CHAPTER V
19th CENTURY: POLITICAL AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS.

I – Introduction

II - Political Conditions
   i) Establishment of British Rule
   ii) Religious Exploitation
   iii) Freedom Movement of 1857

III - Socio Religious Conditions
   i) Social Conditions
   ii) Religious Conditions
   iii) Mujahidin Movement
   iv) Faraidia Movement.
I. INTRODUCTION

The early decades of the nineteenth century constitute watershed in the history of India. The decline of Muslim political power, which had begun in the eighteenth century, reached its lowest point during this period and the tentacles of British imperialism spread far and wide.

The entire political structure of northern India crumbled and the Mughal Emperors became not only pensioners but also prisoners in the hands of East India Company.¹ The most important event of the nineteenth century was the disintegration of Mughal Empire and consolidation of the British rule in India, which reached completion after the failure of the 1857 War of Independence.²

The British, who had secured small footholds in the country in the seventeenth century, started their venture in India amidst bitter opposition as a purely Trading corporation named East India Company. During the period of Mughal supremacy the British could not think of conquering India. But when India succumbed to anarchy they were obliged to protect their settlements and finally began to meddle in the politics of this country through the rebellious princelings.

The East India Company soon passed from dividends to dominion with the real government pursuing the ambitious policy of annexation, which speeded the decline

² Rafiq Zakaria, Rise of Muslims in Indian Politics, (Bombay, 1970).
of the leading Indian powers in the first half of the
nineteenth century.\footnote{Mohammad Miyan, \textit{Ulama-i Hind Ka Shandar Maazi}, (Delhi, 1985), vol. IV, p. 58.}

The rapid expansion of British dominion in India
during the period 1757-1818 brought about a great change.
The Muslims found it extremely difficult to reconcile with
the facts. They could not forget the fact that they had just
lost seven hundred years of rule over the Subcontinent and
therefore could not accept the British supremacy at any
cost. This made it extremely difficult for the Muslims to
make a satisfactory adjustment with the British rule. For
the Hindus, there was no such psychological pressure.
They found not at all difficult to accept the western
authority. They easily took up English in place of Persian
and participated in the trade industry and banking in line
with British principles.\footnote{Mohammad Taher, \textit{Muslims in India, Recent Contributions to Literature on Religions, Philosophy and Social Aspect}, (Delhi, 1993), p.4.}

It was a period of travail and transition when the
medieval society was dying and a new modern age was yet
to take place. It, therefore, witnessed all the social
degeneration inherent in such periods.

The religious life in this period was in an even more
deplorable condition. The growth of Islam in India was
largely due to the pioneering efforts of some of the earlier
sufi saints. The scrupulous and ethical ways of life, their
large hearted humanitarianism etc, all these touched the
hearts of many of the local inhabitants.

With time the sufi orders and monastic institutions
came to be established with the grants of large charitable
donations. These centres soon became affluent but they lost their previous missionary zeal and spirit of service.\textsuperscript{5}

To stem the process of socio-religious degeneration of the Muslims several ulama took measures in the form of reform movements. In the beginning of nineteenth century two movements, popularly called the Faraizi and the Mujahidin movements, mainly religious in character and directed towards purifying Islam in India by removing un-Islamic traits and influences from it, were started.\textsuperscript{6}

Prior to the arrival of the British the relationship of the Muslims with other religious groups was very cordial and warm. There were hardly any instances of clashes on the basis of religion and community. It is important to note that Indian society was never homogenous throughout history. It was highly diverse religiously, culturally caste wise and linguistically but there was hardly any tension between these groups. It all began with the establishment of British rule in India.

Religious bigotry and feeling of antagonism between the Muslims and the Hindus of India began with the arrival of the British. The British government made it a policy of its administration to divide the two communities and secure its own ends.\textsuperscript{7}

The uprising of 1857 revealed for the first time that a large-scale alliance between the Hindus and the Muslims against the British was possible and would be fruitful for both.

\textsuperscript{5} Qeyamuddin Ahmad, \textit{The Wahhabi Movement in India}, (Calcutta, 1996), pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{6} Mohammad Taher, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 5
\textsuperscript{7} Sayyid Ahmad Khan, \textit{Asbab- i- Bagawat- i- Hind}, (Aligarh, 1971).
There is no doubt that the Muslims found it psychologically difficult to tear themselves away from their past. But the treatment meted out by the British made it even more difficult for them to adjust themselves with the present. They still considered themselves the aristocratic class. This complex among the Muslims deterred them from taking to anything British e.g. English education for instance, in large numbers. Eventually it alienated them from the British and widened the gulf between them.\(^8\)

The nineteenth century was a period of great mental turmoil for the Muslims of India. In all walks of life economic, social, political they suffered serious setbacks.

Conservatism and obscurantism prevailed among them. Even after the fall of the Mughals they did not shun their traditional way of thinking and clung to their glorious past with no zeal to achieve it in future.

The change of masters had hardly affected the Hindus who embraced the western education and thus availed of all the opportunities provided by the British. Government services were freely offered and state patronage was extended to them.

Economic prosperity was its natural outcome they became trusted citizens leaving the Muslims sullenly discounted and extremely poor, so much so that even members of the royal family were found begging on the roads of Delhi in the cover of night.\(^9\)

\(^8\) Mohd Taher, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

Time and its pressure however altered the situation. The pressures issuing from the changing social context induced challenges for socio-political competition from other communities.

There were basically two schools of thought that led the Muslims to action in the nineteenth century out of an atmosphere of inaction. These were the Deoband school of thought and the Aligarh school of thought. There is a marked difference between the two. Though both the schools were aimed at the survival and uplift of the Muslims.¹⁰

¹⁰ Mohd Taher, op. cit., p. 8.
II. Political Conditions

(i) Establishment of British Rule

In the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth centuries various factors combined to start the downfall of the Mughal Dynasty, which had ruled most of India with a steady hand since Babur and Humayun in the sixteenth century.

It started with gradual overspending which weakened their ability to fund a good defense and the spark that really got the decline going was Aurangzeb's policy of intolerance of the Hindus and other non-Muslims. This incited many revolts especially by the Sikhs and the Marathas. \(^{11}\)

Not long before these events the British East India Company had begun trading in India. The British presence in India dates back in the early part of the seventeenth century on December 31, 1600 A.D. Elizabeth then the monarch of the United Kingdom gave them exclusive rights to trade in India. \(^{12}\)

The first real contact the British had with the Indian's was when Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor, gave permission to the British to open a trading port and factory at a port town in the Bay of Bengal. The British trading ports grew and with that the company gained more wealth and power. \(^{13}\)

---

\(^{11}\) J.L. Mehta, *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval India, 1707-1813*, (Delhi, 2005), p.130.


\(^{13}\) J.L. Mehta, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-336; http://www.marxisl..
In the eighteenth century the rulers following Aurangzeb were all weak and many of them were rumoured to have been opium addicts. The Marathas were gradually undermining the Empire and had taken most of the Mughal state. Much of the remaining Mughal Empire was broken up into territories ruled by independent princes and many of these states were being occupied by Afghans and Persians.\textsuperscript{14}

With the death of Alamgir in 1707 A.D. began the decline and ultimate fall of the powerful Mughal Empire. It took almost 150 years before the Empire finally disintegrated.\textsuperscript{15}

The inefficient later Mughals and their weak administration along with internal feuds gave the British an opportunity to interfere with the administration of provinces and the settling of disputes between them. The Mughals had already begun losing power to the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and finally they lost it to the most powerful British.\textsuperscript{16}

Taking advantage of this chaotic situation the East India Company began strengthening its military capabilities they conspired with Hindu traders and moneylenders against Nawab Sirajuddaulah of Bengal to take over his principality. The battle of Plassey of 1757 is considered a major break through for the British in the Subcontinent. It paved the way for the company’s rule in Bengal.

\textsuperscript{14} Hafeez Malik, \textit{Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan}, pp. 120-121.
\textsuperscript{15} Hafeez Malik, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 87; See Syed Razi Wasti, \textit{The Political Triangle in India, 1858-1924} (Lahore, 1976), p. 11.
\textsuperscript{16} Mohammad Taher, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 3.
Consequently, English language came to play an important role in the political power of the British in the country.\textsuperscript{17}

The East India Company now found itself transformed from an association of traders to all-powerful rulers exercising political sovereignty over a largely unknown land and people. Less than ten years later in 1765 the company acquired the Diwani of Bengal or the right to collect revenues on behalf of the Mughal Emperor in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Clive became the first British Governor of Bengal.\textsuperscript{18}

The nineteenth century saw East India Company emerge as a major political power in India. Not only was the power of the Mughal Empire broken but the many independent Kingdoms which had risen as a result of the weakening of the Mughal Empire were subjugated by the British which left the East India Company as the indisputable overlord of the country. Hyder Ali who had established a powerful kingdom in Mysore fully realized the danger.

