person behind the formation of 'Samrat-ul-Taribat', 'Jamiat-ul-Ansar' etc.¹²⁶ Madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley too had their close connection with these organizations especially from 1920 to 1947 and the details of this would be discussed in the forth and fifth chapter of this thesis. It is mentioned that the madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley from 1901 to 1947 were not the isolated events or programmes but the continuation process of 19th century and the only difference is that in the first half of the 20th century more number of madrassas were established having Deobandi ideologies and of independent character.

In 1901, Jami-ul-Ulum Kamil Madrassa, Gaasbari was established at Gaasbari under Kanaighat Police Station of Sylhet following the ideologies and principles of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband. Madrassa was established with effort of Qari Mohammad Atahar Ali of Narayanpur and the first teacher of the madrassa was Maulana Jamal Uddin.¹²⁷ Hussain Ahmed Madani visited the madrassa number of times in pre-partition days. In 1903, three similar madrassas were established one in Barak Valley and two others in Surma Valley. Saidpur Sayedia Shamsia Alia Madrassa was established at Saidpur village near Jagannathpur police station under Sunamganj sub-division by Sayed Emdad Ullah.¹²⁸ Monomukh Madrassa was established at Nabiganj under Habiganj sub-division of broader Sylhet and Moinul Islam Nitainagar Madrassa was established under Hailakandi subdivision which was located about 4 k.m. east of Hailakandi town. Originally the madrassa was established on the land donated by Haji Mubeshwar Ali of Nitainagar in the year 1903 but due to the inconvenience of the communication the madrassa was shifted to the present location where one *bigha* of land was donated by Yusuf Ali, a neighbour of the madrassa. The land which was donated by Haji Mubeshwar Ali remained the property of the madrassa.¹²⁹ The Madrassa was founded under the initiative of Maulana Riasod Ali of Nitainagar, who after completion his studies from Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband came to his native place and started this madrassa. He rendered

¹²⁶ Farhat Tabassum, pp.101,118,119

¹²⁷ Maulana Sheikh Ta'jul Islam, *Chalaman Jalalabad: Islami Renaissance Ananyo Jaara*, Protiggan Sahitya Forum, Sylhet, 2004, p. 514

¹²⁸ Maulana Sheikh Ta'jul Islam, p.543

¹²⁹ Interview with Maulana Abdul Karim aged about 54 years, teacher of the madrassa, date of interview 18.10.2011, place of interview – office of the madrassa.

his service there till his death.¹³⁰ The other teachers of the madrassa during colonial period were Maulana Aktor Uddin of Nitainagar, Maulana Ishak Ali of Nitainagar, Maulana Abdur Razzak of Boalipar, Maulana Ishak Ali¹³¹ of Boalipar and Maulana Madaris Ali of Nitainagar. Maulana Abdul Latif¹³² of South Hailakandi who served in the madrassa for few years also contributed a lot for the development of the madrassa.

After five years of the foundation of Nitainagar madrassa another Deobandi Madrassas was established at Hailakandi Sub-division of Cachar district at Krishnapur Bazar, near present Lala town in 1908 with the name Mohammadpur Anuarul Ulum (Krishnapur) Madrassa. Madrassa was started in a nearby mosque. Madrassa is located at Krishnapur bazar but it is named as the Mohammapur Madrassa¹³³ because, the persons who donated the lands for the Krisnapur Bazar were the inhabitant of Mohammadpur village¹³⁴ and hence, madrassa was named after the name of the village of the donors. In April 3,1902 following persons of Mohammadpur village purchased one bigha eleven khatas and six chatak of land from the inhabitant of Krishnapur village and donated these lands for market.¹³⁵ Munshi Iliyas Ali, Maulana Irman Ali, Umed Ali, Abdul Khaliq, Abdus Sattar, Abdul Hasim, Maskandar Ali, Abdus Sattar, Abul Qasim Tapadar, Montaj Ali, Maulana Abdul Matin, Maulana Abdul Kadir, Ram Prashad Hazara, Haji Hamid Ali and Idris Ali. In 1907, they organized a meeting and on behalf of the all members present in the meeting Munshi Iliyas Ali, Maulana Irman Ali, Umed Ali and Abdul Khalik provided a portion of land for a public pond for people of market and a portion of land donated for the madrassa on which present madrassa was established 1908.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ Interview with Maulana Abdur Rahman, (63), Head Maulana of the madrassa, date of interview 18.10.2011, place of interview – office of the madrassa.

¹³¹ There were two teachers with same name Maulana Ishak Ali but one from Nitainagar and the other from Boalipar village.

¹³² Maulana Abdul Latif was closely associated with Abdul Matlib Mazumder and the freedom movement under the banner of Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind.

¹³³ Mohammadpur is a neighbouring village of Krishnapur.

¹³⁴ Interview with Maulana Motiur Rahman, Aged about 70 years, Head Maulana, Mohammadpur Anuarul Ulum Madrassa, Date of interview – 17.10.2011, Place of interview – His Residence, Mohammadpur, Hailakandi.

