CONCLUSIONS
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India is a huge country having a history of pluralistic society where since the medieval period Muslims are widely scattered, mostly as religious minorities, it was only natural that they were gradually and largely influenced by parochial conditions and traditions including religious customs, beliefs and superstitions. More so because a majority of them were generations of indigenous converts from idolatric faiths. The heyday of the Mughal rule marks the beginning of the reformist thoughts in India while its decline provided the backdrop in which the picture of reformist ideology was completed.

The reformer’s realized that any reform was to be mainly centred on preserving the basic Islamic faith and its original sources and secondly the religious culture and educational character of Islam. However the reformer’s immediate concern of the socio-political pressures seems sometime to blur the ultimate objectives of reform. Nonetheless these ultimate objectives of reform are not hard to recognize in their continuity as we have observed earlier. We may briefly recount them as under: -

(1) Centriety of the original and authentic sources (Quran and Hadith) in Muslim society and education.

(2) Purification of fundamental Islamic teachings from un-Islamic elements and superstitions.

(3) Liberating religious thought from total conformism as well as the revival of Ijtihad.
Promotion of unity and affinity through moderation and tolerance.

It is now to evaluate as to what extent these basic objectives of reformist ideology have been fulfilled by the reformist movements during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is rather difficult to say that the outcome of various reform movements was only positive or only negative for the Indian Muslim community. Clearly there were always both, the negative and the positive sides. It is however possible to look to the directions of the movement of ideas from both angles and leave the final judgement to those who want to make their own assessments.

The negative side of the reform movements:

(i) Eclecticism: A common feature of the 19th century reform movements is their selective emphasis regarding reformist ideology instead of adopting a wholistic approach towards the reform package. For instance the Ahl-i-Hadith distinguish themselves by non-conformity to the Fiqh schools while the Deobandis rejected all that was modern, characterized itself with classical traditionalism including conformism and preferred isolation from the main stream developments. Nevertheless it goes without saying that among the 19th century educational and reformist movements Deoband is the most representative of the reformist ideologies and most moderate also in approach. In case of Aligarh it represented in reform all modernistic trends including the founder’s 'new al-kalam', which
sought to re-state Islamic faith more in accordance with the Western ideological developments rather than on the basis of basic Islamic texts. Nadwat-ul-Ulama had gone a few steps ahead of Deoband in so far as the revision of classical syllabi and the unity of a highly divided Muslim community and its conflicting sectarianism were concerned. However both of the objectives ultimately proved to be unachievable. Finally, the Barelwis had nothing to offer save to resist all the reformist ideologies.

This eclectic approach towards Muslims religious reforms is reminiscent of the early development in *Ilm-al Kalam* where single issues relating to Islamic faith and their implications had become the touchstone of various personal stand points leading to the ideological divide, as a result of which historical *al-kalam* was deprived of its wholistic development.

(ii) **Defensive approach:** - This is a common feature of the nineteenth century reform movements. From the beginning they adopted a defensive posture against the tide of socio-political changes which were fast unfolding under increasing British domination. This provided room for stagnation and literalism. The only exception in this scenario was the Aligarh movement of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan. However apart from being radical in character, the controversy regarding Sir Sayyid’s over-rationalization of religious ideas, soon brought the whole movement to the defensive
albeit within the community. Sir Sayyid was labeled a neo-Mutazilite (not to speak of even calling him a Kafir or nechari).

(iii) The primacy of original sources: - It was no doubt a very positive development as the original sources i.e. Quran and Hadith are the fountainheads of all Islamic faith and practice. Nevertheless in a period of conflict and confusion as it was during the nineteenth century, that the sectarian mind turned more and more to literalistic interpretations of the sources and freely used the antagonists terms like Kafir, Bidati even in trifling matters and supported their judgements by texts of the scriptures. This further contributed in vitiating the atmosphere and reinforcing sectarian views and consequently the unity of faith was completely neglected for sectarian bias, just as the wider vision of the text was simply ignored.

