

## Chapter - VI

### CONCLUSION

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Madrassas are generally considered as institutions for the imparting religious education to young Muslim learners, while political role in the national and regional political perspective has rarely been explored. The *Ulemas* and the *talebas* of madrassas have been considered as incapable of coming up to nationalist aspirations. In India's movement for freedom the *Ulemas* of madrassas played a vital role not only through their active participation but also as mobilizing agencies which possess a unique position in Muslim society. In this context, the present thesis, "Madrassas and Partition 1940 - 1947 : A Study of the Madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley and their responses to the partition and Anti-partition Movement" has been studied. In the preceding chapters attempt has been made to bring to light the advent of Islam in this region and to study how the madrassas were developed in this region. The study has tried to focus attention on the importance of the '*maqtab*' and madrassas in context of the socio-political mobilization of the Muslim masses, and on what role was being played by the *Ulemas* of the madrassa in the peak hours of Indian national movement and in the complex event of India's Partition of 1947. The period of study is mainly from the year for the demand of partition till the actual partition of the country i.e. from 1940 to 1947, but in order to get a clear understanding of the Madrassas and Muslim politics the study has focused on the advent of Islam in this region, how the Madrassas were established and under what circumstances they got involved in political movements of the country.

Sylhet which was a part of Bengal till 1874 was amalgamated with the province of Assam by the British along with Cachar through a notification in spite of the opposition of its inhabitants for making the province Assam 'economically viable.' Since then the debate continued over its retention with Assam or amalgamation with Eastern Bengal. The partition of Bengal in 1905 had suspended the demand for transfer for few years but again the annulment of partition in 1911 renewed the demand both inside and outside the legislature. However, after several years of communal conflict throughout the country, the demand for a separate state for the Indian Muslims raised by the Muslim

League in its Lahore Session of 1940. Following this, the Provincial Muslim League of Assam in its second session held on January 1941 decided to support the scheme for the separate state for the Indian Muslims and adopted resolution to carry on the campaign to include Assam in the proposed state although with the League's own formula it could not come under the proposed state considering the demographic percentage of Muslim population.

The Muslim rulers were not succeeded in establishing their rule over Assam but the efforts of the Muslim adventurers ultimately helped to establish some Muslim settlements around Kamrup. On the other hand the advent of Islam in Surma-Barak Valley is generally attributed to the expansion of Muslim rule to this region. Muslim settlement in Surma Valley mainly took place through the missionary activities of *Sufi* saints, through migration and conversion. While in Barak Valley large scale Muslim settlement had taken place not much earlier than the British annexation of Cachar in 1832. Initially, Muslims families migrated from Sylhet, the adjoining province of Bengal and settled in Cachar.

The *khanqahs*' of *sufi* saints were the first Islamic institutions of Surma-Barak Valley., where *sufi* saints along with their followers used to pray *namaj* and preach Islam. Subsequently, number of Muslim population increased through conversion by *sufi* saints and migration, several Muslim habitations were grew up and thus were felt the necessity mosques and accordingly number of mosques were established in this region.

In medieval period the Islamic education of Surma-Barak Valley were mainly Teacher Centered, although at Umarpur village in Gaur area remains of a madrassa was discovered with the name 'Darsbari' where remains of ruin mosque was also discovered which is known as 'Darsbari Mosque' or 'Madrassa Mosque'. In the later years book centered education were also in vague and the learner used to visit and stay in the residence of particular teacher for a particular book of Islamic theology, however, the system and nature of *khanqah* and *maqtab* almost remained same even in colonial and

post colonial period. For higher education students of Surma-Barak Valley were also used to go to Dacca.

The foundation of Calcutta Alia Madrassa by the British East India Company in 1781 can be described as the beginning of modern era of Islamic education in Indian sub-continent but strict holding of the Government limited its scope in awakening the Muslims socially, culturally or politically. However, it was the foundation of the Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband which in true sense began a new era or a movement in the Madrassa education of modern India.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan established Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College at Aligarh and tried to improve the condition of the Muslims of India which according to him would be possible only through modern education among the Muslim with the help of the British. Thus, two institutions got established for the welfare and improvement of Indian Muslims, but in two reverse tracts. The Deoband School aimed for improvement through traditional Islamic education while Aligarh School aimed for improvement through modern education. The Deoband School strongly took its stand against the British while the Aligarh School started maintained its strong loyalty with the British Indian Government. The Aligarh Movement tried to modernize the Indian Muslims while the Deoband Movement tried to Islamize the Indian Muslims in its true sense.