¹³⁵ Registered land documents of the Krisnapur bazaar and madrassa vide no. 1789, dated 3.8.1958, in the Hailakandi sub-registry office.

¹³⁶ Interview with Maulana Motiur Rahman, (70) Mohammadpur, Hailakandi.

After a gap of five years another Deobandi Madrassa, Matijuri Hamidia Madrassa was established at Matijuri in 1913 under Hailakandi sub-division on the bank of the river Katakhal. In the same year the first Government Madrassa of Assam, Sylhet Government Alia Madrassa (1913) was established at Sylhet.¹³⁷ It was established following the pattern of Calcutta Alia Madrassa. After the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1911 considering the demand of the Surma-Barak Valley Muslims, Sylhet Government Alia Madrassa was established.¹³⁸ Madrassa was established by the end of 19th century at Naiyorpul, Sylhet with the name of ‘Anjumane Islamia’ and with the initiative of some local educated Muslim leaders to preach the Islamic education.¹³⁹ Prior to 1897, it had a house of its own, built at a cost of about Rs. 4000/- which was demolished by the earthquake. The madrassa had then between 150-200 students and a large staff of well qualified Maulvis.¹⁴⁰ Under the initiative of Khan Bahadur Sayad Maulana Abdul Majid,¹⁴¹ President of Anjuman-e-Islamia, the Madrassa was converted in to Government Madrassa in 1913 and was shifted to Chouhatta, Sylhet.¹⁴² When the madrassa was converted in to Government Madrassa it had 82 students and three teachers namely Maulvi Hatim Ullah, Maulana Sultan Ali and Maulana Amzad Ali.¹⁴³

Mohammad Yeahyea¹⁴⁴ donated 7.17 acre land on which the Madrassa was established. Madrassa was started under the shade of tin and in subsequent years buildings were constructed for the Madrassa. Residential arrangements were made for the students of distant places and for the teachers too during colonial period.¹⁴⁵ During the

¹³⁷ Education- B, File No. E – 212 of March 1913

¹³⁸ File No. E-212 of 1913, Education –B, Progs. Of March 1913, Nos. – 42-53.

¹³⁹ Maulana Abdul Musabbir, “Sylhet Sarkari Alia Madrassar Atit o Bartaman: Ekti Parjaluchana”, in Mohammad Najrul Islam and others (Ed.), *Kamil Samaponi Smarak 2010, Smrithi*, Published by the students of the Madrassa, Jinda Bazar, Sylhet, 2010, p. 18

¹⁴⁰ Assam Secretariat Proceeding, Education – B, March 1913, Nos. 42-53

¹⁴¹ He was popularly known as Kaptan Mian.

¹⁴² Maulana Mohammad Abdul Musabbir, “Sylhet Sarkari Alia Madrassar Atit o Bartaman: Ekti Parjaluchana”, p.18

¹⁴³ Assam Secretariat Proceeding, Education – B, March 1913, Nos. 42-53

¹⁴⁴ He was popularly known with his nick name Jitu Mian.

¹⁴⁵ Maulana Mohammad Abdul Musabbir, “Sylhet Sarkari Alia Madrassar Atit o Bartaman: Ekti Parjaluchana”, p.19

Premiership of Gopinath Bordoloi a committee was constructed for the development of the Madrassa and the members of the committee were¹⁴⁶

1. Gopinath Bordoloi, Premier of Assam Provincial Government and President.
2. Khan Bahadur Mahmud Ali, Minister of Education.
3. Nawab Ali Haidar Khan, PWD Minister.
4. Shamsul Ulama Maulana Abu Nasar Mohammad Wahid, M.L.A. (former Education Minister).
5. Khan Bahadur Mohammad Mofijur Rahman, Chairman, Sylhet Local Board.
6. Maulana Habibur Rahman, Principal, Sylhet Government Aleya Madrassa.
7. Mohammad Abdulla B.L., Advocate, Judge Court, Sylhet.
8. Dewan Abdur Rohim Choudhury, M.L.C and others.

Sylhet Government Alia Madrassa started with *Ibtedayee* and Junior Section. *Ibtedayee* section consisted from class three to six and Junior Section from class seven to class ten. Curriculum consisted of *Quran, Hadith, Adhab, Fiqh, Balagat, Aqaid*, History, Urdu, Persian, English and Begali literature. After a few years changes were made in the curriculum and mathematics and science were included as elective subjects in the syllabus.¹⁴⁷ During the colonial period examination of the madrassa were conducted under Assam Educational Board and name of the examination were ‘Middle School Leaving Certificate and Scholarship Certificate’ and ‘Matriculation’. These two were the main examinations in two levels of schools. However, annual examinations of the madrassa were conducted in the madrassa itself.¹⁴⁸

The first Superintendent of the Madrassa was Maulana Sa’ad Uddin Abul Lais. In 1919 the senior section of the madrassa was started following the pattern of Calcutta (present Kolkata) Alia Madrassa and with this the post for Principal was created Maulana Abu Said Abdullah became the first Principal of the Madrassa. After a few years the post for the Vice-Principal was also created in the madrassa and all the appointment

¹⁴⁶ Sylhet Alia Madrassa Development File.

