Chapter – II
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MAULANA ASHRAF ALI THANVI: LIFE

Genealogical Background:

In India, before the Muslim rule, Raja Bheem established a Qasbah (Town) in District Muzaffar Nagar by the name of “Thana Bheem”. When the Muslims settled there it began to be called ‘Mohammaed Pur’. But this name could not become popular and it was changed to “Thana Bhawan” from ‘Thana Bheem’. Now Thana Bhawan is a town of District Muzaffar Nagar situated 18 km away from Muzaffar Nagar to the South West.

Maulana Ashraf Ali, originally named Abd al-Ghani by his paternal family and later on known as Hakeem ul-Ummat, the famous moralist, traditionalist, jurist, logist was born on 5th Rabius Thani 1280 A.H., Wednesday Fajr at time (19th September 1863 A.D.) at Thana Bhawan. His date of birth is known as ‘Karam-i-Azeem’ which is nice. He was named ‘Ashraf Ali’ by the renowned saint of the time Hafiz Ghulam Murtadha Panipati, a maternal relative of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi.

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, referred by many Muslims as Hakim al-Ummah (‘spiritual physician of the Muslim Ummah’) and Mujaddid al-Millat (‘Reformer of the Nation’), is a towering figure of Islamic revival and re-awakening of the 20th century.

Maulvi Mirza Mohd. Beg Malik, was the first man who used for him the title of Hakim-ul-Ummat and later it was adopted by all. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi became the most eminent religious personality of his time, a prolific author and the greatest Sufi of Modern India.

3. Ibid., p. 7.
The forefathers of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi had settled at Thana Bhawan Centuries ago. On his father side they came from Thanesar, District Karnal and were Farooqi by descent and by mother side they migrated from Jhanjana to Thana Bhawan and were Alvi by descent. His father Mr. Abdul Haq was a rich man, a devout Muslim, a well respected citizen and held in esteem in Thana Bhawan. He was well educated in Persian Language; knew Qur'an very well, knew the holy books and was a man of high learning and intelligence and considered an authority in his vicinity. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi’s linage can be traced back to the second Caliph of Islam, ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattab, a glimpse of whose intelligence, wisdom, piety and sincerity was certainly visible in Maulana Thanvi. His mother was also an intelligent and saintly lady. His maternal uncle Pir Imdad Ali, was a well known saintly person of his time and people held him in high esteem on account of his piety and excellence of character. “Mir Najabat Ali” His maternal grandfather besides being well versed in Persian language was one of the best writers renowned for his fine and subtle expressions that were gifted with fine wit. He was disciple of first Khalifa to Maulana Shah Niyaz Ahmed Barelvi and was closely associated with Hafiz Ghulam Murtada, the well known Majdub of his time.

From among his fore-fathers, was Sultan Shahab Uddin Ali, known also as ‘Farakh Shahi’, whose descendents were well known for their outstanding piety and Sufistic caliber? Sultan Shahab Uddin Farakh Shah was first king of Kabul after the fall of Ghaznavids rule. He invaded India and vanquished various non-Muslim rulers. After some time he resolved to change his life to spiritual ways of life living in mountains in a calm and peaceful atmosphere. He attached himself to Chisti Darveshes and attained their spiritual heights in this path and illuminated those around him with light and learning. He was buried in a village which is still known by the name ‘Darrah Farukh Shah’ and is visited by many peoples.

6. Ibid., p. 2.
An Exploration of Childish Epoch:

On the death of his mother Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi was of 5 years old and the whole responsibility of bringing him up fell upon the shoulders of his father. He took great pains in his teaching and trained him and his younger brother in discipline and good character. He himself admits that my father fostered us very affectionately both me and my brother so that made us forget the sadness of our mother. He treated me especially kindly. One day our aunt asked him as to why he always beat the younger but rarely the elder. He replied that it is the younger on who instigates the elder to mischief an also Ashraaf always learnt his lessons but he (younger brother) did not. He did not allow them to take sweet from the mosque after the Tarahwih's end in Ramadhan but bought for us from the shop. He considered it immodest greedy.

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi did not like to play with children; he knew how to play games but was not interested. In his games he used to copy the prayers with congregation. From young age he had great desire and interest for Namaz. Even whilst playing he used to intimate the Namazis, i.e. he gather all his friend's shoes placed than in a line put one in front and expressed his happiness that the shoes were performing Namaz. He had great desire to deliver sermons so much so that when he passed by a mosque and even if or it was not the time of Namaz, he used to enter the mosque, ascend the mimber and give lecture and come out. Once there was an expert Blind Hafiz Sahab who knew the Qur'an very well. One day Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi was reciting the holy Qur'an in the Nafl Namaz for him, and told him, I would deceive you in Qur'an in this verse, so when he reached that place in the Qur'an he recited Allah as if he was going to Ruku, thus the teacher obeyed him but he continued to recite the Qur'an, he laugh involuntarily and then started again the Niyyat for Namaz.

