

Name: Zarafshan Zahir

Batch: OB-59 (Islamabad)

Exam: Mock - III

Subject: Pak. Affairs

Date: 11th-07-2024

Part - II

Q3.

## ROLE OF RELIGIOUS REFORMISTS IN ESTABLISHING MUSLIM IDENTITY

The role of religious reformists in creating a sense of Muslim identity in subcontinent is of paramount importance. It is because of the efforts of renowned reformists who revived the shaking Muslim identity. Sub-continent was under British rule and Hindu Nationalism was on the rise. This created a sense of marginalization among Muslims. Resultantly the Muslim reformists came to the front to bring back the glory.

## SOCIO-POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF SUBCONTINENT:

With the decline of Mughal Empire, a once prominent name of Muslim rule in subcontinent and the beginning of British rule on United India; the Muslim identity was waning. The British Crown established political control over India and the social norms were affected giving way to the new Westernized form of living. The economic policies of British also favoured communities other than Muslims. This created a sense of marginalization among Muslims and jolted them to start doing efforts to gain back their lost identity.

## CONTRIBUTION OF MUSLIM

### REFORMISTS:

The process of reviving the Muslim identity accelerated after conquest of India by the Britishers and the rising Hindu Nationalism. However, Muslim reformists were already a part of the reformist movement decades ago. Shah Waliullah is one among many Muslim scholars who started this journey towards making Muslims aware of their worth.



## 1. SHAH WALIULLAH (1703-1762)

Shah Waliullah is recognised as one of the influential Muslim scholars and reformists in the subcontinent. His contributions towards Muslim identity played a critical role in awakening Muslims and Muslims getting an identity of a separate nation.

Shah Waliullah was born at the times of the decline of Mughal Empire. During his time, the subcontinent was under instability and attacks from the Afghans and Marathas. He, amidst all this, saw a declining Muslim nationhood. This, then, led him to work for the revival of Muslim identity.

### EFFORTS

#### - RELIGIOUS REFORMS

Shah Waliullah deciphered the core issue of the dismemberment of Muslim nation. The distance from Quran and Hadith proved to be the reason. He emphasized on the understanding of the text of both Quran and Sunnah. As long as Muslims understand what Allah and the Prophet says, only then Muslims would know their true identity.

He, for this purpose, translated the Holy Quran to Persian so that the non-Arabic

speaking Muslims can understand the true word of Allah. This proved to be a fruitful step in reviving Muslim identity. Furthermore, he also tried to unify people following the different schools of thought in Islam. He advocated for a balanced approach that respected the traditional jurisprudence and individual reasoning. This proved to be a good step towards reducing sectarian violence among Muslims.

#### - SOCIAL AND MORAL REFORMS:

Shah Waliullah was a critique of the non-Islamic practices prevailing among Muslims. He disregarded the grave-worshipping, the use of talismans and ~~the~~ belief in superstitions. He emphasized on the true meaning of Islam and promoted the teaching of the Prophet (SAW).

#### - LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS:

Shah Waliullah wrote many books that proved to be great source of understanding the core meaning of Islam. His major books include, "Hujjatullah-al-Baligha", which addresses the philosophical and theological foundations of Islam, and "Al-Fawz al-Kabir", which is a significant text on the principals of Islam. These books proved to be a



source of knowledge for future foundations

Shah Waliullah's efforts to revive, strengthen and revive the Muslim thought, education and practices had a profound impact on Muslim identity in the subcontinent. By emphasizing a return to the fundamental teachings of Islam, consulting the foundational texts of Islam, promoting moral and ethical standards, proved to be the basis of a cohesive and distinct Muslim identity in the subcontinent.

## 2. SAYYID AHMAD BARELVI (1786-1831)

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi is a key figure in reviving Muslim identity in the subcontinent. He led a revivalist movement that aimed at purifying Muslims from the un-Islamic practices. His contributions to the Jihad movement proved to be his significant contribution as a reformist.

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi was into a family that had strong Sufi and scholarly background. He received his early education in Islamic studies and later became a disciple of Shah Abdul Aziz, the son of Shah Waliullah. This scholarly and



Islamic company influenced his views on the need of reviving valour and Muslims consciousness.

## EFFORTS

### - RELIGIOUS REVIVALISM

Continuing on the legacy of Shah Waliullah of getting Islam rid of the in-Islamic and pagan rituals that had become part of Muslims's lives. He strongly advised Muslims to stick to the teachings of Quran and Hadith, as these are the only authentic sources of gaining Islamic knowledge.

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi preached the true and correct Islam by travelling across the subcontinent. Many Muslims, who believed in the real meaning of Islam, resonated with his views. This helped the Muslims of United India a lot in understanding their identity.

### - JIHAD MOVEMENT:

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi was well-known for his Jihad Movement. He carried out a Jihad operation against the Sikh Empire in Punjab in order to establish a Muslim state where the only law is Shari Law for governance.

After performing Hajj, he gave a call for Jihad against the Sikh Empire, which



oppressive against Muslims. Many Pashtun tribesmen and Indian Muslims gathered and the movement started in North West Frontier Province of the present day Pakistan. Initially, there were many success but the Muslim army faced defeat at the hands of Sikhs and it culminated with the Battle of Balakot where in which Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi was martyred.

This movement, though unsuccessful, made Muslims aware of their true identity and their place in the subcontinent.

#### - EDUCATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS.

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi emphasized the importance of Islamic education. He and his followers established many Madrasahs that helped in making the Muslims of India aware of their worth.

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi's contributions towards a distinct Muslim identity is multifaceted. Through his religious revivalism, military resistance, he built a sense of unity among Muslims. His legacy continued to shape the religious landscapes of the subcontinent, influencing future generations and movements that sought to define Muslim identity in a rapidly changing world.

In conclusion, religious reformists played an important role in shaping a distinct-Muslim identity in the subcontinent. Their efforts and cultural revival responded to the socio-political challenge of the time, ultimately leading to the creation of Pakistan.

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