Chapter 7

TABLIGH –I- JAMA’AT
Tablighi Jama'at is one of the most important grass rooted Islamic movements in the contemporary Muslim world and the west. It was started in 1926 focusing Da’wah work in Mewat near Delhi under the leadership of the sufi scholar Maulana Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944) He was born at Khandla, a small town in the district of Muzaffar Nagar in Uttar Pradesh. He came from a family, widely known for its scholarly pursuits in the Islamic learning and religious piety. He showed keen interest in the study of Hadith, Shari’ah and Tariqah. His father was Muhammad Ismail (d-1898) who lived in the Markaz Hazrat Nizamuddin as a madrasa teacher and a sufi recognized by his contemporaries like Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d.1905) and Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki (d.1898) and Maulana Muhammad Yahya. His mother was a notable lady from Khandla named Safia.

After completing his primary education under Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, who was considered to be his murid, left to Darul-Uloom at Deoband for higher studies. The learning from Deobund helped him to develop his character. He led simple and pious life, which helped him to possess a high spiritual status in the society. He spent much time in deep meditation and led a complete and deep rigorous spiritual exercises without public appearance. Thus he became known as great Shaikh and as capable of helping others in their spiritual matters.
After the death of his father he took the charge of Madrasa at Hazrat Nizamuddeen. As a teacher and spiritual leader his reputation spread far and wide particularly in Mewat. It attracted a considerable number of students to the Madrasa at Bangle Wale Masjid from Mewat. He visited Mewat and requested them to start maktabas and madrassas. This relationship between him and Mewat was started by his father and brother. His father started a Madrasa at Bangale Wale Masjid and invited the Muslim Meos, who were the casual labours by giving a promise that they would be paid daily the same amount which they expected to earn if they sat with him to learn the Qur’an (6). Later this relations helped him to start the movement at Mewat.

Mewat, is a place in Gangatic Plateau in North India inhabited by Rajputh tribe known as Meos. Their conversion to Islam took place in between 12th and 13th century, the formative face of Muslim rule in India. According to Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, the Meos converted to Islam due to the efforts taken by the well known sufi Nizamuddin Auliya and his successors(7). But most of this Meos were Muslims in name only. They retained many Hindu Socio-religious practices; many kept their old names and celebrated their old religious festivals. Most could not even correctly recite one line Shahadah (the Muslim profession of faith) or say their daily ritual prayers. Their birth, marriage and death rituals were all based on Hindu customs (8). Muhammad Ilyas frequently visited Mewat and
advised them to study religion. In the beginning there was some
resistance because the Meos were generally peasants, who were not
ready to send their sons for learning. But his perseverance and
patience won the way and a number of institutions were started.

During his days at Hazrat Nizamuddin, he started brooding over
the fertility of the *maktab* without changing the environment
around them. He realized that the person coming out from *maktab
or madrasa* would fall into astray if the society remains in their old
customs and practices\(^9\). He understood that the absence of religious
consciousness from the Muslim mass was the obstacle in their
communal solidarity. After conducting a careful study about the
moral degeneration of Indian Muslims, he reached a conclusion that
the way to overcome this crisis was to strengthen Islam through
popularizing Islamic beliefs and practices.

Another important aspect which influenced him was the
aggressive Hindu proselytizing movement as the Shuddhi Sangathan
which launched massive efforts in the early 20\(^{th}\) century to reclaim
those fallen away Hindus who had converted to Islam in the past.
They targeted the people like Meos who had retained most of the
religious practices and social customs of their Hindu ancestors. So
Muhammad Ilyas believed that only a grass-rooted Islamic religious
movement like purifying and educating the boarder line Muslims
about their beliefs and rituals, could counter the efforts of above
movements.
The third important factor which influenced the Muhammad Ilyas was the impracticability of starting madrasa or maktabs in the North India due to the financial crisis faced by the Muslim community after the 1857 Revolt. All the above factors forced Muhammad Ilyas to start a new type of reform movement. He realized that the collective effort of Muslims will help the spiritual upliftment of Muslim community. He organized the movement on the same pattern which was shown by Prophet and his companion in the early days of Islam \(^{10}\). He believed that this type of movement would be helpful for spiritual upliftment of Muslim community to retain the sunnah of Prophet, and express his love towards Muhammad (SAW) and brought out the Muslim community collectively to his own ideas of preaching. He felt that the duty of a scholar was to provide education to the degenerated Muslim society.

