

Memoirs of Hazrat Mufti Taqi Usmani دوست برکاتہم

I always hesitate to refer to myself as 'Deobandi' in writing as the term smells of sectarianism. Further, some people have this misconception that Deobandi is some religious sect that has detoured from the mainstream direction of the Ummah. Whereas, in reality, the scholars associated with school of thought of the Dar ul Uloom, Deoband, have always been firm upon the beliefs of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah that is in consistency with the fourteen centuries old theological tradition of Islam. They have not created any new religious sect, but ardently support the same fundamental beliefs and deeds that the majority of Muslim Ummah believes in. In fact, with their wisdom and perseverance, they have always tried their best to prevent these beliefs from becoming tainted in any way. It is for this reason that some hostile people have tried to give an impression as if the 'Ulama of Deoband have created a new sect altogether. A book by Hakeem ul Islam, Hazrat Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyab Sahab رحمۃ اللہ علیہ, titled, 'Ulama-e-Deoband ka deeni rukh aur maslaki mizaaj' (The Religious Way and the School of thought of the Scholars of Deoband) is a remarkable book on this topic, and in its preface, I have further explicated upon this very subject.

Here, however, what I wish to explain is that despite holding the Ulema of Deoband as my ideals in religious matters, I do not like saying that I am a 'Deobandi' with regards to my religious school of thought, as the term carries a tinge of sectarianism. I am, otherwise, a Deobandi by birth, and by Allah's ﷻ grace I am honoured to have been born in a town where Dar ul Uloom, Deoband, yielded such mountains of knowledge, steadfastness and character the examples of which are hard to find in these end of times.

In Deoband, our grandfathers were famously

known as 'Miyani Ji'. Miyani Ji was a title in those days about which our respected father (Mufti Shafi Usmani رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) had said:

"It appears that it was the teachers in the common centers of learning – where after the study of the Holy Qur'an, the study of Urdu, Persian and Mathematics was commonly imparted, and the standard of these studies was way better than that of the education in secondary schools today – found in villages, were referred to by the title of 'Miyani Ji'. These people embodied the essence of religious learning along with learning practical skill – Miyani Ji Noor Muhammad Saheb رحمۃ اللہ علیہ (the Shaykh of Hazrat Haji Imdad Ullah Muhajir Makki رحمۃ اللہ علیہ) gathered fame in metalwork, and Miyani Ji Munnay Shah Saheb رحمۃ اللہ علیہ scaled heights of spirituality".

My Respected father رحمۃ اللہ علیہ has also written the following:

"I have not been able to get hold of any reliable and uninterrupted family tree document, but Shari'ah does not consider it binding for proving the authenticity of a continuous chain in these matters; In fact, the word of mouth as it passes down through our elders is considered evidence enough; and I have always heard from my elders that we are the progeny of Hazrat Usman Ghani رضی اللہ عنہ (the details about our lineage can be found in my father's book, Mere Waalid Maajid)."

I was born on 5th Shawwal, 1342 AH. I saw this date of birth written down in my father's handbook. During those times, it was customary to keep record of important dates in accordance with the Hijra calendar, hence, my father didn't record the Gregorian date of my birth along with the hijri one. Later, however, after referring to several calendars, it was calculated that my date of birth was the 3rd of October 1943. I have also

heard an incident from my respected mother and siblings that on the day that I was born, a snake fell off from the roof on the bed where I was laid down. Had it not been removed from the bed and killed, perhaps this world would have remained free from my ills.

Anyway, I got to spend only four years and seven months of my life (from October 1943 to May 1948) in the town of Deoband. There I spent only that part of my childhood in which a child has no knowledge of the world beyond that of his play, and later, when he grows up, he forgets everything related to that period of his life. But I remember many things of that Deoband of my childhood, as vividly as if I'm witnessing them right before my eyes.

Those were the times when the houses of Deoband had neither electricity, nor fans, neither taps with running water, nor oil or gas stoves. Instead of the electric lights, there were either candles or lanterns. In place of taps, water was kept in clay pots or steel vessels, and the services of a water-carrier (maashki) were often required in order to fill those vessels. The carrier would tie a big leather container to his waist, and deliver water from house to house. If a community or a locality was fashionable and affluent community, they would drill the earth, and install a big metal tap over there, which would be used to fill a bucket or a vessel by swiftly moving its handle up and down. Apart from providing water, one more benefit that this tap yielded was that it helped in exercising not only one's hands, but the entire body. As my age wasn't appropriate for this exercise, I used to feel happy merely by seeing others swing away with this handle. There used to be long-necked clay flasks (suraahi) in houses for drinking water, which would finally become cool after surviving the hot winds of summer. Instead of the electric fans, there used to be hand-fans, which are truly missed today during a power outage.

When the intense heat of the summer would radiate itself from the walls of the houses, some water-carrier would sprinkle water onto the bricked floors; and then when the hand-fans would be used to direct wind towards oneself, the watered earth would start giving away the

scent of the sand – all this would be done to get some coolness in the sweltering weather. In this weather, when I would lay down with my mother on a charpai (a traditional woven bed), there would be no polluted barrier of petrol or deisel between myself and the endless stars in the sky. Not a single star would fade into oblivion due to the presence of any kind of light. I would keep on staring at the twinkling stars in the web of galaxy, and the milky way. As kids, we would refer to this milky way as a heavenly pathway created by Allah for Angels. I would often drift off to sleep thinking about Angels bustling about on the milky way.

-To be Continued,
Insha'Allah.

