



Original Article

Muslim's Reform Movements In 19th Century

Dr. Syeda Lubna Shireen

Asst.Professor Dept. of History, Dr. Rafiq Zakaria College for Women,
Sambhajinagar Aurangabad

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Correspondence Address:

Dr. Syeda Lubna Shireen
Asst.Professor Dept. Of History, Dr.
Rafiq Zakaria College for Women,
Sambhajinagar Aurangabad.
Email: arjumandsayed79@gmail.com



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Abstract

This article explores the Muslims reform movements in 19th century. The nineteenth century was a period of awakening not only for Hindu Muslims but for the entire population. A number of reformers came forward to combat religious malpractices and to preach about the greatness of India's culture and philosophy. Self-reliance, self-respect, and national pride were promoted. As a result of being one of the few enlightened, educated Muslims, Shariatullah felt compelled to pursue a cooperative policy with the rulers and improve their social situation with the assistance of the British. The main goals of these movements were two folded. Firstly, they aimed to address the social and educational challenges that Muslims face. Primary objectives of Muslim Socio-Religious Reform Movements were twofold. Liberals pushed for education, equality and opportunities for progress. Second, they wanted to clean up Islamic practices, getting rid of what they saw as un necessary or wrong additions to the religion. Important personalities in these Shah Waliullah , scholar of the 18th century who called for a return to the basics of Islam and Sir Syed Ahmed khan who started the Aligarh movement in 19th century with the focus on modern education and science. Allama Iqbal also played important role in inspiring Muslims to take part in politics and social issues.

Keywords: Reform Movements, Deoband, Colonial rule, Hadith, social, economic, equality, Religious, Western ideas, wahabi, British rule, United, community

Introduction

In the beginning 19th century, many social and religious reform movements emerged in India. These movements were influenced by various factors, including the impact of Western ideas, modern education, and presence of Christian missionary. These reform movements were in the reactions to the challenges faced by Muslims due to establishment of British colonial rule, social changes, and the spread of western cultures. The Muslim scholars focused on lack of education, social backwardness and religious practices that they considered different from real spirit of Islam. These movements played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual and social scenario of Indian Muslim community. Creating a more progressive educated community. They also aimed to preserve Islamic identity while blending traditional Islamic education with modern knowledge. Overall Muslims reform movements like wahabi movement, Deoband movement & Aligarh movement, have the objectives of purifying and strengthening Islamic teachings. For the uplift of Muslim with the changing time by adopting some Western ideas and culture.¹

These scholar's efforts have the considerable impact on Muslims of India. And many leaders had different views and contributed in their ways. They contributed to its intellectual and social development. The social and religious reform movements of India had different aims & intentions. Many leaders portrayed important roles in diverse scenarios. the issues of challenging times were resolved by the sacrifices & devotions of leaders. The most celebrated icon was sir Syed Ahmed khan, who belonged to Bareilly in U.P. he was mindful of worth of education & sought for modern education among Muslims. He bought the idea that Muslims needed to reconcile to the developing world & acquire modern / Western education and adopt their ideas to advance in future. Mohammed Anglo oriental college, now (Aligarh Muslim university) was established by Sir Syed Ahmed khan in 1875 with a purpose to offer modern education while incorporating Islamic teachings in Muslims. Sir Syed Ahmed khan & Mohammed Iqbal were iconic figures in religious & social reform movements.

Wahabi Movement:

Wahabi movement was a distinct movement with its separate characteristics. This Article provides insight about the prominent leaders engaged in Wahabi movement. This movement is also called as Waliullah movement.

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It appeared as a reaction to Westernization & tried to refine and reform the Islam religion. It drew teachings from the Islamic scholar of 18th century Shah waliullah. The initiative wanted the Muslims to backtrack to the basic & core principles of Islam as stated in Quran & Hadith. The wahabis pointed out the distancing & opposition to innovations & beliefs, they considered deviant from the genuine morals of Islam. The movement not only had a strong religious focus but also had political objectives striving to replace British rule with new governance. The Wahabi movement started in Arabia. Then, it came to parts of India. Wahabis wanted Muslims to follow real Islam. They only followed the Quran and what the Prophet said. Wahabis did not like people praying at the tombs of saints. This caused fights between Wahabis and groups like Sufis. But it also made Muslims learn basic Islam again and Islamic rules and good things.

The Wahhabi movement in India emerged in the 18th century under the influence of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a Najdi cleric from Arabia. Wahhabism is a revivalist and reformist movement within Sunni Islam. The Wahhabi movement spread to India through trade and missionary activities. It gained a foothold in the North Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal. Key figures in the early spread of Wahhabism in India include Shah Waliullah Dehlawi and Syed Ahmad Bareilly. These individuals played a significant role in influencing the religious landscape of North India. The main objectives of the Wahabi movement in India were religious, political, and social in nature. The religious objectives of the Wahabis in India were to purify Islam from what they believed were inappropriate innovations and practices. They wanted to go back to the original teachings and practices of Islam as preserved in the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad. To spread the message of true Islam. The Wahabis believed that other Muslims had distorted Islamic teachings and practiced un-Islamic customs. They considered it their duty to guide other Muslims on the right path. To enforce Sharia law strictly. The Wahabis wanted Islamic laws concerning religious rituals, social interactions, and economic activities to be followed strictly by all Muslims.