Tipu the tiger of Mysore also gave a tough time to the British forces.\textsuperscript{19} After four wars with the British Tipu Sultan was finally defeated and killed and his territory annexed. Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and major part of the United Provinces were already under the control of the British.

Thus by the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century the Maratha power was completely liquidated with

\textsuperscript{17} Shan Muhammad, Muslims and India’s Freedom Struggle, (Aligarh, 2002), p.1.
\textsuperscript{18} K.G. Vasantha Madhava, History of the Freedom Movement in India (1857-1947), (Delhi, 1995), p.11. Also see Syed Razi Wasti op.cit., pp. 3-4.
the exception of some of the Maratha provinces which were allowed. The Kingdom of Oudh was still nominally independent but incapable of holding out against any serious onslaught by the British. The onslaught came some years later and Oudh was annexed. The Nizam had become an ally and ceased to be a source of danger or anxiety to the British. The Sikhs, who had established their Kingdom in the Punjab and the Northwest, were not looked upon with suspicion.²⁰

The British Empire in the Indian Subcontinent remained for nearly 200 years. The first hundred years were marked by chaos and crises. The Sepoy Mutiny also known as the Indian War of Independence which erupted in 1857 developed into a wide spread revolt against British rule. After the British quelled the rebellion in 1858, they took steps to maintain their control. The British government officially abolished the Mughal Empire and exiled its last scion Muhammad Bahadur Shah to Burma where he died in captivity. In addition, the British government transferred authority from the English East India Company to the British Crown establishing direct imperial rule in India.²¹

The British administered India for a period of about two centuries and brought about revolutionary changes in the social, political and the economic life of the country.

The British from the very beginning followed a policy of divide and rule. Diplomacy and deceit were used to gain control for revenue collection in the province of Bengal.

This gave them effective control of the administration. The Marathas, the Sikhs and the rulers of Mysore could never unite to confront the enemy and fell one by one. Very soon there was no local power that could cope with their onslaught.  

Once the British had consolidated their power commercial exploitation of the natural resources and native labour become ruthless. Though there were a few benevolent Governor generals who initiated social reforms and tried to render the administration more efficient and responsive but they were exceptions. By the middle of the nineteenth century arrogant exploitation of the people had tried the patience of the Indians to the limit.  

(ii) Religious Exploitation

The new government introduced English education compulsorily which, on the one hand, proved unfavourable to the Muslims and, on the other, a great boon to the Hindus. The latter who had been for ages under the Muslim rule had no dislike for the language of their new rulers. As they learnt Persian and Urdu under the Muslims so they learnt English under the British. But this was not the case with the Muslims they objected because they feared that English education would undermine their religion.

Such an attitude weakened the position of the Muslims and ultimately they began to lose all-important offices. The Muslims who in the times of Lord Cornwallis were holding 75 percent government jobs no longer

22 K.G. Vasantha Madhva, op. cit., p.65.
23 M.R.A. Baig, The Muslim Dilemma in India, (Delhi, 1974).
occupied the first rank among the Indian communities. It was the result of a radical change introduced in the administrative policy of the country.24

The British had long regarded the Muslims as hostile and unreliable and the incident of 1857 had convinced them of this even more. The British were generally of the view that the responsibility for 1857 lay on the Muslims and to avenge it they hanged thousand of Muslims even on the slightest suspicion and confiscated the Jagirs and properties of many others.25

The reprisals against the dissenting ulama were severe. Many of them were hanged or were deported to the Andamans like Fazle Haq and others. Haji Imdadullah and many others migrated to Mecca. The main leaders both Hindus and Muslims were wiped out and their properties or principalities confiscated. Henceforth, the British government followed a policy of discrimination against the Muslims in all walks of life.

The ulama not only hated the British but also everything that smacked of the British culture, their way of life, their dress, their education and their way of administration. They were making supreme efforts to keep the Muslim society away from the hated British culture. This increasingly led them to still greater isolation.26

Moreover though the British had received the Divani of Bengal from the Mughal Emperor on the condition that

24 Y.B. Mathur, op. cit., See Murray T. Titus, op. cit., p. 192
25 S.A. Husain, op. cit., p. 22.
they would maintain the Islamic Judicial system as it was. As soon as they found themselves powerful enough they put an end to all religious tribunals and established, Civil courts in which all the higher officials were British and the lower officials mostly Bengali Hindus.

Until 1857 they had been allowed, as a concession, to enter government service without knowledge of English but after 1857 the concession was withdrawn. The new policy of the government threatened to ruin the higher and middle classes of Muslims and caused great distress among them.27

The higher and middle classes of Muslim had, to some extent, religious prejudices against the British and their culture, but they hated them mostly because they regarded the British as usurpers who were destroying the Empire that they had served for generations and were likely to destroy the culture that they together with their Hindu compatriots had built up in course of centuries.

As far as the religious class of the ulama and sufis was concerned, they hated western culture due to various religious, economic, cultural and social motives. They regarded the English, inspite of all claims to religious impartiality, as the enemies of Islam and the friends and patrons of Christianity.28 The ulama resented the new western culture that had invaded the Muslim dominated culture in India. With the advent of Christian missionaries

---

28 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
they feared that the whole Muslim population would be converted to Christianity.  

They thought, not without reason, that the British government was a danger to their religion as the schools teaching English and modern sciences were run by the Christian missionaries.

In 1830 the Missionary Society of London had declared that even if there was no religious teaching in these schools, English education would by itself help in spreading Christianity. A few years later Lord William Bentink, on the advice of Lord Macaulay, decided that the educational grants given by the government would be spent on English education alone. Public opinion connected these two declarations and concluded that the government wanted to spread Christianity through English education.

Indians in general had a bitter opinion about the British and regarded them as inferior and avoided social contacts with them. Particularly those ulama were more affected who had till now enjoyed high social status and had now, owing to contemptuous attitude of the government, fallen in the estimation of worldly minded people. So far as the western culture, which came to India with the British, was concerned almost everything associated with it was hateful in the eyes of the ulama. Its secular character they regarded as irreligious. Its higher standard of living they condemned as vain and wasteful.

---

30 S. Abid Husain, op. cit., p. 20; See Sayyid Ahmad Khan, op. cit., p. 45.
31 Ibid., p. 21.
(iii) Freedom Movement of 1857

The revolt of 1857 is a significant event in modern Indian history. The British took serious note of it and thereafter considerably changed their policies. Some of the members of the ruling colonial elite chose to ignore the popular character of the revolt and labeled it merely as a Sepoy Mutiny. Nationalist elite, which took shape in the last two decades of the nineteenth century to lead a successful anti-colonial political campaign, glorified it as the first war of Indian independence. Memories of the revolt lay deep in the minds of both the colonial rulers and the Indian subjects.

British rule in India, which can be said to have come into being after the battle of Plassey in 1757, was initially established in Bengal and then gradually spread to other regions. Being economically exploitative and destructive of the social fabric, it encountered resistance right from the beginning. 32

There were innumerable peasant revolts, which broke out in different parts of the country, some of the prominent ones being the Kol uprising of 1831, the Santhal uprising of 1855 and the Kutch rebellion, which lasted from 1816 until 1832.33 Dissatisfaction among the Indian soldiers of the British Indian Army also had some history. Indian soldiers had grievances on economic, social and religious grounds. A significant mutiny before 1857 was the Vellore Mutiny of

---

1806, which was brutally crushed by the British officers and soldiers.

As mentioned above the 1857 revolt consisted both of rebellion by the Indian Sepoys and reaction from sections of the general Indian population. Peasants were an important segment of society. Uprising among the Sepoys and peasants was even more directly related in that the Sepoys were basically, peasants with close ties with their kinspeople in the villages.34

The origins of the revolt of 1857 lay in the reaction of conservative, tradition loving sections of the Indian society to the modernizing zeal of their British conquerors. As the British consolidated their power in India they also sought to reform Indian society both morally and politically.

In creating a rational and efficient administration the British obviously threatened much of the traditional order of the Princes and landowners. The principal representative of that order felt themselves under sentence of extinction under the governor generalships of Lord Dalhousie (1848-56) both of these classes were subjected to heavy handedness of the government. Dalhousie wished to remove as many feudal states as he could leave only a few of the larger ones nominally independent but actually under the control of his government.35

No doubt that all men whether ignorant or otherwise and whether high or low had a firm conviction that the English government was bent upon interfering with their

34 Tara Chand, op. cit., pp. 5-7; See Bipan Chandra, *Freedom Struggle*. (Delhi, 1972), pp. 43-47.
religion and with their old established customs. They believed that the government intended to force Christian religion and foreign customs upon the Hindus and Muslims alike. It was popularly accepted that the government was slowly but surely developing its plan. Every step, it was thought, was being taken with the most extreme caution.  

