

Rise of Muslim Modernist Discourse in the Nineteenth Century India: A Thematic

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History</p> <p>Received: June 28, 2021</p> <p>Accepted: January 29, 2022</p> <hr/> <p>Keywords : Muslim Modernist Discourse, Colonialism; Orthodox Muslims, Rationalism. Sufi Tradition, Revival, Reformation</p> <p>DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5914905</p>	<p><i>Post-1857 milieu produced a number of Muslim scholars and thinkers in South Asia whose contributions in the domain of modernist and reformist thought have been acclaimed and applauded worldwide. They developed and disseminated their own Islamic reformist and modernist discourse. Their ideologue and methodology gave social reformists impetus and advancement throughout the Islamic world. These scholars although held variant views but their results were amazingly the same in the arena of social reformation which was extensively studied and became the basis of two extremes i.e., the Orthodox Muslim and Western critique. It is interesting to note that if some orthodox Muslim scholarship alleged reformist scholarship for Western accommodation, the Western thinkers viewed reformist endeavor as 'reaction to the British presence and rule in the subcontinent on the other hand. The Western thinkers also noted the influence of British presence on different strata of society in different manners. For example, if the Muslim elite was under the great influence of the British, the Orthodox Muslims were responding severely to this 'change'. The latter were establishing their parallel education system in the form of madaris (the religious school system). Thus, the historical and socio-political context of the post-1857 milieu in the form of British impact especially in the field of education, in turn, gave way to reaction or response to the British colonialism, and to some, Islamic modernist discourse was one such response. The research in hand is a thematic analysis of nineteenth-century South Asian endeavors in the field of modernist reformist Muslim Thought which has provided a strong base to the prevailing Muslim philosophical ideologue.</i></p>

Introduction

In Islamic philosophy and jurisprudence, *tajdid* (renewal) and *islah* (reformation) are not new. Muslim society could not remain spare from the presence of both revivalists and reformers in the form of prophets and saints at any point in time (Tayob, 2009) The process of revival and reformation of existing practices, however, was under the dogma of challenge and response to the circumstantial needs of the time, so in post-1857 India, the modernist and reformist Muslim thought inevitably emerged in response to British presence and pragmatism (Malik, 1980). Different sections of society responded differently. Some accommodated themselves with this sociopolitical change while others confronted. This confrontation and accommodation were the crux of the second half of the 19th century and 20th-century religious-political polemics of the British controlled and administered India.

Although there were a number of diverse factors responsible for this range of responses, yet it had been an unquestionable side of the situation that 'intrinsic aspects' of Islamic tradition (Holt, 1970) i.e. the 'culture of Islam', as Iqbal viewed, were critical to the emergence and advancement of an indigenous and proactive movement of social and intellectual reforms among the Indian Muslims (Ahmad, 1964). According to David Commins, "Notwithstanding their differences regarding the principal impetus behind the emergence of the Islamic modernist phenomenon, most scholars agree that "Islamic modernists advocate flexible, continuous reinterpretation of Islam" (Esposito, 1995). He holds that this becomes inevitable to reform those aspects of Muslim tradition and law which had become 'outdated, fossilized, or harmful by scrutinizing those aspects in light of Islam's normative sources—the Qur'an and the authentic *sunna*". (Ibid) Riffat Hassan is of the view that "this perspective sharply departs from the view that currently prevails in the West. This view sees Muslims as incapable of internal 'reform' and holds that any change "for the better in the Muslim world has to be imposed from outside." (Hunter, 2009). Historically, this phenomenon paved way for the nineteenth-century scholars like Sir Syed and his disciples like Altaf Hussain Hali, Maulana Muhammad Hussain Azad, Maulvi Chiragh Ali, Syed Mumtaz Ali, and twentieth-century scholars like Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Fazlur Rehman, Engineer

Asghar Ali (see his works like *The Qur'an, Women, and Modern Society*, 2005) and Riffat Hussain. This discourse even continues today.

