

Chapter – IV
MADRASSA AND MUSLIMS SOCIO-POLITICAL
MOBILIZATION

Madrassas are the base of Indian Muslim Society as well as the main sources of education for a large number of children in the country. They operate within the norms and practices of a society, play certain social roles and interact with political institutions. Societal norms and practices along with various political forces, influence the orientation and functioning of these institutions.¹ In the context of India, Madrassas have been of great importance and values for the Muslim community, not only during the rule of the Muslims but also during British period as well as in secular and Independent India. Even at the primary level of education, madrassa introduced its students to an awareness about the outer world.² In every stage of life and in every field of life, the madrassas have played a vital role. Madrassas had been the centers that enjoyed heavy influence on every class of the society. They were not distanced from the society with regard to any matter, whether it was related to Muslim community in particular, or to the country in general. Poor parents who failed to provide adequately for the children at home became pleased with the madrassa authority as the children got food on time as well as read the course which was expected to not only reward them on the day of Final Judgment but also enrich their spiritual and moral personality. Parents also felt that their own status and prestige would get enriched in the society for being the father of ‘this’ ‘*Maulana Sahab*’.

The famous ‘*fatwa*’ of Shah Abdul Aziz, the illustrious son of Shah Waliullah Dihlawi and the rector of Rohimia Madraasa, Delhi, declaring India as ‘a ceased-to-be ‘Dar-ul-Islam (Land of Muslim)’ in 1803, was a land mark in the history of India in general and of the Muslims in particular. It made a ervent call to religiously conscientious Muslims to mobilize themselves, in the absence of any powerful Muslim warlord, under

¹ Ali Riaz, p.37

² Farish A. Noor, Y. Sikand, M. V. Bruinessen, p.17

popular leadership and rise in the defiance of the foreign power.³ W. W. Hunter in his *The Indian Musalmans* summarized this 'fatwa' in his own words,

“When Infidels get hold of a Musalman country...and it becomes impossible for the Musalmans of the country, and of the people of the neighbouring districts, to driven them away or to retain responsible hope of ever doing so; and the power of the infidels increases to such an extent that they can abolish or retain the ordinances of Islam according to their pleasure; and no one is strong enough to seize on the revenues of the country without the permission of the infidels; and the (Musalman) inhabitants do no longer live so secure as before; such a country is politically a Country of the Enemy (Dar-ul-Hurb)”⁴

In medieval India *Ulemas* enjoyed high privilege, position and patronage in the royal court and thus had great influence over politics. Socially too their high position had religious sanction, and thus they could play significant role in mobilizing the common Muslim masses. In 19th century, under the banner of Wahabi Movement and socio-religious reforms, madrassas and *Ulemas* played a vital role to free the country from the British dominion.⁵

Dar-ul-Ulum, Deobond ushered in a new era of Muslim mobilization. With the foundation of Deobond Madrassa, *madrassa* become an important agency of Muslim mobilization. The *Ulemas* of this Madrassa were not only the leaders of the community but were great patriots too. The *Madrassa* not only imparted religious education but also imparted lesson on nationalism and patriotism and remained anti-Colonial till the very last day of colonial rule. The Deobond movement and the Deobond Madrassa propagated its messages through-out the country and that mobilized the Muslim masses in general and Ulamas in particular and thus an unconventional network developed throughout the country in late 19th and in 20th century at the initiatives of the Deobandi madrassas and Deobandi *Ulemas*.

³ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.2

⁴ W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, p.34

⁵ Dr. Mohammad Sajjad, “Resisting Colonialism and Communalism Madrasas of Colonial Bihar”, in S.M.Azizuddin Husain, (ed.) *Madrassah Education in India*, Kanishka, New Delhi, 2005, p.171

From 1867 to 1947, the Deobandi *Ulemas* had never compromised with the British government and always held aloft the torch of freedom. Founders of the Deoband Madrassa not only participated enthusiastically in the 1857 revolt but also led the movements at various places. The Deobandi *Ulemas* opposed Sir Sayed Ahmed and his Aligarh School and were also vehement against his interpretation of Quran in modern light. Later they were the people who opposed the two-nation theory and creation of Pakistan. They strongly supported the Congress. Yoginder Sikand wrote:

“Historically too, madrassas have contributed to the national cause. Graduates from the madrassas as well as the founders of some of the leading Muslim seminaries in India played an important role in the struggle against the British, a fact that is conveniently ignored in India’s school history textbooks. Prominent *Ulema*-led uprisings against the British in the 1857 revolt, and, for decades after, the reformist ulama kept aloft the banner of defiance in the Pathan borderlands till they were forcibly put down by the British. Madrassa teachers and students, such as Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi and Maulana Barkatullah Khan Bhopali were among the first Indians to demand complete freedom for India, at a time when Hindu and Muslim communalist groups were supporting the British. It is a fact, lost to those in the Hindutva crusade as well as the larger populace, that most madrassas vehemently opposed the Muslim League and its two-nation theory, insisting on a united India where people of different faiths could live in harmony.”⁶

An interesting part of the history of India’s freedom movement was that the madrassa people who were considered poorly educated and less intelligent by one section of intelligentsia were thought to be always opposing every disastrous policy of British government, while those who were considered to be intelligent and well-educated were thought to be loyal to the Colonial Government. In this regard Manzoor Ahmed stated,

⁶ Yoginder Sikand, ‘The Indian State and the Madrassa’, Year 2001, No. 2 October, www.ercwilcom.net

“That a large number of patriots and leaders who fought for India’s independence came from these religious seminaries, while the modern universities produced many collaborators and officials to run the alien government. ... However, those who were termed as half-literate could see the true face of imperialism in the light provided by the Qur’an and Sunnah and confronted it with their entire mite. The contribution of the Indian Ulama to the Islamic awakening in other parts of the world has also been considerable and has been freely acknowledged by the scholars of the Muslim world.”⁷

The founders of the Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband represented the rebellious spirit. Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi succeeded Maulana Qasin Nanawtawi⁸ as the chief patron and spokesman of the Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband. Maulana Gangohi was a traditionalist through and through but in the field of politics he showed progressive tendencies and issued a *fatwa* declaring that in the worldly matters co-operation with the Hindus was permissible provided it did not violate any basic principle of Islam. The occasion for this *fatwa* arose with the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 which stood against the vigorous stand of Sir Sayad Ahmed Khan.⁹ This was a crucial point and it augmented the political conflict between the traditionalist Deoband and the modern Aligarh. Sir Sayad Ahmed’s “ardent and sustained pro-British policy” had convinced the Deoband leadership that in its approach to Indian politics it differed fundamentally from his counterpart at Aligarh. Sir Sayad Ahmed’s support and loyalty to the British on the issues of Egyptian Revolt of 1881 and the Turko-Greek War of 1897 shocked the Deobandi leaders. Deobandis still considered India as ‘Dar-ul-Hurb’, but Aligarh saw no sense in it. The gulf between the two Muslim institutions continued to exist and widen, and finally divided the Muslims of India in to two hostile blocks.¹⁰

⁷ Manzoor Ahmad, “Islamic Education: redefinition of aims and methodology”, Genuine Publications & Media, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 31,32

⁸ Qasim Nanatawai was died in April 15, 1880, his death felt a tragic loss of Muslim India, Ziya ul Hasan quoted, “He worked for the welfare of the Muslim community and it was due to his efforts that a very useful ‘madrasah’ for religious education was founded at Deoband....He endeavours also led to the establishment of a number of Muslim madrasahs at different places. He had no desire to become a ‘pir’ or ‘murshid’, but there were thousands of people in India, particularly in the north-west districts, who had faith in him and considered him their leader and guide....The madrasah at Deoband is a living monument of his services and it is incumbent on all to see that ‘madrasah’ continues and flourishes.”

⁹ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.43, Binayak Dutta, p.30

¹⁰ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.46

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who came in contact with Sir Sayad Ahmed Khan was highly impressed by his awareness of social problems but he severely opposed the Sir Sayad's loyalty towards the British.¹¹

Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (d.1905) was succeeded by Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan as the Head of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband. He was popularly known as the '*Sheik-ul-Hind*' (leader of Hindustan) and earned the title from the Central Khilafat Committee.¹² He was the student of the first batch of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband. He was a man of action and trained a number of great men in learning and was also active in the political and social life of India.

The Deobandi School of Thought from the last decades of the nineteenth century faced confrontation not only from the Aligarh School but also from the Barelwi School in socio-religious matters. Politically they were almost the reverse of the Aligarh School. The former was strongly against the British and the latter were strongly loyal to the British. However, both the groups's mission was same i.e. the welfare of the Indian Muslims. On the other hand, Deobandi's differences with the Barelwi's were on the basis of the interpretation and understanding of Islam.¹³ Although having their origin in nineteenth century, the Barelwi ideologies were institutionalized in the beginning of the twentieth century, and subsequently they also played an important role in mobilizing the Muslim masses through their networking madrassa.

The Barelwis *Ulemas* played an important role in mobilizing the masses. However, politically, they remained neutral till the last decade of India's independence, and mainly engaged in socio-religious matters. The Barelwi groups emerged as the reactionary or opponent group of Deobandi and the Ahl-i-Hadis group. What made them unique was that they used their position and their legal scholarship to justify the mediational, custom laden Islam, closely tied with the intercession of the *pirs* of the

¹¹ Farhat Tabassum, p. 165

¹² *Ibid*, p.98

¹³ The term 'Barelwi School' and the School of 'Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamat' synonymous as the ideologies of this school was originated by Imam Ahmed Reza Khan Qadiri who belonged to Barelwi, in Rohilkhand (western portion of present-day Uttar Pradesh).

shrine.¹⁴ The basic difference between the Deobandi's and the Barelwi's was over the issues of the personhood of Prophet Mohammad. What is interesting is that the *Ulemas* of Barelwi School of thought also observed the inward turn of the Muslim identity but for that they blamed the Reformist Muslims more than the colonial government. They wanted the traditional Islam rather than the Islam as it was idealized in texts or historical past, but Islam as it was evolved to the present. They were thus an oppositional group rather than reformer.¹⁵ Most of their activities and movements were motivated and targetted confrontation and refutation on the Deobandi stands. Their targets were mainly the other Muslims (Deobandi and Ahl-i-Hadis) rather than the non-Muslim groups.¹⁶ The central figure of the Barelwi School was Maulana Ahmed Reza Khan of Barelwi, who, by the end of the 19th century had formed a group with his students, disciples and associates, that held itself to be ardently true to Islam, and later identified itself as the *Ahl-i-Sunnat Wa Jama'at*.¹⁷ The members often called themselves as the '*Sunni*', and Arshad Alam, referring to the constitution (*Dastur-i-Amal*), stated that '*Sunni*' was one who followed the practices of Ala Hazrat¹⁸ and believed in every words written by Ala Hazrat.¹⁹ Besides, he had to struggle against the Deobandis, Ahl-i-Hadis and Shias etc.²⁰

Ahmed Reza Khan's spiritual teacher, Maulana Fazl-e-Rasul Badauni, was briefly involved in the Revolt of 1857. Many of his students were distinguished government servants, and he himself later on served as a government office superintendent.²¹ Ahmed Reza Khan emphasized the preeminent position of the Prophet, wrote sixteen books on his life and composed praises on him in Urdu verse. Ahmed Reza Khan believed that Prophet had '*Ilmu'l ghaib*', i.e. unique knowledge to the unknown. The Deobandi and the Ahl-i-Hadis, anxious to preserve God's uniqueness, had denied that the Prophet had this knowledge except in special instances when it was granted by God, they considered

¹⁴ B. D. Metcalf, p.296

¹⁵ *Ibid*,

¹⁶ *Ibid*,

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.297

¹⁸ Barelwi's considered Ahmad reza Khan as Ala Hazrat.

