Islamic Revivalism In Sub-Continent: Contributed Endeavor And Periodic Relevancy

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Abstract

Subcontinent was distinctive in such a way that it produced distinguished scholars who made a great contribution in Islamic revivalism. The most famous intellectuals and notable figures who changed the course of time were: Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624), Shah Wali Ullah (1703-1762), and Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979). This academic work was an attempt to critically analyze the methodology of these three personalities and its usability for revivalism in future. Descriptive and qualitative research approach was employed for the collection and analysis of data. The review of literature concluded that the revivalists diagnosed the existing ailments by examining thoroughly the circumstances and conditions of the time and determined exactly where to strike the blow so as to break the power of un-Islam and enable Islam to take hold of life as a whole. Moreover, they shared their ideas, beliefs and moral view points of the people into the Islamic mold, reformed education system, revived Islamic sciences and attitudes, tried to eradicate evil customs, cleanse morals, regenerate the spirit of practicing the Shariah, and prepare men to promote pure Islamic thought. By using abductive reasoning, a strategy for the Islamic revivalism would be proposed in the light of above-mentioned revivalists’ methodology.

Keywords: Islam, Islamic Revivalism, Subcontinent, Methodological Analysis

Introduction and Background of Study

Islam is a complete code of life and Holy Prophet (Peace Be upon Him) is a role model for humanity as Allah Almighty said in Holy Quran:
The Holy Prophet (Peace Be upon Him) trained his companions in such a way that they acted upon Islam without engaging in any kind of philosophical debates. Their beliefs were pure due to the company of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him). They strongly rejected to include and exclude anything in and from Islam as they were careful about saying anything, not narrated from Holy Prophet (Peace Be upon Him). After the era of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) and rightly guided caliphs, Islam faced a lot of challenges in the form of different sects, theological issues and creedal problems. A lot of sects came into existence, each of which had their own interpretation about Islam and Allah Almighty said:

(كُلُّ جَزَاءٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرَحُونَ)

The Holy Prophet had already told about these sects as he said:

«ستفترق أمتي على ثلاث وسبعين فرقة كلهم في النار الا واحدة» وفي رواية ترمذي: إن بني إسرائيل تفرقت على تنين وسبعين ملة وتفترق أمتي على ثلاث وسبعين ملة كلهم في النار إلا طائفة واحدة قالوا ومن هي يا رسول الله قال ما أنا عليه وأصحابي»

The difference in opinions among various sects opened the door towards theological debates on the basis of which a lot of quarrel arose. With the passage of time, many innovations came into Islam and became a part of Islam.

This is a natural phenomenon that cultural has a strong influence in religious life. Islam faced the same challenge in subcontinent. People of Subcontinent who were converted to Islam brought with them previous customs, innovation, ignorance, polytheistic beliefs and superstitions. This invented heresy made Islam a mixture of Islamic and Un-Islamic elements. The problem was that the Un-Islamic elements adopted the guise of Islam as the believers were practicing the religious rituals along with Un-Islamic beliefs and concepts. The innovations in Islam with respect to subcontinent appeared in terms of Polytheism and Monasticism. Polytheism detracted the common man from worshipping One God and led him towards multiple Gods. Due to Hindu’s influence, Muslims started worshipping more than one God in various forms. According to Molana

1 Al-Quran, 33: 21.
2 Saaduddin Taftazani, Sharh-ul-Aqaid al Nasfiah, Traslation: Nukhbat ul Marab, Translated by M. Jamil, Al noor Institute of Islamic Education, Wah Cantt, Pg. 3.
3 Ibid, Pg. 3.
4 Al-Quran, 23:53.
Maududi, there was left no form of polytheism which was not practiced by the “Muslims”. The community started to visit the shrines and graves of saints and world seeking religious scholars provided them the justification by distorting the verses of Holy Quran. Likewise, Monasticism attacked the Islam and Muslims took the influence of mysticism form Christians, Hindus and Greek literature. The pious people of society went to the forests and desert to purify their souls from the impurities and the desires of lower self. In this way, they left the society in the hands of cruel people so that they can run it by anti-Islamic law.

These innovations enforced the Muslim scholars to think about Islam and make it pure from all amendments. This need of Islamic reformation gave birth to the revivalists who uncovered the existing evils and innovations and tried to bring Islam, once again in its original form. But it is incorrect to say that Islam was completely over-powered by ‘ignorance/Un-Islam’. By keeping in view the worth of this issue, the researcher intended to write on the revivalists and their contribution in bringing Islam in its pure form. On one hand, the researcher will critically examine the methodology of past revivalists and its outcomes into the society while on the other hand would propose a frame work of revivalism for future in Subcontinent.