To end the worship of saints and graves. The Wahabis opposed the veneration of saints, relics, and graves, which they saw as shirk (polytheism). They wanted to end such practices among Muslims in India. The Wahabi movement aimed at bringing about social reforms among Muslims in India. This included-To end un-Islamic social customs. The Wahabis opposed social practices among Indian Muslims like the purdah system, marriage with close kin, carrying of amulets, etc., which they saw as un-Islamic. To promote the Islamic dress code. The Wahabis pushed for both men and women to strictly follow the Islamic dress code of wearing long, loose clothes that cover the whole body except the face and hands. To promote Islamic ideals of simplicity and piety. The Wahabis criticized the lavish lifestyle of Indian Muslims and promoted the simple lifestyle of the early Islamic community.

In summary, the main objectives of the Wahabi movement in India were religious, political, and social in nature. The religious objective was to purify and spread true Islamic beliefs and practices. The social goal was to end un-Islamic social customs and promote Islamic ideals of simplicity and piety. Wahabis first came to India with Arab traders and missionaries. But they got more followers in the 1900s. Many Wahabis were in South Indian places like Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The Wahabi movement divided Indian Muslims. It caused tensions between Wahabis and groups like Sufis. But the movement also made Muslims rediscover basic Islam and its principles. Wahabis made simple worship, pure rules, and good behavior their job. They opened schools teaching Islam, the Quran, and Arabic. This helped reform Muslim thinking and rules. However, Wahabis' strict ideas caused conflict with groups like Sufis, who had a more open outlook. The Muslim modernist movement also criticized some Wahabi ideas. Still, Wahhabism helped revive studying the Quran and the saying of the Prophet among Indian Muslims. The movement inspired some Indian Muslim scholars. It made other groups think about their beliefs and rules. This contributed to the Islamic revival in the 1800s in India. The Wahabi movement among Indian Muslims was complex. The British saw it positively as it reduced rituals among Muslims. But the British were wary of its politics.

The Wahabi Movement in India had a distinct political dimension alongside its religious and social objectives. The Wahabi Movement criticized the British administration for various policies. It advocated for the protection of Muslim interests and the promotion of Islamic education. The movement's leaders actively participated in political activities. They also engaged with other anti-colonial movements of the time. Though the Wahabi Movement had political aspirations, it did not have a centralized organizational structure. Its leadership was fragmented, and internal divisions weakened its political influence. The British viewed the Wahabi Movement as a threat to their colonial hegemony and saw it as a potential source of rebellion. The movement emphasized puritanical practices. Its opposition to various aspects of the British administration made it a target for suppression. Wilayat Ali & Enayat Ali of Patna led the second of Wahabi movement, it was against British empire. After 1847 A.D. when the whole of Panjab went to the direct occupation of British Raj, the Wahabi movement assumed its anti-British imperialist color. Wahabi's started full preparation for a total war against the British rule in India from their base camp at Sitana² The result of direct military confrontation between the Wahabis and the British was the surrender of Wilayat Ali and Enayat Ali in 1847 A.D., sent to Patna, they were bound down on bail. Returning to the frontier in 1851 A.D.¹ Wilayat Ali died in 1852 and Enayat Ali functioned as leader from Sitana till his death in 1858. A.D. ³

Professor Amalendu Dey said About Wahabi movement that:

"Wahabi movement entered upon new phase of directly anti British struggle after 1847. Since the Hindus showed sympathy to this movement. There may not be general involvement of Hindu masses. But their sympathies are unmistakably clear. British government felt very concerned and arrested few Hindus as well.⁴ The British authorities employed various strategies to suppress the Wahabi Movement. They imposed strict surveillance and monitoring of the movement's leaders and followers. They also used force to quash any signs of rebellion or opposition. Military operations were carried out against the movement's strongholds, leading to armed conflicts. One of the notable events in the suppression of the Wahabi Movement was the Battle of Balakot in 1831. Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly, along with his followers, established a fortified stronghold in Balakot, present-day Pakistan. The British launched a military expedition against Balakot. This resulted in the defeat of the Wahabi forces and the death of Sayyid Ahmad. The suppression of the movement was not limited to military action alone. The British also employed administrative measures to weaken its influence. Over time, the Wahabi Movement gradually lost its momentum. By the early 20th century, the movement had significantly declined.