¹⁹ Arshad Alam, "Making Muslims: Identity and Differences in Indian Madrasas", in '*Madrasas in South Asia*' Ed. Jamal Malik, Routledge, London, 2008, p.47

²⁰ *Ibid*,

²¹ B.D.Metcalf, p.299

Prophet Mohammad as the model man, to be emulated but not to be venerated since according to them it constituted associating partners to Allah which is *shirk* (biggest sin) in Islam.²² The Barelwis, believed that the Prophet had full knowledge of spiritual matters, '*haqiqat-i-ruh*'.²³ The prime concern of *Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamat* was to fight against the reformism of the Deoband, Nadwa, Ahl-i-Hadis and the Aligarh School which they considered as an assault on their version of Islam.²⁴

Ahmed Reza Khan showed his respect for the Prophet in a number of ways. He gave much importance to the celebration of '*milad*'²⁵ especially the moments of '*qiyam*', i.e. the period of standing, when it was believed that the Prophet was present.²⁶ The Deobandis' opposed this practice of *qiyam* as used in *maulud*. Besides Ahmed Reza justified and approved many practices such as '*Sama*',²⁷ '*Urs*'²⁸ which were declared by the Deobandis as un-Islamic. He issued '*fatwas*' against his opponents, published letters, engaged in debates and sent his students and associates to participate in debates as well. His interpretation of Islam was also propagated in the '*Dabdaba-yi-Sikandari*', a news paper published from Rampur.²⁹ The difference of opinion turned into a bitter fight in the early twentieth centuries, when Deobandis and Barelvis engaged in a '*fatwa war*'. In 1906, Ahmed Reza issued a fatwa accusing leading figures of Deoband-including the founder of Deoband Madrassa, Rashid Ahmed Gangohi, Maulana Qasim Nanatawi and Ashraf Ali Tanwi as being the leaders of the *kafirs* (non-believer). The Deobandis countered Ahmed Reza's *fatwa* with one of their own testimonies that the Deobandis were the only Hanafi sunnis. Barelwis' vehement opposition to Deobandis and other

²² Arshad Alam, "Making Muslims: Identity and Differences in Indian Madrasas", in '*Madrasas in South Asia*' pp.46-47

²³ B.D.Metcalf, p.301, P. Hardy, pp.170-171

²⁴ Irfan Ahmed, 'Power, Purity and the Vanguard: Educational Ideology of the Jama'at -i-Islami of India', in "*Madrasas in South Asia*", Edited by Jamal Malik, Routledge, London, 2008, p.160

²⁵ Celebration of Prophet's birth.

²⁶ B. D. Metcalf, p.301

²⁷ Whether saint after death could listen believers prayers, opposing the Deobandis view he held that they not only hear but their charismatic power (karamat) continued after death as they had in life.

²⁸ Observation of annual sermon on a particular date in a year over the death of a sufi saint or *pir* on his tomb.

²⁹ Metcalf.p.308

contemporary reformists led Barbara D. Metcalf to conclude that the Barelvis were “an oppositional group as much as they were reformers.”³⁰

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there existed a ‘Cold War’ or ‘Fatwa War’ between the Barelwis and the Deobandis. The objective of its madrassas in colonial and even in post colonial India was to fight against the impurity of its rival sects. Through their network of madrassas, these differences were transmitted to the students. This had its impact in Surma-Barak Valley, and that hampered in mobilizing the Muslim masses for participation in the freedom movement. It may be mentioned here that till the late 19th century there did not seem to have been networks of schools of the Barelwis like those of the Deobandis. In the beginning, Ahmed Reza Khan seemed to have served only as a focus for the loyalty of religious leaders and followers, and little stress had been out on the establishment of madrassas.³¹

The partition of Bengal in 1905 created a great hope in the minds of the people of Eastern Bengal especially the Muslims, but the annulment of the Partition in 1911 after having flared up the flames of political movement, came as a rude shock to the Muslims. They felt betrayed. They felt that Hindus had forced the government to abolish the partition and led the Muslim to think that without organization, sufferings and sacrifice nothing could be achieved from the government. The partition of Bengal and subsequent anti-partition movement made the Muslims conscious of their importance in socio-political and economic field of Bengal and Assam. Consequently they began to organize themselves and started number of organizations. In 1906, a Muslim political organization, ‘All India Muslim League’ was formed. Regarding the foundation of Muslim League Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi quoted,

“Much has been written for and against the Simla Deputation (1906) led by the Agha Khan and the establishment of the Muslim League the same year at Dacca. There is no doubt that British engineered the Deputation was reactionary in nature. The address presented by the Agha Khan to the Viceroy was signed by nobles,

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.296

³¹ *Ibid*, p.312

ministers of various states, great landowners, lawyers, merchants and ... many others of His Majesty's Mohammadan subjects."³²

The All India Muslim League founded in the wake of this deputation represented a negative reaction to the aspirations of the Hindu revolutionaries and reactionaries. In the very beginning of the 19th century the Hindi-Urdu language debate emerged as an important issue of contention. There was a controversy as to which language should be the official vernacular language of United Province. The Colonial Government's stand led to discontentment among the Muslims and the 1911 decision of annulment of partition shocked the Muslims like never before. It even affected the Aligarh Schools who had been the undisputed supporter of the British from the very beginning. A new spirit started evoking among the younger generations of Aligarh School. Slowly and gradually they awoke to the realization that the British were cunning imperialists and that all was not good in their pro-British policy. They realized the necessity of relying upon one's own spiritual and moral resources. The man who was largely responsible for the formation of this attitude was Maulana Shibli Numani. He came to Aligarh, stayed there for sixteen years and delivered lectures in Arabic and Persian. He exerted massive influence over his students.³³ He was never actively involved in politics and never joined any political party directly. However, he worked with Sir Sayad Ahmed for sixteen years, ultimately, he was not happy with the religious and political views of Sir Sayad Ahmed Khan. He was critical of the Muslim League politics, and wrote about the same in the 'Muslim Gazette' published from Lucknow by Maulana Wahiuddin Salim in 1912 remarking,

"A tree is judged by the fruit it gives. If our politics had been serious politics they would have evoked a zest for struggle and readiness to suffer and sacrifice for an ideal."³⁴

³² Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, pp.48-49

³³ *Ibid*, pp.47-49

³⁴ *Ibid* p.50

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and his '*Al-Hilal*', were instrumental to a great extent in mobilizing the Muslim intelligentsia. Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi quoted, it was Azad who, "spoke in a new language" different in thought, approach and even its texture. His "style was tense and virile....He used new phrases for new ideas."³⁵ Azad had joined the Muslim League at its first session in 1906, but later on had become disillusioned and came under the influence of Maulana Shibli Numani through his association with Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and its organ '*An-Nadwah*'. The writings of Azad exerted tremendous influence not only among the people of young generation but the people of older generation as well. People openly approved his ideas, and *Sheikhul Hind* Maulana Mahmudul Hassan is reported to have said, "We were sleeping and Azad has roused us from slumber."³⁶

Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband, from the very beginning of its inception had remained active in generating political awareness, and now under the able leadership of Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan, the institution placed itself at the forefront of socio-political movements. Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan, after five years of his appointment in 'Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband' established an organization called *Samaratut Tarabiyat* (Fruits of Training) in 1878. In order to escape the eyes of the British intelligence, its activities were conducted in a very confidential manner.³⁷ This organization was later renamed as '*Jamiat-ul-Ansar*' (1909), and it prepared the ground for *Reshmi Rumal Tahrik* (Silky Handkerchief Movement) which was purely an *Ulema*-based movement.³⁸ Thus, the Deobandi *Ulemas* can be seen to have launched a movement for a free India before the emergence of Gandhi as a populist leader and of the Congress as a mass organization. Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan, deputed one of his most trusted students, Maulana 'Obaidullah Sindhi (1872-1944)³⁹, to lead it *Jami'at ul-Ansar*.⁴⁰ *Sheik-ul-Hind* was convinced of the necessity of bridging the gulf that existed between Aligarh and Deoband and wished to see the '*ulama*' and the western educated Muslim intelligentsia on the

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.52

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ Maulana Syed Mohammad Miyan, p.238

³⁸ Ali Riaz, p.74

³⁹ Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi was a Sikh convert to Islam

⁴⁰ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.56,

same platform. His attitude towards the latter changed as the latter's loyalty to the colonial government reduced to a large extent after the annulment of the partition of Bengal. However, *Sheikul Hind's* also went forward and made a liaison with the Hindu revolutionaries.⁴¹ In order to popularize the programme '*Jam'at ul-Ansar*' and to avoid the watchful vigilance of the government, *Sheikul Hind* restrained from convening a conference on political level and organized a '*Jalsha-e-Dasterbandi*' which was attended by more than thirty thousand Muslims holding different shades of opinion. The *Jalsha* was a great success and for the first time an Aligarh delegation was led by Sahibzadah Aftab Ahmed Khan, son of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who put forward a proposal for exchange of students between Deoband and Aligarh. It was a momentous event but unfortunately, the proposal did not materialize. Deobandis found the first batch that consisted of two Aligarh students who came to Deoband to study Islam, was nothing but a secret agent working for the British Government.⁴² In 1915, Mehmood-ul-Hasan sent Sindhi to Afghanistan for setting up a provisional government of free India and himself went to Mecca to make an ally with Ottoman Empire. However, the Arab government who was an alliance of the British betrayed him and arrested him along with some of his associates and imprisoned him at Malta for three years and two months.⁴³

Shortly after the end of the First World War, the Khilafat movement was launched in India on the issue of Turkish Khalifa, which provided a new lease of life to the *Ulema*, who had, by this time, been increasingly marginalized by western-educated Muslims as leaders of the community. The Khilafat question brought the *Ulemas* of all shades of opinion on a common platform and for the first time they felt the need of organizing themselves in order to give lead to the Muslims in religious and political matters. This led to the foundation of the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* (Association of Religious Scholars of India) on June 23, 1919. The organization was formed mainly with the initiative of the *Ulemas* of Deoband.⁴⁴ The Deoband Madrassa was also instrumental in the funding of the *Jamiat-i-Khilafat-i-Hind* (All India Khilafat Conference). These two were very active political

⁴¹ *Ibid*,

⁴² *Ibid*, p.56

⁴³ Mulana Syed Mohammad Miyan, *Asiran-i-Malta*, p.51

⁴⁴ Francis Robinson, *Seperatism among Indian Muslims*, p.135

organizations.⁴⁵ The *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* was organized with the exclusive purpose of safeguarding the 'Sharia' and giving the Muslim community religious and political guidance according to Islamic principles and commandments. The aims and objectives as laid down in its constitution were:⁴⁶

1. To guide the followers of Islam in their political and non-political matters from religious point of view.
2. To defend on *sharia* grounds, Islam, centres of Islam, Islamic rituals and customs and Islamic nationalism against all odds injurious to them.⁴⁷
3. To achieve and protect the general religious and national rights of the Muslims.
4. To organize the *Ulemas* on a common platform.
5. To organize the Muslim community and launch a programme for its moral and social reform.
6. To establish good and friendly relations with the non-Muslims of the country to the extent permitted by the Islamic *Shariya*.
7. To fight for the freedom of the country and religion according to the *Shariya* objectives.
8. To establish *Mahakim-e-Shariya* (Religious Courts) to meet the religious needs of the community.
9. To propagate Islam, by way of missionary activities in India and foreign lands.
10. To maintain and strengthen the bond of unity and fraternal relations (as ordained by Islam) with the Muslim of other countries.