**Literature Review**

Islamic revivalism is the topic which has been under discussion by Muslim thinkers for last three centuries. In order to address the present situation, a vast amount of literature was reviewed. The literature related to history of Islam in sub-continent, challenges arose, Muslim revivalists, their contribution for Islamic revival, methodology and its relevance to the present condition of sub-continent was consulted. Unfortunately after searching a lot, very few books could be found on the topic which includes “The reconstruction of religion thought in Islam” by Allama Iqbal, “A short history of Muslim revivalists” by Maulana Maududi, “Tajdeed ud din” by Wahid ud din Khan and some sub writings of other scholars. Maududi wished in the preface of his book if anyone could compile the complete history of Muslim revivalists. After Maududi’s death, a lot of cultural and traditional changes have been occurred in the subcontinent but particularly in this area. But a very few amount of literature is available upon it. It would be a great mistake of present time if Islam and Islamic thought would not be revived. Therefore it is very important to examine the present condition of Islam, methodology of reviving, future prospects of and finally frame work for its revival. Past efforts of Muslim revivalists would be helpful to sketch out the future frame work for Islamic revival.

The term “Islamic revival” or “tajdeed” (التجديد الإسلامي) refers to bring reforms in different aspects of Islam to carry it in its purest form by putting a stop to "ignorance", "false innovations" and “deterioration” in following of the Qur’an and Sunnah. The person who revives the religion is

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8 Ibid, 19.
9 Ismail Haqqi, Rooh ul Bayan, Dar ul Fikr, Bairut, 9/382.
called "reviver" or Mujaddid (مجدد). According to hadith of Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him), at the end of each century Mujaddid comes who makes the Islam free from innovations and bring it in original form. The Holy Prophet PBUH said:

"إن الله يبعث لهذه الأمة على رأس كل مائة سنة من يجدد لها دينها."

"God will send to his community at the head of each century those who will renew its faith for it."

The scholars who have been considered as Mujaddideen in the history of Islam are: Umar bin Abdul Aziz, Ahmad Sirhindi, Ibn Taymiyyah, Shah Waliullah, and Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab. These revivers by comprehensive understanding of Islam made as assessment of the contamination into the Islam in different forms, pointed them out with the power of Ijtehad and presented the teachings of Islam in original form. In Subcontinent, the most famous intellectuals who provoked the Islamic spirit and emphasized on reconstruction of Islamic thought are: Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624), Shah Wali Ullah (1703-1762), Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), Alama Shibli Naumani (1857-1914), Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) and Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979). Among these notable figures, the three thinkers changed the course of time and earned the title of reviver (Mujaddid) due to their vast contribution for Islamic revival are: Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624), Shah Wali Ullah (1703-1762), and Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979). The author intended to present the contribution of these three scholars in a brief way and suggest a methodology of Islamic revivalism in future.

❖ Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564–1624)

The very first revivalist in Sub-continent was Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi who was born in 1564 in Sirhind, India. He belonged to Hanafi school of thought and was considered one of the pioneers of Naqshbandi Sufi order. He earned the title of Mujaddid due to opposing the Un-Islamic traditions prevailed in the time of Emperor Akbar. He was also given the title of “Alim-e-Rabbabni and Imam-e-Rabbani” due to his services for the Islam.11

There are three major dimensions of Sheik’s work. First is to purge Islam from the influence of Hinduism as the Islam was losing its original form in subcontinent in Akbar’s time. Sheikh strictly noticed it and took principle stand in front of innovations, and warned Akbar not to do so. Allama Iqbal has admired the sheikh in his poetry:

گوردن نہ جہکی جس کی جہانگیر کے سے بے گرمی احراز
کس کے نفس گرم سے کس کی خاک جھیل کے کے پہ گھن</ref>

10 Tabrani, S.B.A. Al-Mojam-ul-Aosat, Cairo: Dar ul Haramain, 1415. 6/324
The second dimension was to reunite the Shariah and Sufism. Sheikh emphasized that Sufism is nothing other than Shariah and no one can become a Sufi by leaving the teachings of Sharia. He fought on theoretical as well as practical grounds against the innovations and false concepts which could be seen in his letters. The third most important work done by him was the theory of oneness of appearance. He exposed the theory of oneness of being and replaced it by oneness of appearance. Moreover, he wrote the books and particularly his letters are significant to understand his teachings.

