Chapter One

MOULANA MD. TAHIR:

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO HIS LIFE AND TIME

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Moulana Md. Tahir was a twentieth century's prolific Islamic philosopher, reformer, educationist, freedom fighter as well as an enhancer of Arabic language and literature in the Assam-Bengal regions in India. Actually he was a Bengali genius having profound Arabic knowledge who achieved in a single 'acquiescence' of less than eleven years' length, out of a fifty-eight years' span of adult working life, a life-work in the shape of a piece of literature which can bear comparison with the work of a Ibn-Khaldun or the work of a Abul Hasan Ali Nadavi for both breadth and profundity of vision as well as for sheer intellectual power.[1] Actually Md. Tahirwas a Sylheti Islamic theologian — Islamic scholar, Islamic jurist, Islamic lawyer, philosopher, social scientist and freedom-fighter-statesman—born in Sylhet District of East Bengal, the present-day Karimganj district in the Indian state of Assam.[2]

Md. Tahir is considered as one of the forerunner of several Islamic theological and social scientific disciplines: Arabic-Bengali translation, Islamic-cultural history, criticism of other Indian Islamic scholars, the

philosophy of Islamic history, and Islamic sociology.[3] He is also considered one of the forerunners of modern Islamic feminist, alongside the earlier Indian scholar Abul 'Ala Maududi.[4] Tahir is considered by many to be the father of a Arabic-Begali translation of Islamic theology in the regions of Assam and West Bengal in general, for anticipating many elements of these disciplines centuries before they were founded in the Indian sub-continent and other parts of south Asia. But those works were translated in several other languages rather than Bengali. He is best known for his *Al-Manar* which is a comprehensive interpretation of some selected *Hadith*.[5]

Moulana Md. Tahir is one of those shining stars that contributed so richly to the understanding of Arabic language for Bengali speaking people of India and Bangladesh. In order to understand and appreciate his work, one has to understand his life. He lived a life in search of stability and influence as at his time India was under severe prey of brutal British rule which undermined and suppressed the individual's rights, freedom and dignity. He came from a family of Islamic scholars and Islamic social reformers and he intended to live up to both expectations. He would succeed in the field of Islamic Scholarship much more so than in any other field.

However, according to *Abdul Jalil Singaria*, a great scholar, Islamic reformer and the lecturer of Hadith in *Al-Jamiah-Al-Arabiah-Al-Islamiah*, Badarpur, Moulana M. Tahir's star shines the more brightly by contrast with the foil of darkness against which it flashes out; for while Maududi and Abul Hasan Ali Nadavi are all brilliant representatives of brilliant times and places, Tahir is the sole point of light in his quarter of the firmament. He is indeed one of the outstanding personality in the history of a civilization whose social life on the whole was 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short' as India was ruled by British colonial administrators. In his chosen field of intellectual activity he appears to have been inspired by only a few predecessors and to have found little kindred souls among his contemporaries and to have kindled no answering spark of inspiration in any successors; and yet, in the *Al-Manaar* he has conceived and formulated an understanding of Islam by interpreting Arabic which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time in the region. It was his single brief 'acquiescence' from a life of practical activity that gave Tahir *Shaheb* his opportunity to cast his creative thought into literary shape.[6]

His Birth:

Moulana Md. Tahir's life is relatively not well-documented; as he did not write an autobiography from which we can get documents regarding his life and quotations word-for-word.[7] However, the autobiography has little to say about his private life, so little is known about his family background. Generally known as "Tahir Shaheb" after a remote ancestor, he was born in Sylhet on May, 15, 1921, into an upper-class Bengali-Muslim family. However there is a controversy among the scholars of Arabic Literature in India and its neighbouring Bangladesh and his Bengali biographers of Assam and West Bengal.

According to the late Principal of Asimia Title Madrassa, (Karimganj, Assam) and intimate friend and colleague of Md. Tahir, Moulana Imdadur Rahman Durlavpuri M Tahir was born in 1921. (M I. Rahman) Durlavpuri in his own written note had described that his own date of birth was on October, 1921 and Moulana M Tahir was six months older than him. So considering this document into account M Tahir's birth would be on March, 1921. But in other some documents, M Tahir was born on May 15, 1922 A. D. Whatsoever the reason it may be for this difference of fourteen-fifteen months, we will consider May 15, 1922 as his birthday in our research work because Abu Nasr Abdur-Rauf, the most reliable Bengali Biographer of Md. Tahir is in favour of this date.[8]

His family held a high respect in the region because of his father and great ancestors. His father, Moulana Haji Hajim was from the predecessors of famous royal family of Sylhet (former part of Bangladesh, and the present day Karimganj, the state of Assam), the undivided India, and popular Islamic teacher, educated and pious person (Muttaqui). Establishment of Madrassa and teaching was his prime activity of life. Moulana Haji Hajim had considerable contributions in establishing Islamic Congregation centers (*Eidgah*) and Islamic teaching and training institutions. He was a self-depended person who liked to do everything himself without getting assistance and helps from others. He himself worked in the cultivation ground as well as in his home gardens. Students used to come at his home for achieving Islamic insights. He used to rectify all their inconsistencies when the students mistakenly read anything in the books. He has so profound knowledge in Arabic that he aptly taught the most difficult treatise of Islam like *Musallam-us-Subut* and Islamic legal Treatise.