⁴⁵ Ali Riaz, p.74

⁴⁶ Sayed Mohammad Mian, "*Jamiat-ul-Ulama Kiya Hay*", Part-I, Publication Division, Jamiat *Ulema-e-Hind*, Delhi p.9-10

⁴⁷ In 1939, this objective was amended along with objectives no.7, 8 and 9, in view of the changing situation at home and abroad. The amended provisions were:

2) To protect Islam, centres of Islam, Islamic rights and usages and to defend Islamic nationalism against all odds injuries to it.

7) Complete independence for the nation and the country according to *Shariya* objectives.

8) To organize the 'Millat-e-Islamiya' in to a '*Shariya*' body and establish *Mahakim-i-Shariya*.

9) To work for the religious, educational, moral, social and economic reform of the Muslims and to patronage Islam, by way of missionary activities, in India to their best ability.

The aforesaid aims and objectives of the Jamiat, on a deep analysis, reveal its dual loyalty towards Islamic countries and to Indian nationalism. Freeing country from the British regime was a prime mission to be accomplished and for that the Muslims were expected to fight for the freedom of their land with the same zeal as they would have fought for their religion. The *Ulemas* were in favour of unconditional co-operation with the Congress so far as the issue of country's freedom struggle was concerned. The *Ulemas* claimed that once the British regime was dissolved, the Hindus would come in to terms with the Muslims who formed a strong minority. They said that the Muslims would not be deprived of their legitimate rights. According to them the bitter feeling of communalism was but a creation of the Colonial government for creating a sort of fear complex in the minds of the Muslims. They asserted that communalism was at the base of all the ills in Indian politics and therefore, it must come to an end. *Sheik-ul-Hind* Maulana Mehmud-ul-Hasan, while delivering his presidential address at the Second annual session of Jamiat *Ulema-e-Hind*, urged upon the Hindu and the Muslim leaders to pay due respects to the legitimate rights of each community. He is reported to have said:

“There is no doubt that Allah has been compassionate enough to you in that. He has induced a spirit of co-operation in the hearts of your fellow countrymen who form an overwhelming majority, to help you in the achievement of your noble cause. I regard this unity and co-operation is very useful....For I know that any other situation will be extremely harmful to the cause of independence and the British bureaucracy will be more ruthless in perpetuating its iron hold on the Indian soil; and if there is any dim imprint of Islamic hegemony left in this land it will be erased for ever....Today I am not addressing to the masses. My addresses are the leaders of both communities and I ask them not to be deceived by the number of hands raised in support of the resolutions of the Hindus and the Muslims and understand their prejudiced rivalries in government offices.”⁴⁸

In course of the Non-co-operation Khilafat Movement, the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* had issued a *fatwa* which was signed by 925 eminent Muslim scholars. This sanctioned the programme of non-violent non-cooperation movement. Many of the *Ulemas* were

⁴⁸ Hussain Ahmed Madani, *Naqsh-i-Hayat*, Vol. II, Deoband, 1954, pp.260-61

lodged in the jails. The reaction evoked was so strong that a large number of Muslims took to ‘Hijrat’ and suffered in it.⁴⁹ Around this time, Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan was brought to Bombay on June 08, 1920 from Malta jail and was set free with the specific instruction that he would remain aloof from politics. The Khilafat Committee accorded him a hearty reception, and awarded him with the title of ‘*Sheikh-ul-Hind*’ in recognition and appreciation of his service to the cause of the country’s freedom. Gandhiji came down all the way from Ahmedabad, met and briefed him about the political situation at home. After a few days on July 15, 1920, he issued a *fatwa* giving the religious sanction to the non-cooperation movement. The *fatwa* was seconded by as many as 484 *Ulemas*.⁵⁰ The *Fatwa* sparked off bitter anger and hatred against the British. Fervent appeals were made to the parents for not sending their children to the Government institutions. The students of progressive Aligarh School boycotted the Aligarh Muslim Univeristy and decided to establish a new university, ‘Muslim National University’ which later on came to be renamed as Jamia Milia Islamia and shifted to Delhi. They organized a conference and *Sheik-u-l Hind* was requested to preside over its session on October 29, 1920. He had been suffering from chronic tuberculosis and his health had deteriorated so much that he was even unable to stretch himself.⁵¹ He was taken to Deoband railway station in a *Palki* (palanquin). He reached the conference venue but could not address the gathering. So, his Presidential address was read out by Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Osmani. In his address he stated,

“I decided to accept your invitation even in such a weak health, because I am hopeful to get back my lost hope here. There are many pious people around, but when they are told to rise up and save their society from infidels, they are gripped by fear, not of Allah.....When I observed that my sympathizers are more in schools and colleges than in madrassas and khankahs, some of my associates and I took a step towards Aligarh. And as such, we brought together the two historic places – Deoband and Aligarh.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.63-64

⁵⁰ Farhat Tabassum, p.3, Maulana Syed Mohammad Miyan, *Asirane Malta*, p.52

⁵¹ Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan’s attendants wanted to stop him from going to Aligarh but he said, “*If my presidency hurts the British, I will definitely attend the conference.*”

⁵² Farhat Tabassum, p. 116-117

Mehmood-ul-Hasan, in spite of his serious illness toured the United Provinces and requested the Muslim to follow and work under the Khilafat Congress leaders. He impressed upon them to work for the success of the Non-cooperation movement. He appreciated the Hindus for their support and active participation in the Khilafat Movement and in his Presidential address at the Second Session of the Jamiat *Ulema-e-Hind*, he greatly stressed upon maintaining the unity, integrity, love and affection between both the communities, as to him, success of a movement depended on unity and mutual co-operation.⁵³ Maulana Mehmood-ul-Hasan died on November 20, 1920, just one week after the second session of the Jamiat *Ulema-e-Hind*.⁵⁴

With the withdrawal of the Non-co-operation and the Khilafat movements, the artificial and short lived unity between the Hindus and the Muslims and within the Muslim community between the *Ulemas* and the western educated intelligentsia started showing its inherent weakness and in course of time it completely disappeared. Even the *Ulema* of different schools, in most cases, said good bye to each other and parted to take their own way.⁵⁵ It may be mentioned here that the Barelwi or the *Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamat* had little concern about the state. Unlike Deobandi's or the Ahl-i-Hadis, in the sphere of national politics and political movement, the Barelwis mostly took safe part and acted quite conservatively. They always kept themselves away from mass movements such as the Non-co-Operation Movement and Khilafat Movement of the 1920s. Ahmed Reza Khan, in his final years, virtually opposed the Khilafat Movement and the Non-co-operation of Gandhi and the Congress, and in this crux he remained loyal to the British.⁵⁶ The positions of Barelvis and the Deobandis remained divergent and oppositional to each other in later years as well.⁵⁷

The withdrawal of the Non Co-operation Movement was followed by the '*Suddhi*' and '*Sanghatan*' movement and the Hindu-Muslim riots in Multan and other places. The

⁵³ Farhat Tabassum, p.118

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

⁵⁵ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.67-68

⁵⁶ B.D.Metcalf, p.313, Irfan Ahmed, 'Power, Purity and the Vanguard: Educational Ideology of the Jama'at -i-Islami of India', in *Madrasas in South Asia*, Ed. Jamal Malik, Routledge, London, 2008, p. 160

⁵⁷ Ali Riaz, , p.76

'*Suddhi*' movement was started by Swami Shraddhanand, an Arya Samaj leader, to bring the non-Hindus within the fold Hinduism. The '*Sangatan*' movement was started by Madan Mohan Malavya, the founder of the Benaras Hindu University. It aimed at organizing the Hindus for social reforms and for the purpose of maintaining a sort of solidarity in moments of need and emergency. As a reaction to these Hindu movements, the Muslims under the guidance of the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Hind* started a programme of '*Tabligh*' and '*Tanzim*'. These two words correspond, in meaning, to the two Hindi words, '*Suddhi*' and '*Sanghatan*'. The Jamiat succeeded in meeting the challenge of the Hindu zealots.⁵⁸ All these aggravated the situation and the happy days of communal harmony were over. Attempts were made to ward off the tide of communalism but the absence of a common secular national outlook proved these attempts ineffectual.

The *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* despite its co-operation with the Indian National Congress, had never lost its identity. The Muslim League, in the twenties was still an exclusive organization representing the interests of the Muslim middle class, and did not have any support of the Muslim masses. The Jamiat and the League did not trust each other's leadership. The *Ulema* were not prepared to follow the western-oriented Muslim intelligentsia whom they suspected to be the representatives of a different culture.⁵⁹ The western educated intelligentsia, particularly the League leadership on the other hand were not in a position of giving a correct lead in politics to the Muslims. The plea was that *Ulema*, because of their exclusively traditional education and complete ignorance of the complexities of modern life, did not understand the nature of politics as such in the twentieth century. Their sphere of activity was religion and to that they were expected to confine themselves. Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi quoted from the presidential address of Maulana Shah Moinuddin Ajmeri in the 9th session of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* in 1930, and declared:

“Our greatest enemy is Great Britain who, having India and her vast resources under her tyrannical occupation is the main cause for our degeneration and destruction in India and for the untold misery and ruin in Islamic countries outside

⁵⁸ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi quoted in his p.72-73

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.75-76

India. It is crystal clear that we will remain subjugated and down trodden as long as India is under the British occupation. This is why the Indian Muslims have only one object regarding the independence of India and that is that India must win complete freedom at all costs.”⁶⁰

In 1936, a convention was organized by the Delhi Branch of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* where Mohammad Ali Jinnah was invited to speak for the broader interest of the Muslims of the country. Jinnah accordingly participated, and the convention led to the signing of an agreement between *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* and the Muslim League. Both the groups unanimously decided to form a Joint Muslim Parliamentary Board with the name ‘Muslim League Parliamentary Board’ for contesting the election. Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani gave his approval to the constitution and thus the election campaign got enthusiastically launched.⁶¹ Maulana Madani delivered speeches in different parts of the country. Under the influence of his speeches the Muslim League acquired recognition in all those regions where it was a non-entity. Maulana Madani made fervent appeals to his followers, students and the members of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*, inciting them to support the Muslim League Parliamentary Board Members.⁶² However, this artificial bondage did not last long and soon Mr. Jinnah served ties with *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*. Scholars have opined that perhaps Jinnah was not happy with the *Jamiat*’s relations with the Congress.⁶³ *Jamiat* leaders realized of late that Jinnah’s pact was just for the interest of Muslim League and not for the broader interest of the Muslims. They realized that Jinnah had exploited the good will of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* and by taking advantage of the pact had become all the more powerful.⁶⁴

It has already been mentioned that the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* stood for unconditional co-operation with the Indian National Congress – a position at which the Muslim League, more concerned with the championing of the cause of the rights of the Muslim community than the freedom of the country at first, could not support. They

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.72

⁶¹ Farhat Tabassum, p.151

⁶² *Ibid*, p.151

⁶³ Maulana Syed Mohammad Miyan, *Asiran-i-Malta*, p.171

⁶⁴ Farhat Tabassum, p.152

dubbed the Jamiat as traitor and the camp follower of the Congress. There was always a state of suspicion and distrust that governed their relations. This situation continued till 1940 when the Lahore Resolution was passed by the League and since then the two principal Muslim organization never agreed on anything.⁶⁵ Mr. Jinnah is reported to have said at Aligarh in 1937:

“What the League has done is to set free from the reactionary elements of Muslim and to create the opinion that those who play their selfish game are traitors. It has certainly freed you from that undesirable element of Maulvis and Maulanas. I am not speaking of Maulvis as a whole. There are some of them who are patriotic and sincere as any other; but there is a section of them which is undesirable.”⁶⁶

The ideological differences that were found in North India had its direct effects in Eastern India including Surma-Barak Valley. Here too, Deobandi *Ulemas* and their followers often confronted with Barelvi *Ulemas* and their followers. This had its impact on the common masses too and that was reflected in a poem composed by a rural poet Aziz Uddin of Sylhet,

*“Fasad Badilore, badilo janjal.....
Ghore ghore Alim, Fazil hoila bohutor
Shotashoti fatwa dewa hoilo bistor.....
Protomote shorar dai, dui guru hoila
Jaari maarsi Fateha loiya koto kando koila.
Ei fasad sesh na hoite Moulud aashilo
Ihateo Alimgon dui guru hoilo.
'Qiyam' kora loiya hoilo koto ghondogul
Jaiz nohe, keho bolen Sunnate Rasul.....”*

(English translation)

Quarrels aggravated, problems aggravated,
Peoples are growing in houses with the ‘Alim’
and ‘Fazil’ degree. Hundreds of *fatwas* were
issued from either ends, people got scattered,
two groups got formed. So much talks
emerged over the ‘Fateha’. One problem ended
and the other started over the issue of ‘Moulud’
(also called *Milad*). Here too *Ulemas* scattered
scattered in to two groups. Lots of problems
the ‘Qiyam’. One group said it not
permissible while the other group said it
was practiced at the time of Prophet.)