It was never thought that the government would openly compel them to change their religion. The idea was that indirect steps would be taken such as doing away with the study of Arabic and Sanskrit and reducing the people to ignorance and poverty. In this way it was supposed that people would be deprived of knowledge of the principles of their own faith and their attention turned to books containing the principles of Christian creed.  

The western educational system, which had replaced their own, made no provision for their religious instructions. Feelings were further embittered by the effect of the abrogation of the Waqf laws on private Muslim schools and misappropriation of funds of these schools by British officials. Muslim reluctance to make use of the new educational facilities contributed to the vicious circle brought about by their disqualification for government service.

Even more disturbing to Muslim religious susceptibilities was the patronage of Christian missionary activities by some officials of the East India Company. Though it may be argued that the government of East India

---

Company had functioned on the whole as a secular state interfering as little as possible with the religious freedom of the indigenous people, the impression grew in India that its aim, slow but sure, was the christianization of the land.\footnote{Aziz, Ahmad, \textit{Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan}, p. 24.}

Any uprising of significance usually has a number of causes, which fester for a number of years. Yet there is that final spark that launches it. In the case of 1857 that spark came when the British introduced a new rifle and cartridge in the British Indian Army. The grease of the cartridges at the end had to be bitten off before loading in the newly introduced Enfield rifle was sometimes made from beef or pig fat. The bullet offended the religious sentiments of both the Hindus and Muslims and made them suspect that the government was trying to destroy their religion. The Hindu Sepoys saw this as an attempt to break their caste as a preliminary to making them all Christians. Sepoy regiments refused to accept the new cartridges and finally broke into open revolt.\footnote{Kamlesh Sharma, \textit{Role of Muslims in Indian Politics (1837-1947)}. (Delhi, 1985). p.1; See also Muhammad Miyan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 85.}

It is believed that from the beginning of their supremacy in India the British did not trust the Muslims. To perpetuate and strengthen English dominion in India it was thought necessary by the British to keep the Muslims underfoot. The uprising of 1857 appeared to justify it.\footnote{Kamlesh Sharma, \textit{op cit.}, p.1.}

The uprising of 1857 appeared to be the first combined attempt of many classes of people to challenge a foreign power. It may be termed as a national resistance
movement against alien domination. The cohesiveness of the uprising which spread like wildfire shook the foundation of British rule in India and generated vague and floating ideas of free and independent rule in the minds of the local rulers who missed no chance of setting up a government of their own will.

S. Moinul Haq concludes that it was the first major attempt of an eastern people to throw off the domination of a western power. Its aim was to liberate the people from the shackles of British imperialism.\(^4\)

A number of Muslim revivalist groups, Wahhabis (Mujahidin)\(^1\) in particular, played an important role in the revolt. Tipu Sultan of Mysore was well known for his opposition to the British rule. Faraizis,\(^2\) a revivalist movement founded in Bengal in 1804 united the peasantry against the exactions of the new Zamindars in the name of resuscitated faith.

According to traditional Muslim perspective the whole land from Delhi to Calcutta had passed into the possession of the "Nasranis" (the Christians) and India ceased to be the land of Islam. It was henceforth considered enemy territory (Dar al-Harb). It was incumbent upon Muslims to wage a Jihad or holy war against the British or to migrate to some free Muslim country. There was broad unity among different sections of the Muslim community, expropriated aristocrats, ruined handicraftsmen, frustrated

\(^4\) Mujeeb Ashraf, op. cit., p. 157.
\(^1\) For the Mujahidin see below in this chapter.
\(^2\) For the Faraizis also see below in this chapter.
ulama and discontented soldiers in their sentiment against the British. 42

However the concept of Muslim government differed from section to section for example, the religious class generally aimed at establishing a government on the model of Khilafat-i-Rashida. The Muslim masses on the other hand just wanted Muslim rule, the Mughal government being their ideal. Apparently the Sepoys fought from caste considerations and to secure a redressal of promotional grievances, the chief fought to regain their kingdom, the landlords fought to get back their estates. The masses fought from a fear of conversion and the Muslims fought for the reestablishment of their old sway. The fact is that they all fought, each in their own way, against the common enemy the British, and this gave a national colouring to the events of 1857. 43

The ulama spared no efforts to prepare the people for liberating the country from foreign domination. From Shah Abdul Aziz onwards there is an unbroken tradition of the ulama participating in freedom struggles and providing a religious platform to those striving for independence. The activities and sacrifices of Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki, Shaykh al-Hind Maulana Mahmud al-Hasan, Maulana Husayn Ahmad Madni and Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi deserve a full and fair appraisal in any history of Indian freedom movement. They faced imprisonment, exile, torture, and tribulation in their relentless struggle for

42 Michael Edwardes, op. cit., P.C. Joshi, op. cit.
43 Mujeeb Ashraf, op. cit., pp. 159-160.
emancipation of the country.\textsuperscript{44} In response to all these proclamations the houses of the English were gutted and burnt, public records were destroyed and many English men, women and children were indiscriminately killed. It had become generally known that the king was with the mutineers and that to fight against the English was to fight for the religion of the Prophet. Christian power was speedily dwindling into insignificance and the yoke of the 

*firangis* was to be cast off.\textsuperscript{45}

The British now turned to avenge the wrong done to them and so a reign of terror and atrocities ensued. After the capture of Delhi a general massacre followed. In the process, many innocent people who had never struck a blow against the British were hanged and sabred without even a chance of defense. Many of the mutineers were slain on the spot and others against whom proof of murdering the English was found were reserved for more humiliating punishments before their final decree.

Cities and villages were burnt men and women were shot dead or hanged from the branches of the trees and their corpses were left rolling or hanging. A large number of houses were plundered and the inhabitants were driven out. The whole city looked a picture of desolation as if completely abandoned by the unfortunate inhabitants.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} K.A Nizami, *Contribution of Muslims to the Indian Freedom Movement*, (Delhi, 1999), p. 30


\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 27.
III. Socio – Religious Conditions

The establishment of British rule in Bengal saw far reaching changes taking place in the political and economic spheres. Politically the court of the Nawab of Murshidabad entered the phase of rapid decline and same became the fate of the Mughal imperial court at Delhi.

Gradually they were deprived of their sources of revenues rendering them incapable of sustaining their old levels of expenditures. Consequently a substantial number of people attached to these courts became unemployed and deprived of their privileges and sources of livelihood. Their plight became miserable most of them were unable to adjust to the new political realities. Some acquired the knowledge of English and modern education and adjusted to the new situation. 47

Both socially and economically the setbacks to the Muslim community were more severe than it was to the Hindus. The Muslims were traditionally largely artisans though they had large landowners and tenure holders among them as well.

Till the beginning of the nineteenth century India was famous for handicrafts consisting of textiles, metalwares, artistic potteries, arms, carpets, wood works, and so on. They provided employment opportunities and sources of income to a large number of Muslims and helped develop their artistic skills.48

47 Pradip Kumar Lahri, Bengali Muslim Thought, 1818-1947, (Delhi, 1991).
48 Shan Mohammad, op cit., p.10.
It is evident that the Europeans in promoting English goods into India had thrown the weavers, cotton dressers, carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers etc out of livelihood and deprived them of their occupations.\textsuperscript{49} The economic interest of Indigo and the tea planters in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century ruined the cultivators. The impact of the British industrial policy upon the handloom cotton, silk and jute industries adversely affected the rural Muslims. The economic grievances of the peasants against the landlord and moneylenders got identified with Muslim politics and initiated a communal element in the political thought of the Muslims.\textsuperscript{50}

The British expansion had brought in its wake economic exploitation of the people by a foreign power on a large scale as a result of which the Subcontinent became involved into what generally came to be known as the National debt of India.

Poverty and unemployment became widespread. In addition to economic sufferings, foundations of the socio-religious life of the people were being gradually shaken not only by conversions to Christianity but also as a result of western culture and administrative and social changes.

No doubt some of these measure were useful and necessary for the amelioration of the condition of the common man but orthodox sections regarded them as

\textsuperscript{49} Kamlesh Sharma, \textit{op. cit.}, p.33.
\textsuperscript{50} Pradip Kumar Lahri, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 10; See Bipan Chandra, \textit{op. cit.}, p.10.
gross and unwarranted interference with their age-old customs and practices.\(^5\)

East India Company was a commercial entity with the primary objective of increasing its revenue. Social and political fallout from their decisions and long term negative effects were a low priority on the minds of the agents of the Company. Awadh, one of the centres of the revolt, was annexed by Lord Dalhousie, Governor General of India in 1856.

