

**MUSLIM RENAISSANCE IN
THE 18TH & 19TH CENTURIES
BY THE
RELIGIOUS REFORMERS**

RELIGIOUS REFORMERS

1. Shah Waliullah
2. Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi
3. Haji Shariatullah

Key Question: How successful were the religious thinkers in spreading Islam in the sub-continent during the 18th and 19th centuries? [14]

Focus points:

- How important were the religious reforms of Shah Waliullah?
- What influence did Syed Ahmad Shaheed Bareilvi exert in the revival of Islam?
- How influential was Haji Shariatullah and the Faraizi Movement?

Specified content:

- The religious reforms of Shah Waliullah and his role in the political and religious context
- Syed Ahmad Shaheed Bareilvi and the Jihad Movement
- Hajji Shariatullah and the Faraizi Movement

CAIE Exam Questions

1. Who was Shah Waliullah? [4]
2. What was the Battle of Panipat? [4]
3. Why did Shah Waliullah translate the holy Quran into Persian? [7]
4. Who was Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi? [4]
5. Why did the Jihad Movement fail? [7]
6. Who was Haji Shariatullah? [4]

Shah Waliullah (1703-1762)

Early Life:

- Born during the time of Aurangzeb.
- His father Shah Abdul Rahim founded the **Madrassa Rahimiya** in Delhi.
- Started teaching at Madrassa Rahimiyah after his father's death in 1718.
- 1724 went to Arabia to perform Hajj.

Reasons for reviving Islam in the sub-continent:

1. The Mughal Empire was in a state of political decline and Muslims were disunited. A major reason for that was the lavishness that they had been involved in and hence, affected their administration. Many non-Muslim forces like Marathas in Deccan and, Sikhs in Punjab were gaining power. It was feared that if immediate action was not taken, Mughal Empire would fall into the control of Marathas who had stronghold in Southern India. Shah Waliullah believed that reviving true spirit of Islam could only unite the Muslim Community against non-Islam forces.
2. Secondly, Muslims were not only politically weak and disunited but they had also adopted many un-Islamic customs and traditions due to misinterpretation of Islam. He believed that in order to stop the moral degeneration of society and, there had to be moral and spiritual revival of Islam. Very few Muslims could understand Quran because Arabic was not their language. Therefore, he translated Quran into Persian Language.
3. Thirdly, Muslim society was not only experiencing moral and spiritual degeneration but they were also in a state of economic decline. Poor peasants were suffering due to exploitation of rich landlords and there was an economic chaos that the Muslim society was facing at that time. Therefore, he wished that dignity of labor to be valued by following Islamic economic system that ensures economic and social justice.

Efforts for the revival of Islam in the Sub-continent/Importance of Shah Waliullah's work:

1. He was a role model for Muslim community and had deep knowledge and understanding of Quran, Hadith, Fiqah and Tasawwuf. His personal conduct persuaded many Muslims to follow true spirit of Islam.
2. Translated Quran into Persian language to make it understandable for most of the people in the Sub-continent. It paved the way for further translations of Quran. Later his sons **Shah Abdul Rafi** and **Shah Abdul Qadir** translated Quran into Urdu Language.
3. With the translation of Quran, application of Quran became much easier and Islamic teachings did not remain a monopoly of few people who could understand Arabic and deliver Islamic teachings to people according to their own interpretations.
4. Wrote **51** books on Hadith and Fiqah such as '**Hujjatullah-ul-Baligha**, **Izlat-ul-Akhfa** and an account of first four caliphs. He also tried to reconcile the differences between Shias and Sunnis to bring unity among the Muslims.
5. He tried to revive economic system of Islam by emphasizing on a just distribution of wealth, social justice and dignity of labor.
6. He organized opposition to Marathas who had strong hold in Southern India and who became a real threat to dwindling Muslim rule. He wrote letters to Ulemas and nobles and invited Ahmed Shah Abdali from Afghanistan to crush the power of Marathas at the **Third Battle of Panipat** in **1761**. This was another effort to protect Muslim rule in the sub-continent. Even though Muslims could not unite later and Mughal Empire fell into the hands of British.

Syed Ahmed Shaheed (1786-1831)

Early Life

- He was born in **1786** in Rae Bareli, a small town near Lucknow.
- He got his early education by the sons of Shah Waliullah at Madrassah Rahimiya where he got enrolled in 1806.
- He was a man of action who believed in armed struggle against the non-Muslim oppressors, mainly Sikhs.
- In **1810** he joined the forces of **Amir Khan Tonak** and acquired the modern military training in European style. In **1812**, he joined his army to take part in jihad against the British.
- In 1821 he went to perform Hajj and when he came back he was ready to launch jihad against Sikhs.