❖ Shah Wali Ullah (1703-1762)

The second revivalist in Subcontinent was Shah Wali ullah who was born in 1703 during the time of Orangzeb Alamgir (An Emperor). He was unparalleled scholar who left an immense influence on ideological, religious, educational and political grounds. He comprehended the needs of his times and presented Islamic teachings in relations to those needs. One of the examples of his strategies was to give particular emphasize on the ijtihad.

His contribution could be divided into two aspects: academic and practical. Academically, He had deep understanding of real picture of Islam. He translated the Holy Quran into Persian language so that the Muslims could get awareness about the real message of Islam. He started the Dars-e-Hadith and educated Muslim by preparing the unique scholars of Quran and Hadith. He also emphasized on Ijtehad and Jihad. In addition to the Quranic translation, he wrote many books including Hujjat Allah al-baligha, Al-Khayr al-kathir Sata'at (Manifestations), Lamahat (Flashes of Lightning), Fuyud al-haramayn (Emanations or Spiritual Visions of Mecca and Medina), Al-Tafhimat (Instructions or Clear Understanding), Al-Budur al-bazighah (The Full Moons Rising in Splendour) and Izalah al Khifa. Practically, he reduced the influence of Maratha Empire who had captured the Muslims lands. He wrote a letter to Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan and asked him to attack Marhatas. Marhattas were badly defeated in the battle of Panipat but they recovered the lost land less than in a decade. Likewise, He prepared the group of people who struggled on political ground to promote his ideology.

13 Allama Iqbal, Baal-e-Jibreel, Punjab k peer zadon se, Iqbal Academy, 2018, pg. 489.
15 Muhammad Anas Khan, Reconstructive efforts of Shah Wali Ullah Dehlavi in the Shariah Sciences, Hazara Islamicus, Jan-June, 2015, Vol.4, no. 1, Pg. 76.
16 M. Farooq Haider, Shah Wali Ullah and Mabahis e Qurania., Al Azwa 34:30, pg. 49.
One of the most important works of Shah Waliullah was the compatibility between Shariah and Sufism. He studied the Wahhabi movement but did not deny from the methodology of Sufis. He also tried to make a bridge between Shariah and Mysticism.18

❖ Abul A’la Maududi (1903-1979)

The third prominent figure was Syed Abu Ala Maududi who tried for revivalism and presented Islam as a complete code of life. He proved the superiority of Islamic teachings in a rational way which was compatible with the mind of modern man. He pointed out the bad practices and innovations of his times and tried to purge Islam from them. He left a great impact on Muslims and Muslim society in terms of literature. He also established a movement named: Jamat-e-Islami.

Molana Maududi worked on two platforms: Internal and External. Internally, he assessed that the Muslim society had fallen into ignorance and had accepted so many Un-Islamic traditions. He then exposed the false innovations and amendments in Islamic creed, worship, Islamic thought and presented the real picture of Islam. Particularly he purged the Islamic belief system from the influence of Polytheism and established the Monotheism in a rational, systematic, and logical way. Likewise, he criticized the unserious behavior of Muslims towards worshipping Allah Almighty and broke the concept of Murjia (مرجئة) with the arguments of Quran and Sunnah. Externally, he uncovered the hollowness of western ideologies including nationalism, modernity, secularism, liberalism etc. He exposed that Islam had its own set of beliefs, spirit and values which did not match any other system. If the Muslims would lose their values, they would lose their identity. He used simple language to address the community and particularly approached the educated class of society. He broke the traditional concept of Islam which was limited to the beliefs and some rituals and presented it as a political, social and economic system. He emphasized Muslims to preserve their language, dress, customs and traditions by not getting the influence of Westernization and liberalism. He said that we should not accept everything from the West with blind eyes, but should only accept which is compatible and not contradict with the teachings of Islam. He even played his effective role in the Islamization of constitution of Pakistan.19

Proposed Methodology for Revivalism in Present Subcontinent

Presently, majority of the people in Subcontinent have considered the religion ‘Islam’ merely as a set of metaphysical doctrines or just a body of rituals and customs. Believing in God, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) and the Day of Judgment is far enough for salvation in the life hereafter. In their opinion, Islam is only the name of proclaiming Shahadatain (the two testimonies), offering Salah (prayer), doing fasting, paying Zakat (obligatory charity). Neither have they known Islamic view point about worldly affairs nor did they bother that Islam is a dynamic force and has provided

complete details about all affairs of human life. What to talk about common Muslim, the religious scholars are ever engaged in useless debates of classical theology. They always focus on the external appearance of actions rather than submissiveness, modesty, objectives of Shariah and Islamic spirit. In their opinion, a little defect in external appearance would discard any virtue while the inner devotion, submissiveness, and modesty is excluded from their discussion. Most of the traditional scholars are absolutely unaware of contemporary challenges to Islam and Islamic thought.