⁶⁵ Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi. P.82

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.79

The contemporary events and issues specially in Surma-Barak Valley clearly depict that the main targets of Barelvi *Ulemas* or followers were not the Hindus but their co-religionist the Muslim who were under the banner of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*. Although, some of the Deobandi *Ulemas* like Ashraf Ali Tanwi, Shabbir Ahmed Osmani were involved in the formation of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* at the All India Muslim *Ulemas* Convention held at Calcutta, the *Ulemas* of Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Punjab affiliated under Barelwi ideology were instrumental behind the formation of this new organization to weaken the influence of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* on which discussion will be made on the fifth chapter of this thesis.

The *Ulemas* of the madrassas have always a great importance in the Muslim community. According to the Holy Quran, the ones who possessed knowledge came third in the scale of reverence after God and his angels.⁶⁷ Hence they are regarded as the heir, the last heirs of Prophet Mohammad⁶⁸ and are entrusted with the responsibility of guiding the people spiritually and ethically right from the cradle to the graveyard.⁶⁹ The necessity of good *Ulemas* as well as madrassas and their role in the socio-political life of the Muslim has always remained undeniable. The Muslim society of Bengal in general and Surma-Barak Valley in particular were developed centering round mosques. Every Muslim family in one or the other way was intimately connected with the mosque. In Muslim society mosques play multiple roles combining within the role of community space, a place for prayer, religious instruction and political discussion.⁷⁰ Every Muslim family is looked upon as a member family of a particular mosque which in this region is called '*Hamsaya*' (particular unit). The *Imam* of the mosque enjoys an exalted position in his '*Hamsaya*,' like that of a king. He is, infact, the king of that particular unit. He is the sole administrator and judge in socio-cultural and religious affairs of that particular unit. All member families are ethically bound and expected to obey him and his decisions.

⁶⁷ The Holy Quran, 3,16.

⁶⁸ Dr. Kamar Uddin, "Re-Orientatation of Madrasa Education", in *Madrasa Education in India: Eleventh to Twenty First Century*, Edited by S. M. Azizuddin Husain, Kanishka, New Delhi, 2008, p.128

⁶⁹ Farhat Tabassum, pp.3,5

⁷⁰ Arshad Alam, *Inside a Madrasa: Knowledge, Power and Islamic Identity in India*, Routledge, New Delhi, 2011, p.45

Madrassa passed out students often take get employed in the rural areas as the teacher in *maqtab*s and small madrassas or as *Imam* and '*Pesh-Imam*' in small towns and villages and thus they not only have a firm grip on young minds but also influence their guardians.⁷¹ Considering the rural situation of the Muslims of Eastern India Binayak Dutta quoted,

“As village they acted as Imams of mosques, presided over Jummah and Id prayers and officiated at most other religious functions and rites commonly observed by the rural Muslims. Some of them also become teachers at the rural *maqtab*s generally in addition to their priestly function...Learned or not , the influence of mullah over the rural society was vital and in a sense absolute.”⁷²

Every Muslim has three significant events in his life viz. Birth, Marriage and Death. In each of these events the presence of a Madrassa educated *alim* is needed. After the birth of a new born baby, the sound of '*Azan*' and '*Ekhamat*' has to be recited on his right and left ears respectively and for that a person having basic Islamic knowledge is required. The guardians of the baby prefer the an *alim* for the same. Afterwards, on the occasion of the naming ceremony of the baby, the relatives and the guardians again depend upon the '*Imam*' of a mosque or a madrassa qualified *alim* so as to give a good and meaningful name to the baby. Therefore, in spite of the Bengali as the mother tongue, the names of the people of this region are mostly in Arabic and Urdu.

Marriage is an important event of life that integrates two souls and promises a continual life, sharing many happy and sorrowful moments together. Again, it is a madrassa educated *alim* mostly the *Imam* of local mosque conducts the event of marriage through *Khutba* and '*dua*', (prayer) prays for the welfare of the conjugal life of both the bridegroom and the bride. 'Death' is the final event of human life. All the hopes, wishes, desires, ambitions, expectations that starts after the birth terminates with death. In Muslim society the only event left after death is to bury the body after '*Janaja*', the final prayer, for which the '*Imam*' of the mosque or a madrassa educated *alim* is needed. A

⁷¹ Binayak Dutta, p.50

⁷² *Ibid*, p.23

serious patient who in his deathbed calls a '*alim*' for '*tawba*' (regret for the mistakes done in life knowingly or unknowingly and a promise for rectification). Even after death, the near relatives of the dead, depend upon a madrassa educated '*alim*' for the final prayer on dead body '*Ziarat*'.

The main structure or the pillar of Islam is '*Namaz*', which is '*farz*' (mandatory) for all Muslim (not for the children and abnormal) and for proper learning of '*Namaz*' he/she needs an Ulama. Certain basic learning is mandatory for every Muslim and for this he requires one *alim*. There is at least one *alim* in every mosque who conducts the *Naamaz* five times a day as *Imam* and it is his duty to direct every one and show the right way as provided in '*Sharia*'. In the Quran and Hadith also the *Ulemas* have been accorded high prestige, so people also pay their high regards to the *Ulemas*. Prophet Mohammad had himself declared that *Ulemas* are his heir. Common people honour every word of the *Ulema* without even minimum consideration or rational thinking. Common people believe that since the *Ulema* has learned Quran and Hadith and also knows Islamic *Sharia*, so his way of living is as per the *Sharia*. The Quran also assures high rewards to those who pay their respect to the *Ulema*.

Madrassa educated people enjoys a special position of prestige in Muslim society. By the end of 19th century, the Muslim society was structured in such a manner that the role of the *Ulema* was rendered indispensable and paying respects to him was synonymous to honouring Prophet Mohammad.⁷³ The *Imam* of mosque, *taleba* (learner) of madrassa, teachers of madrassa and persons studied in madrassa are considered as the preachers of Islam. The way of life, dress code, behaviour dialogue etc. are followed by the common rural Muslims of the society. The common man hopes to find spiritual elevation by remaining in touch with good *Ulemas* especially the '*Pirs*'. *Ulemas* of madrassa receive honour and regards from the Muslims wherever they pay their visit. A common man, on his way, wishes '*Salam*' whenever he sees an *alim*, even if the latter is not known to him. His interaction with an *alim* is always very polite. He considers that if an *alim* is pleased with his behaviour then Prophet Mohammad will also be pleased with

⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 41

him as the Prophet has himself declared *Ulemas* to be his heirs. Thus, even if a common Muslim finds an *alim*, *Ulema* or *taleba* who is not known to him, he considers it is his religious duty to pay respect by wishing him a '*Salam*'. This exchanges of '*Salam*' brings both the persons closer emotionally.

In the society of rural Eastern Bengal and Assam, the *Ulemas* played pivotal role. The *Ulemas* were the part of the common Muslim society, yet they were given special status because of their acquired knowledge in Islamic theology.⁷⁴ The Madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley were mainly the product of Deoband Movement and hence were affected by its socio-political ideologies. Although Barelwi or *Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamat* ideologies were latter propagated to some extent but was mainly confined among the *Ulemas* who studied in United Province and had little impact in colonial Surma-Barak Valley. It was mainly by the 1940s that some madrassas which were started as Deobandi Madrassa came under the grips of the Barelwi *Ulemas*.

The mosque was a spiritual and mental refuge for the people of Surma-Barak Valley. Whenever a Muslim faced any serious problems he used to go to a mosque, madrassa or to the residence of an *alim* provide some money in the form of '*hadiya*' and request him to pray for his recovery from the current situation. They also used to go to an '*alim*' after a success or after the success any of the family members on social or economic matters so as express their gratefulness to God. For this they required the mediation of a learned scholar in Islamic theology, whom they considered to be closer to God. They also used to visit an '*alim*' to request him to pray to God for the success of a family member in social or professional life. Commonly the Muslims used to visit them with the expectation that God would seriously listen to the prayer of *Ulemas* as God liked them most, and thus their recommendations would definitely bear fruit. The Muslim families also used to invite one or more *alims* in their residence with particular objectives and used to render his best services to them, considering that if they (*Ulemas*) were pleased with his services and hospitalities, then his objective or ambition would be fulfilled. In addition to service, hospitality and food, the host also used to pay them in

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p.23

cash as '*hadiya*' as per his capacities and wishes. However, in Surma-Barak Valley, the system has had its flexibilities in actual practising.

It has already been discussed that the differences that had developed between the Deobandi and Barelwi ideologies all over the country had its impact on Surma-Barak Valley too. The Deobandi *Ulemas* were generally against the '*Qiyam*' of '*Milad*' and the Barelwi *Ulemas* had objections were against the practice of '*Jikir*'. In Surma-Barak Valley, the Deobandi *Ulemas* were the ardent follower of '*Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*' so they were popularly called as '*Jamiaties*' whereas the *Ulemas* having Barelwi ideologies claimed themselves as the follower of '*Ahl-e-Sunnat-al-Jamat*', or shortly as '*Ahle Sunnat*'. Although *Milad Mehfil* used to be conducted by the *Ulemas*, but for *Zikir*, *Ulemas* were not required. However, both were generally conducted by the *Ulemas* and it was the people's belief that the *Ulemas* intervention would always be beneficial as the *Ulemas* remained intimately involved in one or the other activities of God most of the time.

People both from poor and rich and from rural and urban backgrounds used to find pleasure in passing their valuable time with the *Ulemas* of madrassas. Through their interaction with the *alims* they hoped to the value of Islam. Thus it in multifarious ways the *Ulemas* of Mosque and Madrassas played significant role in different aspects of life of the rural Bengali Muslims. They controlled and regulated the Islamic way of life from the cradle to the graveyard and became a friend, philosopher and guide to a person during his joys, festival and sorrows.

