ABSTRACT

The study is intended to bring to light the different reformist trends, which started during the early period of the Mughal rule. The rationale of this study is to discover the causes and the rational grounds, which produced these conflicting trends and also the extent to which the objectives of the reformist ideologies have been fulfilled.

With the advent of Islam in India, new dimensions were added in Indian history through cultural interaction which became increasingly prominent in course of time. Muslim rule got well established after the conquest of India by the Arabs, the Afghans and the Turks.

Islam had a popular appeal due to the impact of sufi thoughts which began with Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (b.1141 A.D.). The Muslim rulers expanded their political hold in India largely through military conquests. Their relations with the Hindu subjects were generally based upon equity and justice barring a few who hated idolatry. Infact
Muslim rulers were generally liberal towards their Hindu subjects and even contributed to the construction of their places of worship. Rarely do we find instances of destruction of temples by the Muslims. The life of the Indian Muslims under the rule of Afghans and Turks in was secure and stable. In their intellectual life Muslims were encouraged to learn. The influence of ulama upon them was quite noticeable. Early educational institutions largely catered to religious teachings.

During the Mughal rule (1526-1858) under Akbar the great (1556-1605), we find a very unique religious thought developing vis-à-vis Islam.

Akbar’s religious thought underwent a radical change in order that he be able to accommodate the basic thoughts of the Hindu religion alongwith those of Islam. He and his advisors came up with the concept of Din-i-Ilahi, a new religion, with which its perpetuators thought of serving dual purpose that of religion as well as of political dominations. However this radical religious idea was wholly grounded in political considerations where religion was used as a
ploy to accomplish political solidarity and cultural unity.

Akbar was himself illiterate but his appreciation of scholars encouraged the intellectuals of the time to exert their influence over public mind. During his rule sufi thought was dominated by the idea of Wahdat-al-Wujud founded by Mohiuddin Ibn al-Arabi in the 13th century.

Akbar's policies, his own practices and the creation of Din-i-Ilahi, all combined led to a sharp reaction with the orthodox circles. Fiddling with the religious beliefs of the Muslims proved to be catastrophic for Akbar. This culminated in the evolution of reformist and revivalist movements in India. There appeared an intellectual revolt against Akbar. The orthodox ulama led the way to confrontation with the spirit of purifying the Islamic religion from un-Islamic elements and superstitions.

The fact is that the period of decadence of Muslim society had begun since the late 16th century and the Muslim society began to show signs of
disintegration. Akbar's way of thinking passed over to Jahangir and the reaction of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi caused him to be imprisoned by Emperor Jahangir. However it was a great stride and he was taken by many as Mujaddid Alf-i-Thani (the renewer of faith in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium) who was deemed to have appeared for the purification of Islam and for protecting it from the influences of Shirk etc.

The 18\textsuperscript{th} century further marked the rapid disintegration of the Muslim society. Socially, ethically and intellectually it was a sharp decline and a state of bankruptcy of values, Islamic and human both. Corruption and evils, intrigues and conspiracies were rampant. Muslim society was stagnant uncreative and decadent.

The reformist trends, however, began to take a new and defined shape in the face of influences coming out of the rise of various new principalities and the fast increasing British domination after the death of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb was an orthodox Muslim bent upon imposing Islam on the Indian conditions regardless of its consequences.
The 18th century in fact, marked a period of utter social and political disaster, confusion and stagnation, Chapter III gives a detailed picture of this state of affairs and the role of Madrasas under the impact of rising reformist trends. In fact reformist trends were a kind of awakening and rise in the type of awareness that Islam was in danger of losing its ethos which should be protected at all costs from the influences that are clearly un-Islamic and go against its basic teachings.

The man who appeared on the reformist platform to address the malignancy was Shaykh Ahmad of Sirhind who not only had a wide range of learning but a method in proscription too. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi had been deeply distressed at the existing situation. Many may not agree with his harsh criticism of increasing Hindu-Muslim relations and closer affinity, which according to him was the major cause for this distortion of religious principles and faith. Shaykh Ahmad introduced the idea of Wahdat-al Shuhud in Sufism because he considered Wahdat-al-Wujud was far removed from the Islamic
concept of Tawhid. He contended that Tawhid differentiates between creation and the creator whereas Wahdat-al-Wujud removes this distinction and goes closer to Vedanta.

About the same time Shaykh Abdul Haq of Delhi emerged and carried out his reformist ideas in the field of Hadith, which had so far been largely subordinated, to rational sciences. With Maqulat in dominance the emphasis on Manqulat was weak. The teaching of Hadith had not been popular in India nor was a complete set of Sihah Sitta available in this country. Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlavi was the first to make an attempt to popularize the science of Hadith in India.

With this state of affairs we witness further deterioration of conditions more visible in a state of ideological, political and psychosocial anarchy. Schools of Fiqh were engaged in open conflicts with each other, which led to deeper cleavage in the Muslim society through sectarian hostility between Shiites and Sunnis.
The 18th century produced one of the greatest reformists and thinkers of Islam-Shah Waliullah of Delhi who claimed his ancestry to the family of the Prophet of Islam. Shah Waliullah was a versatile genius having command over History, Political Science, Sociology, Theology and *Tasawwuf*. He saw the state of affairs of the Muslims society with a vision which was unparallel and made highly realistic academic efforts at bringing reconciliation between different schools of thought.