In last three centuries the situation of the world has been entirely changed due to change in socio-political infrastructure and industrial development. Computer, internet, media, advancement in technology, secularism and westernization has produced undeniable effects on Islamic thought and Muslim societies. In this connection, on one hand it is essential to expose the internal ailments which include Jahiliyah (ignorance), un-Islamic practices, false innovations, wrong concepts, complexity of Islamic and un-Islamic elements, and on the other hand special attention should be paid to the contemporary challenges which include Westernization, secularism, Nationalism, modernity, discourse of Islam and science, separation of Islamic and worldly knowledge, and the questions arising out of the conflict between the Islamic and the contemporary Western worldviews. It is very important to examine all these challenges from the Islamic perspective rather than merely from the viewpoint of accepted concept. In this connection, the religious scholars have to address the following questions immediately:

I. What kind of challenges Islam faced in sub-continent and what methodology was adopted by Muslim thinkers for the Islamic revival?
II. What are the existing ailments, how and to what extent evils have been set in, where are their roots and what position Islam occupies in Sub-Continent?
III. How the negative picture that clings to Islam and Islamic thought be purified and how to deal with the situation to get rid of the dilemma?
IV. How the Islamic spirit could be blown in the modern civilization and culture in order to break the power of un-Islamic and enable Islam to take hold of life as a whole?
V. What is the possible solution to renovate Islam and Islamic thought in its original pure form in subcontinent?

By keeping in view the above situation, this study aimed at reviving a new feeling among the Muslims of the Indo-Pak sub-continent for religious re-awakening, re-construction of Islamic thought and Islamic revival. This research on one hand will engender and enforce the real Islamic spirit in the modern civilization and culture we are living in, while on other hand, it will provide an extraordinary impetus to scientific development in Islam. The study will also open new dimensions of thinking about the future needs of Islam in subcontinent. Therefore Islam needed in every age and still needs such strong men, groups of men and organizations possessing an unusually deep insight in all the current branches of knowledge, major problems of life, contemporary issues rising from the west which could change the course of the times by purging
Islam from all kinds of impurities and could present it in its original form. The previous efforts made for Islamic revival would be helpful to draw an outline and sketch of the study. It would be beneficial if make a comparison between the methodology of revivalists and methodology of revivalism in future.

**Comparison between Previous and Proposed Methodology for Revivalism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous Methodology</th>
<th>Proposed Methodology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The revivalists made their contribution in Islamic revivalism at individual level.</td>
<td>It is suggested to contribute in Islamic revivalism in a collective way by the group of people, organization and institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The revivalists used the resources of their times such as writing books.</td>
<td>It is dire need of time to use modern means including media, internet, newspapers and electronic technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the work done by revivers was on theoretical ground as Molana Moududi decided to prepare the men of knowledge on the request of Allama Iqbal.</td>
<td>It would be beneficial if some men would be prepare who had sound background of Islamic studies and could present the teachings of Islam in modern, systematic, logical and rational way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The revivalist prepared the men who were aware of Islamic Studies.</td>
<td>Islam needs today the men of sound Islamic knowledge in each discipline including economic, political and social system so that they could address the challenges of their disciplines and could present the solution in the light of Islamic teachings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The revivalist faced the internal challenges to Islam that’s why they defended and purged Islam on one platform.</td>
<td>Today Islam is facing two types of challenges: Internally the reviver has to expose un-Islamic practices, false innovations, wrong concepts, complexity of Islamic and un-Islamic elements. Externally, they had to pay special attention towards contemporary challenges including Westernization, Secularism, Nationalism, Modernity, Discourse of Islam and science, separation of Islamic and worldly knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The revivalists exposed one or two disciplines of society and tried to purge them.</td>
<td>The scholar should work collectively and made comprehensive strategy to revive every system: political, economic, social, educational, legal, and communication</td>
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</table>

**Objectives of the Study**
The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the methodological analysis of Islamic revivalism in subcontinent. The objectives of the research are divided into primary and secondary.