Tracing Roots of Muslim Modernist Discourse: The Forerunner Sufi Tradition

A great deal of work has been done on the evolution of modernist Muslim thought in India and the process of rationalization of Muslim religious thoughts during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Details are available in the form of primary and secondary sources. It is necessary to explore the Muslim history in India to understand the development of rational thinking and modernist stances in the paradigm of religion in colonial India. Satish Chandra described in his work 'History of Medieval India' that Muslim rulers entered the subcontinent from two sides of India. *Muhammad Bin Qasim* entered southern India and had conquered the area of *Sindh* up to Multan. On the other side, *Shahab-u-Din Ghauri* had conquered the northern part of India and established Sultanate-e-Delhi. The cultural mix which evolved in two different Muslim rulerships was different. Similarly, the interpretations of Islam which were promoted under both Muslim states were a little bit different and especially the outcomes of the process were incomparable in both areas (Chandra, 2007). After the death of *Shahab-u-Din Ghauri*, *Qutb-u-Din Aibak* became the first ruler of Sultanate-e-Delhi. Under his rulership, many other areas were conquered and included in his realm. At that time, central political power was non-existent in India. Whole India was divided into a large number of small states. It was a difficult experience for Muslim rulers to establish balanced relationships with all those states. It was challenging for Muslim rulers to design a suitable foreign policy to cope up with such a complex situation. It was a common practice of rulers of Sultanate-e-Delhi that when they conquered a non-Muslim state then they gave governance again to the defeated ruler or any his relative after an agreement of annual tax payment and loyalty with the Sultan. All sultans except *Ala-u-Din Khilji* seriously tried to enforce the law in compliance with Islamic *Sharia*. The scholars from central Asia and Arabia were openly welcomed in the court of the Sultan. When Mongols invaded central Asian states then due to war and uncertain conditions many Sufi saints, scholars, and *Ulama* from central Asia migrated to the subcontinent and settled in different areas.

Per A. L. Srivastava's 'The Sultanate of Delhi' the presence of such scholars and Sufi saints catalyzed the spread of Islam in India. The methodology of Sufis was very appealing for the masses because of its simplicity and due to its focus on love or respect for humanity irrespective of caste or religion. A large number of people became regular visitors to Sufi monasteries or Sufi shrines. A large number of people were attracted to such Sufi saints because of their kindness, humbleness, simplicity, and social services (Srivastava, 1966). Many people embraced Islam at the hands of these Sufi saints. Those Indians who embraced Islam, many historians named them as 'Indian Muslims'. With the passage of time, the number of such 'Indian Muslims' was increasing. Socially 'Indian Muslims' became a unique social class in society that was in search of its identity. After embracing Islam such 'Indian Muslims' were alienated from their cultural setup and on other hand Muslim elites were not ready to give the same status which they were enjoying as hereditary Muslims in society under the umbrella of Muslim rulership. Such a situation motivated Indian Muslims towards religious learning to improve their social status in such complex fabric of society. After few hundred years, many well-known religious scholars and *Ulama* belonged to such class of 'Indian Muslims' (Stein, 2010).

The teachings of Sufi saints motivated their followers to adopt each kind of virtuous act that was beneficial for humanity. Hindu and Muslims both were followers of Sufi saints. As the result of such interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims a cultural transformation was started, and the outcomes of such cultural transformation appeared as *Bhakti* movement in the fourteenth century. Under the numeral of *Bhakti* movement, a mixed culture had emerged which made the boundaries of religious ideas blur on both sides of the exchange. It had also produced harmony among different religions and had promoted humanity. The followers of *Bhakti* movement tried to unite people based on universal morality and humanity. Many historians consider *Bhakti* movement in India as important as a renaissance in Europe. These historical events had changed the socio-cultural fabric of society which also left deep impacts on the style of governance of rulers of Delhi Sultanate (Metcalf, 2006). They had adopted an approach to accommodate the Hindu religion instead of its elimination. Such policy gave freedom to all non-Muslims to follow their own faith or religion which made possible the emergence of a religiously plural society. In continuum Abu Zayd and Nasr Hamid's 'Reformation of Islamic Thought: A Critical Historical Analysis' provides valuable details about the cultural and religious transformations in the Sultanate Period, Aziz Ahmad's 'Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment', Alexander Duff's 'India and Indian Missions', Asghar Ali's 'Islam in India: The Impact of Civilization', Burjor Avari's 'Islamic Civilization in South Asia', Barbara D. Metcalf's 'India's Muslims' explored a number of untraveled vistas about multifold early evolution in Muslim thoughts in Subcontinent.