At the tender age of 12-13 he used to pray Tahajjud prayer and recite Zikr-Ullah. Frequently his aunt used to says that it is too early for you to do

this but he was the disciple of Maulana Fateh Mohammed Sahab so he
continued with it. He could not sleep in a room with strong smell, e.g. if guava
etc. was kept there. He could not eat food left over by some even if by a saint.
He was a man of principles as admitted by his first wife. He would have been
born in a king family. Maulana Shaikh Mahmud Sahab Thanvi (RA), who was
Haji Imdadullah’s co-mureed commented on watching him and said that he
will replace me.

An event mentioned in his biography states that in his childhood he saw
a dream in which he saw that a cage with two pigeons was placed in a big
house, when evening came and it became dark they asked him to lighten the
cage he replied you light it yourself, for a moment they grazed their beaks and
the light illuminated the whole cage. After a long period when discussed it to
his maternal uncle Wajid Ali Sahab (RA) he interpreted it that the pigeons were
soul and self, and grazing beaks means that you will not perform mystic
exercise and struggle yourself and that Insha-Allah without endeavors. Allah
will enlighten your soul and self.

Education:

Education of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi was begun with the bringing
him up with religious inherent qualities and thinking. His father had been seen
the talents and natural aptitudes of his son, only he then chose religious
education for him to serve as the foundation for all his learning in its various
aspects. He therefore considered it necessary to put his child in Madrasah to
enable him to pick up Arabic and Persian.

His academic carrier started in Meerut where he learnt elementary books
of Persian through different teachers. Some chapters of the Holy Qur’an were
memorized by ‘Akhoonji’ Sahab but the entire text of Holy Qur’an was learnt

8. Ibid, pp. 21-22.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 23.
11. Ibid., p. 25.
by heart under the guidance of Hafiz Husain Ali, who hailed from Delhi and had settled in Meerut. There after he returned to Thana Bhawan for further education of Elementary Arabic and elementary Persian from Hazrat Maulana Mohd. Fateh Sahab (RA). The higher books of Persian i.e. Abu-al-Fazal were taught to him by his maternal uncle Maulana Wajid Ali who was a renowned master of Persian Literature. After obtaining the knowledge of Persian and some elementary Arabic he went to Deoband to complete the course of Arabic literature where he learnt a majority of books with Maulana Manfa’at Ali e.g Panj Raqqah, Qasida-i-urfi and Sikander Nama. He had gained complete mastery and ability in Persian and be able to give discourses in prose and poetry. During student life just for amusement, when he was of 18 years and his literary life had begun at Dar al-Uloom Deoband, he wrote a mathanvi “ZERO BAM” which is a practical evidence of his literary taste and acquisition of the knowledge of Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages.

He was good looking and had a melodious voice and recited the Qur’an beautifully. He learnt “Tajweed” (recitation of Qur’an) after his first Haj from Qari Mohammed Abdullah Muhajr Makki who was famous Qari of Arabic in Mecca. After performing his first Haj he also had the opportunity to stay in the company of Haji Imdadullah, where spiritual attention, luminous personality, brilliant teaching and excellent methodology of training prepared Maulana Thanvi for the great reform movement he was destined to lead.

He entered Deoband in 1295 A.H. and graduated in 1301 (1923) at the age of 19 years, where he devoted full five years to complete Dars-e-Nizamiyah under the guidance of learned teachers such as Maulana Ya’qub, who was the principal of Dar al-Ulum Deoband, Maulana Qasim Nanautvi, Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gongohi, Shaikh ul-Hind Maulana Mahmud ul-

12. Ibid., p. 21.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
Hasan and Maulana Manfa'at Ali. His five years at Deoband were spent under the spiritual guidance of God-fearing man, Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki a great Sufi of his time, who taught and trained him on the *Naqshbandiyah* way of Sufi discipline.\(^7\) He was also influenced by eminent scholars like Maulana Fateh Mahmud Thanvi, and Qari Mohd Abdul Bari Muhajir Makki.\(^8\) Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, himself later a great Sufi. His intelligence and piety both contributed to the excellence of theory and practice that was manifested in his personality. It was a great accomplishment on his part that he became a Persian and Arabic scholar and completed *Dars-e-Nizamiyah* at such an early age. His education covered sufficient fields in Islamic studies like Arabic grammar, *Etymology, Syntax, Rhetoric, Logic Philosophy, Mathematics, Astronomy, Scholastic Theology, Fiqh, Usul-e-Fiqh Tafsir and Kalam etc.*\(^9\) The elementary books were taught to him by Hazrat Maulana Fateh Mohammed then on his return to Deoband he started *Mishk'at Sharif, Mukhtasar Ma'ani, Noor al-Anwar and Mulla Hasan*. His father had selected him for Arabic education from childhood and given him Arabic education with great enthusiasm. Once his (Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi's) aunt had asked his father you that he chose to give English education to the younger so he could earn his livelihood by doing something of moral excellence, but the elder was reading Arabic, so how would he earn and what would be his condition to be keep alive, how he would earn his living. Since the property would be distributed among the inheritors and what would be left for him would not suffice for his living. At this comment his father became very furious and although he reputed her very much but infuriated he replied that by Allah such persons whom you regard as well off will lie on his foot on the way and he would not even throw a glance at them.\(^10\)