Moulana Haji Hajim was called as *Kabuli Moulovi* as he posed a strong and handsome body. There was a smart compatibility of heighted body structure with his psychological strengths, calmness, concentration and strong belief on truth, non-obedience of illegal decisions of policy makers as well as administrators, clear-cut and comprehensive teaching,

living religious and disciplined life and the like, he uphold many precious human values. These great values had a deep impression on his son Moulana Md. Tahir. He also did care for taking bold actions in maintaining disciplines among the students and in other spheres of social life. Therefore everyone in his locality and in the educational institute revered him with great love and fear.[9]

His mother Nasima Khatun was a vigorous, pious and well-mannered lady who belonged to a well to do family of Singaria village in the Karimganj district of Assam. Nasima's father Mohammad Salim skilfully enhanced her with the great human qualities with imparting religious and Indo-Islamic cultural education in religious primary educational institution called as *Maktab*.

Before the marriage of Nasima with Moulana Tahir's father, Moulana Hajim was married with another lady. One son from his earlier marriage was died and another was missed somewhere who was never found. Similarly, before being settled in married life with M. Hajim, Nasima Khatun was married in *Salehpur* village of *Selhet*. In that marriage she gave birth of a boy, Imdadur Rahman and a daughter Hatim Bibi who are presently living in *Hafania* village of Karimganj. Thus Moulana Tahir

was the able son of Moulana Hajim and Nasima Khatun's second marriage.

From the above discussion on his family background it has been cleared that Moulana Md. Tahir was by nature and nurture a product of the Bengali Muslim scholarship who had profound knowledge on Arabic literature in the Sylhet district of earlier East Bengal and the present day of Karimganj district of Assam. In the following paragraphs a detail study about his life and the situation in which he lived are discussed in order to get a clear-cut knowledge about his philosophical and literary ideas.[10]

Childhood and Education:

Moulana Md. Tahir received a traditional Islamic education that was typical of his family's rank and status from the Singarian local *Maktab,* the pre-primary religious institute of education. He learned first at the hands of his father. His family's high rank enabled him to study with the best Indo-Bengali teachers of the time. Due to his shaky childish behaviour Tahir was taken to his father's workplace in the Indian state of Tripura at his minor age. His father brought him there at the mere age of four years in order to administer by himself under strict discipline. Firstly Md. Tahir was admitted to Zerzeri Madrassa of Tripura but as his father,

M. Hajim was transferred to Kurti Islamic Madrassa of Tripura, Tahir was also taken and admitted there.

It should be mentioned here that his father and the great Islamic scholar of time Moulana Nasim Ali were teaching there in the Zerzeri village of Tripura from whom M Tahir got a very fruitful education for his future life. But during the period of 1926 a thug famine of chicken pox attacked the area and consequently more than seventy thousand people were died in the Zerzeri village. There was no one among Madrassa authority alive in the famine. Therefore the Madrassa was transferred to Kurti, another village of Tripura. In Zerzeri, two mentionable names of Moulana Tahir's friends are Haji Bashir Ali and Munshi Mujibur Rahman who were the students of that Madrassa. According to Mujibur Rahman, Moulana Tahir was studying in their upper standard class. M Tahir's father also engaged in *Imamat*, in that particular village along with teaching in the Madrassa. After that famine in 1927-28 when the population was decreased badly with the initiative of Haji Arman Ali, Kurti Madrassa was named as *Kurti Jabiria Islamiah Madrassa* before the name of his ffther Jabir Mahmood. However, the Madrassa was later on renamed as *Kurti Islamic Madrassa*. M Tahir has spent few months in Kurti Islamic Madrassa for imparting education and building his character.

He received a traditional Islamic education, studying the Qur'an which he memorized by heart, Arabic linguistics, the basis for an understanding of the *Qur'an, Hadith, Sharia* (law) and *Fiqh* (jurisprudence). He also learnt Persian and Urdu languages and excelled in these disciplines. He stayed for few months in Kurti but as his father Moulana Hajim returned to Singaria with getting the news of his daughter's birth. Md. Tahir also followed his father and returned to Singaria.

M. Tahir's father started teaching at Singaria Idgah Madrassa after returning from Kurti Madrassa of Tripura. As he started teaching in Idgah Madrassa he took M Tahir there under his own guidance in Idgah Madrassa. Tahir learnt Koran under the teaching and guidance of Mohammad Azhar Ali and Munshi Arman Ali. He learnt Bengali literature from *"102 No. Primary School"* in Singaria. He was admitted in the *Kayastha Gram M. V. School*. He was assisted in learning mathematics by Mr. Sarajul Hoque and Abdul Khalik of Karimganj. Among his teachers master Abdul Karim's name is specifically mentionable because he specially took care of Md. Tahir as his own ward. M Tahir used to mention his name until death with saying that he was indebted to Master Abdul Karim.

According to Munshi Abdul Khalik, who was one of the students of M Hajim, Tahir's father was so disciplined teacher that he did not hesitate to beat any of the students in case of breaking existing Madrassa norms. Therefore, Moulana Tahir under the strict guidance of his able father M Hajim learnt all precious quality of human being like discipline, time-routine management, rational thinking power, challenging of any illegal activity, consciousness about the responsibility and the like great human quality. His life was itself a witness of all these qualities.