¹⁴⁷ Maulana Mohammad Abdul Musabbir, “Sylhet Sarkari Alia Madrassar Atit o Bartaman: Ekti Parjaluchana”, p. 21

¹⁴⁸ Ibid,

procedures were maintained as per the government norms. In 1937, Maulana Abu Nasar Wahid, the education minister of Assam extended the madrassa up to the *Kamil* level. After a few days Mufti Suhul Osmani of Darul Ulum Deobond was appointed as *Sheiku Hadith* and Dars-e-Hadith course was started in the madrassa.¹⁴⁹

The Non Co-operation Khilafat Movement brought a new era of Muslim political awareness. Muslim masses of Surma-Barak Valley also emotionally joined politics on the issue of Khilafat. During this period All India Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind was also formed by the prominent Ulemas of the country. All these development gave a new spirit to Muslims in general and Ulemas in particular. The programme of boycotting British goods, institutions etc. led people to search for an alternative system of education and that prompted the ulemas and Muslim leaders to launch madrassas. And it was for this a good number of madrassas specially Deobandi madrassas were established in Surma-Barak Valley from 1919 – 1923.

In 1919, three Deobandi Madrassas were established in Surma-Barak Valley one each in Sylhet, Karimganj and Hailakandi Sub-division. Jamia Tawakkulia Renga Madrassa was established at Sylhet. Bhitorgul Senior Madrassa was established at Karimganj and Qasimul Ulum Lala Madrassa was established at Lala. Bhitorgul Senior Madrassa was started as *Qaumi* madrassa but later on it became government aided madrassa. Jamia Tawakkulia Renga Madrassa was established at Mogla Bazar, about 13 km south of district Sylhet by Maulana Arkan Ali.¹⁵⁰ It was founded by Arkan Ali; later ran by his son Badrul Alam,¹⁵¹ a graduate of Darul Uloom Deoband and disciple of Hussain Ahmed Madani. The Jamia provided primary, secondary, as well as higher Islamic education. Like other Deobandi madrassas the developmental activities of the Madrassas were based on public donations and contributions and it maintained five funds. They were general fund, poor-orphan fund, building fund, books fund and scholarships fund. The general fund was used to pay the salary of teachers and other staff. The building fund was used to finance new constructions. The money from the poor-

¹⁴⁹ Proceeding Registry of the Syllhet Alia Madrassa.

¹⁵⁰ Maulana Sheikh Ta'jul Islam p.540

¹⁵¹ Popularly known as Sheikh-e-Renga and Rengar Sheiksaab.

orphan fund was used to pay for accommodation and treatment of poverty-stricken students. The book fund is to buy literature for the needy students and the scholarships fund is used to reward meritorious students. The Jamia provided the student with free boarding and accommodation, supply of water and electricity, and tuition-free teaching. Moreover, the institute supplied all the textbooks to the needy and poor students. Several hundred students studying here were regularly supplied with their timely food. In short, the Jamia provided the students with their basic necessities and took their full responsibility as well. For patronizing the poverty-stricken students and meeting their essential demands, the Madrassa spent sufficient money on the Poor Fund.¹⁵² In the same year Qasimul Ulum Lala Madrassa was also established (1919) which is located at the main town of Lala and about 18 km. far from Hailakandi town. When madrassa was established there was no town (present Lala town) not even a market. Market developed in parallel way along with the madrassa. There is a popular story behind the foundation of the madrassa and the beginning of Lala bazaar.¹⁵³

There was a market nearby the present Lala town called 'Shanibari Bazar'. One market day (Saturday) some people of present Lala bazar were quarreled with the people of Shanibari Bazar. Then they left Shanibari bazaar and organized a meeting where under the leadership of Haji Jama Mian Laskar they decided that as they were insulted in the market they will boycott this market. Members of sixteen families were present there and they decided to start another market to teach the authority of Shanibaribazar a lesson. Haji Jama Mian Laskar used to supply different materials to the Manager of Lalachora Tea Garden and hence had a close relation with this British Manager husband of whose younger sister was the Civil Sub Divisional Officer of Hailakandi. As Shanibari bazaar was very nearer to them so the Civil S.D.O. not permitted them to start a separate fresh market. Then with the recommendation of the Manager of Lala Chara Tea Gurden, Civil SDO advised them to start an institution so that he will be able to permit them to start a new market. Accordingly, people of this sixteen families of

¹⁵² Interview with Maulana Shamsul Islam Khalil (66), Principal, Jamia Tawakkulia Renga Madrassa, Mogla Bazar, Sylhet dated 28.12.2011

¹⁵³ Interview with Mr. Abdul Malik Mazumder, former Secretary, Managing Committee of the Madrassa, Aged about 45 years. He heard this story from the friend of his father Lt. Kalu Prasad Shukla of Shanibari Bazar (near Lala bazar), who was popularly known as Kaalu Thakur in his locality. Date of interview 16.10.2011, Place of interview – Qasimul Ulum Lala Madrassa, Hailakandi

neighbouring villages Uttar Jusnabad, Nijbarnapur, Jalalpur and Dhanipur together purchased twelve bighas of land and started Madrassa. Side by side they too started market in the same place. It is because of that present cattle market Lala Bazar is still on the land of the Qasimul Ulum Lala Madrassa.