Deoband Movement:

The Deoband movement also known as the Deobandi movement, initiated in the late 19th century in a town of Uttar Pradesh, called Deoband. The Deoband movement was led by the conservative class of the Muslim scholars. They directed the Muslims towards the basic teachings of religion based on the Quran & hadith. The foundation of Dar ul uloom in 1867 A.D. was

laid as a result of the uncertain, social, political religious situation prevailed in that period, due to the unsuccessful mutiny of the 1857 A.D. Muslims intellectual and theologian had been feeling the need for a revolutionary institution through peaceful means. For the last one century the Darul uloom Deoband has been considered an incomparable teaching institution for the religious education of the Muslims not only in the subcontinent but also throughout the Islamic world. The Dar ul uloom Deoband is in fact a shoreless ocean from which besides those of this subcontinent the seekers of knowledge of the whole of Asia are benefitting. If the history of Dar ul uloom Deoband is studied minutely a perspicacious reader will not fail to see the reality that it is not merely an old type teaching institution, it is in fact a stupendous movement for the revival of Islam & survival of the community. Their objective & dream of imparting Islamic education in youths for countering western education and culture besides preparing them for the struggle against the British rulers and their ideologies. Their dream was fulfilled when revolutionary leaders like Maulana Mahmood-ul- Hassan, Maulana Hussain Ahmed Madani, emerged on scene. One of these scholars was Maulana Mahmood-ul- Hassan played significant role in the freedom struggle.⁵

The Darul uloom Deoband is not merely a teaching institution, it is in fact a movement an independent school of thought, shoreless sea from which besides those of India, students from the whole of Asia & East & South Africa are acquiring knowledge⁶.

Amongst its alumni were produced many fiery orator, high ranking luminaries, journalists and litterateurs. A first class academic and research institute like the Nadvat ul Musannafin, Delhi is the result of the enterprise of the scholars at the Dar ul uloom. Mr. Zaheer al Deen Siddiqui in a lecture at the Muslim university Aligarh calling the Dar ul uloom Deoband to be the greatest center of Islamic teachings in Asia said, "Not only in the religious but also the political field the services of Darul uloom have had a golden history, we are proud of it, that Deoband taught us to fight for freedom. The teachers there gave us practical guidance raised a banner against political conservatism and proffered the concept of political progressiveness to the Indian Muslims."

Aligarh Movement:

During the 1850s Sir Syed was fueled by an unwavering enthusiasm for educational advancement. While engaging in higher learning he started to recognize the prominence of Western style education which was being available in newly established Indian colleges. In spite of being a committed follower of Islam Sir Syed questioned the impact of traditional & religious orthodoxy. He was transferred to Aligarh in 1864, there he started working as an enthusiastic educator. Scientific society of Aligarh was established by him which was the first scientific association in India. Sir Syed gathered various scholars from different parts of the country. The society organized annual conventions allocated resources for educational initiatives & consistently issued a periodical covering scientific topic in both English & Urdu. He believed that the socio economic prospects of Muslims were endangered by the traditional resistance to contemporary science & technological advancement. By 1873 the committee along with Sir Syed put forth plans for establishing a college in Aligarh. He initiated the journal Tahzeeb ul Akhlaque to foster awareness on contemporary topics & advocate for reform in Muslim society. Sir Syed promoted an interpretation of Islamic thoughts aiming to harmonize tradition with Western Education. He addressed that Quran values reason & natural law making scientific enquiry essential for a devout Muslim. He obtained support from wealthy Muslims & Britishers to establish a modern school in Aligarh & laid the foundation of Mohammadan Anglo Oriental college. He in his speech at Gurdaspur on 27th Jan. 1884 A.D. declared his faith in unity of communities. He addressed the public thus, "We Muslims & Hindus should try to become one heart & soul & should act unitedly in order to support each other. If not the effects of one against the other would tend to the destruction of downfall of both."⁷ Through the 1850s Syed Ahmad Khan began developing a strong passion for education.⁸

Sir Syed spent the final twenty years of his in Aligarh, where he was widely recognized a leading figure & mentor to Muslims thinkers and political leaders of 19th & 20th century. He continued to be the most prominent Muslim leaders with his views shaping the beliefs of a large number of Muslims even as he struggled with illness & challenges of aging. Sir Syed passed away on 27th March 1898.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Wahhabism made good contributions like renewing the study of Islam basics, highlighting Islam principles, and inspiring Muslim reform. However, Wahhabis' strict ideas and criticisms of popular practices also caused tensions. Wahhabis focused more on religious renewal than social and political issues. However, the movement strengthened the Islamic identity of some Indian Muslims and made them think again about their religious beliefs and rules. The movements had a deep impression on Muslim community in the British period. Through its network of religious institutions, the Darul uloom has shaped the educational spiritual, and political dimensions of Indian Muslims life across various spheres. Ultimately it emerged as the most significant source of the movement aim at Muslim revival. It cultivated a generation of patriots devoted contributors to both the nation & community bringing honor & distinction to Muslim identity. Their contribution to the intellectual and educational empowerment of Muslims, promoting a sense of self-reliance, the importance on education led to the initiation of institute like Aligarh Muslim university. The main objective of social reform was to remove caste like distinction & promoting unity in the Muslim community. Overall the reform movements played a significant role in altering the social, political & religious landscape of Muslims during the modern period.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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