After his pilgrimage at Makkah in 1927, he arranged a conference at Noha and put forward his idea of Jama’at which would never compel the people to accept his message, instead he requested the people to follow the right path and get rid of the wrong deeds. He simply taught tauhid and rituals of Islam. The Jama’at, formed by Muhammad Ilyas, consisted 10 members, which moved from village to village. They invited the local people to assemble in nearby mosque or some other meeting places and present their message in the form of following six points.
1. **Kalimah**-which means witnessing “La-Ilaha-Illah Muhammad-Rasul-Allah” (There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger). This asserted the unity of God, reject all other deities and emphasized obedience to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

2. **Salah** (The obligated ritual prayer) - A Muslim must also learn how to perform the Salah correctly and in accordance with its prescribed rites. This not only emphasized the need for the rituals, performance of prayers in their essential forms but also encouraged the believers to strive for complete submission to God by bowing before him in humility and God consciousness.

3. **Ilm and Dhikr** (Knowledge and the praise and glorification of God). The term Ilm means the knowledge about right and wrong which God refers in his Holy Book and which in practiced by the Prophet (SAW) and the knowledge brought by Muhammad (SAW) for the guidance and enlightenment of mankind. The duty of all Muslims was to acquire and impart this knowledge to others. Prophet once said that

   “Convey to others what you listen from me even if it may be a single verse”.

The Jama'at instructed the preachers to recite and study holy books, study the life of the Prophet(SAW) and his companions and also eminent ulama and jurists of Islam who had explained the meaning of the scripture.
The second part of third point *Dhikr* means praise and glorification of God. The Jama'at instructed its followers to spend some time every day to praise the glory of God. It is performed with sincerity and deep contemplation. A believer performs even his mundane duty in a spirit of devotion to God and monitory or worldly consideration is secondary thing for him\(^{11}\).

4. *Ikram-e-Muslim* (Kindness and respect for Muslims)- Every Muslim must be respectful and polite towards fellow Muslims and show difference towards them. This principle recognizes and respects the right of others, right of elders to be treated respectfully, the right of young ones to be treated with love, care and affection, the right of poor to be helped in their needs, the right of neighbours to be treated gently and the right of those with whom we may have differences.

5. *Ikhas-e-niyyat* (Sincerity of intention) Muslim must always inculcate honesty and sincerity in all endeavours. Every thing is to be done for the sake of seeking the pleasure of God and serving His cause and not for any worldly benefits.

6. *Tafrigh-e-waqt* (sparing the time for the religion). It is the distinctive and innovative aspect of Jama'at. The members of Jama'at should be willing to donate time for preaching the word of God and ready to travel from place to place for a period of 40 days at least in the path of God. It is the maximum stint of out
door missionary activity for a new member. Here the Jama'at means the group going out for *tabligh*. Each Jama'at consists at least 10 members functioning under an *amir*. The duty of the *amir* was to attend every individual in the group and look after his needs. His decision is based on *mushawara* (mutual consultation). The aim of the Jama'at is self reformation and the service in the way of God. They laid down a code of contact to those who engaged in the programme as follows:

(i) Each person has to bear all the expenses when he goes out for *tabligh*. He can spend for his needy comrades. But nothing is to be accepted from the people of locality in which they work.

(ii) Respect and regard should to be paid to those who are engaged in this work.

(iii) The Ulama are the custodian of the knowledge of the Qura'n and the wisdom of the Hadith. Therefore special reverence is to be shown to them.

(iv) Entering into controversial discussions is strictly forbidden. The call is to be confined to basic beliefs and practices.