The annexation of Awadh was the single act, which thoroughly alienated almost all classes of that region including rulers of native states, landed aristocracy, courtiers, Sepeys and peasants. In North-western provinces, the British adopted the policy of not resuming the Jagirs after the death of the holder to its descendants. Instead they gave fixed pensions. From 1847-1856 the Company in this way acquired Nagpur, Jhansi, Satara and Sambalpur. In Bengal and Northern India Landholders became fearful\(^5\) of their future under the British. Similarly, the revenue free landholders in Bengal and North-western provinces came under scrutiny as the company wanted to increase its revenue base. In North-western provinces a large number of resumptions of revenue free lands occurred between 1850 and 1856 causing a surge of antigovernment sentiments.

The British removed the talukdars (owners of large groups of villages), traditional landowners of the region,

\(^5\) Peter Hardy, *op cit.*
promising a better deal for the peasants. But in reality, conditions of the peasants only got worse. Heavy over assessment of land revenue impoverished them.53

Talukdars were powerful feudal barons and a recognized institution of nineteenth century central India. They had been the intermediaries between the rulers and village proprietors for centuries. The land policies of the British in North Western province removed the intermediary Talukdars. In Rohilkhand many landed elites were Muslims. The new revenue policy disposed many of them. This powerful lot of landed aristocracy became hostile to the British and resolved that the British would pay with their blood for this nearly fatal mistake.

The new set of village landowners though removed from the rapaciousness of the talukdars had their own grievances. The mix of specific complaints about revenue and taxes, cumbersome and lengthy new British Judicial system and sharing of general anxieties of the public at large resulted in such an equation that the potential beneficiaries of new British policies ended up rallying around the old guards of landed elite.54

The relations of the old Zamindars with their raiyat being guided by existing regulations and conventions were more cordial. They were gradually thrown out of existence. They were replaced by a new class of land speculators who were worse in every respect.

53 R.C. Majumdar, op. cit., p.100.
It was a new landed aristocracy, which owed its wealth to its founders who had been revenue servants of the Company. Under these new landed speculators the raiyat became the worst victims. These experiments were undertaken in the interest of a company of foreign merchant adventures who by hook or by crook had established themselves as the masters of a country of whose ancient customs and usages they had no knowledge.\textsuperscript{55}

The Muslims underwent great social and political changes in the early part of the British rule. During the pre-Plassey days the Muslims remained an integral part in the administration. They enjoyed prominence in military and judicial departments. The Hindus dominated the field of trade and commerce. They played the role of bankers and merchants and monopolized the revenue services.

The situation was just reversed with the advent of the British in India. The consolidation of British rule in India deprived the Muslims of their age-old privileges. The British discouraged the Muslim soldiers and disbanded the native armies comprising mostly of Muslims.\textsuperscript{56}

During the time of Lord Cornwallis (1786-1793) the number and position of Muslim referees and arbitrators were insignificant compared to the Hindus in Bengal.

The permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis elevated the Hindu collectors to the position of landlords and had

\textsuperscript{55} Narahari Kaviraj, \textit{Wahhabi and Faraizi Rebels of Bengal}, (New Delhi, 1982), p.6.
\textsuperscript{56} Barbara Daly Metcalf, \textit{op. cit.}
given them the opportunity to amass wealth which otherwise would have fallen to the Muslims.  

The East India Company had done away with the intermediary Muslim nobles and Jagirdars who needed to let out their estates to Hindu farmers who were made hereditary landlords by the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793. Thus the whole class of Muslim feudal lords was abolished.  

The permanent settlement had a profound effect upon the society in Bengal. The Muslim Zamindars who enjoyed prominence during the Muslim rule became a minority under the British. The Muslim Zamindars were dispossessed due to certain factors and supplanters almost always were the Hindus. A new class of Zamindars prospered under British rule and Muslim Zamindars and the peasants were reduced to a state of semi-slaves.  

In 1793 the East India Company confiscated the Muafi lands to which the Muslim and Hindu Landlords could not claim a clear written title. These lands were in the possession of the families whose ancestors had received them as gifts from the former rulers. Some of these lands were also donated to educational institutions. The landlords who possessed Muafi land had not to pay any taxes. The British confiscated all these lands held by the landlords. The landlords thus affected were largely Muslims whom the permanent settlement dealt a severe blow.

---

57 Syed Razi Wasti, op cit, p.23, See, Tara Chand, op cit, p. 138  
59 Pradip Kumar Lahiri, op cit, p 9
large section of the Muslim aristocracy thus developed strong anti-British feelings.\(^{60}\)

Another class of landholders who suffered greatly under the British rule was the holders of revenue free lands granted by the Muslim rulers to support Muslim learning and education.\(^{61}\) In order to maximize receipts from the land revenue East India Company issued, from 1793 onwards, regulations for investigations and resumption of such holding as did not possess unimpeachable title deeds properly registered with the collectors. Muslims of Bengal where the East India Company acted as revenue – farmer for Shah Alam were worst hit by these resumption proceedings. The permanent settlement in Bengal virtually closed the doors to landlordship. The Muslims educational standard began to contract both in quality and quantity.\(^{62}\)

British rule profoundly changed the relationship of the landed classes to the land in India. As British agrarian policy varied from province to province much depended on how Muslims were made Zamindars and whether they enjoyed incomes from Jagirs or from grants of revenue – free lands. A number of Pathans and Sikh Chiefs who had served the British in the Maratha wars were given Jagirs to the northwest and southwest of Delhi.\(^{63}\)

According to W.W. Hunter, Muslims in Bengal were worst hit than others.\(^{64}\)


\(^{63}\) Peter Hardy, *op cit.*, p. 39.

The two major land revenue and tenurial system, which British introduced, were the Zamindari System and Ryotwari System. Under both these systems the ultimate sufferers were the peasants. In the Zamindari System the old tax farmers were turned into private landlords, complete masters of the village communities and the peasants were reduced to tenants at will. These new landlords however had to pay a bulk of their rent collected from their tenants to the government.

In the Ryotwari System the government collected revenue directly from the individual cultivators. Though the rights of ownership were recognized but the high rate of revenue made their rights only tentative. Through these two institutions the government assumed the position of a landlord.

Some of the policies deliberately pursued by the British administrators also helped to widen the mental horizons of the educated Indians. After the defeat of the Marathas in 1818 the British East India Company became the supreme political power in India consequently many officers of the company changed their views of the functions of the government. Some of them felt a sense of responsibility for the welfare of the Indian people.

Thinking on these lines was further stimulated by the liberal current in England where the cause of reforms in many field had outstanding champions in this period. Several legislative measures of the company challenging

---

65 Ibid., p. 12.
centuries old traditions caused apprehensions. The banning of sati in 1829 was indicative of the company's desire to reorganize Indian society on the basis of reason and enlightenment. James Ramsay who became the Governor General of India in 1847 embarked upon ambitious administrative reforms, which were bound to shake the foundations of centuries old customs.67

Several measures taken by the British in their areas of domination raised caste and religious feelings. These measures roused the suspicions of Hindus and Muslims alike. New legislative measures in 1856 allowing the Hindu widow to re-marry raised suspicions. Enaction of laws allowing converts to inherit property caused doubts in both Hindu and Muslim minds. In early nineteenth century there was increasing missionary activities in India, which was seen as an organized attempt of an alien group to let the natives stray away from their religions.

British attempts to discourage early marriages and joint messing of convicts in Jails and compulsory shaving were seen as intrusion into the traditional ways and attempts at proselytizing. In 1855 a circular was issued from Calcutta stating that in railway trains no caste distinctions will be made in the seating arrangements.68

The eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries constituted a period of deep social and political crisis throughout the Muslim World. Simultaneously with the loss of political power the social order went into rapid decay. To

---


the thinking mind it was quite apparent that something had gone wrong with the Muslim society and that measures were needed to arrest this process. This period consequently, gave birth to various reform movements.

In India the first effort to arrest the tide of decay was made by Shah Waliullah (1703-62). He, however, believed that the decline of the Muslim social order could not be stopped effectively without political power. Muslim leaders such as Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1842) Shah Ismail (1781-1831) and Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (1786-1831) who followed Shah Waliullah adopted a similar approach. None of them could conceive of a Muslim resistance without political authority.69

The Muslim power was gone but the Muslims were still confused because the legal fiction of the Mughal Emperors sovereignty was kept up. Shah Abdul Aziz removed this confusion by declaring that the Emperor was utterly helpless, the real power was in the hands of the British. They had only found it politic to refrain from establishing their administration in certain areas. The Subcontinent was no longer Dar-ul-Islam.70

The implication of this ruling was that in such regions it is the duty of the faithful to strive for the restoration of Muslim authority. In another ruling he laid it down that it was lawful to learn English or for that matter any language or branch of knowledge provided that the intention was to

70 I.H. Qureshi, Muslim Community of Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent, p. 195; See Asgar Ali Engineer, op.cit., p. 131.
put it to a beneficent and lawful use. But if it was intended to use the knowledge to ingratiate oneself with the British or to seek employment of a humiliating or unlawful nature then its acquisition was not permissible.