In the initial decades of 20th century a large number of *Ulemas* of Eastern Bengal and Assam had entered National Movement, particularly during the Non-co-Operation Khilafat Movement. Their participation was mainly effected through the networking madrassas of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband. Maulana Azad and Madani's staying at Calcutta and Sylhet respectively established a perpetual relation between them and the Muslims of Bengal and Assam. Maulana Azad's journals like *Al-Hilal*, and *Al-Balagh* received wide circulations in Bengal and Assam. *Al-Bagh*' was the first popular Urdu journal edited by

Azad. It reflected his thoughts on religion and politics in general and nationalism in particular. Azad expressed bitter criticism against the British policies in India in his '*Al-Hilal*', the most popular journal. Azad strongly felt that journals were the most stringent weapon to mobilize the people. Azad laid ample emphasis on Hindu Muslim unity. He appealed to everyone to be an Indian first and then a Muslim or a Hindu. He said that both the Hindus and the Muslims shared a common language and culture and so there was no cause of disunity. He asserted that it is necessary for both to join hands together against the foreign yoke.⁷⁵ '*Al-Hilal*', went a long way strengthening the confidence of the Indian Muslims.⁷⁶ People appreciated *Al-Hilal*, whole heartedly and soon its circulation raised to twenty six lakhs per week.⁷⁷

This was a phase of politics, when the *Ulemas* came to the forefront and were convinced to a large extent by the Muslim League through its communal propaganda. Under such circumstances, the Assam Provincial Muslim League was formed with Munawar Ali as the President who wanted to work together with the *Anjuman-i-Islamia* Sylhet. The League workers tried their best to desist the Muslims from the Civil Disobedience Movement and they were helped by the *Ulemas*. Among the Muslims, the *Anjuman-i-Islamia* played crucial role in aggravating confrontation between the Hindus and the Muslims by raising communal issues.⁷⁸ During Quit India Movement, the Muslim League in Bengal adopted a resolution, calling upon its members to remain outside from the Congress led movement.⁷⁹ However, in Surma-Valley of Assam, the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* worker collected fund and for the movement.

The failure of the Cabinet Mission of 1946 led the Muslim League to observe the Direct Action Day on August 16, 1946 where the mosque was used as the symbol and center for mobilization by the Muslim League.⁸⁰ On August 14, 1946, Maulana Shabbir Ahmed Osmani, President of All India Jamiat *Ulema-e-Islam* issued statement where he

⁷⁵ Farhat Tabassum, p.168

⁷⁶ *Ibid* p.166

⁷⁷ Abul Kalam Azad, p.8

⁷⁸ Binayak Dutta, p.93

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p.153

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p.178

directed to all the provincial and district branches of the Jamiat *Ulema*-e-Islam to cooperate fully with the Muslim League and to observe the day peacefully and in honourable manner.⁸¹ The *Ulema*'s interaction with the local people was institutionalized through mosque and madrassas. This had its own advantages. Because of being associated with the local mosques and madrassas, they attracted a stable group of followers who regularly attended the Friday prayers. Thus local mosques and madrassa became the nerve centers and contributed to a great extent in mobilizing the masses during the Provincial election of 1946 and in the Referendum. The time of *Juma* (Friday prayer) of mosque and madrassas was delayed time in different mosques and madrassas. The *Ulemas* who acted as *Imam* tried to convince the people who came to attend the prayer about the dire consequences of Sylhet's transfer to East Bengal as well as its retention with Assam. In the mosques, where the Imam was Deobandi it was propagated that Muslims would face danger in Pakistan. Similarly, in other mosques, where the *Imam* was the supporter of the League or the *humsaya* was influenced with League, the message of danger in Sylhets retention with Assam was propagated. The League *Ulemas* were also used to deliver regular speeches at weekly village *haats* (markets) and where they tried to mobilize the Muslim masses in favour of Pakistan by referring to it as the rendering of service to Islam.⁸² Binayak Dutta while writing about the importance of the mosque as a Muslim mobilizing agency during the Referendum stated thus,

“The mosque or Masjid which was the central structure in a rural Muslim life in an Islamized milieu generated much enthusiasm and emotion which which was deftly utilized in the referendum of 1947 at Sylhet by the Muslim League. The breakage of the mosque or a shoddy hutment in a village, which functioned as such, fuelled sentiments to a level that integrated the Muslims of Assam in general and those of Sylhet in particular to a whirlpool of Islamic identity and solidarity on a pan Indian scale.”⁸³

⁸¹ 'The Dawn', Newspaper published from Delhi on August 15, 1946

⁸² Bidyut Chakraborty, p.339

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.208-209

It has already been mentioned that the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and subsequent anti-partition movement had politically awakened the Muslims of Bengal and Assam. The partition issue awoke the Muslims of Bengal to the consciousness of reorienting their political ideas and to rebuild their political organization to meet the challenges of the time. The question of partition of Bengal advanced them towards their future political career. Although Surma Valley was politically a part of Assam but had close relation with the rest of Bengal. The political development of Bengal soon reached Sylhet and thereby brought consciousness among the people. In 19th century the formation of Mohammedan Association at Calcutta in 1855 led to the formation of its branches in Sylhet by the *Ulemas* of different places of Sylhet, *Ulemas* like Maulvi Nasir Uddin Hyder, Maulvi Zahir Uddin Ahmed, Maulvi Abdul Kadir and others formed Sylhet Anjumane Islamia.⁸⁴ In October 1896, 'The Sylhet Association' was formed and in 1905 after the partition of Bengal the 'Provincial Mohammadan Association' was formed. Later, with a view to bring about consciousness among the student community, 'The Sylhet District Muslim Student Association' was formed with the initiatives of Maulana Abdul Musabbir Choudhury, Mazaid Ali, Abdul Hamid, Munawar Ali and other teachers of Sylhet Alia Madrassa.⁸⁵ In 1910, Cachar District Anjumane Islamia was formed which was reformed in 1917 under the leadership of Khan Saheb Rashid Ali Laskar, Nur Mohammad and others.⁸⁶

However, the madrassas and *maqtabas* came forward and took the leading role in the Khilafat Movement of 1919-20. Considering the issue as religious and most sentimental to the Muslims *ummah* the *Ulemas* and the *Imams* came forward. Earlier, mainly the Deoband Madrassa and the Deobandi *Ulemas* used to participate in the politics of the country, but the Khilafat issue went on to become a mass movement because of the active participation and mobilization of the Muslim masses by the Imam and *Ulemas* of different regions. So, the Madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley till 1919 were mainly confined within the social milieu and extended its arena through political mobilization among the masses of Surma-Barak Valley.

⁸⁴ Habibullah Mazumder, p.47

⁸⁵ T. K. Nurul Hoque, *Al-Islah*, Bengali monthly, Sylhet, 1373, B. E.

⁸⁶ Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, *Azad*, (Bengali Newspaper) 15 August 1976 published from Silchar.

Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi which was established in 1897 joined in the political movement by participating in the Khilafat Non-Co-operation Movement. A protest meeting was organized at the Madrassa courtyard where local people assembled and then a protest rally was started with the shouting of the '*Naaraye-Taqbir, Allhu-Akbar*'. Ulemas and the '*talebas*' of this Madrassa for the first time participated in the political movement. The rally which was started from Dar-ul-Ulum Banskandi reached Sadarghat where the office of the Cachar District Khilafat Committee was established.⁸⁷ Maulana Nur Ali of Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi, Maulana Wazid Ali, Maulana Hamid Raja, Maulana Alim Uddin of Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi took part in the movement.⁸⁸ Along with the nationalist Muslim leaders of Cachar like Sufi Mahmud Ali of Madhurband, Tabarak Ali Barlaskar of Udharband, Basarat Ali Mazumder of Kanakpur, Sajid Raja Mazumder of Bhaga they also tried to mobilize the masses in their respective areas against the British government's maltreatment with the Khalifa of Turkey. Basrat Ali Mazumder of Kanakpur took his nephew Maulavi Tabarak Ali Bar Laskar of Udarband and Gulejar Ali Mazumder of Dudpatil and established Khilafat Office at Sadarghat. Maulana Abdul Hoque, Maulana Abdul Musabbir and Maulavi Abbas Ali of Sylhet came to Cachar and inspired people for joining Non-co-operation Khilafat Movement against the British.⁸⁹ The visit of Mahatma Gandhi and Mohammad Ali to Silchar on August 26, 1921 gave a new impetus to the movement. A public meeting was organized at Silchar Fatak Bazar where more than ten thousand people participated. In the meeting they urged the masses for boycotting British goods, offices and institutions.⁹⁰ Gandhiji then visited Sylhet where he got associated with Maulana Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Begum Mohammad Ali, Sheit Jamunalal Bajaj and Krishna Das. On 29th August 1921, at Shahi Eidgah, before a huge gathering, Gandhiji and Mohammad Ali delivered the lecture. Gandhiji's Hindi lecture was translated by Maulana Abdul Hamid and this was till then the largest gathering in Sylhet.⁹¹

⁸⁷ A manuscript written by Moin Uddin Laskar of Banskandi, member of the *Majlish-e-Shura* of the Madrassa, where he states a details of the madrassa.

⁸⁸ Interview with Hamid Ali (65), Lamba Basti, Banskandi Dated.26.10.2008

⁸⁹ Ali Haidar Laskar, *A History of the Muslims and the Barak Valley*, Guwahati, 2013, p-254

⁹⁰ Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, (Ed.), *Azad*, a Bengali weekly published from Silchar dt. 19th Shraban, 1370 B.E.

⁹¹ Nishit Ranjan Das, *Swadhinata Songrame Srihatta Cachar*, Dinkal Press, Silchar, 2006, p.49

In 1921, Khilafat Movement also started in Hailakandi with Maulavi Manuwar Ali as President, Maulavi Mohsin Ali Choudhury of Nimaichandpur as Vice-President and Umar Ali Mazumder of Rangauti as General Secretary. Masaraf Ali Choudhury, Maulana Musabbir Ali Barbhuiya, Majaraf Ali Laskar of Lala were the other leaders of the movement in Hailakandi sub-division.⁹² Madrassas students and *Ulemas* of Ratanpur Madrassa, Dar-ul-Ulum Sahaba, Qasimul Ulum Lala and others also actively participated in the Movement.

However, during Khilafat Movement, a tragic incident took place at Buribail, near Ganirgram where a Khilafat Non Co-operation Conference was organized on March 22, 1922. People from various parts of Surma-Barak Valley attended the conference. Prominent among them were Maulana Abdur Musabbir Choudhury of Sylhet, Maulana Ibrahim Ali of Jaintia, S. K. Das, S. M. Deb, S. L. Deb and others. They delivered speeches. During the session of the conference suddenly Mr. Walker, the D. C. of Cachar arrived with a dozen of Gurkha soldiers and about fifty police personals under Sub-Inspector Vinod Gupta. The mob assembled for the conference were dispersed. They were also forced to pay fine for their agitation and the leaders like Maulana Umad Ali, Khurshed Ali, Mubarak Ali, Hamid Ali, Zila Mian, Hatim Ali and others were put to jail in the evening.⁹³

The tide of the Khilafat Non-Co-operation Movement was widely felt in Karimganj. Madinatul Ulum Baghbari Madrassa, near Kaliganj of Karimganj became a centre of freedom movement.⁹⁴ It played tremendous role in the movement against the British. During Khilafat Non-Co-Operation Movement, the *Ulema* of this Madrassa organized a meeting where a huge number of people gathered and in the meeting they took decision for boycotting even the government market and started 'Khilafatganj' at Baghbari near Kaliganj Bazar (Karimganj).⁹⁵ However, Khilafat movement was started in

⁹² Ali Haidar Laskar, pp.256-57

⁹³ Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, (Ed.), *Azad*, a Bengali weekly published from Silchar dated 30 Shraban 1379 B.E.