Reasons for conducting Jihad against Sikhs

- Ranjit Singh, the great ruler of Punjab had made life miserable for the Muslims in India. Muslims were forbidden to carry out their basic Islamic practices. In some areas even the call for prayers was banned. Now that his rule had extended to NWFP, it was evident that only an armed struggle could put an end to this tyranny. Syed Ahmed, therefore, founded the Jihad Movement also called the **“Mujahideen Movement”** in **1825**.
- Syed Ahmed wanted the Muslims to have a firm control in the areas of Punjab and NWFP as they had Muslim majority there. By controlling these areas he could impose a model ‘Islamic state’ in these two provinces.
- Syed Ahmed himself belonged to the Bareilvi school of thought and believed that the un-Islamic practices that had crept into the lives of Muslims should be removed for their moral and spiritual degeneration. He therefore took the title of ‘Imam’ and imposed Islamic shariah in NWFP.

Influence / Importance of Syed Ahmed Shaheed's work

Although Jihad Movement was not successful in achieving its aims to liberate Punjab from Sikh rule but it had left an everlasting influence on the political struggle of the Muslims in later years.

1. Jihad Movement carried on in the hills of NWFP until 1863 when the British had to send an army to deal with it. Even then the movement survived through the determination of its followers. NWFP remained a stronghold of orthodox Islamic movements till the present age.
2. Syed Ahmed Shaheed set an example of conducting Jihad against an oppressive non-Muslim rule in the history of sub-continent.
3. Jihad movement was not for the sake of money or power but it had a much higher aim - reviving the true spirit of Islam.
4. Jihad Movement is also considered as fore-runner of Pakistan Movement. Syed Ahmed Shaheed's efforts were an inspiration to all Muslims in defending their religion, culture and freedom.

Reasons for the failure of Jihad Movement

- Lack of funds, poor war equipment and inadequate military training was one major reason. Also, army comprised of different sects that also included Afghans who were suspicious of others and not ready to cooperate.
- Sectarian propaganda by Sikhs against the reforms introduced by Syed Ahmed Shaheed to create differences between Shias and Sunnis. (Syed Ahmed Shaheed was a strict Sunni Muslim)
- Treachery of a Pathan commander (**Yar Muhammad Khan**) who was bribed by Ranjit Sindh and created chaos in Syed Ahmed Shaheed's army.
- In the **Battle of Balakot in 1831**, a much larger army fought against Syed Ahmed Shaheed and Muslims were unable to resist. Six hundred Mujahideen were killed including Syed Ahmed Shaheed and his commander **Ismail Shah**.

Haji Shariatullah (1781-1840)

Early Life

- Born in **1781** in Faridpur district in East Bengal, he belonged to a poor family.
- Influenced by the beliefs of Shaikh Abdul Wahab.
- Performed Hajj in 1799 and on return started Faraizi Movement that emphasized on basic religious obligations such as belief in oneness of Allah, Prayers, Fasting, Zakat and Hajj. Haji Shariatullah believed that Muslim community had moved away from true Islamic practices. In order to reform the society, Muslims should follow up all religious obligations strictly. Faraizi Movement also supported the ideas of Jihad against the non-Muslims who were treating Muslim miserably.

Efforts for revival of Islam in East Bengal

- Muslims of East Bengal were oppressed by Hindus and the British. They had been given few opportunities in education and employment. As a result, many Muslims remained backward and poor. Haji Shariatullah started Faraizi Movement to improve the economic conditions of Muslims. He asked his people to give up un-Islamic customs and practices and act upon the commandments of religion called 'Faraiz'.
- His simplicity of character and sincere devotion to faith changed the outlook of Muslim masses.
- Haji Shariatullah declared Bengal as **Dar-ul-Harb** (a Muslim area ruled by non-Muslims)
- Haji Shariatullah's movement was a direct Jihad against the false religious practices and oppression of Zamindars. It caused great concern among the Hindus of East Bengal. The landlords did not want Haji Shariatullah creating difficulties for them and were alarmed that Muslim cultivators were uniting in a desire to improve their lives and improve and purify their religion. They drove Haji Shariatullah out to Dhaka where he died in 1840.
- His work, however, was carried out by his son **Mohsinuddin**, who continued to work to improve the position of Muslims in East Bengal and introduced economic reforms.