A majority of madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley that were established during colonial the period were the Deobandi madrassas established on the basis and principles of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband. Madrassas like Dar-ul-Hhadith Ashraful Ulum Madrassa Ratanpur, Hailakandi, Fulbari Aziria Alia Madrassa, Golapganj, Sylhet that were started before the foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband were developed as teacher centric or *kitab* (book) centric education, where teacher due to shortage of space in residence extended room for the students and that gradually took the formal shape of madrassa. On the other hand madrassas like Rabbania Madrassa, Hasanpur Karimganj were started with private patronage of the local Mirasdar and madrassas like Jingabari Fazil Madrassa, Sylhet, Beani Bazar Kamil Madrassa, Deorail Alia Madrassa, Badarpur, Hailakandi Senior Madrassa, Maulvi Bazar Senior Madrassa were started following the pattern of

general schools. However, Sylhet Alia Madrassa was established on the same line of Calcutta Alia Madrassa and Dacca Alia Madrassa.

No madrassas stood alone; each was linked to other madrassas through a steady exchange of visiting scholars, teachers and students. Even in pre-colonial period, ideas traveled across the Muslim world with surprising speed due to the madrassa network. The foundation of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband gave a great boost to the madrassa education of Surma-Barak Valley and it is observed that a good number of madrassas were established in this region in the subsequent years of the foundation of Deoband madrassa. Madinatul Ulum Baghbari Alia Madrassa, Karimganj, Jamia Islamia Dar-ul-Ulum Dar-ul-Hadith, Kanaighat, Sylhet, Dar-ul-Ulum, Sahabad, Hailakandi, Dar-ul-Ulum, Banskandi, Cachar were some of the major madrassas of Surma-Barak Valley that were established as product of Deoband Movement by the last quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Students after passing out from these madrassas visited Dacca, United Province or Delhi for Higher education. Option of government job for these '*qaumi*' madrassa passed student was not there, so, they used to get engaged as teachers in similar madrassas or *maqtab*s or as '*Imam*' in mosque. However, on account of their religious learnings, they held in high admiration and prestige in the society. The common people, generally expected the *Ulemas* as highly learned in Quran, Hadith, Muslim philosophy, Muslim law etc. and for their profound knowledge in the above subjects they were respected and revered by the general people. Thus they enjoyed an exalted position in the society.

In the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Deobandi *Ulemas* and the Deonbandi School faced opposition from the Aligarh School on the issue of pro-British and anti-British policies, and by the end of the century the ideological conflict developed with Barelwi's, another theological School developed under Ahmed Reza Khan centering round Barelwi. Their conflict on religious issues had its impact on the political participation. 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, and were apprehensive of the

practices which developed in the Muslim society in its path of evolution in Indian subcontinent. They were thus an oppositional group rather than the reformer. Most of their activities and movements were motivated and targeted confrontation and refutation on the Deobandi stands.

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. Deobandi *Ulemas* took the leading role in organizing this Association. However, the Barelwis groups due to their opposition with the Deobandis' and *Ahl-i-Hadith* on religious issues were not joined in the Association.

The partition of Bengal and its subsequent annulment awakened the Muslims of Bengal to some extent politically and the Khilafat Non Co-operation Movement through its religious appeal united the Muslims of all shade of opinion together against the British all over the countries. The *fatwa* issued by *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* and Mehmood-ul-Hassan and Hussain Ahmed Madani along with the tours of Maulana Mohammad Ali, Shaukat Ali, Mahatma Gandhi raised the status of the movement in to a mass movement. The Muslims of Surma Barak Valley in general and *Ulemas* and *talebas* of different madrassas in particular also actively organized and participated in the movement. Student communities of Surma-Barak Valley left schools and participated in the movement. In many places of Surma-Barak Valley, during the course of the movement, new madrassas were started, as students after leaving government schools searched for new avenues and madrassas provided them the scope. However, Sufi Habibur Rahman, Head of the Fulbari Aziria Alia Madrassa opposed the movement and did not allow its students to join in the movement. That created a chaos in the locality. Students left the madrassa and soon a new Madrassa 'Dhaka Uttar Ranaping Madrassa' was started where they got admitted. Sufi Habibur Rahman's family was also socially boycotted by the local people.