⁹⁴ Kamal Uddin Ahmed, p.236

⁹⁵ Nishit Ranjan Das, p.35

Sylhet by Maulana Abdul Hoque of Calcutta Alia Madrassa accompanied by Dr. Mortuja Choudhury on November 15, 1919.⁹⁶

Maulana Abdul Hoque Choudhury of Balaganj, Sylhet who studied in Calcutta Madrassa came in to contact with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and was influenced with his nationalist ideology. He took active part in the Khilafat Movement and on December 22, 1920 he participated in Nagpur Session of Indian National Congress and Khilafat Conference. The authority of the conference gave him the charge for formation of Assam Provincial Khilafat Committee and accordingly on the presence of Hussain Ahmed Madani he formed 'Assam Provincial Khilafat Committee at Jugidahar, near Maulvi Bazar subsequently known as Khilafat Nagar.'⁹⁷ In this conference, Maulana Nazir Uddin who was in the charge of the Reception Committee delivered lecture attacking the British policies and atrocities towards Indians and the Turkish Khalifat. Government of Assam banned his speech first at Maulvi Bazar on November 15, 1921 and then all over Sylhet. Maulana Nazir Uddin's spirit of movement led him to left Sylhet and he joined in the movement at Cachar district. He was then imprisoned for one year in Jorhat Central jail on August 20, 1922.⁹⁸

Maulana Sakhawatul Ambia of Sylhet Gaasbari Madrassa who also studied in Sylhet Aliya Madrassa actively participated in the Khilafat Non-co-Operation Movement. He was the Secretary of Sylhet Khilafat Committee and Zamindar of Duhalia Dewan Mohammad Asaf was its President. Maulana Ambia with his help had formed District level, circle level, Police Station level and village level Khilafat Committee and thus moved against the British in different parts of Assam. For this he was imprisoned for a year at Jorhat jail. After his release from jail he started Khilafat office near Manikpir Tila at Sylhet. Maulana Ambia had close connection with '*Tabligue*' and '*Tanjim*' movement and too published a book on '*Tanjim*'.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Mohammad Abdul Aziz,(et. Al), *Brihatar Sylhetr Itihas* , Vol. – II, Brihattar Sylhet Itihas Pranayan Parishad, Sylhet, 2005, p.25

⁹⁷ Dr. Moammad Abdullah, p.274

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.275

⁹⁹ *Ibid* p.278

Maulana Abdul Mukit Choudhury of Bhatipara village under Dhirai police station of Sunamganj was superintendent of Sylhet Aliya Madrassa. He was known for his good oratory skill and was called 'Bhatiparar Bulbul', also took active part in Khilafat Non-co-Operation Movement. He left his job in August 20, 1920 and joined in the movement.¹⁰⁰ A Muslim Conference was held at Sylhet town hall on 29th and 30th August 1920 where he delivered his speech and that impressed the masses present in the conference.

Maulana Mohammad Islmail of Botshail village under Kanaighat of Sylhet was a brilliant student of Calcutta Aliya Madrassa. He became blind but even after this, he composed number of Urdu poems against the British during Khilafat Movement and his speech also attracted the masses to mobilize against the British.¹⁰¹ His brother Maulana Mohammad Tishna, also actively participated in the Khilafat Movement. He studied in different Madrassas of U. P. and joined politics during Khilafat movement at Sylhet. Like his brother he too composed number of poems against the British and in favour of Turkish Khalifa to mobilize the masses. He was against the mutual co-operation with the Congress.

On 15th February 1922, a meeting of the *Ulemas* was arranged by the Madrassa students inviting people of 32 *parganas* at Volachar field, Kanaighat, Sylhet under the Presidency of Maulana Mohammad Tishna with due permission from the police. Several thousand masses assembled in the gathering. Commissioner J. E. Webster arrived there on a horse along with a Gurkha Regiment and ordered the crowd to disperse within seven minutes. While the crowd started dispersing Commissioner ordered for firings. The mob also became furious and then police started firing in which seven people were killed and 27 others were injured. Two police personels Bonkim and Bihari were also killed.¹⁰² Constable Banka Behari, who was in front of Commissioner refused to fire on unarmed peaceful crowd and was immediately shot dead by the Commissioner. Gurka soldiers

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid* p.272

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.74

¹⁰² Nishit Ranjan Das, p.74

killed five other people and 36 were wounded. Names of the people killed at Kanaighat are.¹⁰³

- i) Banka Behari Dey
- ii) Maulana Abdus Salam of Bayumpur
- iii) Abdur Rahim of Niz Baurbhag
- iv) Zahar Ali of Sardari Para
- v) Azizur Rahman of Ujan Para
- vi) Musa Mian of Durlabpur

Maulana Mohammad Ibrahim Ali Chatuli of Jaintiyapur under Sylhet who studied in Jingabari Madrassa and Fulbari Madrassa and later went to Rampur, U.P. for higher studies also took active part in the Khilafat Movement. He joined Khilafat Movement in January 07, 1922 and in the same year he was put to jail. After hearing about his son's arrest Chatuli's father Munshi Abdul Karim expressed his disappointment by composing a 'puthi', titled 'Chorkar Chokkor', (Movement of Circle) where he inspired people to participate in the movement. He wrote in his *puthi*-

*“Shuno jaadu Ibrahim, bolchi Abdul Karim
Baba jaare dhakise sodai,
Bachha jaak jail khana.
Jeler kosto niranjane mitaiba kunodine
Moner saad puraiba Allai..Bachha....
Jogote Muslim joto, hoiyase pagal moto
Khelafat bedine lutai. Bacha.....”¹⁰⁴*

The head of the Fulbari Madrassa on the other hand took a different stand under such circumstances, Sufi Habibur Rahman refused to participate in the movement and did alerted his students and did not allow them to participate in the movement. To him, the movement was because of the Hindu conspiracy to make the Indian Muslims as the

¹⁰³ Nishit Ranjan Das, pp.50,51

¹⁰⁴ Dewan Nurul Anwar Hussain Choudhury, Khilafat Aandolone Sylhet unpublished essay, p.13-14

servants of Hindus as they were the majority.¹⁰⁵ The Deobandi *Ulemas* of Sylhet started boycotting the madrassa. They compelled the teachers and the students to left the madrassa and the madrassa remained closed for few days and was restarted in 1933.¹⁰⁶ The Family of Sufi Habibur Rahman was isolated from the other families of the society. He was not allowed to even enter the market place and at last he took police protection for his family's security. Under such circumstances a new Qaumi madrassa was opened in nearby the place in 1923 following the ideology of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband.¹⁰⁷ However, Mojod Uddin Ahmad re-started the madrassa in 1933 and he himself arranged finances from his tea-garden fund to maintain requirements of the madrassa. Before his death Mojod Uddin Ahmed purchased few acres of land and donated it to the madrassa and at present madrassa has been getting its profit from the income of this land.¹⁰⁸

Maulana Ibrahim Toshna, of Imdadul Ulum Madrassa, Umarganj, during the Non-co-Operation Khilafat Movement with the instruction of his teacher Maulana Mahmud Hassan of Deoband actively participated in the movement along with his students and other teachers of the madrassa. He delivered speeches on different places of Surma Valley during the movement to mobilize the masses. The British government arrested and put him to jail for his speech against the British.¹⁰⁹ The movement became so popular that even the Muslim women were also largely participated and donated their jewelries to the Khilafat Fund.¹¹⁰

Maulana Syad Nazir Uddin, of Baliakandhi village under Maulavi Bazar sub-division of broader Sylhet who studied in Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband and came in touch with Hussain Ahmed Madani took the leading role in organizing the Khilafat Movement at Maulvi Bazar. In 1921 '*Swadeshi Sammelan*' was organized at *Bodo Hut* (Big market), under Maulavi Bazar sub-division which was presided over by C. R. Das and Mmaulana

¹⁰⁵ Mustansirur Rahman Choudhury and Fakrul Islam Choudhury, *Fulbari: Itihas Ksyato Ekti Gram* published by the author, Sylhet, 1992, p.58

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p.59

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid* p.28

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid* pp.22-23

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid* p.46

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*,

Sayad Nazir Uddin was the convener of the conference.¹¹¹ Maulana Sayad Nazir was a good orator and in 15th November 1921 his speech was banned first in Maulavi Bazar and then in whole Sylhet by the government.¹¹² Then he left Sylhet and started campaign against the British in the Cachar district and where he was arrested and put to Sylhet jail for two years.¹¹³ Jail authorities tortured Maulana Sayad Nazir and others for agitating against the rules of jail and hence on August 20, 1922 they were shifted to Jorhat Central Jail. Before the term he was made free with some condition from the jail due to his poor mental condition as he heard from the jail that a number of his family members had died due to cholera. Then he left for Singapore and joined a mosque as *Imam* and after few years his father called him back to the native place, so he returned home and when the post of *Imam* became vacant at Abu Turab Masjid of Bondhorbazar, Sylhet he was appointed there. It may be mentioned here that Maulana Syad Nazir Uddin was the first person who met Maulana Iliyas of Delhi, the founder of '*Tabligue-i-Jamat*', and started *Tabligue* in the Sylhet district.¹¹⁴

The withdrawal of Non-Co-operation Movement ended the period of mutual communal harmony between the Hindus and Muslims of India and it brought a period of country wide communal calamity. The communalists took the communal issues and tried to consolidate their positions. Both the groups had forgotten that their common enemy was the British and had started war between each other. Communalist groups started their wings in different regions of the country. The communalist adopted means and strategies which were basically related to the religious aspects of the common man. Sensitive issues like 'music before mosque', 'cow slaughter' etc. again appeared in the society. '*Suddhi*' and '*Sangathan*' movements of Hindus extended its wings in Assam which was countered by the '*Tabligue*' and '*Tanjim*' movement. The Assam Provincial Hindu Sanmilon was held at Nogaon on June 1928 with B. S. Munji, a Mahasabha leader as Chair. Lecture was delivered to alert the Hindus about the plan and activities of Hindu

¹¹¹ Mustansirur Rahman Choudhury, p.68

¹¹² *Ibid*,

¹¹³ *Ibid*,

¹¹⁴ *Ibid* p.69

Mission.¹¹⁵ The Hindu Mission of Calcutta visited many places of Assam like Jorhat, Tezpur, Nogaon with a view to convert the hilly tribes to Hinduism.¹¹⁶ On the other hand Assam Muslim Tabligue Conference was held at Guwahati on April, 15, 1927 which criticized the activities of Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha for their evil attempt of converting the Muslims in to Hinduism. *Tabligue Jamat* were formed in different parts of Assam.¹¹⁷ The Islam Mission was formed at Shillong in 1927 with the objective of spreading Islam among the tribal people. Shillong Muslim Union was also established with the same objective in 1934.

In Surma-Barak Valley too the Hindus and the Muslims worked under Hindu Mahasabha and Tabligue respectively. A Mahasabha's Meeting was held at Sylhet where Lakshmi Narayan Sastri, leader of All India Hindu Mahasabha delivered his speeches urging the Hindus to be aware about the duties and responsibilities being as Hindu.¹¹⁸ Similar meetings were held at Habiganj, Karimganj and Silchar.¹¹⁹ On the other hand Tabligue Committees were also formed during this time at Sunamganj under Maulana Ahmed Sayed, Dr. Murtaza Choudhury, Maulana Abdul Musabbir Choudhury and others.

Anjuman-e-Ulama-e-Bangla which was formed in 1913 was merged with 'Jamiat-e-Ulema-Bangla' formed in 1921 with Maulana Abu Bakkar Siddiki of Furfura as President and Maulana Manirujjaman Islamabadi as Secretary. Originally it was a provincial wing of 'Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind' (1919) and the second version of 'Anjuman-e-Ulema-Bangla'.¹²⁰ The fifth Annual Conference of Jamiat *Ulema-e-Bangla* was held at February – March 1929 where Maulana Ruhul Amin, one of the favourite Khalifa of Maulana Abu Bakkar Siddiki expressed the objective of the organization said that the organization was formed to unite the thousands of *Ulemas* of Assam and Bengal, to

¹¹⁵ Fortnightly Report, 18-06-1928, ASA

¹¹⁶ Fortnightly Report, 1926-34, File – 55, D.S.A., Assam

¹¹⁷ Home Poll, File No. 32-37, Fortnightly Report, April, July 1927.