Employment under the British was lawful if the duties assigned were beneficial to society, like the suppression of thieves and robbers or the explanation and enforcements of the Islamic law. It was a mortal sin, amounting almost to apostasy, to cooperate with the British in the destruction of Muslim lives or the subversions of the Muslim authority and the propagation of false beliefs and un-Islamic practices.\(^71\)

The Fatwa which he wrote after the Emperor Shah Alam was taken under the protection of the East India Company in 1803 is regarded as a very revolutionary document but it hardly solved any of the problems of Muslims. In the Fatwa he addressed the puppet Mughal Emperor as the Imam of the Muslims and accused the British of wantonly demolishing the Mosques and restricting the freedom of Dhimmis and Muslims alike. Their non-interference with practices such as the Friday and Id Prayers, the call to prayer and cow slaughter did not, according to him, merit any respect because they felt no obligation to show such tolerance he therefore declared India was now *Dar-ul-harb.*\(^72\)

(ii) Religious Conditions

The nineteenth century is a period of unique importance in modern history. It is the century in which

\(^{71}\) I.H. Qureshi, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

intellectual unrest and various kinds of conflicts and tensions in the Muslim world reached its climax. India was one of the main centres of this unrest and tension. Here the conflicts and tensions between the Western and the Eastern cultures between the old and the new systems of education, in fact between the old and the new world views and between Islam and Christianity, were mounting. They were locked in a fierce struggle for survival.

The movement began at a time when the struggle of 1857 for the country's independence had been brutally suppressed. The ensuing debacle had shocked the Muslims to the core, their hearts were bleeding and their minds paralyzed. They were confronted with the danger of double enslavement political as well as cultural.

The British, meanwhile, had launched upon a vigorous campaign to spread a new culture and civilization in India, as also the Christian missionaries, who had scattered all over India, were bent upon active proselytisation. To shake the confidence of Muslims in their own beliefs and to make them skeptical as to the bases of the Islamic Shariah even though they might not be converted to Christianity was deemed by them an important enough achievement.

The new generations of Muslims who had not been thoroughly grounded in Islam were their main targets. The schools and colleges, introduced along the foreign pattern, were the main fields of their activity directed at spreading intellectual confusion. The efforts were not altogether unsuccessful. The danger was not apostasy but rise of skepticism and atheism.
Religious debates between Ulama and Christian missionaries took place frequently, leading in general to the victory of the ulama. This established the intellectual superiority and greater vitality of Islam as against Christianity. Nevertheless intellectual unrest, skepticism and weakness of faith kept increasing.

This was one aspect of the situation i.e. the external and internally the situation was even worse. Mutual disagreements between Muslim sects had assumed frightful proportions. Each sect was busy denouncing the other. Sectarian polemics were the order of the day, leading often to violent clashes and even to bloodshed over controversial sectarian issues. The whole of India was in the grip of what might be termed as sectarian civil war.

This had given birth to mental confusion creating breaches in the Muslim society and disgust in the people and had considerably damaged the prestige of the ulama and of Islam. On the other hand immature sufis and ignorant pretenders of spiritual excellence had reduced the sufi orders to a farce. They gave wide publicity to their trance utterances and inspired pronouncements one found people everywhere making overly extravagant claims and going about proclaiming their ability to perform astounding miracles and to receive messages from on high.

The result of all this was that the Muslim masses developed an uncommon relish for things esoteric and for miracles, supernatural performances, inspired dreams and prophecies. The more a person had to offer by way of
these things, the greater was his popularity. Such people used to become the centre of popular veneration.

Hypocritic darvishes and cunning traders of religion took full advantage of the situation. People had developed such a liking for esoteric that most of them readily accepted every new fantasy to support every new movement and to believe in every esoteric claim however baseless and imaginary. 73

In the nineteenth century Islam in India had become almost moribund, decadent sinking to the lowest ebb of its decrepitude. The Mosques stood as it were only as symbols of the glories of Islam. The majority just listened to Fakirs and went on pilgrimage to the tombs of holymen, superstitions and corruptions engulfed them.

Such deplorable situation, which became still graver due to the missionary propaganda called for immediate action against pressing dangers 'Back to the example of the Prophet' 'Back to the early Khilafat' was the call of revivalism which occurred among the Muslims. 74

One of the most remarkable features of Muslim worship in India during the nineteenth century was the veneration the people came to lavish on the saints. 75

The belief in saints and the worship of their shrines and tombs by the Muslims of India is not however peculiar to Indian Islam. Infact this all came largely readymade to India through those who introduced the religious orders

73 Freeland Abbot, *op. cit.*
74 Shan Mohammad, *op. cit.*, p. 16
into the country from Afghanistan, Persia and Iraq. Further owing to the ancient Guru Chela practice existing among the Hindus and the universal belief in the worship of local god's and goddesses which was the heritage of the majority of the Muslims of India through their Hindu origin it became all the more easy for saint worship to become a fixed part of Muslim religious life. Infact the Muslim masses of India seem to enter into the worship of saints with more enthusiasm than into the regular religious exercises, which are obligatory.\(^76\)

At the beginning of the nineteenth century beliefs in the efficacy of prayers to saints had also become universal among the Muslims of India. The living pir was applied to for the aid of his prayer and amulets were sought from him as security against dangers. The list of Indian saints whose tombs had become objects of worship or pilgrimage is rather voluminous. Beside these saints of all India fame each province and sometimes even each district had its own patron saint.\(^77\)

The devotee believes that the spirit of the saint is actually present in the tomb and he hears the petitioner and will intercede with God to grant request or that the saint many even fulfill them himself.\(^78\)

In the nineteenth century the ulama usually complained that women were habitually visiting shrines and appearing in public shamelessly violating the age-old


\(^{78}\) Murray T, Titus, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
customs keeping themselves in Purdah. Condemning it they never tried to understand the socio-cultural milieu in which women were forced to observe purdah, having low social status, regarded as property and living in the four walls like prisoners and having no access to the outer world. The only pretext to go out was to visit the shrines.

Mirza Hairat Dehlavi citing an eyewitness account laments that women belonging the noble families visited the shrines daily and provided opportunities to baser elements to tease and seduce them. He complains that whenever women visited the tombs they never cared about purdah and often exchanged remarks with strangers. \(^{79}\)

(iii) Mujahidin Movement

To understand the attitude of the Muslim religious class towards the British rule and western cultures, the religious movements that arose in Delhi and Bengal during the first half of nineteenth century need to be considered.\(^{80}\)

The genesis of the movement *Tariqah-i-Muhammadia* generally known as the Mujahidin movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi may be traced back to the reform movement led by Shah Waliullah of Delhi.\(^{81}\) The reformist movement that Shah Waliullah had started thus becomes a Jihad movement under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi.

The founder of the Jihad movement Sayyid Ahmad Shahid (the martyred) was born in 1786 A.D. at Bareilly. There were two objectives of his movement first to purify

---

\(^{79}\) Mubarak Ali, *op. cit.* p. 95.

\(^{80}\) Mujeeb Ashraf, *op. cit.* p.117.

Islam of those concepts, rituals, and customs which had polluted its teachings and distorted the Islamic beliefs of Tawhid and the second to establish an Islamic state with an Islamic social order in India.\textsuperscript{82}

Sayyid Ahmad belonged to a respectable family of saintly renown settled at Bareilly. He was the son of Syed Muhammad Irfan. He had his early education at home. Besides the \textit{Sirat-i-Mustaqim}, which is a collection of his own observations and sayings, several pamphlets were also written by him. Sayyid Ahmad's father died in 1800. Soon after that he proceeded to Lucknow in search of employment. From there he moved to Delhi where he met Shah Abdul Aziz and took bai‘h on his hands.