A branch of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* was started in Bengal in 1921 which worked at provincial level maintaining its relation with the All India *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*. The Nehru Report of 1928 disappointed the leaders of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* and that created a gap in the Congress-Jamiat alliance. The Lahore Session of Congress made the Nehru report null and void which also declared complete independence as its only objective. That made Hussain Ahmed Madani happy and once again he gave his consent to the Jamiat's participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement. However, *Jamiat Ulema-e-Bangla* was reluctant to participate in any movement along with the Congress. This conflict led a section of *Ulemas* to remain silent in the movement but the followers, disciples, students of Hussain Ahmed Madani actively participated in the movement.

After the passing of the Govt. of India Act 1935, most of the political parties started preparation for the ensuing election. Mohammad Ali Jinnah after a short exile from active politics returned in 1935 and reorganized the Muslim League which in last few years had been a moribund condition and in the absence of Jinnah the Muslim League had 'lived in paper'. In the provincial election of 1937, they performed quite well in Muslim majority provinces. Congress in United Province denied to make coalition government along with them and also denied to recognize them as the representative of Indian Muslims. That led the Muslim League to demand for separated homeland for the Indian Muslim in its Lahore Session.

The demand for a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims with the Muslim majority provinces gave a readymade support to the Muslim League. What the Muslim League had failed to earn in three decades, was earned with a single resolution. The Muslim League leaders realized that without the co-operation of the *Ulemas* it would not be possible to reach out to the masses in large scale. Being, a genuine 'politician', Jinnah, knew how to manage the situation. By raising the communal issues the Muslim League to some extent succeeded in managing a good number of *Ulemas* to their side. To weaken the influence of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*, he patronized another such organization *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* which was formed at Calcutta in 1945, by a section of *Ulemas* who were politically opponent of Hussain Ahmed Madani of Dar-ul-Ulum, Deoband. Interestingly,

Jinnah used Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, Ashraf Ali Tanwi and other such *Ulemas* with good reputation, who were also associated with Deoband, because Jinnah was quite aware about the institutional hold of the Deobandi *Ulemas* in different parts of country.

The *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* on the other hand was greatly disappointed with the League's Resolution and the Azad Muslim Conference, convened on behalf of the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* and other organizations in April, 1940 at Delhi, reinforced strong views on the reactions that the Lahore Resolution had provoked in the circle of the non-Muslim organization. The Conference reiterated that the League was playing a dangerous political game at a very high stake. A booklet consisted of two articles one of Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, and the other Maulana Syed Muhammad Miyan. '*Hamara Hindustan aur uske Faza'il*' ('Our India and its Glories'), brilliantly articulates this commitment of leading Deobandi *ulema* to the cause of composite Indian nationalism and gave rise to a spirit in favour of united India. Similarly, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, also visited across the country and tried to mobilize the masses against the illegal demand of Muslim League.

The Assam Muslim League which was formally founded in 1938 with Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan as President and Abdul Matin Choudhry as Secretary was reconstituted in 1939 with Sir Mohammad Shadullah as President, Abdul Hamid Khan as Vice-President and Abdul Matin Choudhury as General Secretary. They were excited with the Lahore Resolution and in January 1941, demanded the inclusion of Assam in proposed Pakistan scheme of Muslim League. To popularize the demand the leaders of the Muslim League and volunteers organized public gathering in many places of Surma-Barak valley and the Brahmaputra Valley. The largest public gathering in this context took place in Habiganj town on 30-31 January 1941, at the Second Assam Provincial Muslim League Conference where more than 50,000 Muslims attended and the conference was presided over by A. K. Fazlul Hoque, the Chief Minister of Bengal. It showed how in a short span of time the popularity of Muslim League had spread throughout the province.