Development of Muslim Modernist Thought during Mughal Period

According to Oscar Salemink's 'Handbook of Religions in Asia' level of complexity was increased in the Mughal period (Turner, 2015). There were two reasons for such increase in complexity of the situation. The first reason was the start of Shia-Sunni polemics after Emperor *Hamayoun*. At his return from Iran, many Shia scholars came to India with him. He gave them key roles in his court. Now the fabric of society became more

complex with the fibers of Hindu-Muslim culture and Shia-Sunni polemics (Bennett, 2013). In such circumstances, an innovative style of governance was a need and Emperor Akbar became the champion because of his extraordinary skills. He introduced a syncretistic religion named '*Deen-i-Ilahi*'. Under the doctrine of '*Deen-i-Ilahi*', the position of the King became stronger. According to '*Deen-i-Ilahi*', King became the representative of God in this world who had the right to give new interpretations of religion. Emperor Akbar gave space to all religions in his religiopolitical doctrine.

According to M. B. Hooker's '*Islam in South-East Asia*,' Emperor Akbar was not secular in the modern sense, but his policies laid the foundation stone for secularism in India (Hooker, 1988). It was the start of rational thinking in interpreting the teachings of Islam. He ruled over such a complex and religiously pluralistic society successfully. After Emperor Akbar, the continuity of '*Deen-i-Ilahi*' was terminated because of the sincere efforts of *Sheikh Ahmad Farooqi (Mujadid Alf-e-Thani)*. He denounced '*Deen-i-Ilahi*' and all non-Islamic practices. He also addressed the Shia-Sunni polemics and gave candid judgments about the Shia school of thought that it was not in complete compliance with true Islamic doctrine. He wrote letters to high officials of the Mughal Empire to minimize the role of the Shia school of thought in state affairs. Emperor Jahangir (1569-1627) did not maintain the continuity of all religious policies of Emperor Akbar. During the reign of Emperor Jahangir European traders got royal permission to trade in India and they established their warehouses in coastal areas. Such European traders brought modern gadgets and products with them. The European ambassadors presented many Renaissance paintings and technological gadgets to the king as a gift. But at that time Mughal king did not take notice of the modern discourses of science and technology (Singh, 2012). But on the other hand, the interaction of Europeans with the local community opened the avenues of cultural exchanges. Even in the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan (1592-1666), a manifestation of such cultural exchanges could be observed in the architecture and interior of the Taj Mahal. Emperor Shah Jahan established an educational institution in European style. Afterward, this institution had become popular as an imperial college (Ahmad, 1967). Mughal emperor Aurangzeb was an orthodox Muslim. He was not in favor of syncretic culture. He denounced Sufism and tried to establish an Islamic government in compliance with Sharia. He worked for the deterioration of political powers of Marathas. He also conquered Hindu states BeejaPur and Golkanda. He was a true Muslim as well as a wise player of power politics. Under his patronage, Shah Abdur Raheem compiled a well-known book '*Fatawa-e-Alamgiri*'. Aurangzeb was a follower of *Sunni Hanafi* sect. (Khan, 2006)

According to M. Raza Kazmi's '*A Concise History of Pakistan*,' Emperor Aurangzeb did not show any soft corner to the Shia community. The duration from Emperor Jahangir to Emperor Aurangzeb was considered a glorious period for Muslims in India and during this time India was considered as Dar-ul-Salam means the house of peace. Muslims were the rulers, and their political dominance gave a sense of security to all commoner Muslims (Kazmi, 2009). During this era, the Indian Muslims were turned towards the learning of religious discourses. The class of Indian Muslims got a religious education from Madrassahs and many Muslim religious scholars emerged from this class. The role of these Muslim religious scholars was remarkable in the evolution of Muslim thought in the religious history of Muslims in India (Osella, 2013). In Continuum I.K Khan's '*Islam in Modern Asia*', Hamid Inayat's '*Modern Islamic Political Thought*', Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi's '*Islam and Muslims in South Asia: Historical Perspective*' and Justin Jones's '*The Shia in Modern South Asia: Religion History, and Politics*' provided sufficient details about the evolution of Muslim thought and Shia-Sunni Polemics in Mughal era.