(v) Sincerity of intention is must and essential. A *muballigh* should always keep in mind that a religious act is rewarded only when it is done with sincerity of heart.

(vi) One should earn one's lively hood only by honest and fair means.
(vii). Ta'lim is the collective teaching and learning under the supervision of a mu'allim by the proper use of time when the people go out for tabligh. Wasting of time in superfluous talks and useless activities are to be avoided [12].

The method of Jama'at was set up by Muhammad Ilyas as ten days, 40 days, and 120 days, 1 year and for entire period of life. When the number of members of the Jama'at increased with new entrance it was split up and new Jama'at was formed. The muballighs were instructed to do the activities twice a week once at the locality and other at a nearby area and must spare three days in a month to partake in a Jama'at[13] The camp and venue of Tablighi Jama'at is the mosque and its surroundings. After reforming the optional tributary prayers amir used to divide the various duties to its members. During the tabligh, they invite the local Muslim to assemble in the mosque or some other meeting places and request them to cooperate with the movement. It is known as gasht [14]. It is of two types, qususi and umumi, the first one is inviting important personalities of the locality and seek their cooperation. But the second one is meeting of maximum number of people in the locality. They delivered a public speech after the prayer [15]. Apart from this they also conducted a study class to its members and locally assembled people. In this session they discussed the Sirah of prophet and his companions, virtues of salat, dhikr, zakat, hajj, fadail of the good deed and the Hadith and the Qura'n. This is the
Tabligh curriculum developed by Maulana Muhammad Zakaria a reputed scholar of hadith and a supporter of the movement (16). The methods of Muhammad Ilyas were further developed and visualized by Muhammad Zakaria and Maulana Muhammad Yusuf became the corner stone of Tablighi Jama’at in Kerala.

**Tablighi Jama’at in Kerala**

The functions of Tablighi Jama’at were started in Kerala in 1940’s itself (17). It was first introduced by the first Deobandi-alim, Maulana Musthafa Alim Sahib, who was a mudarris in the mosque of Eerattupetta in Kottayam District (18). Its running was not so smooth and did not get many followers. Even the early scholars of Deoband like Muhammad Musthafa Alim Punalur, Sadik Moulavi, Kiliyannoor, Abdul Hameed Moulavi Pudunagar, Abdul Hameed Hazrath, Amani Hazrath etc. were not active in the Tablighi Jama’at in Kerala. In the early stage the movement got some supporters which helped the later movement of Jama’at in the areas of Idukki district.

It was only after 1951 that the functioning of Tabligh Jama’at became so strong in the eastern side of the South Kerala. Its activities widened with the entrance of Kanjar Musa Maulana(19). He came back to his home after completing his degree in Manba-ul-Anwar at Lal Petta under Amani Hazrath. During his study at Lalpetta he got a chance to interact with the Jama’at activities and participated in the first Jama’at with his own teacher Amani Hazrat.
He started a Dars in his own place and continued his *tabligh* activities which influenced the local Muslims. After establishing a clear platform for the activities of Tabligh, he invited the Jama’at by Maulana Rahmatulla and Mi’anji Esa Sahib to Kanjar with a condition of constituting a 4 month Jama’at in his place. After that, the activities of *Tabligh* were started under Shaik Muhammad Kuthari better known as Todupuzha Hazrath. Gradually *Tabligh* ideas were spread to Eerattupetta, Kanjirappally, Moovattupuzha, Thodupuzha etc. Muhammad Labba Haji, Pareed Bava, Taha Haji, Muhammad Haji, Pareed Annan, Nur Maulana etc. were the important co-workers of Musa Maulana. In this regard the first *amir* of the movement was Kottar Shaikh Muhammad. It was after the death of Muhammad Labba Haji, the veteran companion of Musa Maulana became the *amir of Tabligh* in Kerala.