Under the initiative of Haji Jama Mian Laskar, Qasimul Ulum Lala Madrassa was established on the lands donated by sixteen neighbouring families. For the smooth running and maintenance of the madrassa they then formed a Managing Committee among themselves and appointed ‘*Maulvis*’ for the madrassa.¹⁵⁴ Maulana Mohsin Ali of Nimai Chandpur, Hailakandi was appointed first as the Head Maulana of the Madrassa and then other teachers were also appointed.¹⁵⁵ Other well known teachers of the madrassa during colonial period were Maulana Askar Ali of Tikarbasti popularly known as Lalapuri and Maulana Makaddas Ali.

In 1920 during the high tide of the Khilafat Movement, two other madrassas were established in Hailakandi and Karimganj Sub-division one in each. Eidgah Eshhatul Islamia Madrassa was established at Singaria in Karimganj and Eshatul Ulum Hussainia Madrassa was established in the village Dholai of South Hailakandi located about 45km. far from the Hailakandi town. The Madrassa was established with the inspiration of *Sheikul Islam* Hussain Ahmed Madani of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband and so the madrassa was named after him. It was established by Maulana Abdus Suban of Dholai on eighteen khatas of land donated by Hussain Ahmed Mazumder of Dholai.¹⁵⁶ Maulana Abdus Suban after his *maqtab* education went to Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband for higher education. After completion of his higher education, *Sheikul Islam* Hussain Ahmed Madani advised him to start a madrassa at his own place. Accordingly he returned to his village and after

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Atiq Uddin Choudhury (50), present secretary of the Managing Committee of the Madrassa, Date of interview 16.10.2011, place of interview – Qasimul Ulum Lala Madrassa.

¹⁵⁵ Constitution of the madrassa.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Maulana Kabir Ahmed Mazumder aged about 50 years, teacher of the madrassa, date of interview – 25.09.2011, place of interview – office of the madrassa.

consultation with the local people established this Madrassa. Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani after coming to Sylhet in 1922 visited this madrassa.¹⁵⁷

In 1921 ‘Matiura Bazar Dar-ul-Ulum Hafizia Madrassa’ was established at Matiura, near Biani Bazar under Sylhet sub-division. Hafiz Mohammad Abdul Gofur of Matiura completed *hifz* of ‘Quran’ at Mecca¹⁵⁸ and after returning to his village he organized a meeting and shared his ambition for starting a *Hafizia* Madrassa. The members present in the meeting welcomed his views and extended their helping hand and with the collective effort ‘Matiura bazaar Dar-ul-Ulum Hafizia Madrassa’ was established on the land donated by Sheikh Mohammad of Minarai village. After a few days, when the number of students we increased another teacher Hafiz Chakawat Ali of Deulgram was appointed who served eleven years in the madrassa. Hussain Ahmed Madani during his stay at Sylhet visited this madrassa a number of times.¹⁵⁹ In 1922, ‘Qazir Bazar Alia Madrassa’ was established at Ratabari under Karimganj Sub-division following Deobandi ideologies and the very next year (1923) two similar madrassas Moinul Ulum Monachera Madrassa was established under Hailakandi Sub-division and Jamia Mohammadia Harirkhandi madrassa, located in the village Harirkhandi (Hadirkhandi) under Jakiganj police station of Sylhet district. It was established by Maulana Abdul Ali, *Imam* of the local mosque of the village Fordhana (presently known as Baharpur). Maulana Abdul Ali was originally from the Jalalpur village under Katighora police station of Cachar district. Madrassa was at first established temporarily in his own purchased land.¹⁶⁰ After a few months Akmal Ali Tapadar and Mohammad Reja Tapadar donated lands for the madrassa on which present madrassa is situated. Maulana Abdul Ali was the first *Muhtomim* of the madrassa. He was succeeded by

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Masman Ali Mazumder (70), neighbour of the madrassa, nephew of the land doner Hussain Ahmed Mazumder, date of interview 25.09.2011. place of interview – his residence, village – Dholai, P. O. Dholai, Katlichera, Hailakandi.