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All through his student life Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi kept aloof from fellow students and relatives. As he admits that after graduation as innocent as I had gone there five years back. He was a man of conspicuous peculiarity and he never wasted his time. He graduated very quickly and always remained far away from the company of evils.²¹ He spent his time in reading books with his special teachers. Maulana Mohammed Yaqoob Sahab, who was the first teacher, he used to sit in his company and listen to him carefully, a thing that is becoming less and less prevalent now. One day Maulana Mohammed Yaqoob Sahab had gone somewhere and even then he took the opportunity of sitting in the company of another teacher, Maulana Sayyid Ahmed Sahab instead of wasting of his time in useless talk. During the student life, in short, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi had never wasted his time worthlessly and kept himself actually busy in his essential desires, that is entirely in search of knowledge.

He felt great pleasure in reading had read many different books of some different authors. All the teachers had regarded him. Thus, as a student he was honored and distinguished among his class fellows. His teachers were aware of his abilities. Thus when Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi arrived at Deoband to take the exam of the students, and for the graduation ceremony his teacher Shaikh-al-Hind, Maulana Mahmud al Hasan praised him on his intelligence and presence of mind and declared that a very bright and intelligent student would be graduating. Then the examiner Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi put some difficult questions to test his brilliance, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi satisfied them with their replies. Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi was amazed and pleased with his answers.²²

**Avidity of dilecting Writings (Munazarah):**

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi was an expert logician and an eloquent speaker and based his argumentation in discussions and conversations on logical reasoning, and rationale. The position was that if any body reached

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there (Thana Bhawan) with the intention of *munazrah* (dialectic discussion), he went without delay and subdued him. He was well versed in intellectual knowledge and logic. Once he reached to an English clergyman who came to Thana Bhawan with the intention for *munazrah* (dialectic discussion) When Maulana Mahmud al-Hasan came to know this he thought that Maulana Thanvi, is inexperienced and that he may not be overawed he, himself reached there for support. He very soon made him speechless and at that moment his wife, feeling that he will be defeated sent a note to him and he immediately withdraw saying that Madam wants me. He not only withdraws from there but also left Deoband.\(^{23}\) Maulana Thanvi himself said that at time the more I liked such debates now, because of its harms, I hate it that much. He had debated with the Aryans, Shi’ites, and Christians and non-conformists, in student life.\(^{24}\)

Maulana Sayyid Murtada Hasan Sahab commented that in the art of religious debates. Maulana Thanvi had an exceptional command. No one can oppose him. His various speeches on different occasions on the science of Traditions are published in the form of magazines and books. He was a good debater on religious matters and was ready to discuss and debate on any topic and could argue with great success with the holders of opposite views.\(^{25}\)

**Convocation:**

In 1300 A.H. at the time of the prize distribution and convocation ceremony (*Dastar Bandi*) to be celebrated in full colour with great enthusiasm and joy by the teachers of Dar al-Uloom Deoband. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi along with his fellow students went to Maulana Mohammed Yaqoob Sahab and said that we hear that we are going to be graduated and given certificates. “We do not deserve for it please cancel it as our graduation will bring a shame to the Dar al-Uloom Deoband.” On hearing of this concern of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Maulana Yaqub replied that your thinking is completely wrong! At Dar

\(^{23}\) Aziz al Hasan, *op. cit*, p. 29.


al-Uloom Deoband, in the presence of your teacher you do not feel anything. You consider your personality to be very meek and in significant. In fact once you graduate and go out side of this institution, you will realize your worth and importance. Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi said I take Oath by Allah that when you will anywhere no body will oppose you, and you will prevail and become dominant.26

After completing his education at Deoband, Maulana Thanvi settled at Kanpur and started his missionary work in Madrasah ‘Faid- e-Aam’ where he thought high level books, wrote *fatawa’s* and delivering lectures27 on various topics connected with Islam in the various sphere i.e., Hadith, Tafsir Fiqh, Mantiq Philosophy and Tasawwuf. His lectures (*Wa’az*) were highly intractable clarifying and he enlightened the audience with his learned discusses on religious topics.28