Here, it is worth mentioning that Tahir kept himself at home under the extensive care of his ablest father for two years during 1929-31, with leaving acquisition of formal education in educational institutions. At that time his home tutor Ramesh Ranjan took him to Middle School which was in his own village Singaria. Thereafter, he also got certain level of formal education from *Esha-atul Uloom* Madrassa in Singaria.

In Badarpur Maktab:

In 1931-32, father Moulana Hajim admitted Md. Tahir in Badarpur Maktab Madrassa. Because his father felt that the educational environment in Badarpur was far better than that of his native place Singaria. So his sister Maryam became lonely as her brother was sent away from her. However, she often used to visit him in Badarpur. Tahir's father M Hajim

had struggled extensively to flourish him from each and every aspects of his life. While Tahir was studying at Badarpur Maktab Madrassa he was lodged at Kala Shaikh's home at Dighirpar, Mission Road, Bdarpur. Master Toffozzul Ali kept him with great benevolence and took care of him as his own brother during the period of Kala Shaikh Lodge. With the accomplishment of his Third standard in Badarpur Maktab Madrassa he joined at *Badarpur Junior School (Deorail M.E. Madrassa*) and attained the first position in the class. He was not allowed to waste his time in extra curricular activities, even certain sorts of plays. He became the most favorite disciple of all his teachers during his stay at Badarpur Junior School.

Moulana Tahir joined the Badarpur M. V. Madrassa in 1936 in the *Fourth* standard and continued studying there unto sixth standard. In the final examination of class sixth he stood first class first throughout the state of Assam and therefore was selected for a merit based scholarships. Teachers observed his extra-ordinary merit, talent, enthusiasm for learning, and sharp knowledge about different disciplines in three years at M. V. school and subsequently advised him to go to famous Madrassa for higher education in Assam, The *Sylhet Alia Madrassa*'. Accordingly, he marched towards the recommended Madrassa later on in 1939.[11]

During his stay at *Badarpur M. V. Madrassa*, Anjab Ali, Ramiz Uddin, Abdul Wahid and the like renowned teachers introduced him to mathematics, logic and philosophy, where he above all studied the works of various imminent Arabic scholars like Averroes, Avicenna, Razi and Tusi. During the period of those three years in studying in M.V. Madrassa his teachers and guardians were so greatly impressed with his talent that and subsequently, they decided to sent him to the famous higher educational institute of Assam the Sylhet Alia Madrassa. He received certification (*ijazah*) from there for all the valuable subjects taught there.[12]

As a result of extra ordinary hard work and efforts made for education, in 1937 Moulana Tahir was attacked by a severe disease, expectation of life was lost, medicine came to no use; Moulana Hajim was already frustrated from the loss of the children of first marriage and now for the deteriorating condition of Tahir he was fully broken down and promised before Allah (SWT) for fasting of one thousand days to beg the life of Tahir from Allah and retained in mosque for lonely meditation (*eaitekaaf)* and he performed it accordingly.

Although the disease was cured later after the long process of meditation from the part of his father, and medication from different angles yet, it germinated another chronical disease like cough, severe

bronchitis and asthma which affected M Tahir throughout his life but without taking care of all these problems he could spread his recognition throughout the world by writing several books of different languages, particularly in Arabic and Bengali language. These books are so impressive that they could produce stranger among the eighteen cores Bengali speaking people throughout the Asia Pacific subcontinent. These books are regarded as proud assets of Bengali language. Introduction of Arabic, Persian, Urdu and new Hindi languages into Bengali and mingling of these languages with Bengali is the first and foremost contribution of Moulana Md. Tahir. In fact by induction of Arabic language in the modern Bengali has made a new epoch in the history of Bengali language and a new transliteration method of Arabic language. The translation, transliteration and interpretation of the Islamic Holly Constitution (i. e. Koran), proper exposing and extracting of its internal as well as external meaning are some identical contribution of Md. Tahir. He has gifted the Bengali community the comparative understanding of Arabic language by grasping its theme in their own native language. This topic would be discussed in detail in later some chapter of this thesis.[13]

In Sylhet Alia Madrassa:

In 1939, Md. Tahir admitted in Sylhet Aliya Madrassa. He appeared in Madrassa Intermediate Examination and stood second position in the

board as his able classmate Moulana Imdadur Rahman could secure the top position. But during the Madrassa final examination his friend, I. Rahman could not secure the first position and the prestige of that position came under the accession of Md. Tahir. The high profiled teachers who taught in the Sylhet Alia Madrassa at that time there were Moulana Abdul Aziz, Moulana Sher Zaman, Moulana Anjab Ali, Moulana Mujahid Ali, Moulana Iliyas Ali and the like prominent figures of the period.

Under the guidance of the principal, Mr. R. Sayeed Abdullah, who was also the principal of M. C. College, Sylhet he started constructing his personality. Moulana Sayeed Abdullah was also the principal of famous Oriental College of Rampur before coming to Sylhet and was a very eminent scholar who could teach the most difficult books like '*Musallamus Suboot*' and '*Sullaam*' without looking at the pages of the books. Likewise, Moulana Sher Zaman who was the son–in-law of *Sheaik-ul-Hind*, Moulana Mahmudul Hassan and was very able teacher of the institution. The influence of these influential teachers had a deep impact on Moulana Tahir which molded his all round development. Apart from these scholars of eminence Tahir also achieved educational insights from several other prominent scholars like Moulana Hassan Reza, Moulana Asaddar Ali, Moulana Mushahid Shaheb, Lutful Hoque

Choudhury and so on. These famous personalities had an impetus impression on him and they guided him towards his bright future.