¹⁵⁸ It was for this Hafiz Abdul Gafur was popularly called ‘Makkhi Hafiz’.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Achchakib’, magazine of the madrassa published in January 2009, p.7

¹⁶⁰ Maulana Sheikh Ta’jul Islam, *Chalaman Jalalabad: Islami Renaissance Ananyo Jaara*, Protiggan Sahitya Forum, Sylhet, 2004, p.511-512

Maulana Abdur Rohim of Jokinganj and after his death in 1945 Maulana Abdul Goni of Mansurpur became the *Muhtomim* of the madrassa.¹⁶¹

After the withdrawal Non-Co-operation Khilafat Movement and abolition of the post of Khalifa, the spirit of the Deobandi Ulemas also got struck and in next five years there was hardly any Deobandi Madrassa in Surma-Barak Valley. However, in 1929, once again the spirit developed and number of madrassas were established both in Surma-Barak Valley. Jamia Islamia Arabia Darul Hadith Hasnabad madrassa located in the Hasnabad village of Chhatak sub-division in Sunamganj Sub-division. It was founded by Maulana Muzaffar Ali, who studied in Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband and an eminent person of the area named Arshad Ali in 1929 and was inaugurated by *Sheikul Islam* Hussain Ahmad Madani.¹⁶² Madrassa was established with the objectives “To create a group of Alim, Mufassir, Muhaddith, Hafiz, and Islamic thinkers to be followed by the footprints of the best great man of all ages and the last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad as well as his companions who will call our future generation to the rightful way of the *Deen* Islam and to be earned satisfaction of Allah as well as eternal success of the *Akherat*.”¹⁶³

In 1929, another Deobandi Madrassa ‘Bagha Gulapnagar Arabia Islamia Madrassa’ was established by a disciple of Hussain Ahmed Madani, Maulana Boshir Ahmed of Bagha under Gulapganj circle of Sylhet. Madrassa was patronized by Maulana Abdul Musabbir of Gohopur and Maulana Abbas Ali of Kauriya. Madrassa was established with the principles and ideologies of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband and with the objectives to impart Islamic education, preaching of Islam, provide service towards the Creators Creations and for protection of Islam.¹⁶⁴ In 1930, Dhaka Uttar Ranaping Arabia Hussainia Madrassa was established at Golapganj, Sylhet mainly with the effort of Maulana Riasad Ali and Maulana Sirajul Islam of Golapganj. The Madrassa was established mainly with the effort of Maulana Riasad Ali and was named after the name

¹⁶¹ Shamsuddin Mohammad: Jamia Mohammadia Harikhandir Othit o Bortoman, Aal Faruk, Madrasa Barshiki, Sylhet, 1999, p.35

¹⁶² Interview with Master Ashraf Ali (87), Hasnabad, Chhatak, Sunamganj, Bangladesh, dated 07-01-2012.

¹⁶³ Pamphlet published from the Madrassa.

¹⁶⁴ A souvenir published by the Madrassa authority in July 2008.

of Hussain Ahmad Madani.¹⁶⁵ Jamia Islamia Rajaganj Union Madrassa, Kanaighat, Sylhet which was established in 1932 following the Deobandi ideologies with the joint effort of Qari Abdul Hai and Hafiz Qari Abdul Mannan of Gazipur. Both of them were also the first teachers of the madrassa. Madrassa was established as ‘Arabia Islamia Rajaganj’ and later *Hadith* course were started and the madrassa was renamed as ‘*Jamia Islamia Rajaganj Union*’.

After a gap of five years ‘Al-Jami’at-ul-Islamia Dar-ul-Ulum, Maulavi Bazar’ was established following the ideologies and principles of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband. This Madrassa is located nearby Shah Mustafa Road, Maulavi Bazar. It was established with the collective efforts of Maulana Abdur Nur, Maulana Khalilur Rahman of Rajnagar and Maulana Abdur Razzak of Kamaganj. Mualana Abdur Nur became the first *Muhtamim* of the madrassa. And the very next year i.e. in 1938, two such madrassas were established in Karimganj and Hailakandi subdivision respectively. Both the madrassas started as Qaumi Madrassa following the ideologies and principles of Deoband Madrassa but after independence both the madrassas became government aided madrassas. Aal Jamiatul Arabiatul Islamia, Badarpur was established in 1938 at the village Deorail,¹⁶⁶ Badarpur under Karimganj sub-division of Sylhet. The Madrassa was established with the name of ‘Deorail Islamia Madrassa’, following the pattern and syllabus of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond as founder of the madrassa Maulana Yakub Ali was the student of Deobond Madrassa who after completion his *maqtab* education at Badarpur went Sylhet Aleya Madrassa and then to Dar-ul-Ulum Deobond for higher studies. It was due to his effort and initiative Deorail Title Madrassa was established with the name of ‘Deorail Islamia Madrassa’.¹⁶⁷ Maulana Atiqul Hoque of Berenga, Sylhet was the first Head Maulana of the madrassa.

