

Key Question 1: How successful were the religious thinkers in spreading Islam in the sub-continent during 18th and 19th?

Shah Wali Ullah (1703-1762)

Introduction

Shah Wali Ullah was born on 21 February 1703 during the reign of Aurangzeb his real name was Qutub-ud-din but became famous as Shah Wali-Ullah his father was Shah Abdul Rahim who founded Madrassa Rahimiya in Delhi his father died in 1718. In 1724 Shah Wali Ullah went to Arabia to perform Hajj. He studied under famous scholar Sheikh Abu Tahir bin Ibrahim and returned to Delhi in 1732.

Beliefs

He believed that the Muslims were facing decline not because of weak leadership but because of Muslim community itself. He believed that many Muslims did not have complete knowledge of Quranic teachings. A major problem was that Muslims were divided into Shias and Sunnis and fought with themselves. It was necessary to follow Islamic teachings into every aspect of life.

Work

He worked hard to ensure that he was a role model for every Muslim. He translated Quran into Persian because many people were unfamiliar with Arabic. Later his sons, Shah Abdul Qader and Shah Rafi, translated Quran into Urdu so more and more people could gain Islamic knowledge. He wrote fifty one books in Persian and Arabic. Amongst the most famous were Hujjatullah-ul-Baligha and Izalat-Akhfa. He also wrote an account of the first four caliphs of Islam in a way that was acceptable to both Shias and Sunnis. In economics he emphasised the need for social justice and for peasants and craftsmen to be truly valued for their contribution to the economy. His most important contributions to the Muslim community was his organization of opposition to the Marathas, who were threatening to over-run the Mughal Empire from the south. It was to call together the divinites among Muslims and unite them for Jihad. He wrote a letter to Afghan King Ahmad Shah Abdali and joined local forces with local Muslim leaders and defeated the Marathas in the Battle of Panipat in 1761. However, despite encouragement from Shah Wali Ullah, the Muslim leaders did not unite to take advantage of the defeat of the Marathas. Perhaps if they had done so, the Muslims would not have soon found themselves under Non-Muslim rule.

Importance

Shah Wali Ullah was one of the first thinkers to state that the decline of Mughal Empire and the vulnerable position of the Muslims were due to a neglect of the principles of Islam. He showed how this regeneration might take place. The Madrassa continued to play a vital role in teaching Islamic principles and researching Islamic thought. He believed that Muslims could prosper if they followed proper Islamic customs and did not indulge in social evils. His writing gave large number of Muslims a chance to study their religion and understand its teachings. He gave Muslims inspiration to lead a pure simple Life. He showed that Muslims had to concentrate more on basic principle rather than finding the difference which would lead them in the conflict among them. He tried to oppose Maratha and unite the Muslim under a common enemy. Many future leaders were inspired by his teachings. And fight for the good of Muslim community.

Syed Ahmad Shaheed Barailvi (1786-1831)

Introduction

Syed Ahmad was born in a small town of Rai Bareli near Lucknow. He moved in Delhi in 1806 and Studied in Madrassa Rahimya for two years. In 1810 in joined a Pathan Military Leader and learned to use European weaponry. In 1817 He returned to Delhi trying to make Islam to its original purity.

Beliefs

He believed that Muslims could achieve their freedom by having arm struggle against the British and Sikhs. He believed that the evil in the Islamic Society had to be cured. He called for Jihad Movement to over throw the non-Muslim force which was oppressing them. Only then Islam could be rescued from the evil customs of other societies.

Work

In 1821 He went for Hajj and returned from Arabia in 1823 ready for action. At this time Punjab and NWFP was in the control of Sikh and Muslims were unable to live according to their faith. He traveled many hundred miles to raise a mujahideen force. In 1826 Syed Ahmad established his headquarters near Peshawar and sent a messenger asking Ranjit Singh the ruler to allow muslims follow their religion but the request was turn down so he had no choice but to attack at Okara on 21 December 1826 and after that Hazarothe and defeat the Sikhs. He was successful military leader and the mujahideen force soon reached 80,000 men, but there was a major problem as the force had people from different area they quarreled on how the camping should run. Sikhs tried to exploit the army by calling it un-Islamic but it was consider jihad by Muslim leaders. When Syed Ahmad was about to attack the fort of Attock he encountered the army of Sikh of 35000 men's. What he did not know was that Yar Muhammad Khan a Pathan chief was bribed by the Sikh and even his servant tried to poison him. Then Yar Muhammad deserted him on the battle field along his men and thus this creates chaos and lead to defeat. Syed Ahmad had no choice but to move his headquarters to safety of Panjtar near Kashmir but was again betrayed when a person in his army told the British a secret way to attack them. In battle of Balakot 1831 a surprise attack was lead by Sikh and Six hundred Muslims were killed along with Syed Ahmed.

Importance

The Defeat of the mujahideen in the Battle of Balakot was a serious setback for the Jihad movement still it survived. The movement continued on the hills of NWFP until 1863 when the British sent large force to deal with it still it survived through determination of its followers. The work of Syed Ahmad was important because it was the first arm struggle of a movement to free Muslims from non-Muslim rule. It was not a movement for a leader but it was to achieve religious freedom. Jihad of Syed Ahmad inspired many Muslims. It is the fore-runner of Pakistan movement as the aim of this movement was to safe-guard Muslim interest and achieves a homeland where they can practice their Religion, Culture and Freedoms.

Haji Shariat Ullah (1781-1840)

Introduction

He was born in 1781 in Faridpur district in east Bengal. His family was poor. In 1799 He went to Arabia on pilgrimage and stayed there for nineteen

years . He was greatly influenced by the teaching of Sheikh Muhammad Abdul Wahab.