It is worth mentioning here that Sylhet Title Madrassa was set up in 1938, but slow infrastructural development of the Madrassa for apathy of the government led students of the said Madrassa to revolution where Moulana Tahir played a vibrant role. Another revolutionary activity is that in 1942, Moulana Tahir with his classmates Abdul Latif associated with other students and general public and indulged in Quit India movement with all the enthusiasm.[14]

In Rampur and Deobond:

With abiding the advice of Moulana Mushahid Saheb Baiumpuri of Kanaighat, Moulana Tahir and Moulana Imdadur Rahman went to Darul Uloom Deobond, for higher studies. He set up for Rampur along with others on 24th April, 1944. The Assamese students therein received them at the station. Here it is mentionable that prior to appear before the admission test in Daarul Uloom Deobond, it was imperative to study grammars, discourses study, science, Islamic law and the like knowledge. Therefore, prior to appear before the admission test in Darul Uloom Deobond, Tahir along with his classmates reached under the guidance of great scholar and the principal of Rampur Oriental College, Moulana

Abdul Daiym for 6 months. They started imparting education in Urdu medium but with the request of the students, Arabic medium of instruction was initiated there.

On 12th August 1944 as they completed the aforesaid causes in Rampur Oriental College they got admission in Darul Uloom Deobond and continued studying there for one year. All the six most authentic Treatise of Hadith in Islam, the *Bukhari*, the *Muslim*, the *Tirmizi*, the *Nasai*, the *Abu Dauod*, and the *Ibn-Majah*. He was taught the Bukhari Shareef by the world famous lecturer of Hadith Moulana Saiyed Forbuddin (R. A.) and the great master of Islam Moulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (R. A.). He learnt many precious human qualities from these prominent scholars. Apart from them he was greatly influenced by other teachers like Moulana Aijaj Ali who was the great scholar of Arabic literature, world famous Islamic religious propagator, Qari Tayyib Saheb, the most famous interpreter of Koran, Moulana Shabbir Ahmad Usmani, Moulana Abdul Ahad, Shareef Hassan Kashmiri and Moulana Abdus-Shukur.

To Lahore:

After the completion of learning Hadith in the Darul Uloom Deobond (the great Indian Islamic university in Uttar Pradesh) Moulana

Tahir with accompanying Moulana Imdadur Rahman marched towards Lahore with thrust of learning Qirat (correct procedure to recite and learn Koran) and they achieved from world famous Quri Moulana Ahmad Ali whose disciples have been diffused throughout the Asia Pacific countries. His most significant contribution in Tafseer (explanation of Koran) is that he could establish a beautiful coherence among former versions of holly Koran with the later versions in their legal explanations. Description of different Koranic events with sequence is a special expressive style of Moulana Ahmad Ali of Lahore. He beautifully assembled and aggregated of all those precious historical and analytical comprehension of Koran and Hadith with logistic discourse of knowledge is defined his remarkable contribution of Arabic language and literature. This specific insight of Moulana Ahmad Ali had a deep impact on Tahir which later on flourished in him at his writing age.

After the completion of courses in Lahore Tahir returned to Deobond in 1945 and again started studying Hadiths there. However, as he became the prey of severe disease he could not continue studying there. Eventually, he returned to home in Assam from Deobond in 1946. It is mentionable here that though his condition was serious when he returned from Deobond, yet he got recovered at home and therefore, again went to Deobond for his residuary study of Hadith. This time he could pass the

highest class of Hadith with overwhelming percentage of marks. He also attained the *Ijjah* (certificate or *Sanad*) from there. Simultaneously, he gained spiritual insights from the great master of Islam, Moulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (RA) and returned as an expert Alim in 1948.[15]

Exposure of Studentship:

When Moulana Tahir was a student of Sylhet Alia Madrassa on the auspicious occasion of Eid, during 1943-44 he delivered a prolonged lecture enhanced with highly rational understanding of Islam in the Eidgah of 13th Mouja where his father was Imam. His precious lecture was completely based on Islamic constitution and delivered on a huge congregation. The lecture created a feeling of enthusiasm among the present educated society and great Islamic scholars of that time. That lecture was so influential that he could get acquaintance through the region with the single lecture. People of all classes congratulated the existing Imam, Moulana Hajim that he had attained and flourished an able child who can represent scholarship of Sylheti Bengali genus. At once his name and fame were diffused throughout the Sylhet and within the short span of time he could won the hearts of educated society of the in Assam-Bengal region. He was considered as one the best orator of the Sylhet region.

Teaching in Urdu College:

As he returned from Deobond after completing higher study on Hadith in 1946 he joined the Urdu College of Sylhet as a teacher. But his thirst for acquiring knowledge caused a lot of pain in his heart as he could not learn whole courses during his stay at Deobond as he was forced to return home by illness. Therefore he went to the great master of Islam, Moulana Hussain Ahmad Mdani, who was performing *Aitekaf* (meditation in a closed door) in the *New Sadak Masjid* of Sylhet. He went to Madani accompanied by Moulana Jalaluddin and became the disciple of Madani. But his father directed him to go back to Deobond and complete the residuary course of Hadith from there and later on completed the study of *Tafseer* (explanation of Koran) with overwhelming percentage of marks.