¹⁶⁵ Maulana Sheikh Ta’jul Islam, p.539

¹⁶⁶ There is folk story behind the name of the village ‘Deorail’, Deorail is a combination of two words ‘Deo’r and ‘Ail’. ‘Deo’ according to the popular belief of rural masses as a kind of powerful devil and ‘ail’ is boundary of a particular area especially of land. Land of a particular person is demarcated with ‘ail’. The story is that once people of the locality had been suffering by the ‘deo’s of this side and then they went to the house of ‘*Pir*’, ‘*Pir Saheb*’ through his ‘mantra’ surrounded the place with ‘ail’ and after that the name of the place become Deorail. They made linkage of the story with Deobond. To them, in Deobond, similarly ‘Deo’ was surrounded closed in a particular area ‘bond’ and then the place become known as Deobond.

¹⁶⁷ Maulana Ashab Uddin article “*Aal Jamia Proshonge Kichu Kota*” in ‘Aal Misbah’, Souvenir of the madrassa, published during 2008-09, p.34

He was succeeded by Maulana Mushahid of Bayumpur, Sylhet. He was popularly known as *Bayumpuri* or *Pir Saheb* of Bayumpur. He remained the Head of the madrassa till the date of the partition of India in 1947. He was succeeded by the famous freedom fighter, political leader and *pir* Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury,¹⁶⁸ who was originally from Sylhet studied in Dar-ul-Ulum Deobond and was very close to *Sheikul Islam* Hussain Ahmed Madani. He too suffered from the worse affect of the partition and left his native place to remain with united India. He took the charge of the madrassa on October 01, 1947 and under his bold leadership it developed rapidly.¹⁶⁹ In 1948 it got the Provisional Recognition and in 1950 Permanent Recognition from the State Madrassa Education Board and become the government aided madrassa.¹⁷⁰ The name of the madrassa ‘Deorail Islamia Madrassa’ was changed and renamed as ‘Aal Jamiatul Arabiatul Islamia’ in January 19, 1970 with the foundation of new building.

In 1935, Beani Bazar Senior Kamil Madrassa was established at Beanibazar under Sylhet as *Qaumi* Madrassa with the effort of Maulana Siraj Uddin Ahmed of Borodesh village. After three years of its foundation it became government aided madrassa in 1838.¹⁷¹ Hailakandi Senior Madrassa was established in 1938 as *Qaumi* madrassa on the land donated by Irfan Ali Laskar with the objective to spread and propagate *dini* (Islamic education) education among the Muslim children. Sishali Saheb¹⁷² of Ujankufa village, Hailakandi founded the madrassa and he too was the first teacher of this madrassa. Other teachers of the madrassa in pre-independence days were Mahmudur Rahman of Fulbari, present Bangladesh, Maulana Sirajul Hoque, Maulana Irfan Ali and Maulana Mohibur Rahman. Maulana Mahmudur Rahman studied from the Sylhet Aleya Madrassa while Sishali Saheb and Maulana Sirajul Hoque Saheb studied in Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury was also the MLA of Assam Legislative Assembly. He formed the famous socio-religious-educational organization ‘*North Eastern Emarat-e-Sharia and Nadwatut Tameer*’

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Maulana Abdul Khaliq, aged 73 years, Retired Principal of the madrassa, date of interview 10,10,2010, place of interview – his residence, nearby the madrassa, Badarpur.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Maulana Yusuf Ali aged about 56 years, Principal, Aal Jamiatul Arabiatul Islamia, Badarpur, date of interview 10.10.2010, place of interview – office of the madrassa.

¹⁷¹ Calendar published by the Madrassa authority for 2011 A.D. with brief introduction of the Madrassa.

¹⁷² Original name has not been known but he was popularly known by this name.

¹⁷³ Interview with Maulana Mustafa Ahmed Choudhury, Superintendent, Hailakandi Senior Madrassa, aged about 55, He was also the student of the same madrassa. Date of Interview – Hailakandi Senior Madrassa, date of interview – 17.10.2011

‘Saidpur Dar-ul-Hadith Madrassa’ was established as *Hafjia* Madrassa in the family of Maulana Abdul Khaliq at the village Saidpur, under Jagannathpur police station of Sunamganj subdivision in 1940. Subsequently other courses were also started and madrassa took its present name. Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani instructed his disciples Maulana Abdul Khaliq and Maulana Takhlis Hussain to start a madrassa in their village. The latter was very much devoted to his *murshid* (spiritual teacher) and soon started a madrassa in the residence of Maulana Abdul Khaliq. It may be mentioned here that Hussain Ahmad Madani went twice to both of his disciples’ residence while he was in Sylhet. The first two student of the Madrassa were Hafiz Manjur Hoque and Hafiz Abu Sayid. The later was the son of the founder of the Madrassa Mualana Abdul Khaliq. Both of them took their first lesson from Hussain Ahmed Madani and after completing the course (*Hifj*) they took their last lesson again from Maulana Madani at the Naya Sadak Mosque of Sylhet.¹⁷⁴ After fifteen years of its establishment Madrassa due to the shortage of spaces shifted to its present place in the same village.