- Mohsin-ud-din divided the East Bengal into circles and appointed Khalifas to look after economic and social conditions of Muslims.
- He motivated people to oppose heavy taxes imposed by Hindu and British landlords. This created law and order condition in Bengal. He also declared Jihad against the British government.
- Faraizi Movement brought a spiritual change which led to revival of Islam in East Bengal. It united the Muslims against Hindus and British and made peasants of Bengal aware of their rights. This proved to be important in later years as the Muslim demand for their homeland grew. Later on Pakistan Movement thrived in Bengal and resulted in creation of Pakistan

Titu Mir (1782-1831)

Mir Nisar Ali (Titu Mir) was one of the greatest freedom fighters of Bengal. He lit the flame of liberation into the hearts of Bengalis and urged them to struggle for political, cultural and economic independence. Titu Mir was born on **January 27, 1782** in a village in Bengal. He studied in a local Madrassa and became a Hafiz of Quran there. He had good command on Arabic, Persian and Bengali languages. He went to Mecca in 1822 to perform Haj. There he met Syed Ahmad Shaheed. He became greatly influenced by Syed Ahmad Shaheed who inspired him to preach the true teachings of Islam and fight for the freedom of Muslims.

Upon returning home he started his struggle against British. He united peasants against the Zamindars who were supported by British. Titu Mir protested levying tax on beard, moustache, mosque and Islamic name of Muslims by local Hindu Zamindars. The Zamindars tried to create division among Titu Mir's followers by labeling him as a Wahabi. However, the Muslims did not pay any heed to their tricks. As a result, they intensified torture on the Muslims.

At last, on **14 November 1831**, the British forces armed with modern weapons attacked the Muslim Mujahideen. The battle at **Narkelbaria** was fought valiantly but they could not withstand with their shields and spears. Titu Mir had built a bamboo fort and kept the British forces at bay but was eventually martyred along with many of his fellow freedom fighters.

Analysis, Evaluation and Judgment related to:

Religious Reformers/effort to spread Islam in the Sub-Continent

In my opinion, Shah Waliullah rendered the most valuable services for the revival of Islam. His works to revive the true spirit of Islam continued to be a source of guidance and inspiration for all the generations to come. The translation of Quran into Persian language by Shah Waliullah has been considered as the most authentic one and it paved the way for further translations of Quran into many other languages. Furthermore, his writings made the Muslims realize the importance of following the true Islamic principles.

On the other hand, Shah Waliullah was partially successful in his mission to revive Islam. Despite of his hard efforts, neither he could not prevent the downfall of the Mughal Empire nor establish the Muslim society on pure Islamic lines. Moreover, harmonious relations between Shi'as and Sunnis remained out of question till present time due to certain fundamental differences between the two sects.

East India Company

CIE Exam Content:

- What role did the East India Company play in the decline of the Empire?
- How successful was British expansion in the sub-continent from 1750 to 1857?

[NB: The two focus points on British expansion do not require detailed teaching, but are essential to provide a full picture of Mughal problems during the period, and are regarded as suitable background and context for British colonial rule of the territory now encompassed by Pakistan, as well as for the War of 1857-58. Candidates may be asked to use this information in questions related to the background to the events of 1857-58]

Specified content:

- Foreign invasions from Persia and Afghanistan
- Reasons for the East India Company's involvement in the sub-continent
British relations with the later Mughal rulers of Delhi
- British expansion from the 1750s to 1810
- A general overview of the course of, and reasons for, British annexation of the territories which now encompass Pakistan (including the Anglo-Sikh wars and the annexations of Lahore, the Punjab and Peshawar)
- The British search for a 'natural' and 'scientific' NW Frontier
- British policy towards Tribal Territory.

CAIE Exam Questions

1. What was the East India Company (EIC)? [4]
2. Explain why the East India Company became involved in the Indian subcontinent during the 17th century? [7]

Background:

- After the discovery of new sea routes to India, European powers such as Portuguese, French, Dutch and British were casting envious eye on India's wealth.
- In **1510** Portuguese established trading base in Goa.
- In **1600** Queen Elizabeth 1 granted permission to a group of merchants to establish EIC.
- EIC had monopoly in trade between Britain and areas east of Africa.
- Dutch had monopoly over spice trade of East Indies (Indonesia), so EIC took control of India.
- EIC landed in Surat in **1608** and in **1612** Shah Jehan granted them permission of trade.

Why was EIC interested in India?

Economic Reasons

- India was known as 'golden sparrow' because of its resources.
- Profitable trade of spices, silk, indigo, opium etc. They opened trading posts at Bombay, Madras and Calcutta called Presidencies.
- After Industrial revolution British required raw material for their industries in Britain.
- India could serve as a big 'market' for the industrial products of Britain.
- British wanted to capture trade routes of South Asia.
- British could look after their possessions in the Middle East and Far East from their stronghold in India.