During his teaching career at Kanpur, Maulana Thanvi reported, to have seen ‘Abdullah’ Ibne Abbas, the cousin of Prophet (SAW) and the leading commentator on the Qur’an, among the companions in a dream that indicated to him that the Qur’anic exegesis should become his primary task.29

Maulana Thanvi did not have much opportunity to study under the founder of Dar al-Uloom Deoband. He himself mentioned that he would occasionally attend the lecture of Maulana Qasim Nanautvi on *Tafsir al-Jalain*.30 Maulana Thanvi greatly benefited from Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi and Maulana Mohammed Yaqoob Nanautvi. He says that, “Among my teachers I was spiritually attached to Maulana Gangohi” with the exception of Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki. Maulana Thanvi received much affection and spiritual training from Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi. Whenever Maulana Thanvi arrived at Deoband, Maulana Gangohi would say, “when you

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27. His lectures were therefore, attended by many people residing at Kanpur and its vicinity.
arrive, I become alive,"^31 Once Maulana Thanvi came to Gangoh to deliver a lecture. Maulana Gangohi sent all his visitors to attend his lecture, saying to them, what are you doing here? Go and listen to the lecture of a truthful scholar. Maulana Gangohi would also send some his students to Thana Bhawan to benefit from the ocean of knowledge and spiritually that was Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi was also deeply inspired by Maulana Yaqoob Nanautvi a devoted theologian and a divine mystic Maulana Yaqoob has stated that Maulana Thanvi was an unusual student who was provided naturally with extraordinary character.

Some Students of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi:

Maulana Thanvi lived for 14 years at Kanpur imparting the knowledge of religious sciences, where he acquired a reputable position and good deal of popularity in very short time. His teaching attracted many students later he becomes the torch bearer of Islamic teaching in many Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, and his research and publications enhanced Islamic academia. He traveled to many cities, towns and villages and delivered lectures in the hope of reforming the people. After these tours the lectures and discussions would usually become available shortly in printed form of books. In the history of Islam there have been very few scholars whose lectures have been printed and widely circulated during their lifetimes. The desire to reform the masses intensified in his heart during his stay at Kanpur. The following prominent students were inspired by Maulana Thanvi and they spread the knowledge of religious education in all over the Indian Sub continent:

1. Maulvi M. Ishaq Sahab, Bardanwi (RA) who was the successor of Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (RA) in Kanpur and founded the Madrasah Aliya at Calcutta.

2. Maulvi Ahmed Ali Sahab, (RA) who specialized is Fiqh and made public his knowledge in Fatehpur and Barabanki.

3. Maulvi Fazle Haq Sahab, (RA) of Allahabad his work "Mishnat-bit-Takveer" showed his mastery over philosophy and taught at Qannauj.

4. Maulvi Hakim Mohammed Mustafa Sahab, (RA) Bijnori was a person having great knowledge of Arabic literature and logic. He used to write down the points from Maulana Thanvi’s sermons and then rewrite it like the original. He wrote an explanation of a remarkable work of Maulana Thanvi’s "Al Intibahat-ul Mufeedah".

5. Maulvi Sayyed Ishaq Ali Sahab Kanpuri (RA) who was Professor of Arabic at Allahabad University.

6. Maulvi Zafar Ahmed Uthmani Sahab (RA) who was nephew of Maulana Thanvi, he wrote "Aylaassssuan" consisting of 11 volumes on Fiqh and Hadith.32

7. Maulvi Rashid Sahab (RA) who was specialized in Fiqh and Fatawa and devoted himself in Madarsa Aliya on a wealthy salary.

8. Maulvi Sadiq al-Yaqeen Sahab Khurasani (RA) was a wealthy and devoted man. He was a nearest student of Maulana Thanvi and also was a disciple of Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi.

9. Maulvi Shah Lutf Rasool Sahab (RA) was an intelligent durvesh of high prophecy. He was accepted by Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki as his (mureed).

10. Maulvi Mazhar ul Haq Sahab (RA) had a great knowledge of Persian. The people of Bengal had great regard for him.

11. Maulvi Shahid Ahmed Sahab (RA) was appointed as District Judge of Gwalior.33

Maulana Thanvi, along with being an orator of excellence, was also a great teacher who had his own exceptional method of teaching. Some of his thoughts on teaching may be summarized as follows:

1. Teacher should himself first understand the lesson and present it to the students in an easy and intelligible manner.

2. Difficult and complicated problems should be presented in a simple way first and when the student grasps it then only the technical and difficult term be used.

3. He disliked that just to prove his ability. The teacher should deliver a lecture so long that it is more than necessary.

4. The course should be taught first and complete, argumentation easily.

5. For the student too in order that they may gain the required ability he had the following advices:

   (a) The next lesson should necessarily be read before the class.

   (b) He should not proceed further without understanding what the teacher as teaching.