¹¹⁸ Fortnightly Report, August, 1927

¹¹⁹ Fortnightly Report, August, 1927

¹²⁰ Dr. Moammad Abdullah, p.81

regulate them collectively and to compromise the conflicting issues mutually for removing the misunderstanding among them.¹²¹

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind and *Jamiat Ulema-e-Bangla* worked together till the date when *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* became a full-fledge ally of Indian National Congress. In the 9th Session of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* which was held at Amroha from the 3rd to 6th June 1930, under the Presidentship of Maulana Shah Moin Uddin three resolutions were adopted that were not supported by the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Bangla*. These were¹²² –

- 1) As the Congress took the decision of full freedom and cancelled the Nehru Reportt, so *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* now does not have any objection in working with the Congress in the freedom movement of the country.
- 2) *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hinds* programme for Civil Dis-Obedience Movement has now been prepared.
- 3) Boycott of foreign goods and participation in Round Table Conference is now accepted.

President of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Bangla*, Maulana Abu Bakar Siddiki withdrew its alliance with *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*. He declared Congress and *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*'s decision of demand for complete independence, Civil Dis-obedience Movement and boycott of foreign goods were thought to be harmful for the Muslims of India and he delivered a lecture in protest of these.¹²³ In Surma-Barak Valley too the *Ulemas* were divided on the issue joining Civil Disobedience Movement. Bengal Provincial *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* extended its wing in Assam and along with the Muslim League leaders tried to keep Muslims aloof from joining the Movement. At Kulaura, in the district of Sylhet a meeting was held in November 1930 where about 5000 people gathered. The meeting dissolved with the decision that it would blunder to join the Civil Dis-obedience Movement under the Indian National Congress.¹²⁴ However, in spite of the opposition a

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p.82

¹²² *Ibid* p.84

¹²³ *Ibid*, p.82

¹²⁴ Home Poll, File No. 18/13, Fortnightly Report, December 1930, NAI

good number of *Ulemas*, disciple, followers and students of Hussain Ahmed Madani participated in the Movement. Maulana Waris Ali and others left Sylhet and went to Nuakhali District to collect salt.¹²⁵ On 26th January 1930, the nationalist Muslim and the *Jamiat Ulema Hind* volunteers started a procession at Sylhet where 33 volunteers were arrested and number of others got injured by the *lathi* charges of police.¹²⁶ In Karimganj a meeting was organized by the Khilafat Committee in the end of January 1931 where a good number of nationalist Muslim participated. The organizers condemned the repressive measures adopted by the British to suppress the movement. Makaddas Ali Tapadar, Maulana Jalal Uddin Choudhury, Mahmud Ali, Hazi Matasin Ali Choudhury and others delivered speeches and urged the people to continue the boycott of foreign articles and they too were arrested latter.¹²⁷ Pir Mohammad Ali, Maulavi Gulam Sabbir Khan, Sajid Raja Mazumder, Khurshed Ali Mazumder and others joined in the Movement at Silchar and were put to jail and similarly at Hailakandi sub-division Maulvi Abdul Matlib Mazumder, Faizur Rahman Laskar, Harmuj Ali Barbhuiya and Maulvi Abdul Latif Laskar (Gada Maulavi) and other volunteers of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* were imprisoned.¹²⁸ The Provincial *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* conference was held on February 14, 1932 at Sylhet which was presided over by Fazlul Karim.¹²⁹ Similarly, on 14th December 1932, a public meeting was held at Mogla Bazar under the presidentship of Maulana Abdul Hoque where appeal was made to the people to maintain Hindu Muslim unity and to work together to attain the independence.¹³⁰ In spite of the opposition of Bengal Provincial *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*, *Jamait* volunteers raised protest rallies and *hartal* against the arrest of Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani, Rector of Dar-ul-Ulum Deoband and the President of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*.¹³¹

After passing the Govt. of India Act 1935, most of the political parties started preparation for the ensuing election. Maulana Abu Bakkar Siddiki appealed to the *Ulema* communities in his different speeches for active participation in the socio-political field

¹²⁵ Habibullah Mazumder, p.122

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.125

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p.125,

¹²⁸ Ali Haidar Laskar, p.260

¹²⁹ Fortnight Report, February, 1932.

¹³⁰ Fortnight Report, December, 1932

¹³¹ Habibullah Mazumder, p.127

of the country.¹³² The organization was reformed in 1936 and extended the jurisdiction of its operation up to Assam and was renamed as '*Jamiat Ulema-e-Bangla O Assam*'. After its reform Maulana Abu Bakkar Siddiki remained its President and his third son Maulana Abdul Kadir Siddiki became its Secretary. After the death of Abu Bakkar Siddiki in 1939 his eldest son Maulana Abdul High Siddiki became its President.¹³³

Jamiat *Ulema-e-Bangla* and Assam had three registered mouthpieces '*Shariat-e-Islam*', published from Calcutta '*Hedayat*' edited (monthly) by Maulana Moizuddin Hamidi and '*Sunnat al Jamat*' edited by Maulana Mohammad Ruhul Amin published from Calcutta. These papers along with Maulana Akram Khan's '*Dainik Azad*', published both from Calcutta and Dakha, played important role in popularizing and consolidating the strength of the Muslim Leagues among the masses of Bengal and Assam.¹³⁴ "*Sunnat-al-Jamat*", in its editorial, of January-February (Volume-II), 1939 appealed to the Muslims of rural Bengal and Assam to show their strength, honour and integrity by raising the League Flag in every villages of the region.¹³⁵

The 6th Session of Assam Provincial *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* was held at Sharoda Smriti Bhawan, Sylhet in November, 1938 under the Presidentship of Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani where about six hundred *Ulemas* and disciples of Hussain Ahmed Madani participated. Ticket system was arranged for the session and in spite of the availability, ticket was not issued to any *Ulema* who was the supporter of Muslim League. It may be mentioned here that ticket system was arranged mainly to check the presence of League Maulanas in the session.¹³⁶ Mohammad Abu Hamid Abdul Hoque, Chairperson of the Reception Committee in his speech said that freedom is the message of Islam and it is the duty of every Muslim to participate in this movement.¹³⁷ The presence of Maulana Manirujjaman Islamabadi gave a new spirit to the Muslims. Maulana Manirujjaman appealed the members present for not falling on the cheating of

¹³² Dr. Moammad Abdullah, p.94

¹³³ *Ibid* p.94

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p.98

¹³⁵ *Sunnat-al-Jamat*, 6th Years, Volume- II, Januar-February 1939

¹³⁶ Dr. Moammad Abdullah, p.88

¹³⁷ Mohammad Mustafa Kamal, p.135

Mohammad Jinaah, Fozlul Hoque or Sikandar Hayat and suggested to follow the *Ulemas*, the real prescriber of Quran.¹³⁸ Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani in his Presidential address said that the British, both as friend, and as foe, harmed the Muslims in different countries of the world. As friend, what they did against the Muslim of the world are not less than what they did as foes of the Muslim.¹³⁹ *Sheikul Islam* Maulana Madani addressed the *Ulemas* of different madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley and of Brahmaputra Valley who attended the session. He said that it is due to the grace and mercy of Allah, that they (*Ulemas*) acquired the knowledge and become 'Alim'. He (God) gave them the status as the heir of Prophet. He said that, they should always stand against the evil power and it is their duty to show the right path to the creations of God and also to propagate the *Sharia* and *Sunnah* of Prophet Mohammad.¹⁴⁰

At the end Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani said that Islam does not only mean prayer, it does not only teach it. On one hand it fulfils the attainment of spiritual development, on the other hand it teaches the physical and moral development. It teaches every aspect of individual, family, social and national life of the Muslim. Maulana Madani appealed to the *Ulemas* that the present administration was harming the Muslims way of life, hence they should involve themselves in it and make effort to reform or to change the system. It was not logical for the *Ulemas* to maintain distance from politics. They should get involved as it was one of the important duties of Prophet Mohammad.¹⁴¹ The *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* in this session not only tried to condemn communalism and communalists but by using the name religion in positive way, they tried to raise nationalist feeling among the Muslim masses in favour of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* and Indian National Congress. Their interpretation of Islam was followed and propagated by the Deobandi *Ulemas* of Surma-Barak Valley, a good numbers of whom participated in the conference and were engaged in different madrassas and mosques of the Valley. Besides, during this period Hussain Ahmed Madani himself also visited in different parts of the Surma-Barak Valley and formed branches of this organization. A large conference

¹³⁸ Janashakti, Vol. XVIII, Issue-24th, 30th November 1938

¹³⁹ Maulana Sirajul Hoque, "Assam Pradeshik Jamiat Ulema Sosto Odhibeshon, Sylhet 25-26th January 1938", Published by Assam Provincial Jamiat *Ulema-e-Hind*, Sylhet, 1938, p.3

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p23

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.24

was held at Joldup, near Beani Bazar on June, 13, 1938 under the Presidentship of Maulana Abdul Mazid of Dasura, where some branches of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* were formed.¹⁴² The League activists vehemently opposed and ill-behaved with Maulana Madani.¹⁴³ *The Jugabheri* wrote against Mualana Hussain Ahmed Madani and in protest of this a protest meeting was organized at Bondor Bazar Mosque of Sylhet under the presidentship of Maulvi Syed Nurul Hoque where Maulvi Abdul Musabbir appealed the public present in the meeting to give response in the call of Hussain Ahmed Madani to attain freedom. He further said that League leaders were searching their self interest at the cost of Islam.¹⁴⁴

In 1937, another organization was formed with the objective to promote the personal, social, economic, political and cultural life of the Arabic learners according to the ideology of Islam and to promote *Tabligue* and *Tanjim* by the madrassa students and authorities with the name 'Assam Jamiat-e-Tulaba-e-Arabia'. Its head quarter was at Sylhet and was organized with the aim to bring all kinds of madrassas under its jurisdiction.¹⁴⁵

The very next year Muslim League meeting was arranged with high pomp and show at Sylhet Shahi Eidgah on November 27, 1938, where Nawab of Dhaka Habib Ullah and Maulana Azad Subahani delivered speeches and appealed to the Muslim to join the Muslim League.¹⁴⁶ In contrast to Assam Provincial *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*, Muslim League also organized its provincial wing with the name 'Assam Provincial Muslim League' and Sylhet was selected as its head office. It organized from the grass root levels. At first it was Village League then Circle League, District League and finally the Provincial League.¹⁴⁷ After the declaration of Lahore Resolution, the Muslims of Surma Valley in general and League activists in particular welcomed the Lahore Resolution openly. Muslim League widely celebrated the Pakistan Day in Sylhet district. While the

¹⁴² Janashakti, Vol.-XVIII, 8th Issue, 20th July 1938

¹⁴³ Mohammad Mustafa Kamal, *British Birudhi Andolone Srihatta*, Ittadi, Dakha, 2010, p.135

¹⁴⁴ Janashakti, Vol.-XVIII, 8th Issue, 27th July 1938

¹⁴⁵ *Assam Jamiat-e-Tulama-e-Arabia: Niyomaboli*, KMSS, p.2

¹⁴⁶ "Al-Islah" Monthly Bengali journal, 2nd Issue, 5th Year, 1938, p-83

¹⁴⁷ *Assam Pradeshek Muslim Leguer Niyomaboli*, prepared by Abdul Matin Choudhury, Secretary, Assam Provincial Muslim League Committee, p.2

League conducted a procession and meeting to celebrate 'Pakistan' in Govinda Park, the Jamiat *Ulema-i-Hind* held its meeting in the adjacent Sarada Memorial Hall which was interrupted by the Muslim League. This resulted in a clash where some person got injured.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, after a few weeks *Waaz Mehfil* was organized at Dhaka Uttar Ranaping Arabia Hussainia Madrassa at Golapganj, Sylhet which was a Deobandi Madrassa. In the *mehfil* while Maulana Mufti Mohammad Naim was delivering his lecture with strong words against the League and the British, the audience present in the *mehfil* who were the supporters of Muslim League objected to his words and insisted him to concentrate on the religious issues only. Thus it seems that Lahore Resolution gave the League activist an extra energy to oppose the others.