Bhanga Markajul Ulum Madrassa was established by a group of local people who assembled in a meeting at Sorpur village, where for the welfare of the society and community and to propagate the teaching of Prophet Mohammad, Hazi Tasabbur Ali of Sorpur, Hazi Yusuf Ali of Sorpur, Hazi Abdur Rahman of Kolakauri and a woman promised to donate land for the establishment of a Madrassa. Accordingly, they purchased two acres land from Isbar Sheikh of Sorpur and donated the same to the Madrassa. When madrassa was established in 1940 by Maulana Musabbir Ali of Kazirgram, Maulana Ahmed Hussain and Maulana Boshir Uddin, it was named as Islamia Madrassa and Maulana Moshaid Ali of Kankalash was selected as ‘*Mutawalli*’ of the madrassa. Maulana Sofiquel Hoque of Saatgori, Maulana Sikandar Ali of Sorpur and Maulana Abdul Gofur of Kolakauri were the founder teachers of the madrassa.¹⁷⁵ Madrassa like other Qaumi madrassa of the time were informally affiliated under Dar-ul-

¹⁷⁴ Maulana Sheikh Ta’jul Islam, p.503

¹⁷⁵ A manuscript written by Abul Kalam of village Jobainpur, Bhanga.

Ulum Deoband and Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani visited the madrassa number of times before and after independence of the country.

In 1941, Jamia Lutfa Anuarul Ulum Hamidnagar (Baruna) Madrassa was established at the village Baruna under Srimangal Police Station of Maulvi Bazar Sub-division. Madrassa was established by Maulana Lutfur Rahman, a Deobandi graduate who was inspired by his teacher *Sheikul Islam*, Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani to establish this madrassa. The Madrassa not only imparted education but also served as the center of *Tabligue* in its locality.¹⁷⁶ Similarly, in 1942 Qasimul Ulum Arabia Madrassa was established in the village Kanchanpur, under Hailakandi Sub-division under the patronage of Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani and with the initiative of Maulana Abdul Wahab Laskar and Haji Abdul Matlib Laskar, son of Kala Mia Laskar on the land donated by later¹⁷⁷. Haji Abdul Matlib Laskar donated nine *khatas* of land to the madrassa.¹⁷⁸ Madrassa was started as Hafijia madrassa later on other courses were also included in the curriculum. Madrassa began with two teachers and ten students. Maulana Abdul Wahab Laskar started the madrassa and after few days Lengra Moulabi¹⁷⁹ of Narayanpur also joined with him. Later, Maulana Tajamul Hussain of Kanchanpur, Maulana Abdul Gaffar Laskar, Maulana Ali Uddin of Narayanpur, Maulana Samsul Hoque of Nitainagar also joined the madrassa.¹⁸⁰

In 1944, two madrassas were established in Habiganj sub-division. Jamia Sadia Raidhar Madrassa was established with the objective to preach and propagate the Islamic education among the people and to prepare a class of ulema who will work for the betterment of the society. Following the pattern of Darul Ulum Deoband and syllabus of Dars-e-Nizami, madrassa began its mission. The first teacher of the Madrassa was

¹⁷⁶ Maulana Sheikh Ta'jul Islam, p.500

¹⁷⁷ Haji Abdul Matlib Laskar donated nine khatas of land to the madrassa.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Maulana Tajamul Hussain Laskar (86), Head Maulana of the Madrassa, place of interview- His Residence, Vill. Kanchanpur, Hailakandi, dated 16.09.2011. Maulana Tajamul Hussain Laskar is also associated (District Qazi) with the organization of '*Emarate Sharia and Nadwatut Tamir North East India*, formed by Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury of Badarpur.

¹⁷⁹ His original name has not been known and he was popularly known as Lengra Maulabi.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Maulana Tajamul Hussain Laskar (86), Head Maulana of the Madrassa.

Maulana Mufti Abdul Gafur and the first student was Maulana Mukhlisur Rahman.¹⁸¹ From Primary to Title all the classes and sections of Islamic education were available in the madrassa. It may be mention here that Maulana Asad Ullah, uncle of Maulana Lutfur Rahman prepared the ground for the establishment of the madrassa. It was Maulana Asad Ullah who used to organize *Khanka* (campaign) in the village time to time to aware the people about Islamic *shariya*. Jamia Islamia Arabia Imambari Madrassa, the other madrassa established in the same year played an important role in the spread of Islamic education in this region. Madrassa was established by a Deobandi graduate Maulana Firoz Mian Choudhury with the principles and ideologies of Deoband Madrassa on the land donated by Mofiz Uddin Choudhury.¹⁸²