It is important to note that in the beginning some of the characteristic features of the Mujahidin movement are traceable to this time. Various incidents of the early life of Sayyid Ahmad show his abhorrence of and opposition to some of the prevailing customs and practices like worship of dead saints and supplication at their tombs excessive veneration of pirs etc. He retuned from Delhi to Bareilly in the beginning of 1808 and stayed there for two years.\textsuperscript{83}

Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi married in 1809 and in 1810 left Delhi and joined the army of Amir Khan to help him oust the foreign rulers from India.\textsuperscript{84}

During his two years stay at Bareilly Sayyid Ahmad spent much time deliberating over his mission and the

\textsuperscript{82} Mubarak Ali, \textit{op cit.}, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{83} Qeyamuddin Ahmad, \textit{Wahhabi Movement in India}, (Calcutta, 1966), p. 25.
\textsuperscript{84} Maryam Jameelah, Two Mujahidin of the Recent Past and their Struggle for Freedom against Foreign Rule, Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, Imam Shamil, A Great Mujaddid of Russia, (Delhi, 1982), pp.4-5.
methods for achieving it. He felt from the beginning the necessity of developing an organization, preferably military, for defeating the intruders from the distant lands for clearing the Augean stable of innovations prevailing among the Muslims. Sayyid Ahmad was appointed to the post of Pesh Imam on account of his piety and learning. This post incidentally enabled him to exercise his moral influence and extend his teachings to the army men. This helped him attempt to bring about the desired transformation of character among them.\(^{65}\)

To propagate his teachings he widely traveled from 1818 to 1821 and addressed a number of meetings. The first step, which was taken by him, was the decision to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca. The decision was significant because after the control of the European nations over the seas few Muslims dared to go for pilgrimage. Some of the ulama realizing the danger issued a Fatwa suspending the Haj. Under these circumstances his decision became significant in reviving an important fundamental of Islam.\(^{66}\) It is said that during the stay at Mecca and other places he visited in Arabia he imbibed the ideas preached and popularized by Abd al-Wahhab of Najd (1703-1791).\(^{67}\)

On return from the pilgrimage to Mecca he launched a fund raising and recruiting campaign throughout the Subcontinent. Then in 1826-27 following the example of the Prophet’s migration to Medina left the pagan dominated India to establish his ideal state in the Muslim dominated

\(^{65}\) Qeyamuddin Ahmad, \textit{op cit.}, p. 26.
\(^{66}\) Mubarak Ali, \textit{op cit.}, p. 82.
\(^{67}\) Mohammad Taher, \textit{op cit.} p. 99.
North West Frontier. The Mujahidin first waged Jihad against the Sikhs but from the beginning the movement was directed no less against the British. Sayyid Ahmad's correspondence with princely rulers within India as well as Muslim rulers of Central Asia makes this amply clear.\(^\text{88}\)

In 1828 Sayyid Ahmad succeeded in extending the sphere of his influence over the area north of the Kabul river and in 1829 he occupied Peshawar. He took serious measures to enforce the Muslim law and abolished many customary laws, which were in conflict with the spirit of Islam.\(^\text{89}\)

As every movement needs some moral justification for its action, Sayyid Ahmad convinced his disciples that the Muslims of the Punjab were suffering under Sikh rule. The government of the Sikhs was undoubtedly very oppressive to the Muslims.\(^\text{90}\)

Ranjit Singh after having settled himself in the Punjab came out to be an inveterate enemy of the Muslims and their faith. He started to crush them without conjunction. He prohibited the Muslims to perform all Islamic rituals.\(^\text{91}\) They had no religious freedom the Mosques were converted into stables. The cases of the forcible conversion of Muslim women and their marriage with Sikhs were not uncommon. There is no doubt that some of the


\(^{89}\) Y.B. Mathur, *op. cit.*, p. 12.


\(^{91}\) Mohammad Taher, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
extremist Sikhs had adopted a hostile attitude towards the Muslims and had violated their religious sanctity.\textsuperscript{92}

As a result the pilgrims from India to Mecca could not take a route through Sikh territory. The call for religious war against such an infidel and oppressive government therefore received enthusiastic support.\textsuperscript{93}

In addition to Shah Ismail\textsuperscript{\textdagger} (1781-1831), and Maulvi Abdul Hayy, Sayyid Ahmad was accompanied by a large number of admirers and his journey was a great successes. The party visited Allahabad, Benaras and many other centres on the way; there was a long stay at Patna where many people became Sayyid Ahmad's disciples. He nominated four Khalifah's or spiritual vicegerents and a high priest to look after them. The stay in Calcutta extended over three months and he was unable to go through the ceremony of initiation by separate bai'h for each hand so his turban was spread out and held by the prospective disciples at the time of taking the oath of initiation.

The Jihad which began towards the end of 1825 was originally successful as stated above and at one time Sayyid Ahmad's supporters were able to occupy Peshawar and enforced the Islamic Laws. However it was short lived and ultimately Sayyid Ahmad lost his life in a battle near Balakot on 7\textsuperscript{th} May, 1831. Sayyid Ahmad's military efforts ended in disaster and many of his distinguished companions including Shah Ismail died on the battlefield.

\textsuperscript{92} Mubarak Ali, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 85; See, Sheikh Muhammad Ikram, \textit{Manj-i-Kansar}, p.21.
\textsuperscript{93} Azizur Rahman Mallick, \textit{op. cit.}, p.99.
\textsuperscript{\textdagger} Shah Ismail was the son of Maulana Abdul Ghani the youngest brother of Shah Abdul Aziz.
but his meteoric career left a lasting impression in distant corners of the Subcontinent.  

Sayyid Ahmad Shahid organized a Jihad to transform the ideal of an Islamic state into a political reality. Though his immediate objective was to destroy the Sikh tyranny in the Punjab. His ultimate aim was a Jihad against the British who had spread a net of deceit and doubt in order to liquidate the Muslim state and religion. His defeat at Balakot did not put an end to his mission as it was kept alive by the Mujahids of the Northwest.

Sayyid Ahmad and his followers believed that he was at least the ‘renewer’ (the Mujaddid) of the faith for his century at most the promised Mahdi who would come at the end of time to destroy the evil and initiate a new society. In the life of Sayyid Ahmad they saw a parallel to the life of the Prophet. Both were uneducated both were subject to trances and dreams both awoke people from forgetfulness of God’s law.

Sayyid Ahmad opposed the excessive respect shown to the religious monopolists. He condemned the practice of visiting the tombs, mausoleums, shrines, graves of the illustrious dead for making offers and soliciting favours from them. The atheistic and polytheistic customs and traditions being observed in the month of Moharram was

---

96 Barbara Daly Metcalf, *op. cit.*, p.60; See also N.R. Farooqi, Saifyad Ahmad of Rae-Bareli An Account of his Life and Thought and An Appraisal of his Impact on the Sufi Centres of Awadh and Eastern India in *The Islamic Path Sufism, Society and Politics in India* (eds.) by Saiyad Zaheer Hussain Jafri and Helmut Reifeld, (New Delhi, 2006), p. 295.
yet another object of his attack. He attacked with full might and vigour the apostatic beliefs and practices prevalent among the sufis of his age.  

It is significant that Sayyid Ahmad’s movement did not denounce sufism. Indeed his position among his followers was primarily that of a sufi Shaykh to his disciples. To emphasize however the centrality of the law he gave initiation not only in the traditional orders but also in the *tariqat-i-Muhammadia* or the way of the Prophet. Sayyid Ahmad thus opposed not sufism but what was held to be deviation from true sufism.

He emphasized that there was no intermediary between the believer and God and condemned calling on saints, apostles, Imam, martyrs, angels, ‘fairies’ naming children after them or wearing their special symbols. He condemned the discipline of repeating the name of saints as well as *tasawwur-i-Sheikh*. He criticized prostration at shrines and pilgrimage that entailed special dress, circumabulation, sacrificing animals, burning lights and sanctifying water. He held that the common Fatiha, ceremony, consisting of Quranic readings and distribution of food at shrines or graves be performed simply without lights and without restrictions and specifications as to date, or kind of food or condition of the participant.

Underlying the reformist discussion was the insistence that all ceremonies connected with the dead be understood to have the purpose of *isal-i-sawab* “the  

---

98 Barabara Daly Metcalf, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.
transfer of merit" for the performance of commendable deeds to the deceased.

A second reformist denunciation that Sayyid Ahmad held was toward that which originated from Shia influence. He particularly urged Muslims to give up the keeping of taziyah the replicas of the tombs of the martyrs of Karbala taken in procession during the mourning ceremony of Muharram.99

Sayyid Ahmad denounced popular customs as a source of compromise to the doctrine of Tawhid. He condemned expensive ceremonies associated with weddings, circumcisions and burials and the prohibitions of widow re-marriage.

The Hindu social practice which prohibited the remarriage of widows had crept into Muslim life since long and was so deep rooted that none had the moral courage to raise a voice against it Sayyid Ahmad was determined to enforce the reform of the practice at his own home to begin with. Consequently, he married the widow of his elder brother Sayyid Ishaq.100

The Sayyid now called his order Tariq-i-Muhammadiyah the order of Muhammad, and followed the Waliullahi tradition of initiating disciples into all four principal sufi orders in India, Chistiya, Qadriya, Naqshbandiya and Mujaddidiyah.101

99 Ibid., p. 59.
101 Barbara Daly Metcalf, op. cit., p. 95.
His early thoughts had been occupied with the elevation of the words of God and to do away with *Kufr* and *Bidah*. Nonetheless with infidelity and innovation the thought of a Jihad was always in his mind. The English, though an infidel power, allowed freedom of worship to Muslims. The Sikhs did not. The Jihad against the second was considered obligatory.\(^{102}\)

Sayyid Ahmad continued his tour with extreme vigour and religious enthusiasm. Apart from meeting people individually and in groups and admonishing them to lead a purely Islamic way of life. He used to hold regular meetings for preaching his ideas wherever he went. This tour was like that of pir and their sons. That is he, used to move from town to town and village to village with a group of murids. Everywhere he was invited and bai‘h was taken regularly\(^{103}\) forming a circle of followers. Sermons were delivered regularly emphasizing the avoidance of *Bidat* and corruptions.\(^{104}\)

In 1821 he set out for Haj from Bareilly with four hundred men and women. Before proceeding for Haj he visited Patna where he halted for two weeks and enrolled thousands of disciples including Wilayat Ali (1790-1853) and Inayat Ali (1794-1858) who later were to figure prominently in the history of the Mujahidin.\(^{105}\)

After his death at Balakot the organization split into two and eventually into three amorphous groups of

---

\(^{102}\) Ibid., p. 96; See N.R. Farooqi, *op cit.*, p. 298.