Teaching in Badarpur Title Madrassa:

In the later part of 1948, Moulana Tahir started teaching in Badarppur Title Madrassa. Here it is worth mentioning that a great scholar of Islam of time Moulana Abu Yusuf Muhammad Yaqub alias Hatim Ali engaged him in teaching Hadith in a room at Badarpur Alia Madrassa. At that time Moulana Mahmadur Rahman was the president of Badarpur Title Madrassa and Abdul Latif Fultalli was one of the teachers of said

institution. The institution was encouraged by calling Moulana Mushahid Ali of Bayumpur as teacher in 1946.

It is mentionable here that after the 15th August of 1947, the present Indian district of Karimganj where the institution was situated was a part Pakistan for fifteen days. As the district came under the Indian administration after 15 days, Moulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury, the great Islamic reformer and scholar also came to India by leaving East Pakistan.

Moulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury initially stayed at the home of Moulana Hatim Ali and later on lodged at the home of Ahmad Ali a great Sufi saint of contemporary Indian state of Assam located at Badarpur. Under the guidance of Moulana Hatim Ali Moulana Abdul Jalil took the responsibility of Badarpur Title Madrassa from first October, 1947. Then in 1948, Moulana Tahir started teaching in Badarpur Title Madrassa as assistant teacher of Hadith. In April 4, 1949 he left Badarpur as he got a call from Calcutta Madrassa and initiated constructing a new life there.[16]

Service Life:

As he completed his study, he engaged himself in the Badarpur Title Madrassa which was established by Hatim Ali of Bundashil and under the principal ship of Moulana Abdul Jalil Badarpuri. He received there rupees thirty on the monthly basis as the wages from the said

institution. But under the guidance and suggestion of Moulana Hussain Ahmad Madani he went the historical institution of higher education, The Calcutta Alia Madrassa, to teach as a lecturer of Hadith there on April, 4, 1949. At that time the amount of government salary for him was granted 170 rupees per month. At that very period his ability on teaching Hadith and scholastic eminence was diffused throughout Assam- Bengal region which was further on spread over the other states India with his influential speeches and personality representing writings. His written books and articles have been warmly accepted in schools, colleges, Madarssas and other educational institutions.

Marriage of Moulana Tahir:

Tahir was married under the guidance of Moulana Hussain Ahmad Madani in 1948, with Halima Khatun of then Sylhet and present Badarpur Ghat of Karimganj district. Her father was Haji Abdul Ghafur and mother was Mahmuda Khatun who extensively took care of her in imparting education and building of her character. Initially she was admitted to the Katigorah Primary School and later on studied in Katigorah M. E. School and Silchar Government Girls School respectively. She successfully passed all the classes' up-to tenth standard with attaining high reputation. Apart from her being a meritorious student, she was very attentive in

spiritual activities. She acquired the knowledge about prayer, Ms-ala (Islamic Laws), Arabic and Urdu languages along with acquiring Koranic knowledge. Moulana Hussain Ahmad Madani used to stay at their home whenever he visited Badarpur.

However, in December, 1948 Moulana Tahir Married Halima Khatun and the marriage sermon was performed by the Shaik Ul-Islam Madani, with the request of Moulana Ahmad Ali, the president of Assam Jamiet-Ulema Hind.

According Abu Muhammad Abdul Noor, the Presidential award holder, eminent educationist and the superintendent of Karimganj High Madrassa who was the contemporary of Moulana Md. Tahir-"For the first time in 1924, Moulana Hussain Ahmad Madani came to Sylhet. He started teaching Hadith in Khilafat Building Madrassa and then his influence had been throughout the Sylhet and therefore, from 1925 Khilafat Movement was being diffused in entire assam irrespective of town and villages. It took the furious form during 1930. Consequently, the British government adopted its oppressive harsh policy on the revolutionaries. From 1935, revolutionaries of Khilafat Movement launched their movement hand in hand with Jamiyet Ulema Hind. Simultaneously, the Indian National Congress and Jamiet Ulema Hind co-ordinated together in their struggle

for independence. From 1938 to 1945, the Jamiet played a leading role in Assam and Sylhet in the struggle for independence. The President of All India Jamiet Ulema Hind, Moulana Hussain Ahmad Madani used to visit the Sylhet district in the month of Ramzan during his life time. Although he went to Deobond as he was appointed as a lecturer of Hadith there, yet used to come here for the month of Ramzan. Therefore, his influence had been diffused in this area and many people were impressed with his philosophy of Jamiet understanding. Among the 86 certified (Ijazat holders) desciples of Madani through the globe Moulana Tahir was one."[17]

In that phase of struggle for independence Moulana Tahir played a very important role with attaining the company of Moulana Jalal Uddin, Abdul Hamid Gandhi of North Sylhet, Moulana Bashir Bhasha of Gopalganj, Bangladesh and the Basanta Datta on Indian National Congress. In fact Moulana Tahir was the organizing secretary of the Students Federation during 1944. The sole aim of that movement was to counter the Influence of All India Muslim League. The Movemment worked to maintain communal harmony, opposition of division of the country and to enshrine a feeling oneness among the Indians. Here it is worth mentioning that though Moulana Tahir was a student at that time, yet he was very deeply involved in the struggle for independence. Simultaneously, he was so meritorious that instead of involving in the

freedom struggle so deeply he could score second position in intermediate examination.