The Deobandi-Barelwi conflict (on which focus would be made on the fourth chapter of this thesis) that was started in United Province had its impact on Surma-Barak Valley too. Although most of the madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley were based on the ideologies of Deoband School of Thought, some Madrassas were also established with the ideologies of Barelwi School of Thought. This School, however in its initial years were not much concentrated on the foundation of madrassa. Several attempts were made to start madrassas but these soon came under the influence of the Deobandis. Finally they succeeded in founding number of madrassas in Barelwi itself and in the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁸³ Barelwi ideologies also spread in Surma-Barak Valley but initially the ulemas who came under its influence were also not took initiative for the foundation of its ideological madrassa but the preached the ideology at individual level. However, some madrassas which were originally established with Deobandi or independent ideology later came under the banner of Barelwi ideology or the ‘Ahl-e-Sunnat wa’jamat’. July Majidia Islamia Madrassa which is located in the village July under Kanaighat Police Station of Sylhet, established in 1916 with Deobandi ideologies latter came under the influence of Barelwi ideologies. Madrassa was established on six *khata*’s of land donated by Sadir Mian of this village. After four years of its establishment a similar madrassa was established in 1920, Bade Deorail Fultoli Alia Madrassa at Jokiganj under Karimganj

¹⁸¹ Maulana Sheikh Ta’jul Islam, pp.501-502

¹⁸² Maulana Sheikh Ta’jul Islam, p. 538

¹⁸³ B. D. Metcalf, p.312

Sub-division by Maulana Fater Ali. It was started in mosque known as '*Monsurpur Jame Masjid*'. Later with the assistance of locality the Madrassa was established in its present location.¹⁸⁴ In 1932, Moinul Islam Madrassa, Mohanpur under Hailakandi Sub-division was established. The madrassa is said to have started with Barelwi ideology. Like many other madrassas Moinul Ulum Madrassa was also started in a mosque at Mohanpur Bazar which was started in 1923 on the land donated by Abdur Rahman Laskar and Haji Aftar Uddin. Along with this a managing committee was also formed under Abdur Rahman Laskar for maintenance of the mosque.¹⁸⁵ An inhabitant of Jaintiabasti had been temporarily stationed at Mohanpur who had a son named Mohammad Safar Ahmed. Mohammad Safar Ahmed, after completion his primary education, went to United Province for higher education. He admitted himself in the Mahmudia Madrassa of the Nawab of Satar, Nawab Mahmud Khan. After completion of his studies he returned to Mohanpur.¹⁸⁶ Maulana Mohammad Safar Ahmed collected some students from the village Mohanpur and started madrasas education first in the said mosque in 1832. Within a few months with the co-operation of the local people he made separate room just opposite of the mosque for the madrasas and shifted the place of madrasas from the mosque. The new madrassas was named as Moinul Islam Madrassa Mohanpur. Maulana Safar Ahmed named the name of madrassa as Mainul Islam Madrassa, after his teacher of Mahmudia Madrassa United Province Maulana Main Uddin Ahmed, who was head and '*Sheikul Hadith*' of that madrassa.¹⁸⁷

In 1921, Chhatak Jalalia Alim Madrassa was established at Chhatak under Sunamganj Sub-division as M. E. Madrassa under the private patronage of Hazi Fazal Uddin, a local wealthy person of Gauripur. Later on it became government aided madrassa. In 1940, Silchar Alia Madrassa was established with Barelwi ideology at Silchar. In recent years a good number of madrassas have been established on the Barelwi ideologies in Surma-Barak Valley but before 1947, only a few madrassas were there and the institutional hold of Barelwi ideologies was very limited. However, on the

¹⁸⁴ Maulana Sheikh Ta'jul Islam, pp.518-519

¹⁸⁵ Constitution of the Moinul Ulum Mohanpur Madrassa

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

issues of partition and anti-partition the Barelwi School and its wing ‘Ahl-e-Sunnat al Jamat’ took the side of the Muslim League and received support of the League supporters in Surma-Barak Valley.

From 1850 to 1947, a good number of Madrassas were established in the different Sub-division of Surma-Barak Valley. Till the middle of the 19th century *maqtab*s were the only institution for education and for the higher religious education Muslim youths used to go to the United Province and thus an informal network developed through these learners. In 1967, when Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband was established, it started a new era of traditional Islamic education, and it was through these learners that the tide of the Deoband Movement reached in Surma-Barak Valley. Gradually, through this network different madrassas were established in Surma-Barak Valley. In 1919-20, the Khilafat Non Co-operation Movement reawakened the Muslim masses of Surma-Barak Valley and frequent visits of *Sheikul Islam* Hussain Ahmed Madani at Sylhet further boosted up the process of establishing Islamic institutions in this region. However, a few madrassas based on Barelwi ideologies were also established in addition to the foundation of number of Government aided Madrassas. It may be mentioned here that in spite of the availability of all types of madrassas in Surma-Barak Valley, a good number of students, after completing their primary education used to go to Calcutta Alia Madrassa, Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband, Shaharanpur, Rampur, Barelwi and other Madrassas of United Province. Generally educated Muslim students also used to go to Aligarh Muslim University for their higher education and thus United Province became the center of Muslims’ education both Deobandi and Barelwi School of Thought evolved there under traditional system of education and modern education and through these United Province played central role in the Muslim socio-political mobilization which will be discussed in the fourth and fifth chapter of the present thesis.