Political Reasons

- EIC was given monopoly in trade between Britain and areas east of Africa. The merchants were hoping to break into spice trade in the East Indies (modern day Indonesia), but the Dutch had already won control of spice trade and would not let another European power share it. So the EIC turned to India as an alternative.
- Weak government in India had divided India into several states ruled by independent rulers. It was now easier to capture the states one by one.

Religious Reasons

- Spread of Christianity through missionary activities.

Cultural Reasons

- Indian culture such as festivals, food, dresses, architecture and art had a fascinating effect on British.

How did the EIC/British capture India by 1857?

- They had just a few trading posts in the beginning.
- In **1664**, they established headquarter in Bombay.
- In **1686**, they fought against the Mughals but got defeated. They were forced to pay a heavy fine.
- By early 17th century they had defeated Portuguese and Dutch.
- Rivalry with French - Lord Clive defeated French in the **Battle of Carantic** in **1751** and increased British influence over Bengal and southern India.
- The Battle of Plassey was fought in **1757**. Lord Clive defeated Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Doulah with the help of his general Mir Jaffar who was made Nawab afterwards. British captured the richest province of India.
- In **1764** in the Battle of Buxur, Mir Jaffar's son-in-law Mir Qasim joined with Nawab of Oudh and Mughal emperor Shah Alam II to drive EIC out of Bengal. They lost the battle.
- EIC took control of revenue collection in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and extended its influence to Oudh.
- Through exploitation of Bengal, famine, disease, lawlessness. EIC was only interested in making profits and transferring wealth to Britain.
- EIC continued to trade but British Government took administrative control of India.
- In **1782** Governor General **Warren Hastings** signed a treaty to end war between British and Marathas.
- In **1799**, Governor General **Wellesley** captured Mysore by killing Tipu Sultan.
- In **1799**, Nawab of Oudh was defeated and handed over large territory to British.

- In **1803** British entered Delhi and forced the Mughal emperor, Shah Alam to rule under British protection.
- In **1818** Marathas were defeated and accepted British control.
- The annexations of Sindh **1843** - British were defeated in 1841 in Afghanistan. In order to cover up embarrassment, **Sir Charles Napier** provoked Amirs of Sindh to attack on British Presidency in 1843. He then defeated Amirs and annexed Sindh.
- Annexation of Punjab and NWFP - Ranjit Singh, a strong ruler of Punjab had signed a '**Perpetual Treaty of Friendship**' in **1809** but after his death in 1839, his army attacked British possession, south of River Sutlej. In return British attacked Punjab and defeated the Sikhs in the **First Anglo-Sikh War in 1846**. **Treaty of Amritsar** forced the Sikhs to pay large fines to British for breaking the treaty. Also, the British formalized the sale of Kashmir to **Gulab Singh Dogra**, who helped British win the battle, for **7,500,000** Nanakshahee Rupees of all the lands in Kashmir that were ceded to them by the Sikhs by the **Treaty of Lahore in 1846**.
- After a revolt against the British, Punjab and NWFP were annexed in **1849**.
- In other areas where British did not have formal control, like Hyderabad Deccan and Oudh, local rulers were allowed to rule but they had to pay large amount of money to British and had to control on foreign affairs.
- **Doctrine of Lapse in 1852** – It was (if a ruler died without a male heir, his state would be annexed to British) introduced by Lord Dalhousie and helped the British gain control of more lands such as Oudh after the death of Nawab in 1856. Jhansi, Nagpur, Satara also fell under the British control.

Specimen Question:

Why did the British Government take control of the affairs of the East India Company in the early nineteenth century? [7]

British Government took control of the affairs of the East India Company in the early nineteenth century due to a number of reasons:

- Firstly, the volume of trade became so significant that the British government felt it was too valuable an asset to leave in the hands of a private company even though the EIC was now holding its possessions in trust for them.
- Secondly, the fear of Russian expansion in Central Asia worried the government and so Britain decided to shape its foreign policy by further expansion towards Afghanistan to counter this threat. Britain was much concerned of her prestige being at stake especially after the defeat by the Afghans at Kabul in 1842.
- Thirdly, the famine in Bengal, misgovernment, corruption, declining law and order conditions were also the reasons for British government's intervention in the affairs of EIC.

Analysis, Evaluation and Judgment related to EIC/ control of India

In my opinion, Indians had been unsuccessful to a great extent to take control of India from the British for more than 100 years despite of a number of attempts mentioned above. However, it is unlikely for any foreign power to retain their control on another country against the will of the people on permanent basis. Moreover, during the 20th century, the ideas of democracy, equality, freedom and fundamental human rights became popular in the civilized world including Britain. Being a great supporter of these ideas, they had no other choice but to liberate their colonies. After the Second World War, Britain lost the status of super power and the process of decolonization started that liberated India from more than a century's imperial rule.