The *Mahatma Gandhi Indian Common Language Programme* accepted Urdu as the Common language for Indians on the eve of independence. In accordance of that programme Moulana Tahir with the aid and assistance of Jamiyet workers established an Urdu College in the district of Sylhet in 1943. But due to narrow communal feeling of Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel, Purushuttam Das and protest of most of the Hindi leaned Congress leaders along with Jawaharlal Nehru the aspiration of M Gandhi was gone in vain. Therefore, Moulana Tahir's Urdu College also could not survive for long. However, his efforts for development of Indian society had left its significance for ever."[18]

At Kolin Street:

In 1950, Moulana Md. Tahir left Taltola and took a room on rent at Kolin Street in Calcutta. He spent major tome of his life in that place. Most of his children like Fakher, Sufia, Razia, Alia, Ahmed, Muhammad, and Mehmood were born and adopted there. However, the youngest daughter, Sabiha and Masud were born in Mcclaid Street. M Tahir in his initial period of life he used to write poetry in different languages. But it is

a matter of great regret although some of these poems were published in different books; most of his written poems have not been yet published.

Life Style:

During his stay in Calcutta, Moulana Tahir spent major portion of his life in rented house. He did not like to live aristocratic life rather than simple one. So he did not purchase any plot or building in the initial period though these things were achieved with low cost at that time. Many of his neighbours as well as well wishers put pressure on him to purchase the same but he did not care for that. As a last resort Moulana Asad Madani was able to make his ready to buy some land near his institute, *Jamia Islamia Madania Madrassa*. He was in favour of a temporary house and therefore he directed the carpenters to do accordingly. But the carpenters stated a basement of a building that caused his anger. Eventually, under the pressure of native people he allowed them to build the house.

Spiritual Advancement:

He sought the company of holy men and was intimate with them. After completion of his studies, he became more severe on his ownself. He began to deny himself the many cravings of life, except the barest minimum merely to sustain life. When his devotion towards "Mujahida"

(struggle for attaining spiritual salvation) increased, he left *Aliah Madrassa* and went to a place called *Bakda* of Kolkata. He used to advice,

> "Do not expect to be included in the company of spiritual people, unless you have become an enemy of your whole-self and have become absolutely separated from all the organs of your body and all your limbs, and have cut off all connections with your existence, your movements, your speaking, your hearing and seeing, with your efforts and your intelligence, and with every thing that proceeds from you, before your spiritual existence come into bring in you."

He further explained,

> "All that will be found in you, after spiritual existence is breathed into you, because all these things constitute a screen between you and your Lord. You should consider your whole being and your parts as idols together with the rest of the creation and you should not obey any of them. Then you will learn the secrets of divine knowledge and acquire extraordinary powers".
>
> "Then you will truly become a manifestation of the powers of God; you will hear, see, speak, and understand through God,

and will have comfort and rest through Him. Thus you will be blind and deaf to any thing besides Allah, so that you will not find anything existing besides Him".[19]

Moulana had a very soft corner for the needy and he would not rest until their needs were fulfilled. Even after his demise, any prayer for spiritual help from Hazrat seldom met with disappointment. He was very fond of feeding people along with him. His door was always open for all. He would personally look after the needs of his guests. After evening prayers, his tablecloth would be spread and his personal attendants would announce dinner for his guests, whatever was the food available.

Sometimes, people with a desire for a particular dish would come to Him. Once on his return from Assam trip the famous preacher of India, Hazrat Hussain Ahmed Madani has narrated that he and his other companion wished mentally to have honey and milk dishes respectively at dinner. Meals were brought and when these were being served the servant placed honey before his companion and the milk dish before him. One seeing this Tahir pointed out to his attendant to reverse the dishes, that is, the place honey before him and the milk dish before his companion as were mentally desired by them. Hazrat Tahir once said, I have explored the

weight of every human action and have finally come to the conclusion that feeding of the poor and hungry is virtuous of all actions.[20]

He was always most polite and respectful to his visitors. Whenever, any one of them was absent for sometime, he would enquire particularly about him. In cases of indisposition he would visit the patients and pray for their health and happiness.

He disliked the company of political leaders and rich men. Whenever the political leaders and rich men intended to come to him, he would get up from amongst those present and retire to his chambers. It has not been established by any writer so far that Hazrat had ever gone to see any political leaders and rich men. On the contrary they used to come to him.

Sinners, who listened to his discourses, reformed their lives. His sermon alone helped in the reformation of over one lac of evil doers, which included murderers and thieves, who repented their past sins and started to lead better lives. Without any fear, he publicly denounced the unjust acts of Chief Minister of Trpura who once went against the *Islamic Shariah.* The Hazrat disapproved this act and said that the Chief Minister had committed a grave error in making this commitment and that he would have to account for his action in the near future before public. When the

Chief Minister heard of this admonition, he trembled with fear and dismissed the decision.[21]

Philosophical Ideas:

Being a great reformist philosopher, Moulana Md. Tahir preached the followers of Islam to be spiritual in their speeches and deeds. He wants to bring them in a single plateform to acknowledge Allah the Almighty and lead their lives in accordance of His wills. His spiritual and reformist philosophies can be extracted from his own advices to Muslim brotheren. Some of the precious philosophies among these advices are as follows—

1. There are four varieties among men, One is who has no tongue and no heart, and he is a man of ordinary position, dull and lowly, who does not count with Allah and one who has nothing good him. He and people like him are like chaff which has no weight, unless Allah covers then with His mercy and guides their hearts towards faith in himself and moves the organs of their body in obedience to Himself. Beware that you do not become one of them nor entertain them nor yet stand among them. These are the people of chastisemont and wrath of Allah; they are the inhabitants of Fire and its inmates. Let us seek refuge of Allah from them.

