

Deoband Movement, Background, Founders, Impacts

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DEOBAND MOVEMENT

The Deoband Movement, one of South Asia's most important Islamic revivalist movements, arose in the late nineteenth century in response to British colonial rule and the decline of Islamic authority in India. The movement centred on the Darul Uloom Deoband, a madrasa founded in 1866 in the town of Deoband (Uttar Pradesh), aimed to preserve and revitalise Islamic teachings, promote moral and religious education, and resist colonial cultural and religious influences.

The Deoband Movement has had a significant impact on India's religious, social, and political landscape, influencing the practices and beliefs of millions of Muslims worldwide.

Deoband Movement Background

The Deoband Movement emerged in the aftermath of the Revolt of 1857, which marked the formal establishment of British rule in India. The movement's founders, including **Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi** and **Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi**, were deeply concerned about the decline of Islamic traditions and the growing influence of Western culture and education.

- They aimed to establish an institution that would serve as a hub of Islamic learning and spiritual guidance, free of the British government's influence.
- **Darul Uloom Deoband** (Islamic seminary) was founded in **1866**, with its first location being a small mosque in **Saharanpur district** (Uttar Pradesh).
- The *madrassa* quickly rose to prominence, attracting students from across India and beyond.
- The curriculum emphasised the study of the **Quran, Hadith** (the Prophet Muhammad's sayings), **Fiqh** (Islamic jurisprudence), and other traditional Islamic sciences.
- The movement emphasised a return to the purity of early Islam, advocating strict adherence to **Sharia (Islamic law)** and rejecting **religious innovations (bid'ah)**.

Deoband Movement Beliefs

The Deoband Movement is distinguished by its dedication to orthodox **Sunni Islam**, specifically the **Hanafi school of jurisprudence**. It stresses strict adherence to **Sharia**, rejection of Bid'ah, and a strong emphasis on *Tawhid*. It promotes Islamic education, resists colonial rule, and advocates for preserving Muslim identity.

- **Sharia Compliance:** The Deobandi Movement emphasizes strict adherence to Islamic law, with **Shariat** (scriptural law) and **tariqah** (the spiritual path) guiding all aspects of life, from personal conduct to social interactions.
- **Rejection of Bid'ah (Innovations):** Deobandis strongly oppose religious innovations (Bid'ah) and stress a return to the practices of the early Muslim community, especially the first three generations (Salaf).
- **Emphasis on Tawhid (Monotheism):** They prioritize the concept of **Tawhid** (oneness of God) and reject practices like saint or shrine worship, which they view as violations of monotheism.
- **Education and Religious Revival:** The Deoband Movement, through its **Darul Uloom Deoband**, promoted traditional Islamic education while advocates like **Shibli Numani** supported integrating European sciences into the curriculum.
- **Resistance to Colonialism:** The Deobandis were staunchly anti-colonial, viewing British rule as a threat to Islam and urging Muslims to preserve their religious and cultural identities while resisting Western assimilation.

Deoband Movement Founders

The Deoband Movement was founded in 1866 by Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi and Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi to preserve orthodox Sunni Islam through a rigorous educational and spiritual framework.

- **Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautavi (1833-1877):** A prominent scholar of Islamic jurisprudence and theology, Nanautavi co-founded Darul Uloom Deoband, shaping its curriculum to promote traditional Islamic values and education. He aimed to train scholars dedicated to preserving Islamic principles.
- **Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1826-1905):** A renowned Hadith and Fiqh scholar, Gangohi worked closely with Nanautavi at Deoband, guiding students with a focus on piety and strict adherence to Sharia. His efforts were key to spreading Deobandi teachings across India.

Deoband Movement Impacts

The Deoband Movement significantly impacted Islamic education and thought by establishing *madrasas* across South Asia, promoting traditional Islamic teachings, safeguarding beliefs, reimagining madrasas as religious institutions, supporting nationalist movements, and extending its global reach with Deobandi madrasas influencing Muslim communities worldwide.

- **Educational Reforms:** The Deoband Movement established madrasas across South Asia to promote traditional Islamic education. *Darul Uloom Deoband* became a model for Islamic learning, and its graduates influenced religious and social spheres.
 - **Shibli Numani**, a supporter, also advocated integrating English and European sciences in education, founding **Nadwatal Ulama** and **Darul Uloom** in Lucknow.
- **Protecting Aqaid:** Deobandi scholars safeguarded Islamic beliefs by writing authoritative commentaries on the Quran and Hadith, defending the **Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah** and actively countering deviant sects and ideologies.
- **Reimagining the Madrasa:** The movement reshaped madrasas into purely religious institutions, with '*ulama* overseeing moral guidance. This approach rejected British-promoted secular knowledge, focusing instead on religious knowledge as a guiding principle for life.
- **Support to Nationalists:** Deoband aligned with the Indian National Congress, opposing Syed Ahmed Khan's pro-British organisations. **Mahmud-ul-Hasan** integrated Islamic principles with Indian nationalist aspirations, giving Deobandi ideology a political dimension.
- **Global Reach:** The movement's emphasis on religious education spread internationally, establishing Deobandi madrasas and scholars in regions like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and the U.K., influencing Muslim communities worldwide.

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