Evolution of Muslim Modernist Thought in Nineteenth-Century India

Aziz Ahmad, in his book, '*Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan*' described that after Aurangzeb the pace of decline of the Mughal Empire increased (Ahmad, 1967). In 1765, East India Company got the tax collection rights from Shah Alam II who was the successor of Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir. After Emperor Aurangzeb there were two threats to Muslim rule; one was in the form of East India Company and the other was in the form of the growing political power of Marathas. Many Muslim scholars of that time identified these threats and tried to respond to them. It is possible to identify two different kinds of responses to the challenges described above. One response was from *Shah Waliullah* who was a well-known religious scholar of his time. He wrote letters to Ahmad Shah Abdali. By such letters, Shah Waliullah motivated him to invade India for the elimination of *Marhatta* power which was an emerging threat for Muslim dominance in India (Chughtai, 2005). Ahmad Shah Abdali came to India and defeated *Marathas* in the battlefield of Panipat and returned to Afghanistan. It was a remarkable victory for Muslims, but it gave the opportunity to East India Company to establish its rule over the whole of India because no one could encounter the advancement of East India Company in the political paradigm of India. Such imperialism changed the political scenarios at a very high pace. There was no way for Muslims instead of following new trends which were settled by English dominance (Samira, 2009). Now Muslims had to resolve the conflict between religion and modern scenarios. At that time *Shah Waliullah* came forward and gave a new interpretation of religion to create an avenue towards a safe future for Muslims. The whole identity politics of Muslims was in the sphere of such socio-political space which was created by *Shah Waliullah* (Sindhi, 1942).

According to Ayesha Jalal's 'Partisans of Allah' the second response was manifested by Syed Ahmad (Jalal, 2008). When Sikhs became the rulers of Punjab then Shah Abdul Aziz gave the judgment (Fatwa) of '*Dar-ul-Harb*'. After this Syed Ahmad left his job in the Army of Nawab of Tonk. He decided to start Jihad against Sikh imperialism in Punjab. With his companions, he moved towards Peshawar and won it after a battle and declared it as an Islamic state. But Sikh responded with a huge force. Syed Ahmad had to leave Peshawar and then he moved towards Kashmir. At *Balakot* he embraced martyrdom with his companions in a battle against Sikhs. The Jihad movement of Syed Ahmad Shaheed was the last symbol of resistance of Muslims in India (Rizvi, 1965).

The British government took India under its direct supervision after minimizing the role of the East India Company. The involvement of the British in all state affairs was increased rapidly because there was no challenger for them in the domain of power politics. British had established their complete control over the whole of India. At that time, the position of Mughal King Bahadur Shah Zafar was ceremonial. But in 1857, Muslims and Hindus tried to play down the hegemony of the British by direct confrontation or war with them. A war was started between natives and British Army. Afterward, this war was termed as mutiny or a 'war of independence'. Natives were lost in the battle. British took complete control and assassinated all Mughal princes and sent a Mughal king to Rangoon in Burma. It was the end of Muslim political power in India and the start of British imperialism in India. After 1857, India directly became the colony of the British Raj. The British government put the responsibility of mutiny on Muslims and introduced policies in a way to keep Muslims away from all state affairs. It was a difficult time for Muslims in colonial India. It completely changed the socio-political and socio-cultural paradigms for Muslims. After this defeat Muslim civilization was under pressure due to a cultural transformation. In the process of cultural exchange, Muslim civilization in colonial India was at a lower end (Pletcher, 2010). It became difficult for Muslims to sustain their social setups. It broke the continuity of tradition.

According to Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi's 'Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the 16th and 17th centuries,' such non-favorable circumstances motivated Muslims to adopt new trends to cope with the challenges of life. Muslim scholars, intellectuals, and Ulama tried to find a safe avenue for Muslims. British came with rational discourses and philosophy (Rizvi, 1965). Modern or rational education in such a traditional society promoted rational thinking among Muslims. The colonial period and its suppressions became a reason for rational thinking and many Muslim rational scholars emerged in such circumstances. It opened a dialogue between traditional orthodox and modern rational scholars. After 1857, the political dominance of Muslims was evaporated, and they were forced to make their activism in the completely new political paradigm of representative democracy. Muslims were not well prepared for the challenge. There was a need to bridge the tradition with modern trends in all walks of life. Many modern Muslim scholars tried to bridge the gap. Their writings and interpretation deeply affected the Muslim mind (Kulke, 1998). After centuries of Mughal Rule in India, the *Hanafi Shariah* law was compiled under the auspices of Emperor Aurangzeb in the form of *Fatawa-e-Alamgiri*.