2. You should, on the contrary, endeavour to be equipped with Divine knowledge and to be among the teachers of good and guides of religion. So beware that you should approach and invite them to obedience to Allah and warn them sinning against Allah. You will, then be a fighter in the cause of Allah and will receive the rewards of the Prophet and the messengers of Allah. The Holy Prophet (may peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said to Hazrat Ali If Allah gives guidance to one person through your guiding him, it is better for you than that on which the sun rises.
3. The other kind of person is he who has got a tongue but no heart; he speaks wisdom, but does not act according to it. He calls people to Allah but himself flees from him. He abhors defects in others but he himself persists in having similar defects in himself. He shows to others his piety, but contends with Allah by committing major sins. When he is alone, he is like a wolf in clothes. The Prophet has warned and said The thing to be most afraid of and which I am afraid of in respect of my followers is the learned men who do evil. We normally seek the refuge of Allah from such learned men. So you should keep away from such a man and turn away from him, lest you should be misled by the sweetness of his talk contaminated

by the fire of his sin, which will consume you, and the filth of his heart, which will smother you.

4. There is a third category of man who has a heart but no tongue but he is true believer. Allah has screened him away from his creation and hung around him His curtains to provide him and insight into the blemishes of his ownself, and enlightened his heart to make him aware of the mischief in mixing up with people and of the evil of talking and speaking and in ensuring safety in silence and retirement in a corner in keeping with what the prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) said, "Whoever kept silent attained salvation." Surely the service of Allah consists of ten parts, nine of which are in the silence. Thus, this man is a friend of Allah in his secret, and is protected and possessed of safety and abundant intelligence. He is the companion of the Beneficient Allah, and is blessed with his favours.
5. So mind you, you must keep company with such a man and with him and endear yourself to him by fulfilling the needs which he may want. If you so do, Allah will love you and choose you and include you in the company of His pious servants and shower His blessings, if it pleases Him.

6. The fourth category of man is one who is invited to the World invisible, clothed in dignity, as it is related in the Hadeeth. "Whoever learns and acts upon his learning and imparts it to others, is invited to the World invisible and made great". Such a man is possessed of the knowledge of Allah and his sign; and his heart becomes the repository of the rare secrets of His knowledge kept hidden from other to be released only to those whom He has selected. He is drawn towards Himself and expands his heart for the acceptance of these secrets in order to make him a worker in His cause to invite Allah's servants to the path of virtue and to act as a warner against chastisement of evil deeds as a guide and accepted intercessor who verifies the truth of others.
7. Such a person achieves culminating point of perfection among mankind and there is no station above this, excepting that of prophethood. Therefore, it is your duty to be aware that you do not oppose such a person and be averse to him or to keep away from him. Do not be hostile to him or avoid accepting him. Be attentive to what he says and admonishes.
8. When you find in your heart any hatred or love for a person, examine his actions in the light of the book of Allah and the practice of the Prophet. Then, if these are not in accord with these

two authorities, be happy to seek refuge in Allah and His prophet. But if his actions are in accord with them but you are opposed to him, then realise that you are opposed to your law desires. You are hating him on account of your low desire unjust to him on account of your hatred towards him and thereby rebelling against Allah, the Almighty the Glorious and His Prophet and opposing both the Quran and Hadith.

9. Turn therefore towards Allah repenting for your hatred and ask Him for love for that man and the others and from the friends of Allah and His Walis and the pious among His servants. You would then please Allah.

10. Make your life after death your capital investment and your worldly life its profit. Spend your time, first of all, in acquiring your life after death. Then if any surplus time is left, spend it in acquiring worldly life, and in seeking your livelihood. But do not make your wordly life your capital investment and your life after death, your profit, trying to utilise any surplus time left, to obtain your life after death by fulfilling obligations of five prayers, like putting different things all together in a single melting pot, and thereby upsetting the order of various obligations and the intervals of fulfillment lying between them you become so exhausted and agitated, you resort to

sleep neglecting your duty of prayers, like a dead body at night and make use of the day to serve your animal self and desires, and Satan. It is tantamount to your selling you're hereafter in exchange for your worldly life, having become a slave of your animal self.

11. You are commanded to ride your animal self and discipline it, to exercise and traverse on it towards the paths of safety. Thus is the way to life eternal and submission to its Lord. But you act otherwise by succumbing to its urges and handing over to it, its own reins to follow its low desires and enjoyments. You thereby allign yourself with its passions and miss the best things of this life and of the hereafter. You enter on the Day of judgement the poorest of men and a great loser.

12. On the other hand if you correctly, traverse the path of the hereafther as your capital investment you will gain in your wordly life as well as in the hereafter. Your destined portion of this world's life would have come to you with all its pleasantness and you would have been secure and respected. Thus, the prophet has said, 'Surelly Allah gives facility in this World's life on the intention pertaining to the hereafter, whereas the felicity of hereafter is not given on the intention pertaining to this world's life'. Intention for the hereafter

is submission to Allah because such intention is the very soul of Allah because such intention is the very soul of service.