Musa Maulana was born in the Muhammad-Fathima family, on 10th May 1930 at Kanjar, in Idukki District. He completed his primary education at Kanjar and joined *Dars* for higher studies at Erattupetta under the Deoband scholar Muhammad Musthafa Alim sahib. Later Maulana joined the *Dars* at Needurnivas of Javor District in Tamilnadu. Then he joined *Manbual Anwar* at Lal Petta and completed his graduation under Amani Hazrat. There he learned the instructions of great scholars of South India like Abdullah Hazrat, Amani Hazrat etc. and was inspired with the ideologies of Muhammad Ilyas.
After his return from Lal Petta he started Tabligh activities in his village Kanjar which helped the Muslim to understand their religion. Later he sent small groups to the adjacent villages and the people welcomed this movement. He decided to invite an efficient Jama'at from Dindigal in order to give a powerful preaching. Thus a team under the leadership of Miyanji Esa Sahib reached at Kanjar and worked a few days there and the Jama'at then travelled to Kanjirappally, Thodupuzha, Erattupetta etc.

Musa Maulana tried his best to spread the ideology of Tabligh. To become a great scholar he sacrificed his wish and dreams. He spent his time for exclusively for the religious propagation. He worked hard for the improvement of the movement. He conducted the first conference at Kanjirappilly with the help of Madathil Thampi Ravuthar who was the mutawalli of the mosque. The conference was attended by hundreds of persons from different parts of South Kerala. They started moving in the form of Jama'at to Pulippara, Pangode, Kochalumoode, Chirayinkeezhu, Aattingal etc. This Jama'at founded its roots in southern Kerala. It attracted the prominent scholars like Pulippara Abdul Khader Moulavi, Ibrahim Haji, Haneefa Musaliyar, Sainul-abdin Moulavi, Chirayinkeezh Swalih Sahib, Perumathura Noor Maulana, Manakkad Abdul Rasheed Haji etc. After that the Tabligh started it functioning in the North Kerala and Tamilnadu.
After eight months of the Tabligh Musa Maulana come back from Delhi and became more active in his missionary works. He expanded his work from Idukki to Kottayam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alleppey, Pathanamthitta and Ernakulam. This movement got much recognition and popularity due to its cooperation with Dakshina Kerala Jami'at al-Ulama. It is a Sunni organisation formed in 1955. But this movement in Malabar region or in north Kerala was not much popularized or recognized by the Muslim Masses. They looked at this with doubtful eyes. Nobody was ready to accept or cooperate with it except a few innocent scholars.

During the early time some offshoots of Tabligh were introduced from Dindigal that worked at Thathamangalam, Puthunagaram and Vadakkanchery etc. in the District of Palakkad. The leaders of these areas were Vattappara Shahul Hameed Sahib, Abdul Kareem Sahib, Chittoor Abdul Hakkim Sahib and Abdullah Master Vadakkancherry. But the participation of common Muslims was not encouraging. Musa Maulana sent a Jama’at from Mettupalayam towards Thaliparamba via Shornur, Pattambi, Manjery, Perinthalmanna, Kozhikode and Kannur in 1984[24]. This group familiarized the ideology of Tabligh in the Northern Kerala. They faced a stiff resistance from the orthodox Sunni ulama under Samasta Kerala Jami’at al Ulama. The Jama’at could not attract much the ordinary Muslims for active participation. Though, they got some acceptance among the Muslims of Malabar. The people of
Thaliparamba welcomed *Tabligh* and started to co-operate with it. There they conducted a conference. The speech of Maulana during the Jama’at helped to popularize the *Tablighi* Jama’at in the whole Kerala. Now its activities are going on throughout the Kerala. They used to conduct three conferences in different parts of Kerala every year 