Beliefs

He believed that the miserable condition of the Muslims in India led to the country being Dar-UI-Harb (Country under Foreign Rule). He told that Friday prayer and Eid prayer cannot be offered here. He also believed that Muslim community had moved away from Islamic practice. He wanted them to return to what he thought was the proper observation of Islamic duties called Faraizi. This was why he started his movement was called Faraizi Movement. The Faraizi Movement supported the idea of Jihad against the non-Muslims who were undermining the true principles of Islam.

Work

He started Faraizi movement to restore the Pride of the Muslims and remove what he thought were the Hindu practices. Emphasis was placed on praying for past sins and promising to lead a righteous life in the future which had crept into their worship. The success of this movement caused British and Hindu Landlord's and they did not want Haji Shariat Ullah to create difficulty for them by uniting a desire to improve their lives and purify their religion so they drove Haji out of the reign to Nawabganj in Dhaka where he died in 1840. His work however was carried by his son Mohsin-ud-Din who continued to improve the position of Muslim in East Bengal and introduced important economic measures. He divides East Bengal into circle under control of each Khalifa to carry out religious activities. He helped the peasants to oppose land taxes and he threatened to declare Jihad against the British so he was captured and put in prison where he died in 1860.

Importance

Work of Haji Shariat Ullah was important to Faraizi Movement because it gave encouragement to Muslims at a time when they demoralised by oppression suffered from Hindus and British. It also brought about a spiritual revival which led to a revival in Islamic religion in East Bengal. Hindu influences were removed from Islamic practices. It might be said that some seeds for the Pakistan Movement were sown by the Faraizi Movement.

Some Important Questions Which Repeats In Exams

Comparisons of Religious Thinkers (14 Marks)

Islam was widely spread in subcontinent by Shah Wali Ullah Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi and Haji Shariat Ullah.

- Shah Wali Ullah was a religious scholar. He taught Islamic teachings in the Madrassa Rahimya. This produced a number of scholars in the sub-continent and therefore increased spread of Islam. Shah Wali Ullah also translated the Quran in Persian. Arabic was not very much understood in the sub continent so translating Quran revived Quranic teachings in the subcontinent because Muslims and also other people could understand Quranic teachings. Shah Wali Ullah also wrote to all Muslim leaders in the subcontinent to unite and defeat the Marathas it was partly due to his persuade that Ahmed Durrani came to subcontinent and defeated the Marathas. Thus by writing letters he decreased the non Muslim influence of Marathas and united Muslim leaders which revived Islam in subcontinent. Shah Wali Ullah wrote several books about 51. These books were extremely popular. These not only converted many people to Islam and increase understanding of religion for Muslims of Islam but also united the different Muslim sectarian such as the Shias and Sunnis.
- Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi also played part in reviving Islam. He started the Jihad Movement. The Jihad Movement was a Movement started by Muslims to defeat the non Muslim oppressors. The Movement united all the different Muslim against one common enemy. This showed the power of the Muslims and united the Muslim community which spread Islam.
- Haji Shariat Ullah started the Faraizi Movement. It indicated tht Muslims should return to their religious teaching and perform their religious obligations. This particularly became popular in Bengal and Muslims were revived back to their religious teachings. His movement also united the Muslims of Bengal.

However there were failures

- Shah Wali Ullah was not able to bring Muslim power back to subcontinent and Muslims were still being oppressed by Marathas who prevented them from obeying there religions law.

- Syed Ahmed eventually failed to defeat the British and the oppressing Sikhs and Muslims once again returned to their torturing lives.
- Haji Shariat Ullah could only bring rejuvenation in Bengal and so could not reach the entire subcontinent. The failure of the Jihad Movements discouraged Muslims to rise up against the enemy which weakened Islam.

Conclusion

Although every religious thinker was quite successful in spreading the message amongst the people, Shah Wali Ullah through writings, Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi through his Jihad Movement and Haji Shariat Ullah through his Faraizi movement, yet in my opinion Shah Wali Ullah was most successful as his work was ever lasting and sowed a seed for the later "Pakistan Movement".

Comparisons of Works (14 Marks)

- There were many Muslims reformers at that time. SWU was one of them. He believed that the Muslims were not able to understand Islam because they weren't able to understand the Holy Quran because it was in Arabic. He translated Holy Quran from Arabic to Persian. Later it was translated to Urdu by his sons. He wrote 51 books .They include Hujjatullah-ul Baligha and Izalat al Akhfa. He also wrote an account on the four Caliphs of Islam to decrease differences between Sunnis and Shias.(he also fought against the Marathas)
- Another reformer was SASB. He was a man of action. He was a great Muslim warrior. He gathered an army of mujahideen to fight against the Sikhs and Ranjit Singhs forces. He did Jihad against the Ranjit Singh army at many times. Although many people left him he still continued the fight against the Sikhs. He fought the Battle of Balakot in 1831. It was the first example of a movement formed to free Muslims from non Muslims leaders. It was a uniting force for the Muslims and inspiration for future Muslims.
- Another reformer was HSU. He believed that the country was now Dar-UI Harb where non Muslims ruled. He also believed that the Muslims had moved away from true Islamic practice so he started a movement called the Faraizi Movement. It supported the idea of Jihad Movement. The Faraizi Movement was started to restore the pride of Muslims and remove non Muslim practices in Islam. This Movement encouraged the Muslims. It brought a spiritual revival. It also had

much economic impact. The Bengal peasants became united in opposition to the British and became aware of their rights and unity became to grow between them and they realised their rights that should have been given.

Conclusion

I think SWU was the most important reformer because he was one of the first persons to realise the main thing of Muslims problems. He did the major thing of translating Holy Quran to Persian so that more people could understand it.

Mega Lecture