13. So when you obey Allah with obstinacy both in life and in seeking the abode of hereafter, you are among the choosen ones of Allah loving Him and yearning for the life hereafter. Paradise and nearness to Allah will be your reward. The world will be at your service and the portion allotted to you therein will in full measure because everything is subordinate to its Creator and Master. But if you become engrossed in worldly life and turn your face away from the hereafter; The Lord will be displeased with you. You will lose the hereafter and the world will be disobedience to you in that you will encounter trouble and difficulty in obtaining your allotted portion that emanates from Allah. The truth of the saying of the Prophet "The world and the hereafter are two co-wives. If your please any of the hereafter are two the other become angry with you establishes itself Allah the Mighty Glorious says "Surcly there are among you, who desire this world's life and some other are among you, who desire the hereafter". Safety lies in following the book of Allah and the practice of the prophet, and destruction, in what is besides them. With the help of these two, the servant of Allah rises towards the state of Wilayath.[22]

It should be clarified that there is not the slightest tinge of egoism in the aforesaid philosophies. Md. Tahirhad completely mastered his lower self and by his conduct, sermons and writings to wean mankind from all low desires and passions, he could not have for a moment think of self exaltation. It was the manifestation of Divine will that he was obliged to cultivate these thoughts so that the great man in particular and the mankind in general may know to whom to turn for guidance in spiritual advancement.

The stages of spiritual advancement and Human consciousness, according to him, are divided into three categories rising upward in the scale of evolution.

i. *Nafs Ammara*.-Un-ruly animal self.
ii. *Nafs Lawwama*.-Struggling moral self.
iii. *Nafs Mutmainna*.-Composed Allah realised self

In the first stage '*Ammara*' man is animal-like, restless with bestial urges, impatient of restrictions and indifferent to any pricking, of concience. By a systematic course of religious training, of which obedience to command and Prohibitions is the chief feature, he develops a sense of propriety and impropriety and repents for falling into error each and every time. The *Lawwama* is that state which begins with a faint dawning of the moral

scnse and ends in a complete surrender of the animal ego in man, is the third and the highest stage viz. *Mutmainna*. The struggle between the lower and the higher self having now ended, the pilgrim enters a condition of perfect peace, of purity, of rectitude and of knowledge. To indicate the experience starting from the thresh old of this stage, further on, the Sufis have coined three more terms.

All the above thoughts have immortalized him among the educated people throughout the south Asian sub-continent. He is not only known as the greatest of all helpers, but was also a great preacher, a great educationalist, a great moralist and a great doctor of Muslim law. He was the glory of the learned and the light of Islam; the Spokesman of theologians, the Interpreter of men of spiritual knowledge, the unique Leader of Leaders; the Leader of nations; the Reviver of Religion; possessed of very high and perfect spiritual knowledge; and hailed as the Honour of Religion.[23]

Death:

Before his death Moulana Tahir called his dearest friend Moulana Jalauddin to Calcutta at Madani Nagar, Bakda which was his residence. It was seemed that he could understand that he would not survive for long and therefore, he handed over the responsibility of Jamia Islamia Madania to Jalaluddin. Eventually, the great Islamic thinker, reformer and social worker left his last breath on December 11, 1998. He was of 78 years

when he was died of bronchitis for which he had been suffering from last fifty years. The entire regions of Assam and West Bengal were mourned with the news of his death. A huge number of scholars attended his death ceremony and more than ten thousands Muslims offered his prayer of *Janajah* from all corners of Indian subcontinent.

His whole life was devoted towards the service of the poor and he devoted more of his precious time to the poor, than to the rich. Whenever in a town while passing through its streets, the people would come out of their shops and houses, and would stand on both sides of the streets to greet him in their reverence. Despite innumerable handicaps Hazrat Shaikh ul Islam by dint of his labour, became, an acknowledged teacher of Quran, Fiqh Hadith and Arabic literature and all their subjects. Hazrat has himself referred in his famous Qasida the extent of knowledge acquired by him.

Findings: From the above discussion we can say that Md. Tahir is one of the forerunner of several Islamic theological and social scientific disciplines: Arabic-Bengali translation, Islamic-cultural history, criticism of other Indian Islamic scholars, the philosophy of Islamic history, and Islamic sociology. He is also considered one of the forerunners of modern Islamic feminist, alongside the earlier Indian scholar Abul Ala Maududi. After analysing his family background it has been cleared that Moulana

Md. Tahir was by nature and nurture a product of the Bengali Muslim scholarship who had profound knowledge on Arabic literature in the Sylhet district of earlier East Bengal and the present day of Karimganj district of Assam. Tahiris considered by many to be the father of an Arabic-Begali translation of Islamic theology in the regions of Assam and West Bengal in general, for anticipating many elements of these disciplines centuries before they were founded in the Indian sub-continent and other parts of south Asia. But those works were translated in several other languages rather than Bengali. He is best known for his *Al-Manar* which is a comprehensive interpretation of some selected *Hadith*.[5] The book has immortalised him as great scholar of Arabic literature. In the forthcoming chapter an analytical study about this book would be entertained.

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