According to Aziz Ahmad's 'Islamic Modernism in India and Pakistan', when Marathas got dominance in some areas during the Mughal period of decline then they did not devise an alternative legal system in the areas under their rule (Aziz, 1965). This is the reason that Shah Abdul Aziz, who was the son of *Shah Waliullah*, declared India under Marhatta rule as *Darus-Salam* (House of Peace). On another hand under British rule, he declared India as '*DarulHarb*' (House of War or Place of Unrest) because the British government had replaced Muslim law with such a legal system that was not in compliance with Sharia. The declaration of India as '*DarulHarb*' had its political consequences. It was a response of *Ulama* towards British dominance. Shah Abdul Aziz and his followers considered the area under British rule as the territory of the enemy. But their preaching's recommended establishing suitable cooperation with the British if they did not interfere with the religious freedom of the Muslims. Such types of judgments gave space to Muslim students to get enrolled in British schools (Ahmad, 1965). Similarly, it allowed Muslims to serve under the British East India Company. British educational institutes promoted rational thinking. It was reflected in the work of *Karamat Ali Jawnpuri* who tried to establish a bridge between orthodox *Ulama* and modernists. He was a fundamentalist as well as a modernist. He was a disciple of Shah Abdul Aziz and was also supported the *Barelvi's* movement but on the other hand, he wrote in favor of assimilation of western sciences and advised Muslims to maintain personal loyalty to the East India Company. *Karamat Ali* derived the justification of scientific knowledge from the Holy Quran and Hadith. Per him, science could be verifiable from the Holy Quran (Jones, 1989). He was in favor of learning European languages to acquire and understand scientific knowledge and considered it as the first step for Muslims towards modern knowledge. He considered the translation of scientific content into Urdu, Arabic, and Persian as the second step and mandatory for the material progress of Muslims of colonial India. Such ideas of *Karamat Ali* provided rational foundations for a response in favor of educational, cultural, and economic institutions introduced by the British in the early nineteenth century. Afterward, Syed Amir Ali wrote 'The Spirit of Islam'. He was one of the famous students of *Karamat Ali*.

Other than the writings of these scholars, some institutions played a significant role in the process of modernization. The role of Delhi College was remarkable to westernize Muslim intellectuals and reconstruction

of Muslim mind. In the institution, the medium for instruction was Urdu while English was also taught there. A well-known theologian *Mamluk al-Ali* from *Shah Waliullah* school of thought joined Delhi College and produced a class of semi westernized Intellectuals like *Zaka Ullah* (a historian), *Altaf Hussain Hali* (a poet), and novelist *Nazeer Ahmad*. After 1857, the British closed the college. Before its end, it had produced a class of semi-westernized Muslim intellectuals who afterward paved the path of modernization of the Muslim community by their writings and they became a source of motivation for the Muslim elite to acquire English education. British officials also played their role to motivate the Muslim community to acquire English education in these words: “*The introduction of western education in English was not meant to overthrow older religions but to free the people of this land from ignorance’s, to open for them intellectual vistas of progress, and thus to root out gradually the backwardness and poverty of the country*”. (Ahmad, 1965)

The duration from 1855 to 1857 is very important for the consolidation and counter-offensiveness of Muslim theologians against missionary polemics. It was common that such polemics or dialogues were observed by many people. Afterward, people appreciated or criticized the participants of such dialogues which raised rational thinking in the matters of religion which afterward appeared in literature written by Muslim intellectuals (Masud, 2009).

After the War of Independence in 1857, the British considered Muslims responsible for the event and they tried to play down the status of Muslims in every field of life. The political and economic pressure was increasing day by day on the Muslim community. At the start of the war of independence, the scholars or *Ulamas* of the *Shah Waliullah* school of thought were divided into two groups. The first group which consisted of a follower of Muhammad Ishaq (the grandson of *Shah Waliullah*) was in favor of Jihad against the British. The second group, which consisted of those scholars who were in Delhi, was initially opposed to the participation in the uprising (Sindhi, 1942). The first clear ruling to declare uprising as Jihad was given by *Ulama* on the insistence of *Bakhat Khan* from Meerut. Many *Ulama* were imprisoned by the British due to their participation in the uprising. In such a scenario, the British considered Muslims the instigators of the Mutiny or war of Independence. The government took some actions against Muslims which caused a damaging effect on Muslims in each field of life.

