

Reform of Islamic Theology in India: Sheikh Waliullah Ad-Dahlawi and Syed Ahmad Khan

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Abstrak

Kemunduran umat Muslim di India pada abad 18-19 disebabkan oleh dua faktor, yaitu faktor eksternal dan internal. Faktor internal disebabkan karena adanya kehancuran dinasti Mughal, terutama setelah kematian raja Aurangzeb. Di sisi lain, faktor internal ini juga disebabkan adanya kejumudan dalam umat muslim India. Sedangkan faktor eksternal disebabkan adanya ilmu pengetahuan modern Barat yang dibawa oleh Inggris. Kedua faktor tersebut yang mempengaruhi adanya gerakan teologi yang diprakarsai oleh Syaikh Waliyullah Ad-Dahlawi dan Seyyed Ahmad Khan. Kedua ulama tersebut sama-sama menginginkan agar umat muslim India bisa bangkit dari keterbelakangannya. Upaya yang dilakukan oleh kedua orang tersebut adalah dengan merekonstruksi teologi yang selama ini sudah mapan di muslim India. Syaikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi menginginkan agar umat Islam terbebas dari ortodoksi agama. Sedangkan Seyyed Ahmad Khan, di samping menyempurnakan usaha ad-Dahlawi, Seyyed Ahmad Khan juga memberikan pemikiran segar tentang pendidikan Islam. Seyyed Ahmad Khan berhasil memadukan antara Islam sebagai agama dan pendidikan modern. Hasilnya berupa berdirinya sekolah *Mohammaden Anglo Oriental Collage* (M.O.A.C.) atau dikenal dengan Universitas Islam Aligarh yang pada saat itu menjadi salah satu universitas Islam besar di Asia.

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Kata Kunci: *Seyyed Ahmad Khan, Syaikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi, Pembaruan Teologi.*

Abstract

The decline of the Muslim community in India during the 18th and 19th centuries was attributed to both internal and external factors. Internally, it was driven by the collapse of the Mughal dynasty, particularly after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb. This internal decline was also exacerbated by stagnation within the Indian Muslim community. Externally, the influence of modern Western knowledge introduced by the British played a significant role. These two factors prompted theological movements initiated by Syaikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi and Seyyed Ahmad Khan, both of whom aspired to uplift the Indian Muslim community from its backwardness. The efforts of these two scholars were focused on reconstructing the theological framework that had long been established among Indian Muslims. Syaikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi aimed to free the Muslim community from religious orthodoxy. Meanwhile, Seyyed Ahmad Khan, in addition to advancing ad-Dahlawi's efforts, introduced fresh ideas regarding Islamic education. Seyyed Ahmad Khan successfully integrated Islam as a religion with modern education, culminating in the establishment of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College (M.O.A.C.), later known as Aligarh Muslim University. At the time, this institution became one of the largest centers of Islamic learning in Asia.

Keywords: *Seyyed Ahmad Khan, Syaikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi, Reform of Islamic Theology.*

Introduction

The historical dynamics of Islamic empires began to end when the Mughal empire in India collapsed. The Mughal Empire was one of the Islamic empires that survived until the 18th century in India. This kingdom was a continuation of Islamic dynasties that had begun centuries ago, so that the traditions and knowledge developed by Muslims had developed further. However, this development began to come to an end due to various factors. Firstly, internal royal conflicts; secondly, the challenge of modernity developed by the West. These two issues were behind the retreat of Muslims in general, and in India in particular, from world civilisation. It was on this basis that several Muslim thinkers emerged to renew Muslim theology so that it could answer the challenges of the times such as Seyyed Ahmad Khan and Shaykh Waliyullah Ad-Dahlawi from Delhi India.

The Mughal Empire was one of the Islamic empires that survived until the colonial period. The decline of the Mughal empire was one of the aspects that caused Muslims to retreat. During ad-Dahlawi's lifetime, around the beginning of the 18th century and after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 AD, non-Muslim groups began to stir the flames of rebellion. The kingdom was on the verge of collapse. This was exacerbated by the life of the state elite who liked to live lavishly so that they forgot the mandate to think about the fate of their people. The atmosphere increased when the scholars at that time only thought

of themselves, they were jumud, the Sufis were complacent until they tended to waste religious provisions, as a result the Sufis actually came out of the essence of Sufism itself.

