

## *Dar al-'Ulum Deoband: A Brief Study*

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During the closing years of the eighteenth century the political edifice of Mughal empire started to collapse so fast that it facilitated the rise of several non-Muslim dynasties. In over a century's period a vast area of India passed under the control of British East India Company. The British imperialists not only drove the Muslims out of the corridors of power but also from the areas of socio-cultural influence. The Christian missionaries mounted a ruthless assault on Islam and the Muslims. In these turbulent times, the problem of maintaining and deepening the Islamic identity of the Muslim masses was a formidable task. And this task fell upon the 'ulema'. The 'ulema', therefore, tried to check the inroads made by the Christian missionaries into the cultural life of Muslims and also prepared a generation of freedom fighters. The 'ulema' opposed the policies of the British in an uncompromising manner. The assertions and propaganda of Christian missionary organisations, a natural accompaniment of the East India Company tried to convince the Muslim minds that the British rulers were out to destroy Muslim civilisation. Thus it was in these circumstances that, during the second half of the nineteenth century, the 'ulema' started a movement for the reformation of Muslim belief and practice and its institutional framework in the sub-continent.

Therefore in 1867 a *madrassah*, conceived as a distinct centre of Islamic education, was established at Deoband, located ninety miles northeast of Delhi. For the founders of this *madrassah*, trained in the tradition of Shah Wali Allah, the answer to the

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