   (c) Once he understands the lesson then later he should revise it accordingly.

He had a novel method of teaching and always tried to inculcate the ability of learning in the pupils by training them in that art.

He wanted students to study the lesson thoroughly themselves before learning the lesson with the help of teacher.34

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi resigned from the Madrasah ‘Faid e-Aam’ when he was asked by his colleagues to appeal for donation for the madrasah at the conclusion of his public lectures since his lectures attracted a large gathering. Maulana Thanvi disliked this and joined Madrasah Jami al-Uloom which was specially established for him at Jama Masjid of Mohalla Tapkapur.35

35. Ibid., p. 5.
The Company of a Pious, God fearing Shaikh is necessary for every Muslim. Through the knowledge gained from books, a man can reform himself externally and through the company of a Shaikh his internal conditions are purified. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi had great concern about focusing on his spiritual self. During student life at Dar al-Uloom Deoband, once Maulana Rasheed Ahmed Gangohi came to Deoband Maulana Thanvi asked him to accept him as his mureed and train him in the spiritual sciences. However, Maulana Gangohi did not accept at that time and advised him to wait.\(^{36}\)

His first Haj and first meeting with Haji Imdadullah was very interesting indeed. Maulana Thanvi remained impatient. When Maulana Gangohi went for Haj in 1299 A.H., Maulana Thanvi sent a letter through Maulana Gangohi to recommend him to accept him as his mureed. Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki said, “All right, I accept you as my mureed” and wrote to Maulana Thanvi, “do not worry; I have taken you under my own mentorship”. He was 19 years of age then, Haji Imdadullah wrote to his father asking him to bring him along when he proceeds on Hajj.\(^{37}\) When Maulana Thanvi read the letter his heart became full of joy. Maulana Gangohi used to tell Maulana Thanvi “Brother”, you have eaten of the ripe fruit\(^{38}\) of Haji Imdadullah, whereas we ate his unripe fruits.”

Maulana Thanvi visited Haji Imdadullah during his first Haj in 1301 A.H. (1884 C.E.) Haji Imdadullah told him to stay for six month, with him Maulana Thanvi could not remain in his company because his father wanted to return early Haji Sahab, told him to leave as his father’s obedience comes first. On his second Haj in 1310 A.H. Maulana Thanvi stayed with his Shaikh for six month. Haji Sahab advised him to go to Thana Bhawan and leave Kanpur.\(^{39}\)

He retired from teaching at Kanpur in 1315 A.H. after teaching for 14 years and devoted himself to re-establishing the Khaqah (spiritual centre) of his

\(^{36}\) Aziz al Hasan, op. cit., p.166.
\(^{37}\) Ibid., p. 165.
\(^{38}\) Fruit refer to knowledge.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., p. 169.
Shaikh in Thana Bhawan. Upon this change, Haji Imdadullah, Muhajir Makki remarked, "It is good that you came to Thana Bhawan and hope that the large number of students will be benefited, spiritually and physically by you, and told him to engage himself in revitalizing the madarsah and Khanqah in Thana Bhawan, as far as I am concerned, I am always praying for you and attentive towards you."\(^{40}\)

As an exponent of Islamic *Tasawwuf* Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi enjoyed great reputation among the Muslim thinkers of his time and occupied a distinct position amongst them. He did not leave any field of Islamic learning untreated. No doubt, Maulana Thanvi was a master of Islamic spirituality. He is considered the prominent Sufi of Modern India.\(^{41}\) His approach to *taswawwuf* was in complete harmony with the Qur’an and Sunnah. Accurately summarizing the approach of the scholar associated with Dar al-Uloom Deoband, regarding Sufism, Kenneth W. Jones writes:

"Deobandis conceived of Islam as having two points of focus Shari ‘a\(^{42}\) (the law, based on scriptures and religious Knowledge), and the Tariqah\(^{43}\) (path derived from religious experiences). Thus they accepted Sufism with its form of discipline, and the role of ‘Ulama’ in interpreting the four school of Islamic jurisprudence. The Qur’an the hadith, *qiyas* (analogical reasoning) and *Ijma* (consensus) provided the foundation of religious knowledge, and understanding them required the *Ulama* as guide. The Deobandis, while accepting Sufism and rejected numerous ceremonies and the authority of *Pirs* who claimed sanctity by their descent rather than by their learning. Knowledge granted authority and not inheritance. Pilgrimage to saint’s tombs and the death anniversary (*urs*) also lay outside acceptable Islamic practice. Among the types of behavior seen as erroneous innovation was any social or religious practice that appeared to come from Hindu culture. The scholars of Deoband purified Islamic mysticism in the Indian subcontinent, from all un-Islamic elements and practiced a *Tasawwuf* that earlier Muslims, such as Hasan al-Basri, Junaid al-Baghdadi, and Abd al-Qadir Jilani would advocate if they were living in the 20\(^{th}\) century. Pure,


\(^{42}\) Ib., p. 140.