The political divisions in this government caused chaos. This chaos was utilised by the Maratta' to organise a force in Daccan. This group was the militant Hindus of Bombay province. By capitalising on the chaos and weakness of the Mughal empire they managed to expand their territory to become a powerful kingdom in the Daccan area around 1737 (Munir, 2017, p. 17).

According to ad-Dahlawi, the decline of Muslims needs to be corrected. Improvements made not only about theology or kalam but also about the socio-political kingdom. Reconstruction of the understanding of religious teachings at that time was indeed needed to give new enthusiasm to Muslims so that they could rise again. The purification of religious teachings is with the intention that Muslims can distinguish between religion and culture. Because, at that time the theological problems faced by Muslims were due to the thin gap between religion and culture, so that it blurred the meaning of religion and culture.

However, before ad-Dahlawi succeeded in improving the situation of Muslims in India a new problem arose. This problem did not come from outside as it was marked by the arrival of the British and their involvement in the war during 1757-1857 AD. The British came to India when the conditions and circumstances of India were bad. In an atmosphere of political instability in India, the British took the opportunity to strengthen their position as traders and tried to seize political positions. This endeavour succeeded with the fall of Bengal to them in the battle of Plassey in 1757. This battle saw the remaining power of the Mughals finally exhausted. It was also the final chapter in the political collapse of all Muslims in the Indian subcontinent.

The revolution of 1857 led to India being ruled by the British. It was at this time that a reformer who was also influenced by earlier thinkers, Seyyed Ahmad Khan, emerged. Ahmad Khan in many ways has been able to change the stigma about the British in India. The reform that was carried out was not only a matter of theology, as was done by ad-Dahlawi, but the reform was also related to the development of science, as well as awakening rationalism in the Islamic world.

Thus there were two major moments that triggered the decline of Islam in the 18th century in India. The decline of the power of the Mughal empire which began with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 AD. secondly, the power and position of British merchants in India was getting stronger. The decline of Islam in India then received a response from Shaykh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi to reconstruct the theology of Muslims in India in

particular and Muslims in general. This reconstruction was also continued by Seyyed Ahmad Khan when the British had already established their politics in India. Therefore, this paper will explain more about the discourse of renewal carried out by these two figures.

Islamic Reform of Shaykh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi

Shaykh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi was born in 1704 AD in Delhi India with the full name Wali Allah Ahmad ib Abd Rahim ib Wajih al-Din al-Syahid ibn Mu'dham ibn Mansur ibn Ahmad ibn Mahmud ibn Qiwam al-Din ibn Qasim ibn kabir al-Din ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Qutb al-Din ibn Kamal al-Din ibn Syams al-Din ibn Shayr al-Malik ibn Muhamd ibn Abi al-Fath ibn Umar ibn Adil ibn Faruq ibn Jurjes Ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Mahan ibn Hamayun ibn Quraysh ibn Sulayiman ibn Affan ibn Abdillah ibn Muhammad ibn Abdillah ibn Umar ibn Khatab al-Adawi al-Quraysh. In terms of his lineage, ad-Dahlawi was one of those who shared blood with the second caliph, Umar ibn Khattab. His family still has a high status in the community, as evidenced by his father holding the position of judge and teacher at al-Rahimiyah (Asmawi, 2012, p. 361). Shaykh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi was a scholar, a mujtahid in the Hanafi madhhab because he studied the madhhab and the social conditions of the Indian Muslim community were predominantly Hanafi.