\(^{103}\) Barbara Daly Metcalf, *op cit.*, p. 367.

\(^{104}\) Mohammad Hedayetullah, *op cit.*, pp. 93-94.

\(^{105}\) Barbara Daly Metcalf, *op cit.*, p. 62.
scholars divided from one another by differences in theological opinion.

The main body of 'Path of Mohammad' centred at Patna. It was led by Maulana Wilayat Ali, the chief successor to the Sayyid. This group had evident influence of Shah Waliullah's teachings for it held that the blind acceptance of the teachings of any of the medieval scholars or thinkers was not permissible for any person to decide for himself. Wilayat Ali's contention was that the studies of the medieval jurists should be ignored but like Shah Waliullah before him he held that each school should be considered equal.

Maulana Karamat Ali (d. 1873) broke off from the path of Mohammad to form his own group known as Taaiyuni rejecting Shah Waliullah in part. This group insisted that one of the medieval school of jurisprudence had to be followed by every scholar no matter how finely trained he might be or how diligently he had studied the Quran. As a reformer Maulana Karamat Ali was vigorous in combating superstitions and Hindu customs adopted by the Muslims of Bengal.

106 Maulana Karamat Ali an important disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid. He advocated purist sufi beliefs and denounced the accretions and cult worship. He was also opposed to the Muharram celebrations and Taziyah. His followers are known as Taaiyuni. Taaiyuni movement led by Maulana Karamat Ali had split off from the Tariqah-I-Muhammadiya and wanted to retain some traditional institutions of Muslim society such as Fatihah, Milad, and Urs, which were rejected by other three. Moreover following the revolt of 1857 the Taaiyuni movement joined hands with the Muslim modernist and declared India under the British Crown as an ‘abode of protection’ which according to maulana Karamat Ali absolved the Muslims from the religious obligation of Jihad. See, Mohammad Taher, op. cit., vo.14, p.114; *Muinuddin Ahmad Khan, History of Faraidi Movement in Bengal* (Karachi, 1965); H.A.R Gibbs and J.H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Ithaca, 1961), p.217; Titus Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

107 Freeland Abbot, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98.
After the upheaval of 1857 when the members of the Muhammadiyya movement realized that the British government was too strong to overthrow directly they concentrated on the preservation of Islamic education and Islamic literature. They avoided taking part in Indian politics but at the same time remained active in disseminating the teachings of the Quran and Hadith.

In 1867 Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi a follower of Shah Waliullah school, who was deeply influenced by the movement of Sayyid, laid the foundations of an Islamic Madrasa at Deoband at Saharanpur. This Madrasa played an important role in the preservation of Islamic education in India and continued to propagate the ideas of the movement.

Similarly the members of Ahl-i-Hadith movement who also claimed to be the real followers of Shah Muhammad Ismail and Sayyid Ahmad made a tremendous effort to popularize the study of the Quran and Hadith. Maulawi Sayyid Nazir Husain Dehlavi the founder of Ahl-i-Hadith movement in India took charge of Madrasa Rahimiyya after the migration of Shah Muhammad Ishaq to Arabia.

Islamic Madaris and the literature of the Tariqa-I-Muhammadiyya played a considerable role in the propagation of the ideas of Sayyid Ahmad and

---

108 Shah Muhammad Ishaq was the grandson of Shah Abdul Aziz and a distinguished pupil. In the presence of Shah Abdul Aziz he taught hadith to the students for twenty years. In 1823 Shaį Abdul Aziz entrusted Madrasa Rahimiya before his death to Shah Muhammad Ishaq appointed him as his successor. Till 1841 he rendered the service of disseminating and propagating the science of hadith. Almost the whole of India benefited from his educational graces. He translated the Mishkat al-Masabih into Urdu.

popularization of the teachings of Islam and played a significant role in recreating and highlighting community awareness among the Indian Muslims even before Sir Sayyid’s movement.\textsuperscript{110}

\textbf{(iv) Faraidia Movement}

The Faraidia movement is mainly concerned with the province of East Bengal. The movement gained popularity at the beginning of nineteenth century. The founder of this movement was Haji Shariatullah (1781-1840). At this time the condition of the Bengali Muslims in the Subcontinent was very miserable. The British policy of distrust and oppression towards the Muslims rendered them economically and educationally crippled and the oppressions by the Zamindars made their lives unbearable.\textsuperscript{111}

This movement was basically a peasant movement. The social conditions in Bengal of that time were almost dominated by Hindu culture. Muslims, particularly the uneducated, had adopted many practices and beliefs contrary to the beliefs of Islam. Although the Muslims were in a majority but culturally they were influenced by Hindu traditions.

Since most of the population of Muslims of the area was converts from Hinduism, therefore they retained their original love for the Hindu culture. This was a sign that their conversion was incomplete. Many Hindu cults, dogmas, gods and goddesses were still given regard by the

\textsuperscript{110} I\textit{bid.}, p. 66.
Muslims. Bengali language and literature of that time are proofs to the above fact.\textsuperscript{112}

This ignorance about Islam and its teachings was in fact due to the lack of proper religious education among the Muslims.

The social condition of Bengal before the British occupation was such that the Muslim landlords and Zamindars were dominant. The British imposed the permanent settlement by which a Hindu landed aristocracy was imposed upon the Muslim peasants, which caused the position of the Muslims to sink further.

Many religious practices and observances were adopted according to local traditions and were practiced in a way not conforming to the word and spirit of the Quran. It is also significant to note that there were little or no religious books for Muslims in Bengali. Even the Quran was not translated into Bengali till 1886.\textsuperscript{113}

Such un-Islamic practices were adopted as would give the semblance of saint-worship. The tombs and shrines were regularly visited either in distress or for fulfillment. This practice also added to the veneration and respect of the living sufis. It was essential for the people that to achieve salvation one should be a \textit{murid} of some \textit{pir}. In this environment there sprang up numerous sufí orders and fraternities having little respect for Islamic teachings.\textsuperscript{114}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{112} Mujeeb Ashraf, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 144.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{113} Annemarie Schimmel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 174.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{114} Obaidullah Fahad, ‘Faraizi Tahreek Kai Siyasi Nazriat’ \textit{Fikr wa Nazar}, (Aligarh, 1991), vol. XXVIII, No. 2, p. 70; See, Maryam Jameelah, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 167.}
The Muslims of Bengal even during the disintegration of the Mughal Empire kept up their economic prosperity and political supremacy but their downward trend started from 1757 after the coming of the British. The Hindu farmers were elevated to the position of Landholders and they became masters of such lands as brought them wealth and which would otherwise have gone to the Muslims. The government adopted the policy of discrimination and Muslims were removed from posts of trust and authority, and were debarred from government employment. They were largely replaced by Hindus. Most revenues of trade and commerce and benefits of economic prosperity and political power were shut on them.

The Muslims took half a century to realize their actual plight. It was Haji Shariatullah (d. 1840) who developed consciousness among the Muslims of Bengal to selfassertion.\(^\text{115}\)

Little is known about the early life of Haji Shariatullah, apart from that he was born of obscure parents at Bandarkhola in Faridpur district of Bengal.\(^\text{116}\)

His date of birth is not known but assumed to be 1781.\(^\text{117}\)

\(^{115}\) I.H. Qureshi, *Ulama in Politics*, p. 78.