**Institutions:**

Tabligh has its roots in each and every nook and corner of Kerala. Maulana wished that there must be certain institutions to mould scholars and *huffaz* who are efficient enough to led all generations. He never wanted to seek financial assistance from others, instead he thought that he would run the institution with the help of rich ones among the Jama’at people who co-operated with him and also he himself took up most of the expenditure. Few affluent persons came forward, first among them was Maulana’s close friend Marhum Subair Haji. An institution named *Al-Jamiah-al-Kausariya* at Edathala in Ernakulam district became the centre of Tablighi Jama’at. It also became the centre of Kerala Markaz, *al-Kausarul Ulama Council*, publishing centre of *Al-Balagh* magazine and *Al-Ma’arif* publication. In the same way another one was established in Kollam namely *Manarul Islam Madrasa* and a *Markaz Masjid* in 1994 with the financial help from Dr. Kalamuddin. Yet another institution was founded in Manjeri namely *Najmul Huda Madrasa* and *Sirajul Huda Madrasa* at Pallikkara established by
J.P.A. Ibrahim and it moulded a number of *huffaz* and *ulama*. Another institution was founded with the help of Haji Yakoob at the birth place of Musa Maulana known as *Baqiyat-al-Swalihat Madrasa* \(^{(26)}\). Apart from these there were a lot of other persons who built mosques and Madrasas utilizing their own wealth as advised by Moulana.

**Salient Features:**

The new approach in Islamic movement got great success in relatively short period. A lot of Muslims joined this movement. The Jama’at was able to send its *Tabligh* mission all over India. The reason for the success was following:

**a.** The *Tabligh* Methods of preaching did not require any degree of religious scholarship, formal training, and lengthy preparation. Everyone who joined Jama’at became an instant preacher on the basis of his familiarity with the six simple principles of *Da’wah*. This may be caused to multiply the number quickly.

**b.** The Tabligh workers deliberately stayed away from politics, the controversies on religious groups and issues of different matters. The founder believed that the Jama’at would not be able to achieve its goal if it would involve in the political or religious debates. He asked his followers to continue their essential non political *Da’wah* work among the Muslims of all political groups. Even though Jama’at has rigidly maintained this non political posture it refused to take position on political
issues like communal riots and Muslim family law, the Shah Banu Case and the Babri Mosque issues. This non political stand greatly helped them to operate their activities in all societies without bothering of any consequence from the Government.

c. Another important feature is that Jama’at remained an informal association with non written constitution, standardized organisation of rules and procedures, hierarchy of leadership, net work of branches and department or even official records and membership registry. They maintained a democracy in the matter of selection leaders and other important matters. The amir is selected for life time through informal consultation among the leaders of the jama’at. In turn a shura was constituted by the amir to consult on important matters.

d. Another feature is its mystic origin and a non intellectual movement. It emphasized dhikr, iman, istighna (contentment), dua’a (invocation), ikhlas-e-niyyat (sincerity of intention), infaq (spending in the way of God), istighfar (asking forgiveness and praying for mercy to God), inkisar (humility). The devotional aspect of the Tabligh owes its origin to the sufi teachings. They were the followers of Naqshbandiyah order of Sufism at least in its early phase. We can say that they maintained some relations with the Islamic sufism.
e. They are the followers of taqlid and did not pursue ijtihad. At the same time they rejected the veneration of saints, visiting shrines and observing the synchritic rituals associated with popular Sufism. They are rigid in following orthodox rituals and practices and emphasized both the form and the spirit of religious rule.

**Assessment:**

On analyzing the last five decades of Tablighi Jama’at activities in Kerala we can understand that their working is going on smoothly in all over Kerala but they were not successful in comparision with North India. They however succeeded in the South Kerala than the northern side on account of the efforts taken by Musa Maulana and his companions. His sincerity and hard work helped to spread the ideas of Tabligh in Kerala.

Another important factor which helped to spread the ideas of Tabligh is that the support of Sunni scholars. In the beginning of the Tablighi Jama’at, the Sunnis considered and recognized this movement as a part of classical Islam. That is why K.P.Usman Sahib, the first Chairman of Samastha Kerala Education Board, gave the name as *Tabligh Islam Madrasa* to its Madrasa No. 296 established at Thodupuzha in 1955\(^{27}\). So *Dakshina Kerala Jami’at al-Ulama*, the Muslim Sunni Organisation formed in 1955, and Tablighi Jama’at worked hand in hand to let and promote religious educational work at South Kerala. But later in 1969, *Samasta Kerala*
**Jami'at al-Ulama**, the Sunni organisation issued a religious decree that Tablighi Jama'at was a Wahhabi organisation and must not be followed by the Sunnis (28). After that the Sunni scholars and followers in Kerala strongly opposed the Tabligh while the Dakshina was supporting the movement. So the movement became more popular in south Kerala than in the North.