\(^{43}\) Ib.
unadulterated Sufism is an important part of the Islamic faith. Dar al-Uloom Deoband trained individuals to become rational scholars, as well as sound practitioners of *Tasawwuf*. In choosing "*Muftis and Shaikhs*" as the title of chapter in her well-researched monograph *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Barbara Daly Metcalf emphasizes this beautiful combination.\(^{44}\)

Imam Shafa‘i said, “Knowledge is not what is memorized; knowledge is what benefits”\(^ {45}\). Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi’s knowledge was not only benefited his companions, but it continued to benefit Muslims all over the world. His words would flow into the ears of those who attended, of his discourses which then struck their heart, scraping away their spiritual rust. Mufti Mohammed Shafi would sit in front of Maulana Thanvi as a student of traditional Islamic studies sits before his teacher. “He would closely observed Maulana Thanvi and each moves of his showed that he had left this world and whatever was in it while engaging in the study of his *Shaikh*s appearance. When Maulana Thanvi would say something remarkable, Mufti Mohammed Shafi, who seemed totally absorbed in his *Shaikh* while unconscious of everything else, would leap forward in excitement."\(^ {46}\)

Mufti Mohammed Taqi ‘Uthmani says, Hakim al-Umma laid great stress, on prescribing proper remedies for the spiritual troubles of people. His cure did not give them medicinal syrup or to engage in same *wazifas* (formulas) but his prescription comprised of action.\(^ {47}\)

Preaching Islam and calling people to the way of Allah Almighty was an essential part of Maulana Thanvi’s life. Maulana did not confine his activities to the four walls of *Madrasa-e-Khanqah*.\(^ {48}\) He moved from place to place in the country to spread the true Islam and deliver lectures for the benefit of the

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people, who assembled in thousands to listen to him. Maulana Thanvi also visited to the area of Mewat in 1922 where the Muslims were at the verge of disbelief. He visited Alwar and also visited Gajner, a village in Kanpur District (U.P.), where the Aryans started to preach Hinduism among Muslims. He was also to take pledge from the people there “that they would not commit apostasy.” He also wrote a treatise *Al-Insidad* for the prevention of the spread of apostasy. He was highly organized and planned his lectures before tours. Thousands of people attended his lectures or sermons which usually lasted two or three hours and some up to five hours. During the course of his sermons he frequently quoted appropriate verses from Arabic, Persian and Urdu poetry. He spoke with extra ordinary clarity, the only purpose of his sermons being to make good out of ordinary Muslims. He struggled to transform Muslims into an excellent human being (*Insaan*) which he thought was better and different than being a *wali*.

Every true Islamic reformer roots out the irreligious practices, people perform in the name of religion. Through his speeches and writings Maulana Thanvi battled against all evil innovations in religion and presented Islam in light of *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. He was deeply concerned about ignorance of Muslims who performed unnecessary acts perceiving them to be righteous acts of religion. Hence, he wrote many books that dealt with this subject. His book *Hifz-al-Iman* clearly explains the evils, such as grave worshipping, other than Allah, believing in the Omnipresence of the Prophet Mohammed (SAW) and pious people and so on. Another book entitled *Aghlat al-‘awam* is an earnest effort to root out all un-Islamic rituals prevalent among the peoples and condemned innovation in belief, worship and transactions. Maulana Thanvi balance approach places all religious injections in their proper place with out excess (*Ifrat*) or short coming (*tafrit*).

Political View:

Maulana Thanvi was not a politician nor did he have interest in active politics. Even he tried to judge the politicians in their religious perspective and guide them accordingly. However, he was well aware of the politics in the country. At that time the struggle for the independence was at its peak. The Ulama of Deoband organized a committee named Jamiat al-Ulama but Maulana Thanvi opposed it but supported another camp of Ulama named Jamat ul-Ulama-i-Islam, which was founded by Maulana Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani. Prior to the adaptation of historic Lahore Resolution of March 1940, many noted Ulama advanced the idea of a separate Muslim homeland to protect the distinct, social, cultural and religious entity of the Indian Muslims. Maulana Thanvi was also among those Ulama who wanted Muslims to separate themselves from Jamiat ul-Ulama and congress and put the demand for creation of separate Muslim state in which Muslims could wield power and propagate their faith and culture independently. As far as the political views are concerned, Maulana Thanvi was a strongly supporter of Muslim league and intended that Muslims should have their independent separate state where Muslims may be able to exercise their right of self determination and follow the Islamic practices and teachings in true spirit in free atmosphere without any interruption and interference from outside agency. Maulana's view was that separate state for the Muslims was necessary for the preservation of Muslim culture and society, economy and commerce, craft and industry. He believed that the Pakistan be created for the establishment of an Islamic system essential for the governance and implementation of the Qur'anic code.