\(^{117}\) According to a modern writer, at the age of eighteen he went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and having stayed there for twenty years as a disciple of Shaykh Tahir as Sanbal al-Makki who was the Shaafi scholar returned to India in 1802. Dr. James Wise on the other hand states that while at Mecca he remained a disciple of the Wahhabi leader ruling that country and after an absence of twenty years, returned to India about 1820. In Encyclopaedia of Islam the date of Shariatullah's return to India after an absence of twenty years is given is 1802. James Taylor writing in 1840, however states that Shariatullah "at the early age of 18, made a pilgrimage to Mecca; he visited it a second time, and took up his abode among the Wahhabis, and after an absence of twenty years returned to his native country about the year 1828. The confusion thus created by the first three is to some extent cleared up by the fourth, who speak positively of two visits to Mecca by Shariatullah. The contention and the most common one, that Shariatullah brought with him to India ideas similar to those of the Wahhabis of Arabia would be untenable unless the date of his stay in Mecca be
Shariatullah started his movement among the most depressed classes of Muslims made up of peasants and artisans who were looked upon indifferently by even the Muslims. For him the best way to reform Muslims was to live with them, bring them out from their complexes and make them aware of their rights and responsibilities as Muslims.\textsuperscript{118}

He told the Muslims to observe strictly the duties (Faraiz) enjoined by the Quran and exemplified by the Prophet and to respect the Unity of God. Since a majority of the Muslims in Bengal were converts so habitually they had been following many indigenous customs, rituals and ceremonies not sanctioned by Islam.\textsuperscript{119} Numerous rites and ceremonies connected with birth, marriage and death such as Chilla, Fatiha, Milad and Urs were forbidden by the Faraizis. Saint worship showing undue reverence to the pir, raising of Tazia during the Muharram were also declared Shirk.

He denounced the prevalent superstitions and corrupt beliefs as also the procedure of sufi initiation. He replaced the terms pir and murid, which suggested a complete submission, by the words ustad and shagird.\textsuperscript{120}

Shariatullah also insisted that so long as the British ruled Bengal congregational prayers on Friday and Id festivals should not take place according to the Hanafi

\textsuperscript{118} Azizur Rahman Mallick, British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757-1856, (Decca, 1961), pp. 67-68.
\textsuperscript{119} Francis Robinson, op. cit., p. 187.
\textsuperscript{120} M.H. Syed, op. cit., p. 539.
school these could only be performed where the officials had been appointed by an independent Caliph or Sultan. Shariatullah thus implied that Bengal was *dar ul-harb* (the land of war) in which Muslims could not live according to the holy law, though he did not declare Jihad preferring to concentrate on his mission to purify their practices as sanctioned by Islam.\(^{121}\)

He soon won the hearts of the poor Muslims who readily responded to his call and gave up their un-Islamic customs and practices. They began to act upon the commandments of Islam known as *Faraid* or duties. Hence his followers came to be known as *Faraidis*.\(^{122}\)

Haji Shariatullah lived a life of piety and with his sincerity and exemplary life won the confidence of the people who venerated him as a father able to advice them in times of adversity and give consolation in their affliction.\(^{123}\)

Haji Shariatullah started his movement with religious and social reforms. During his life time the movement was basically a religious movement. He was succeeded in 1840 by his son Muhammad Mohsin better known as Dudhu Miyan (1819-1862).\(^{124}\)

Dudhu Miyan had a more vigorous temperament and organizational capabilities with a natural talent for authority. Under him the Faraidis became a disciplined

---

\(^{121}\) Francis Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 188, See Barbara Daly Metcalf, *op. cit.*, p.69.

\(^{122}\) Azizur Rahman Malliôck, *op cit.*


\(^{124}\) Freeland Abbot, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
organization and he was called by his followers a *pir* against the precepts of his father.

The influence of Dudhu Miyan extended to East Bengal especially Dhaka, Faridpur and Patna. These were further divided into districts each entrusted to special agents. It was the duty of these agents to make converts and to organize resistance against the rich and repressive landlords.125

Under him the movement became the spearhead of the resistance of the Muslim peasantry of East Bengal against Hindu landlords and European Indigo planters.126 He took up the cause of the depressed Muslim cultivators who suffered from the excesses of Hindu and European landlords. He turned his father's missionary brotherhood into a military one which boasted of an underground organization in the districts of East Bengal and for a large part operated quite independent of British law.

Dudhu Miyan implemented a law among the Faraidis not to go to the British courts. The disputes between the Faraidis themselves were to be settled by him personally. In case of the disputes which arose between a Faraidi and non–Faraidi these were taken on hold and generally remained un-solved.127

Since the Faraidi community consisted of poor peasants and they had lack of resources. Collections were organized to support them. These collections were also

---

125 Barbara Daly Metcalf, *op. cit.*, p. 69.  
126 M.H. Syed, *op. cit.*, p. 542  
127 Francis Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 188; See Peter Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 57.
used to take the Zamindars to the courts in cases of injustices to peasants.

The taxes and forced labours imposed by landlords on the peasants were considered illegal on the basis of Shariah. Therefore the peasants were advised to leave the privately owned state and settle on state properties known as Khas Mahal.\(^\text{128}\)

In this manner they were able to avoid all taxes other than those of the government. This move was so effective and efficiently organized that the Zamindars became united in trying to destroy them and they used all possible methods both privately and officially.

On the strength of religious statements of the Faraidis the Zamindars collectively tried to get Dudhu Miyan prosecuted on charges, which could not be proved, and so he was let off. This happened several times. They even tried barbarous torture methods on his followers. The Zamindars had little success in their second method due to religious authority behind the Faraidis. They tried to prove that the Faraidis were heterodox. However, the Faraidis lost many sympathies due to certain mistakes of Dudhu Miyan. He excommunicated by declaring non-Muslims all those who did not accept the Faraidi doctrines. The disturbances created by the Faraidis became more and more serious, frequent, and intolerable. Ultimately he was arrested and sent to Alipur Jail where he spent the rest of his life till his death in 1860.

The charges against him could not be proved but still he was kept in custody and the movement became weak without him. Although his sons tried to carry on his work but they lacked the energy and the leadership qualities of the father. With time the Faraidi movement lost its social effectiveness and became a part of the many insignificant religious communities of India.

In organizing the Faraizi society, Dudhu Miyan had two objectives (i) Protecting the Faraidi peasantry from the oppression of the Zamindars and European Indigo planters and (ii) Securing social justice for the masses.

The Faraidis adhered to the Hanafi school with certain peculiarities in their religious beliefs as well as in practices. These peculiarities can be loosely grouped together into five Faraizi doctrines.

(i) **Tauba**:- A disciple signified his readiness to accept his responsibility by respecting a formula of repentance (*tauba*) under spiritual guide. \(^{129}\)

This meant repentance of past sins and resolves to abstain from sinful deeds in future. The method and the processes to achieve this consisted in the administration of a rule by a spiritual guide or *Ustad* to the disciple called *Shagird* while both of them sitting face to face. A person initiated into the Faraidi fold was called a *Mumin* and he enjoyed equal rights with the rest of the Faraidis. \(^{130}\)

(ii) **Faraiz**: (Or the observance of religious duties). The Muslims should observe strictly the obligatory duties as

\(^{129}\) Peter Hardy, *op cit.*, p.55.

\(^{130}\) Azizur Rahman Mallick, *op cit.*, p. 89.
enjoined by Islam. It was the central principle of the Faraidi’s reform programme. From this the Faraidi’s had derived their name, the term Faraid meant the absolute necessity of observing five fundamentals of Islam i.e. Kalima, five times daily prayers, fasting in the month of Ramdan, the payment of Zakat, and the performance of Haj.

(iii) Tawhid or Unitarianism: as enunciated by the Quran emphasis was laid on the necessity of going back to the simple quranic concept of the Unity of God. Tawhid included various implications, which stress on the belief in the Unity of God. For the Faraidis Iman was founded on two pillars to believe in the Unity of God strictly and firmly, and to refrain from ascribing to God any partnership (Shirk).

Tawhid was not only a theory but also a principle any belief and action having the remotest semblance of Kufr and Shirk such as subscribing money or participation in Hindu rites and ceremonies, unusual reverence to the pir, the traditional Fatiha and such other practices were opposed to the doctrine of Tawhid.

(iv) Congregational Prayers: India being dar ul-harb, Friday and Id prayer were not obligatory. Deviating from the orthodox view that congregational prayers must be observed compulsorily as far as possible. But the Faraidis under the direction of Haji Shariatullah did not consider it so.

---

131 Peter Hardy, op. cit., p. 55.
132 Pradip Kumar Lahri, op. cit., p. 28.
Haji Shariatullah declared that congregational prayers enjoined by Islam can truly be possible only in *dar ul-Islam* and not in *dar ul-harb* which is the position of the country under the British.  

**(v) Abstention from the participation in cultural and religious ceremonies of non-Muslims**

In Haji Shariatullah's time the Muslims of Bengal were traditionally accustomed to participating in the festivals of the Hindus. They also contributed financially towards the funding of these festivals e.g. Durga Puja.

Haji Shariatullah had strictly forbidden his followers to participate in such un-Islamic practices, which would give semblance to *Shirk*. Thus the Muslims of Bengal abruptly eliminated the practice of sharing festivals and ceremonies, which for centuries had a major participation of Muslims.

---