The well established Madrassa system of Kerala is a main hindrance to the growth and development of Tabligh Movement. The different Muslim organisations established a large number of madrasas, dars and other Islamic higher educational institutions. It helped the Muslims to learn religious education from the primary level. Most of these institutions provide religious education from 1st to 10th standards. An average Muslim can learn the religious education from these institutions. Apart from this recently developed modern education centres also provided religious education along with the secular education. Moreover in the gathering of Tablighi Jama'at they read the book Fazail-e-Aamal, a collection of hadith and sayings of the companions and later pious Ulama by Maulana Zakaria, does not escape the description of even some fanciful tales and unauthentic traditions. They did not give much importance to learning and understanding of the Qura'n and traditions of the Prophet (SAW). The people like religious scholars and those well versed with the dini teaching through dars did not show so keen interest and kept aloof from the movement.
Another important factor for the failure of Tabligh is its attitude towards secular education. They gave more emphasize to the religious education than secular one. They provided only essential and basic level of modern education. They believed that secular education might lead to deviation from the aims of Daw’ah. Though, many of their members are doctors, lawyers, engineers etc. they gave prime importance to the propagation of Tablighi Jama’at than their professions. Moreover those professionals who were attracted to Tabligh Jama’at lacked the religious education properly.

Another factor is their harsh attitude towards women education and employment. They insisted that women should always be under the protection of men without any independent thinking. So there was no need for higher education for women. Further they discouraged women education on the ground that the mingling with non Muslim women would lead them to imitate their dress and behaviour code. They totally refused the women’s employment. They established a dozen of institutions which provided religious education. None of these provided modern education and job opportunities to women. The women education in their circles and jurisdiction is imparted only by the family members or their Muslim women because they declared any co educational system anti-Islamic.

Apart from these, their method of teaching is also ineffective. The basic qualification of a preacher to them is that he should be
well versed only in the six points. They discouraged the learning of the Qur'a'n and the traditions instead they gave prior importance to their own ideology. The little bit of knowledgeable person became their leader and guided the Jama'at. They put the six points as the pillars of Islam and always spoke the same in their gatherings. One of the participants in a Jama'at says,

"if a Jama'at starts for four months, the leader must be completed his formal education and well versed in religious and secular education. Jama'at must be moved under the leadership of a scholar otherwise the Tabligh would become not useful"(29).

It can be concluded that Tablighi Jama'at is an uninstitutionalized organisation which was its headquarters at Delhi and central amir called Hazrathji. Additionally it has regional headquarters and state, district and town level amirs to be appointed by the centre. From the direction of centres they formed their Jama'at. Some times the centre constitutes the women's Jama'at which is known as masturat Jama'at which means concealed Jama'at. Those participate the masturat will cover the entire body except eyes and group was to be formed with husband and wife. In the venue they assembled, no adult male is allowed to enter .The women who participate in the Jama'at meet the other women of the locality and spread the message in the same way. This kind of education caused the backwardness of Muslim women and
community once again. Further their attitude towards Taqlid and Ijtihad, sufistic way of life and presumed Wahabi attitude created a doubt in the mind of Kerala Muslims, who could not support the Tablighi whole heartedly.
Notes and References


2. Ibid.


5. Lokhandwalla, S.T. op.cit., p.61

6. Ibid, p.60


10. Ibid. p.63

11. Ibid, p.65


13. Abdul Samad, M., Dr., op.cit., p.145

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19. Middle Hill Ulama Counsel, *op.cit.*, p.65


23. Pandikasala, Kunju Muhammad, *op.cit.*, p.52


25. Kareem, C.K., Dr., *op.cit.*, p.632


27. *Ibid*, p.59

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