He also made a scholastic attempt to reconcile *Wahdat-al Wujud* and *Wahdat-al Shuhud* which came to be widely accepted. He did not merely criticize the various sections of the Muslim society but also came out with a set of harmonized reforms and corrective measures based on a deep understanding of the original sources of faith and practice. To achieve this he translated the Holy Quran in Persian. Infact the Waliullahi ideas crystallized in them the rather rudimentary reformist trends stimulated earlier by the reformist efforts of Shaykh Abdul Haq Muhaddith. Dehlavi and Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi.
On the political front the decadent society had to face the brunt of Maratha, Sikh and Jat uprisings and the most decisive military confrontation with the British. In these conditions Shah Waliullah made his unique and effective efforts to unify the conflicting schools of the Sufis and ulama and improve the social and moral conditions of Muslims.

However the British took advantage of the turbulent conditions and ultimately came to a vantage position in strengthening their power.

The dark side of the situation was that the Muslim psyche became rigid and did not allow modern learning. In India the Muslim leaders thought that a military action was more important and thus accepted the fatwa of Dar-ul-harb by Shah Abdul Aziz in this regard. Before 1857 the confusion was at its peak and then also came the end of the Mughal titular rule. Christian missionaries enhanced their activities under British patronage. The simple fact was that the Muslim mind failed to harmonize traditional Islamic knowledge with the emerging trends of modern knowledge and values.
This attitude provided ground for deadly conflicts that got aggravated with the sectarian emphasis on interpreting Islam. We thus find an overall state of confusion in the 19th century expressed through futile polemics in public discourse.

In this scenario Deoband, though moderate, represented medieval orthodoxy and the school of Nadwa, which was a virtual extension of Deoband, became a votary for revisionism of all syllabi. However Sir Sayyid stands out as a lone example during the 19th century who had the courage and calibre to think of the new direction that Islamic reform and western thought could take together.

The genius of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan saw the deplorable condition of Muslims in all its aspects, social, political, economic, educational, religious. He, therefore, turned the direction of reformist movements towards modern education and science under a kind of synthesis, keeping alive the Islamic religion in its true spirit. He was mainly opposed by conservative schools for his religious interpretations
and he faced this opposition with all humility. He reconciled with the political supremacy of the British and visualized saw it clearly that the challenges of the future could not be met in the absence of modern English education nor by keeping the Muslim society under the hegemony of conservatism.

Muslim society at its intellectual level is polarized between the liberal and conservative forces. Religious awakening took a political turn under the Jama’at-i-Islami whereas the Tablighi Jama’at simplified the whole reformist and revivalist discourse into a six point agenda.

As situation now stands there is an emphasis on original sources, purification of Islamic teachings, harmonization of Shariat and Tariqat, awareness of the importance of *ijtihad*, promotion of unity among sectarian differences and desperate search for discovering the right course to meet the challenges of modern civilization in all aspects.

The reformist trends in Indian Muslim society had made their first appearance almost with the
beginning of the Mughal dynasty. The reformer's realization of the need of reform was mainly centred on preserving the basic Islamic faith and its original sources, purification of fundamental Islamic teachings from un-Islamic practices, liberating religious thought from total conformism or revival of *Ijtihad*, promotion of unity and affinity through moderation and tolerance.

It is difficult to say as to what extent these basic objectives of reformist ideologies have been fulfilled by the resultant reformist movements. There were always both, the negative and the positive sides in respect of reformist ideas.

One of the most important features of the 19th century reform movements is their selective emphasis concerning reformist ideology, instead of adopting a wholistic approach. For example the Ahl-i-Hadith, distinguished themselves by non-conformity to schools, of Fiqh Deoband characterized itself with classical traditionalism and isolated itself from mainstream developments, while Nadwa came to be identified with revisionism of classical syllabi. As
a result of this eclectic approach towards Muslim religious reforms the Muslim society was deprived of the wholistic development as it had happened in early Islam with historical al-Kalam. Another important feature of the reformist leaders during the 19th century was that they adopted a defensive posture against the increasing British domination.

The gap between the upholders of Shariat and Tariqat was not new. The reformist ideology also aimed to bridge this gap. However during the 19th century the selective emphasis marred the prospects of bridging this gap. Deoband appears to be the lone example where this gap was almost fully bridged.

The independent Madrasa system played an important role in promoting religious and cultural reforms in the Muslim society. However there is no doubt that this Madrasa system further isolated the Muslim community from all opportunities available in the mainstream education. The Muslim community’s isolation in post-1857 decades and even throughout later on has been continuously increasing. Apart from the socio-political factors this
was partly due to the madrasa system, which grew in full isolation. Thus we see a purely religious education has weaned a religiously literate and educated Muslim community away from the material life.

It is thus 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. Another positive side of the reformist movements during the 19th century was a war against superstitions, un-Islamic practices and the primacy and centriety of basic Islamic sources was re-established. The Holy Quran as well as traditions of the Prophet were not accessible prior to the emergence of reforms as no translation of the Holy Quran was available. The same is true about books of Hadith and Sihah-Sittah, which were only introduced by the reformist efforts.

Finally it can safely be said that the dissensions in the Muslim society resulting from the conflicting reformist ideologies were not the direct results of the reformist thoughts, rather these were later
developments mainly from limited vision, eclectic ideas and polemics of the reformist movements. Infact the reformist ideology and reformist movements need to be differentiated. Islam in full light of its basic sources is not only capable of reforming and regenerating the Muslim society but also could accommodate the sectarian religious differences and provide a common ground of unity and affinity.