The idea of an independent state for Muslims took shape initially in the mind of Dr. Iqbal first. Motivated by the same ideal spirit, Maulana Thanvi

50. Manzoor Alam, op. cit., p. 213.
considered religiosity, as primary and therefore. Whenever, Maulana Thanvi found anything against the Shariah in Mohd. Ali Jinnah’s speeches or actions he deputed some persons to meet Quaid’-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Among them, the most prolific personalities were, Maulana Zafar Ahmad Uthmani, Maulana Mufti Mohammed Shafi and Hazrat Maulana Shabbir Ali to make him of the tenets of Islam so that Pakistan comes into being as an Islamic state, to stick sincerely and seriously in accordance in the Islamic injunctions, with the doctrine of Shariah.

Mohd Ali Jinnah held Maulana Thanvi in high esteem and listened to his views and messages attentively. But he did not pay much need to Maulana’s advice for Islamizing Muslim league.\footnote{Ibid.} He wanted to liberate Muslim league from western influence. Actually Jinnah followed his instructions in practice and the result was that an Ideal Muslim came into being as an Islamic state. Thus the dream of Dr. Iqbal was realized.\footnote{Ahmed Ali, op. cit., pp. 2-8.} Maulana Thanvi thought Pakistan was sure to emerge as an Islamic state on the map of world and Jinnah would be credited for it.

The Khanqah of Maulana Thanvi located in Thana Bhawan, District Muzaffar Nagar, which has a mosque, a library, a guest house etc? In the beginning the following three deputies of Hazrat Mianji Noor Mohammed Sahab (RA) lived in Khanqah:

1. Hazrat Haji Mohammed Imdad Ullah (RA),
2. Hazrat Haji Mohammed Dahmim Sahib mertya (RA) and

During the Ghadr (mutiny) Haji Imdadullah migrated to Mecca, Haji Dahmim was martyred and Maulana Shaikh Mohammed died. Khanqah lay vacant for sometime. Hazrat Maulana Thanvi later settled and remained there
till the age of 60 years. During this time Maulana Thanvi wrote nearly 800 to 1000 books on Islam which are still being reputed and read by many. The Large number of people came there to follow spiritual path and to reform themselves in accordance with the will of Allah so that they could become true human beings.

In the system evolved by Maulana Thaanvi “Salik” express the hidden dirty trick of their self and satan before the Shaikh who gives the cure or remedy according to the need of the person so as to purify them the vices and to bring them on to virtues. They suggest struggle, “Muraqabah”, for some while for others and still for others both. This remedy helps in purifying their salves and seek the pleasure if Allah.

Gradually such people came their, had who lost the way of Shariah and Sunnah, who could not distinguish right from wrong and obligatory from preferred. Maulana Thanvi used to explain the true nature of religion and clarify the principles and auxiliaries of Islam as it was required. There were Thousands of people who misunderstood the religion and many robbers were against the Way. Some non-Sunnah recitals which were all in Khanqah for centuries, i.e. worshipping Shaikh’s, tombs, chilla, muraqabah, dreams, miracles were stopped completely. There was mixture of religion and non-religion which were ranked as obligatory and considered as highest achievement. Selfish situation was regarded as spiritual situation. All those customs of Khanqah which were against the Sunnah were stopped by Maulana Thanvi. The customs, miracles materialism, and spiritualism and its progress were corrected according to the Shariah and Tariqah. He stopped the innovation in Shariah as well as Tariqah and revived the four orthodox silsila Chistiyyah, Naqshbandiyah, Suharvardiyah and Qadriyah and explained the true Tariqah in Shariah and Sunnah.

57. Ibid., p. 34.
Embodiment of Humility and Simplicity:

Way of life, Habits, dealings, moral and every step of Maulana Thanvi was on the straight path of Sunnah. All his life he followed “Laqad Kana fi Rasoolillah Uswatun Hasana” the Prophet (SAW). Some examples are taken from Ashraf As- Sawaneh, these have a loving touch of life of Maulana Thanvi.

Regarding the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (SAW), Maulana Thanvi once said, “I thought how much we talk about following the Sunnah and how much we actually follow. I examined myself for three days how we followed as a matter of Habit. After this examination he gave a lecture ‘Al-Ghalibo lit-talib’ which describes the deeds and teaching of Holy Prophet (SAW) and pointed out in chapter eight of his book Hayat-ul-Musleemeen” or Islamic Renaissance. It is good deeds, prosperity for the world and there after Allah has declared in Qur’an love who follow the Prophet (SAW) and his Sunnah.

He was simple, sensitive, and did like anything abnormal neither for himself nor for others.