(iv) Shariat and Tariqat: - The gap and conflict between the upholders of Shariat and Tariqat was not new and at times its seemed to widen considerably. In India also it existed from the beginning of the Muslim rule. The reformist ideology aimed to bring this gap or conflict to the minimum. However with the emergence of reformist movements during the 19th century the selective emphasis marred the prospects of bridging down this gap. Deoband appears to be the lone example where this gap was almost perfectly bridged. However, the Ahl-i-Hadith
rejected Tasawwuf or Tariqat in its entirety and tried to promote Shariat devoid of all tariqat. Jama'at-i Islami during the 20th century followed in their footsteps. About the close of the nineteenth century Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi's group appeared on the scene and put up a very strong resistance to the unification of Islam's legal and spiritual system.

(v) The Madrasa System: - The independent Madrasa system played a pivotal role in promoting religious and cultural reforms in the Muslim society. Pioneered by Deoband and followed by others these Madrasas maintained their independent status with the help of public donation and have served their cause of religious instructions in conformity with their founder's ideology. In addition these Madrasas turned out to be a great source of literacy among the poor Muslim classes who were otherwise unable to receive any mainstream schooling. However, there is no doubt that this Madrasa system including the Maktabs (for primary instructions) further isolated the Muslim community from all opportunities available in the mainstream education. The tremendous network of the Madrasas in the Subcontinent essentially thrives on public donations and there are hardly any organizational links between them. The Majority of these Madrasas belong to the Deoband school of thought, but the central institution of Deoband does not control all
except only a few which have some closer relations with the parent body.

Almost the same applies to all other Madrasas belonging to other schools of thought like Ahl-i-Hadith or Barelwis. Nadwat-ul-Ulama seems to have achieved relatively good success in bringing some semblance of organization among its several offshoots in recent years. The government, state or central, is trying to bring the Madrasa system education under a board, which will not only bring some organization to them but will also enable the Madrasas to receive government aid and recognition.

(vi) The gap between Faith and the material world: - It is all too often claimed that Islam does not recognize any difference between the realm of faith and the material world. On the contrary the difference between the two has remarkably widened. The Muslim community’s continued isolation in Post-1857 decades has been increasing. Apart from the socio-political factors this was partly due to this Madrasa system, which grew in full isolation and independence. Neither the government realized the need to patronize or recognize them nor the functionaries of these Madrasas tried to foresee the importance of government recognition which could enable their students to find government jobs and opportunities connected with the recognition in practical life. Thus we see that a purely religious
education has weaned a religiously literate and educated Muslim community away from the material life. Consequently the two sides of a wholesome social life, religion and society, became completely differentiated and the frequent reference to "faith and material life being one in Islam" appears to be hollow and meaningless.

The positive side:

It is difficult to give a verdict whether the reformist movements in India after 1857 have resolved the identity crisis of the Muslim community or have further complicated it. It is however clear that in the rallying point of reformist movements, the Muslim community found a new hope and a ray of light to come out of the gloom destined for them in post – 1857 decades. Thus the relevance of the various reformist movements which emerged during the second half of the 19th century lies not as much in their reformist ideology as in providing the community with a platform and a rallying point of hope and optimism. This is all too obvious a fact of that period. Another positive side of the reformist efforts was an incessant war against superstitions and the constant effort for the promotion of education and that too completely free of any charge. In the same way it was only through this reformist ideology that the primacy and centriety of basic Islamic sources was re-established. The Holy Quran itself as well as the traditions of the Prophet were not accessible prior to the emergence of the reformist thoughts. The translation of the Holy Quran and its commentaries, as it was, were simply absent in non-
Arabic lands and languages. The same is true about the *Sihah Sittah* and other books of Hadith which were not only introduced by reformist efforts but are now easily available even in Urdu and other languages. The negative consequences apart the wide network of Madrasas shows also the inner dynamism of the community, which has independently shouldered the responsibility and provided through them, free education and literacy to the poorest of the poor.

Finally it is too difficult to resist the inference that the dissensions in the Muslim society resulting from the conflicting reformist ideologies were not the direct result of the reformist thought itself but rather these were produced mainly from within the limited vision, eclectic ideas, and polemics of the reformist movements.

In fact the reformist ideology and the reformist movements need to be differentiated. The positive criticism of Muslim life and learning, and also equally positive restatement of Islam, in full light of basic Islamic sources were largely integrated into a reformist ideology. It was not only capable of reforming, reviving, and regenerating the Muslim society but also could accommodate to the maximum the sectarian religious differences and thus provide a common ground of unity and affinity.