The main factors which shaped the Muslim history in colonial India were the change in authority structure of India, the realization of Muslims about their status, their exposure to western literature, and rational discourses. In the colonial period, many Muslim scholars emerged. Their modernist and reformist thinking revolutionized Muslim consciousness. The prominent modernist Muslim scholars were Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Maulvi Chriagh Ali, Altaf Hussain Hali, Zakir Hussain, Nazir Ahmad, and Syed Amir Ali.

Conclusion

After 1857, the situation was critical for the Muslim community. In this critical situation, Syed Ahmad Khan came forward and tried to encounter all arguments given by the British against Muslims of colonial India. He tried to convince British officials that the principal causes of the uprising were the misconceptions and misinterpretations of the government’s policies by the people of India, certain legislative and administrative measures that ran counter to Indian traditions and which were, in fact, harmful to the Indian population. On another hand, Syed Ahmad Khan advised Muslims to be a loyalist to the British government in politics and to adopt modernism in their institutional paradigm. According to Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s ‘Modern Islam in India: A Social Analysis’, after 1857, Muslims were engaged to find solutions to their problems in political as well as in intellectual paradigm. Another discrepancy was in a theological paradigm which is about the rationalization of the basics of the faith because of challenges of the findings of new sciences. Sir Syed had in-depth knowledge of *Shah Waliullah* tradition. He also studied western philosophies. He devoted his energies to resolving the conflict between religion and science and to reconcile the best of both for the younger generation of the Muslim elite whom he wished to attract. He gave a new interpretation of religion purely on rational grounds which were compatible with the modern discourses of philosophy, science, and politics. He elaborated the British rule in India as the most wonderful phenomenon in the world and advised Muslims to show loyalty. He gave arguments that to be loyal to the British government would not be in contradiction with Islam. He promoted his rationalist view on religious dogma in ‘*Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq*’. In the pages of ‘*Tehzib-ul-Akhlaq*’ modernism emerged as a force that changed the direction of Islam in India. His books like ‘*Life of Mohammad*’ and ‘*Khutbat-e-Ahmadiyah*’ were purely in compliance with the methodology of modern Indian historiography of Islam which he wrote to refute Sir William Muir’s highly polemical ‘*Life of Mahomet*’. Sir Syed was a reformist in the tradition which was settled by *Shah Waliullah*. His theological interface was a balanced blend of tradition and modernism. He adopted the rational way of religious speculation from *Shah Waliullah* and implemented it in a modern scientific way to develop his own worldview. Sir Syed interpreted *Fiqah* and *Tafseer* on rational grounds which freed Islam from tradition. He considered nature and reason identical and his naturalistic commentary on Quran arose complexity in Muslim religious discourse in India. No doubt, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the first Muslim scholar in the colonial period who established his scholarly and religious views purely on rational grounds. The rationalization of Religion and Modern thoughts of Sir Syed Ahmad

Khan led the Muslim community to pave the way towards its prosperous future in this dynamic modern world. In continuum Wilfred Cantwell Smith's 'Islam in Modern History', Hunter Shireen's 'Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity', Francis Robinson's 'Islam and Muslim History in South Asia' and Usha Sanyal's 'Devotional Islam and Politics in British India' provide good details about the dialectical process between Islam and modernism which had been started in colonial India among Muslims.

In other accounts, the work of Barbra D. Metcalf, Bashir Ahmad Dar, Ayesha Jalal, Christian S. Troll, David E. Singh, P. Hardy, Muhammad Khalid Masud, Robinson, Wilfred C. Smith, and Murray T. Titus provides a candid picture of penetration of Islam in Indian society, start and evolution of rational thinking and impact of the colonial period in the rationalization of religion in subcontinent. They also provided brief accounts in their work about the evolution of modernist Muslim thoughts and the development of a new political worldview of Muslims of colonial India.

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