It is interesting that the Deobandi *Ulemas* from the very beginning, were the champions of preserving Islam and of protecting Muslim culture still they opposed the demand for a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims where they could preserve Islam as well as those cultural values which epitomized the Muslim culture, without any danger from any non-Muslim quarter to threaten these. The crux of its opposition lay in its traditional conception of Islam. Since, the leadership of the Pakistan movement was in the hands of the western educated Muslims, they had sufficient reason to be alarmed at the future fate of 'Islam' in Pakistan. They further realized that the scheme of partition was not going to solve the Indian communal problem and millions of Muslim would be left behind in "Hindu India".

The period from 1945-47, was a peak period where the Muslims of Surma-Barak Valley were clearly divided in to two groups, one was led by *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* Congress coalition and while the other was led by Muslim League. The former group mainly consisted of the *Ulemas* of madrassas, *Imams* of mosques, *talebas* and a section of common masses. The other group consisted mainly of the middle class Muslims general educated Muslims, landed Muslims and also a section of *Ulemas* who were against *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*. The organization developed a strong institutional hold through Deobandi networking madrassas in Surma-Barak Valley. However, *Ulemas* passed from Calcutta Alia Madrassa, Sylhet Alia Madrassa, Fulbari Aziria Alia Madrassa, Jingabari madrassa, Barelwi Madrassa, Rampur Madrassa were mostly sided with the Muslim League. 'Jamiat *Ulema-e-Bangla*' and the formation of 'Jamiat *Ulema-e-Islam*' also consolidated the hold of the Muslim League in the Muslim society. The Deobandi *Ulemas* of Surma-Barak Valley mainly used traditional mobilizing method through informal interactions, meeting at prayer time, at the time of *Jhum'a* (Friday), on the Islamic *Jalsha*, *Waz Mehfil* and on such other occasions. The League activists on many occasions violently forbade Deobandi *Ulemas* in their campaign for united India. The League used its *Ulemas* for informal mobilization for the cause of Pakistan and also used modern mobilizing agencies for wide circulation through its volunteers. Surma Valley League leaders also possessed News Papers like *Jugabheri*, *Assam Herald* of their own and used these for mobilizing the masses. Songs, slogans, poems were composed, leaflets



were circulated by both the groups and used not only for mobilizing the public in their favour but also for attacking and counter attacking each other.

Campaign for and against partition continued by both the groups throughout the province and got a great boost by the end of 1945, on the eve of the provincial election in 1946. All India leaders of Congress, *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* and the Muslim League like Jawaharlal Nehru, Hussain Ahmed Madani, Mohammad Ali Jinnah came for the election campaign in both Surma Valley and Brahmaputra Valley. Muslim League in course of time with the formation of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam* got the support of a section of *Ulemas* and their communal appeal to a large extent convinced the Muslim masses to favour them. Thus out of 34 Muslim reserved seats Muslim League alone secured 31 seats and the rest three seats were secured by the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* candidates in Surma-Barak Valley. In the high tide and flow of the Muslim League three seats were secured by the *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* candidates. This was mainly because of the strong support of the *Ulemas* of the madrassas and mosques. Hussain Ahmed Madani, President of *Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind*, who stayed five years in Sylhet in the third decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, used to perform *Iteka'af* in every *Ramadhan* in subsequent years till 1946, in the Sylhet Naya Sadak Mosque. That created a good bondage between him and the *Ulemas* of different madrassas and also the masses of Surma-Barak Valley. Besides, *Ulemas* of Surma-Barak Valley who studied in Deoband during this period also had emotional attachment with him.