The primary objectives of the research were:

i) To diagnose the existing ailments by examining thoroughly the circumstances and conditions of the time and determine exactly where, how and to what extent Jahiliyah (ignorance) has crept in, what and where its roots are and what position Islam occupies presently.

ii) To determine exactly where to strike the blow so as to break the power of un-Islamic and enable Islam to take hold of life as a whole.

iii) To sketch certain meaningful outlines by providing a proposed framework for Islamic revival in accordance of future that how the Islam could be practicing religion in the modern age.

The secondary objectives of the research are:

i) To review the efforts for the Islamic revival along with the impact in society.

ii) To examine the usability of previous efforts in order to address the contemporary challenges.

iii) To check the methodology and its relevance with the present situation.

This study is limited to the Indo-Pak Sub-Continent so that the findings, conclusions, and different aspects of research will reflect the condition of Islam in subcontinent.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this study was to analyze the present condition of Islam in subcontinent and to provide the framework for its revival. Therefore the study was fundamentally based on mixed methodological approach according to the nature of topic. It employed the analytical and descriptive research techniques to analyze the data. Previously published and parallel literature including books, research articles, periodicals, theses, dissertations, and personal observation by critically examining the on-ground practices in society were pulled in to produce sound, scientific and investigative research, as well as to plan the Islamic theory and thought on the basis of correct and valid data. In addition to that, secondary sources including Internet and library were used after careful assurance of their validity and reliability. Using such a mixed methodological approach enabled me to collect data from a variety of sources. This approach helped me to make a connection between previous efforts for Islamic revival and their relevance to the present condition of Islam in subcontinent. It undertook extensive study on the works of revivalists of subcontinent which presented their ideas for Islamic revival and methodological framework. The data was reviewed and investigated in three stages; general, explorative, and focus study. This constituted comprehensive material to draw a detailed sketch outline for the future need.
Conclusion

In the light of cited literature, the study concluded that Mujaddideen played an important role to pure Islam from the amendments and presented it in its original form. While looking upon the work of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Wali Ullah, one can easily assess that they fought against the false innovation, wrong interpretation of Islam, teachings of false sects. They made reforms in social, political, economic as well as religious platform. These two scholars tried to make a connection between the mysticism and Shariah by their influential teachings on both: theoretical and practical grounds. However, in Maulana Maududi’s time, the situation was a bit changed. He did not face the internal challenges only (false innovations, wrong sects and wrong concepts regarding Islam) but also faced the external challenged including Secularism, Westernization, and Modernity etc. He fought on both platforms to purge Islam of the above evils, and tried to present it, once again, in its original pure form. He objected to Western colonial exploitation of Muslim countries and the imposition of Western secular values. He aimed to reassert ‘original’ Islamic values.

Recommendations

Following are some important recommendation given below:

❖ Thirty six years have been passed to the death of last revivalist (Molana Maududidi) in subcontinent, as he passed away in 1979. A lot of developments has been made into the society. Social, electronic and print media, internet, is increasing day by day and is promoting Atheism, secularism and Modernism. Therefor it is the need of time that, the Islamic point of view should be presented against these anti-Islamic trends in such a way that the spirit of Islam should be working behind the system and modern man can practice the Islam in his daily life.

❖ Initially an exposition of the ideas, values and basic principles of Islam are required which must be spread to the intelligent class. At one hand a huge amount of literature and means should be used to eliminate the internal challenges like false innovation, un-Islamic, and wrong concepts and on the other hand Special attention should be paid to the questions arising out of the conflict between the Islamic and the contemporary Western worldviews. It is very important examine them from the Islamic perspective rather than merely from the view-point of accepted concept.

❖ In the postmodern age the situation has been entirely changed due to change in socio-political infrastructure and industrial development. This is the time of science and logical reasoning. The validity of everything is observed by rationality, scientific and systematic approach. So in this age it is necessary to make reforms in systematic and rational way. A very difficult task against Muslim scholars is to differentiate between modernity and revival. There are some misconceptions that some people make a connection between Islam and modernity by interpreting the modernity in an Islamic context.
The revivalists and Muslims scholars should look into the Khair-ul-Qaroon in order to get the understanding of pure Islam. By making it criterion they should analyze the contemporary condition of theoretical and practical Islam in order to purge it from the impurities.

In past, the job of the revival was done by the individual but in future it must be done by an organized group of group of people.

Bibliography

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