With the passing of historic Quit India Resolution on 8th August 1942, by Indian National Congress, the Surma-Barak Valley entered in to the last phase of war on the path of its independence against the Colonial Government. In 1942, Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani of Deoband was arrested. A meeting was held at Sylhet where about 600 Muslims were assembled and urged the Government for the release of Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani.¹⁴⁹ On 18th August 1942, All India *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* adopted a resolution to support Quit India Movement led by Congress. Surma Valley Jamiat *Ulema* leaders immediately joined the Movement and it assumed the character of mass movement.¹⁵⁰ Arrest warrant was issued against Maulana Izzat Ullah of Gaasbari Madrassa but the police failed to arrest him.¹⁵¹ The Congress and Jamiat volunteers in Surma-Barak Valley went to organize protest meetings, processions, *hartals*, picketing at schools and Colleges, shops, selling foreign goods. In the August Revolution of 1942, in broader Sylhet 470 peoples were arrested of which forty number of *Ulemas* were there who participated under the banner of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* from the different madrassas of Surma-Valley.¹⁵² Maulana Abdul Mannan and seven others workers of Provincial

¹⁴⁸ Home Poll F. R. April 1940, No. 18/4/40, NAI

¹⁴⁹ Home Poll F. R. July 1942, No. 18/7/1942, NAI

¹⁵⁰ Mohammad Mustafa Kamal, p.148

¹⁵¹ *Juger Aalo*, 6.3.1944, Maulana Izzat Ullah later went to Baniachong for voluntary service to the people suffering from malaria and he too was attacked by the same disease and breathed his last on February 23, 1944.

¹⁵² Debashis Roy, "1942 er Bharot Charo Andolone Srihatta-Cacharer Abodan: Ek Samikha", Towards Freedom, Kolkata, 2012, p.59

Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind were arrested at Karimganj for illegal procession. Mr. Jawad Ullah, President of the Surma Valley student Federation was also arrested by the police.¹⁵³ A meeting was held at Gangajal Madrassa of Surma Valley under the Presidency of Matasin Ali Choudhuri, where resolution was taken to form, “*Revolutionary Sainik*”. The Madrassa secretly made a *Sainik* Camp to carry on the movement. On the other-hand as per the decision of All India Jamiat Ulama Hind in 1944, “*Ansar Bahini*” was set up in Surma Valley. The Jamiat leader of Surma-Barak Valley toured all over the Madrassas and Schools of the Valley and admitted twelve thousand members having strong faith and conviction in “*Ansar Bahini*”.¹⁵⁴

In Cachar people were to some extent passive due to fear psychology and threats of Japanese bombing, as already bombs were exploded by Japan in Kumbirgram and Derby of Cachar district. However, in Surma Valley the Madrassa students and *Ulemas* of most of the madrassas actively participated in the movement. They came out wearing ‘*kurtas*’ (Punjabi) and chanted slogans ‘*Allahu Akbar*’. ‘Quit India’.¹⁵⁵ Movement was organized in both violent and non-violent way in Surma Valley. On August 10th and 17th *hartal* was observed at Sunamganj and on 13th, 14th and 18th August *hartal* were observed at the different places of Sylhet town and neighbouring areas. Movements were also organized in Habiganj, Munshi Bazar, Srimangal, Kamalganj, Kulaura and in other places. Huge number of masses participated in rallies.¹⁵⁶ Students of the general schools and of madrassas also participated in large number. In September 1942, total 470 nos. agitators were caught by the police out of which 40 nos. nationalist *Ulemas* of different madrassas were there, most of whom were the supporters *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*.¹⁵⁷ Maulavi Hakim Khan and Maulavi Mohammad Abdul Bhakt, workers of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* took active part in the Quit India Movement at Sylhet. Ghazi Sikandar Ahmed of Bhanga Bazar, Karimganj also took active part in the movement.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Janashakti, 23rd years, 31st Issue, 16th December, 1942

¹⁵⁴ Habibullah Mazumder, P.268

¹⁵⁵ Ali Haidar Laskar, p.262

¹⁵⁶ Debashis Roy, p.59

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*,

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p.61

The Lahore Resolution of Muslim League (1940) perished all the chances for future co-operation between the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* and the Muslim League Group. The Muslim League in its own way started a mission for mobilizing the Muslim masses by managing the *Ulemas* of madrassas and mosques. They realized that without the co-operation of the *Ulemas* it would not be possible to reach in the masses in large scale. The *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* on the other hand were greatly disappointed with the League's Resolution and started wide campaign along with other nationalist party leaders about the danger of League's demand for Pakistan. Madani's essay, titled '*Hamara Hindustan*' ('Our India'), which was published in early 1940s drew upon narratives contained in the works of classical Islamic scholars to illustrate the 'glories' (*faza'il*) of India. He wrote that according to Islamic tradition, God directed Adam, the first man and the first prophet, to be sent down to earth, to India. Thus it was from India that the human race sprang from Adam's progeny. Madani argued, that the Indian Muslims should therefore consider India as their 'ancient home' (*watan al-qadim*). Madani referred to the Qur'an and said that it mentioned that God has sent Prophets to every nation, and thus Prophets were sent to India as well.¹⁵⁹

Madani persistently appealed to the Muslims to oppose the Pakistan demand. His appeal was rooted in his insistence that Islam itself required Muslims to love their country and work for its unity. He emphasized that India was as much the motherland of the Muslims as it was of other communities. In a rhetorical statement that might appear as somewhat quixotic, Madani went as far as to claim that Muslims do, or at least should, display an even greater concern for India's welfare than other communities because while Hindus burn their dead and throw their ashes into rivers, and the Parsis let vultures feed on their dead, the Muslims bury their dead in the bosom of the earth, in the very soil of their motherland and thus it is only the Muslims who remain faithful to India even after their death. Thus he tried to assert that Muslims are, or should be, more attached to India and concerned about its welfare than people of other communities. Madani insisted that the Muslims cannot not leave India and depart for any other country, nor would any other

¹⁵⁹ Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani, *Hamara Hindustan aur uske Faza'il*, a Urdu booklet published in 1941, Deoband.

country accept them. The Indian Muslims would have to live and flourish in India itself.¹⁶⁰

Hussain Ahmed Madani in his speech on September 19, 1945 in Delhi addressed particularly the *Ulemas* on the occasion of the formation of the Azad Muslim Parliamentary Board to fight the last constitutional battle against the demand for Pakistan in the general election of 1945 – 46. He is reported to have said:

“Our object is to bridge the gulf of hatred which is being created by the protagonists of the scheme of Pakistan; we are opposed to the idea of limiting the right of missionary activities of Islam within any particular area. The Muslim have got a right in all the nooks and corners of India by virtue of the great struggle and grand sacrifices of their ancestors in this country Now it is our duty to maintain that claim and try to widen its scope, instead of giving it up.”¹⁶¹

The Deobandi *Ulemas* realized that the western educated League leadership was exploiting the fair name of Islam for the worldly gain of the Muslim vested interests which, knowing fully well that the ignorant Muslim masses could only be won over appealing to their religious emotions had given the slogan that in united India, Islam would be in danger. It is true that even Aligarh, which can legitimately be called the intellectual arsenal of the movement, remained, till the last moment, confused about the kind of society that was going to be built up in Pakistan. Islamic democracy, Islamic socialism and terms like these were frequently used, but what they meant by them was never elaborated. Deobandi *Ulemas* were however sure that the men like Mr. Jinnah and Liyaqat Ali Khan were incapable of building up an Islamic state in Pakistan. Neither their educational training nor their mental make up was suited for such a high ideal. Experiences had shown that they had no respect for the tenets of the ‘*Shariya*’. They spoke of the comprehensiveness of the Islamic law when they had to address the Muslims in order win their support for their leadership; but in legislatures and in private life they

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*

¹⁶¹ Sayed Muhammad Miyan, *Ulama-e-Haqq*, Vol.-II, pp.340-41

did not care for its application.¹⁶² On the other hand regarding the role played by the Deobandi *Ulemas* in mobilizing the public in freedom movement, Dr. N. Ishaq Jamkhanawala, President, *Anjuman-i-Islam* stated,

“Their unwavering commitment, purity and sincerity of their intention and wide range of their scholarship had an enthralling effect and influences on masses. Their selfless and disinterested leadership infused a spirit of nationalism and promoted a sense of togetherness amongst the masses. Their writing and speeches acquainted the indigenous people of the foreign infiltration, usurpation and exploitation. People learn to resist and retaliate.”¹⁶³

Both the groups utilized every agency for mobilizing the masses. Till 1944, the position of League in Assam was not very good and to mobilize the people Abdul Matin Choudhury, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan, Maulvi Fazlul Hoque Selbarshi and others visited every district of Assam to strengthen the political hold of Muslim League in addition to the regular publication of articles in local news papers both in vernacular and English language. In Surma-Barak Valley districts Cachar and Sylhet they found, that although Muslims were majority, their political activities were very meager.¹⁶⁴ Maulana Sheikh Abdur Rahim a supporter of Muslim League appreciating Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani expressed his discontentment about the other leaders inactiveness in ‘*Juger Aalo*’. He appealed to the Muslims of Assam for more active involvement in the League’s activities and for raising Muslim League flag in every houses of the Muslims of Assam.¹⁶⁵ *The Jugbheri* published from Sylhet, wrote a series of articles in its different issues under different poetic title like “*Jaage Islam Mahajagorone – Tahar Mrityu Nahibe*”, “*Islam Jinda Hota Hein Har Karbala ke Baad*”, referring to religious words for favouring Muslim League. Institutional hold of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* was more consolidated in comparison to the Muslim League although they too managed a good number of *Ulemas* in their favour and also patronized an association with similar name ‘*Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam*’ to weaken the influence of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*. The Deobandi

¹⁶² Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, p.118

¹⁶³ Farhat Tabassum, p.vi

¹⁶⁴ *Juger Aalo*, dated 6.3.1944

¹⁶⁵ *Juger Aalo*, dtd. Chaitra, 7, 1351,B.E.

Ulemas through traditional mobilizing agencies tried to mobilize the masses while the modern educated Muslim League leaders used both traditional and modern mobilizing agencies through speech, interaction, procession, slogans evoking religious sentiments of the Muslim masses. They used modern methods as they too possessed a good number of journals and newspapers which were published from different places and contributed greatly in mobilization. The Barelwi group or the *Ahl-e-Sunnat wa Jamat* were not the supporter of the British colonial rule, in the political sphere they mostly maintained neutrality in the early years of the 20th century but later on the issue of division the country the *Ulemas* of these group were not only inclined towards Muslim League but very actively participated in campaign for mobilization and partition for the country.¹⁶⁶ Their strong involvement was not genuinely for the cause of the creation of Pakistan but for the opposition the Deobandis and the Jamiat *Ulema-e-Hind*. Barbara Metcalf rightly said that the main concern of Barelvis were to oppose ‘Deobandis’ rather than to reform.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand the *Ulemas* followed Deobandi ideologies undoubtedly played a crucial role in the whole process of mobilizing the masses in this region in shaping their socio-moral vision and political farsightedness. They tried their best to inculcate the values of national integrity and communal harmony.

¹⁶⁶ Ali Riaz, p.76

¹⁶⁷ B. D. Metcalf, p.296