Congress and its allies got the absolute majority in the Provincial election of 1946 and Gopinath Bordoloi formed the ministry in Assam. On the other hand when the Cabinet Mission came to India, in order to settle the conflict between the Congress and the Muslim League suggested its plan for division of Indian states in to three Groups, Assam was classified in to third Group along with Bengal which was opposed by the Bordlooi Government of Assam. Besides, by the end of 1946, he took up the task of eviction of the illegal immigrants as per the controversial Line System that led to wide spread protest movement in the Province. The Muslim League which was also excited with the election result took up the cause of the immigrants eviction, Line System and

anti-grouping attitude of the Government etc. and widely appealed to the masses through communal slogans against the Government. They started Civil Disobedience Movement, Maulana Bhasani's fast unto death for the cause of immigrants, and wide spread publicity of the atrocities made by the Government created a pathetic situation in Assam. However, the failure of the Cabinet Mission left for the British Indian Government no other option but the partition of the country in to two divisions as declared in the famous 3<sup>rd</sup> June Plan (1947) of Lord Mountbatten. However, when the division of the whole country was set, Surma Valley district Sylhet was left for plebiscite either to join with Assam or with Eastern Bengal.

The Muslim League became exalted at the announcement of the Mountbatten Plan. The prospect of a sovereign state 'Pakistan' elated them but they were dissatisfied with the fact that Assam would be excluded in the proposed Pakistan. Even the case of Sylhet was to be achieved and determined by plebiscite. However, the League leaders of Surma Valley left no stone unturned to prevent loss of further area and made every arrangement for wide campaign in favour of Sylhet's amalgamation with Eastern Bengal states. The campaign was led by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani who was specially assigned the task of mobilizing the masses. He mainly selected mosque compounds, Eidgah or those in the vicinity as the venues for his meetings, and undertook a campaign in which religious terms underlined the significance of his persona as a *Pir*. Service to Islam and vote infavour of East Bengal became synonymous in the campaign. The Friday prayers were attended by all Muslims most religiously and during the campaign period, time was allotted after the prayers to discuss the issues concerning the follower. However, the '*Fatwa*' issued by Maulana Suhul Osmani of Sylhet Alia Madrassa and its wide circulation by the League volunteers played a significant role in mobilizing the Muslims of Surma Valley.

Khaliqzaman was entrusted with the job to mobilize Muslim support for Sylhet's amalgamation with Pakistan by the Bengal Provincial League. Muslim League leaders, *Ulemas* from Bengal came to Sylhet for the campaign. Muslim League Student Federation under A. T. M. Masud also campaigned for the referendum. Muslim League

National Guard was reorganized under Abdus Salam for protecting the Muslim League meeting, rallies, processions etc.

*Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind* leaders like Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury, Maulana Ibrahim Choudhury, Abdul Matlib Mazumder, Maulana Mohammad Ali, Gulam Sabbir Khan, Maulana Moshaid Ali and others widely campaigned for Sylhet's retention with Assam. The *Jamiat Ulemas* of different madrassas, mosques and *maqtabas* tried till the last moment but they got support neither from the state nor the central body and ultimately failed to compete with the communal campaign of Muslim League and thus in the Referendum and the nationalist groups were defeated and Sylhet, after readjustment of boundaries by Radcliff Commission, joined with Eastern Bengal and then with East Pakistan.

The long struggle for India's independence thus came to an end, India got independence but after division in August 1947. In the whole discourse Ali Jinnah turned out as champion. During 1935, the All India Muslim League was in a measurable state and was even were unable to collect annual subscriptions. But, Mr. Jinnah, arrogant, proud cold blooded logician and lawyer returned to Indian politics at the age of sixty in 1935 and with his charismatic personality transformed the decrepit Muslim League in to a mass movement. Mr. Jinnah who with his able leadership created Pakistan, never experienced jail in his long political life.

However, the un-Islamic and anti-people characters of the Muslim League as apprehended by Hussain Ahmed Madani, Abul Kalam Azad and others were exposed to the ordinary Muslim masses only after the independence. Fazlul Hoque, the long time crusader against the dictatorial rule of Jinnah, Suhrawardy, the Muslim League Chief Minister of Bengal in 1943-47 and Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, the one time eminent Muslim League leader of Assam and a defender of the causes of the down-trodden among the Muslims, all combined together to oust the League from power immediately after independence and in the early fifties. The anti League movement started when Pakistan was not even a year old.