He used to write any important thing that came to his mind. He said that he wanted to keep himself available for Zikrullah when opportunity arises and did not keep any one waiting for long nor wanted any one to keep him in suspense. When he started something he did not feel happy only when he finished it and he wrote books all nights long.

From childhood he remained neat and clean and did everything at its assigned time and properly. He kept in mind not to annoy anyone and not to displease any one. He used to examine his own actions and deeds from the very beginning.

Small children pleased him very much. He used to joke with them.

He accepted gifts, but not expensive ones and did not accept from strangers on first meeting.
He used to himself go to the person concerned in case of special need, so that he does not to discontinue whatever he was engaged with.

He was particularly not to take money in left hand and shoes in the right hand.

He never interfered in other’s jobs but if they themselves wanted to ask him. Usually he did not borrow something from others and if ever he did so, he returned it immediately.

He used to pay, salary to servants with respect by putting it in front of them and not by throwing it to them.

He was used to doing most of his work himself and did not depend on servants or family members and did not take to wait for anyone. He liked his own freedom and theirs too.

The roots of all good dealings, good way of life, and comfort and happiness are that you are not a source of trouble to any body. This he believed is the outcome of all Tasawwuf and Sulook.

He writes an object “Adab al-Ma’ashirat” which consists of little things which make up a happy life.

He would accept, if a known person invited him on meals.

He would advise against going to extreme in accepting “Tabarrukat”.

He would ignore minor mistakes of his friends.

He said, “Do everything with discipline. It is helpful to you and to others too.”

He stood for visiting the people on the occasion of death or marriage but was against attending the ceremonies of marriage or death. At the time of someone’s death he used to give lecture, on the patience and forbearance of the occasion and at the time of marriage gave lecture on blessing of Nikah and
against ceremonies on the occasion. At the time of visiting sick people he read the Qur'an and blows on them and prays also for health.\(^{58}\)

According to Mufti Mohammed Taqi Uthmani Hakim al-Ummat Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi used to say, “I do not consider myself superior to any Muslim at the present time and possibly not superior to any non-Muslim in with respect to future.” He says that, I am inferior to every Muslim, and inferior to every non-Muslim, if a non-Muslim accepts Islam then he must be a better Muslim than me.\(^{59}\)

He said that he never desired to see even his enemies in calamity. He treated each one according to his status, even books he kept Hadith books above then Fiqh, then Tasawwuf and then the other books. Similarly first Arabic, then Persian then Urdu. He himself said that he did not put any book on top of Arabic book.\(^{60}\) Maulana Thanvi was rectifying himself then correcting others, as he himself refers: “whenever I find the need of referring myself, I speak on that specific shortcoming of mind.”

Maulana Thanvi was man who believed in punctuality and regularity; he did his work at the right time, which is fundamentally important for success of life. If a man discipline’s one’s affairs and regulates them with time, thus would be helpful in his own life. Maulana Thanvi’s whole life was given up to useful and fruitful works, he never gossiped and did not interfere with other jobs. He guided Muslims in accordance with the Shariah of the Prophet (SAW) and provided a clear and complete guideline for all aspects of life.

Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi trained many disciples who spread his teaching all over the South Asia. It is true he is a man of endeavor who persuades true teaching of Islam to Muslims in mass.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., p. 24.
\(^{59}\) Taqi Uthmani, op. cit., p.25, Also http://annoor.word/press.com/biography-of-hazarathanvi
\(^{60}\) Mohd Abdullah, op .cit. p. 27.
Death:

Five years before his death, he was suffering from stomach and liver disease which developed sometime constipation and sometime diarrhea and his appetite was gone which could not be cured in spite of continuing long treatment. On Monday 19\textsuperscript{th} July 1943 A.D., after Maghrib he asked his younger wife, I have given you your monthly allowance, she replied yes. Then he said I am going today, she asked where? He said, you don’t know, and then he was senseless for more than one hour and then he breathed his last. People saw from his right hand middle finger a light coming and disappearing with his breath. He wrote \textit{Sharia} and \textit{Tariqah} with this finger.\textsuperscript{61}

Maulana Thanvi passed away in his home town of Thana Bhawan, in the night between 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} Rajab 1362 A.H. or night of July 19 and 20\textsuperscript{th} 1943 A.D. His funeral prayer was led by the great scholar of Hazrat Maulana Zafar Ahmad Uthmani (his nephew)\textsuperscript{62} and was buried in the \textit{Isha-q-Bezan} graveyard.

On his illness and death Maulana Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi composed in his writing that “lamp of past society (approaching its end) which was steady, has been extinguished by a wave of wind.”\textsuperscript{63}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 12.
\item \textsuperscript{62} http://annoor.word/press.com/biography-of-hazratthanvi
\item \textsuperscript{63} Najm al Hasan Thanvi, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 25.
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