The life of Shaykh Waliyullah cannot be separated from the socio-political context at that time. By the time of the modern revolution in the Indian subcontinent, the Mughal Empire was in decline. Nevertheless, the Mughal Empire was known as a fairly pluralistic empire. This is evidenced by the religious communal structure, especially Muslims as a minority in India are not formed in a single community, but consists of various ethnic groups, lineages, and a number of population classes, even consisting of several castes (Lapidos, 2000, p. 703). Indian Muslims form a number of religious bodies based on individual schools of thought, tariqahs, and clerical groups. They are partly Sunni and partly Shi'i. The Sunnis themselves were further divided into scripturalist Sunnis and popular Sufism (Lapidos, 2000, p. 485).

However, the socio-political situation at the time of ad-Dahlawi's life was not good. The Mughal Empire at the time was suffering from a crisis of confidence that led to many civil wars. Towards the end of the 18th century, there were many movements on behalf of non-Muslims against the Mughal dynasty, which was led by Aurangzeb. The development of this movement was later termed as ethnic nationalism. The rise of ethnic identity was a new socio-political phenomenon at that time. Previously, there had been conflict, but the conflict was caused by differences in dynasty, religion and caste. However, in the era before the fall of the Mughals, ethnicity was the main cause of conflict.

Ethnicity as a political force has been growing over time. The issue of ethnicity threatened governance in the Indian subcontinent (Ahmed, 1992, p. 85).

The destruction of Islamic politics in India became one of the causes of the decline of Muslims. according to Syaikh Waliyullah, this decline was due to the existence of a broken system of government; disorganised so that Muslims were increasingly divided. Ad-Dahlawi considered that the Mughal Empire was an absolute and totalitarian kingdom. The courtiers lived in luxury without caring for the Muslims as a whole. Therefore, one of the concepts of reform offered by Shaykh Waliyullah was to offer an Islamic system of government for the progress of Muslims in the future.

In addition, ad-Dahlawi's thinking according to S.A.A Rizvi from the book *Tafhimat al-Ilahiyat*, ad-Dahlawi's own corpus, can be used as a guide to assess ad-Dahlawi's method of thinking. The quote explains that ad-Dahlawi's method of thinking is based on burhan (demonstrative proof), wijdan (intuition), and manqul (traditional knowledge) (Rizvi, 1980, p. 229).

Socio-Political Reform

The period of ad-Dahlawi's life was marked by unfavourable socio-political conditions. The Mughal dynasty in India was on the verge of collapse. After the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 AD, non-Muslim groups began to terrorise the kingdom in the Maratta, Dacca, Sikh, Punjab, Rajput and Jat areas of the Jumna Sheet. Even many of the Muslim governors proclaimed their independence from Mughal rule, so that the king's power was practically limited to Delhi and its neighbourhood (Schacht & Bosworth, 1974, p. 137). By the time Aurangzeb died, ad-Dahlawi was only four years old. After that, the kingdom was successively ruled by nine kings. Each of these kings ad-Dahlawi witnessed that these people could not control the government, even the atmosphere of rebellion and the life of the government elite who liked to splurge added to the chaos in a government that no longer thought about the fate of its people. The atmosphere is even more sad when the scholars only think of themselves, they like to live jumud, taklid, the Sufis have been complacent with their lives so that they tend to waste religious provisions, as a result the Sufis actually come out of the essence of Sufism itself.

Seeing the above reality, when ad-Dahlawi had become a mujtahid, he criticised and reformed the political problems and social conditions of Muslims. According to Harun Nasution, there are four things behind the renewal of Syaikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi, which is actually based on his analysis of the causes of the weakness of Muslims, namely (Nasution, 1975, pp. 20-22):

1. The change in the system of government in Islam from the caliphate system to the kingdom system. This led to a change from a democratic system to an autocratic system that tended towards absolute power. Taxes were imposed on farmers, merchants and labourers in their own way. Furthermore, the proceeds of taxes were made by the nobility who did not have any work. So, to overcome the negative things above, Syaikh Waliyullah argued that the system of government as found in the era of Khulafa ar-Rashidin needed to be revived.
2. The existence of divisions among Muslims, namely between the sects that exist in Islam. between the Shia and Sunni groups, between the Mu'tazilah and Asy'ariyah and Maturidiyah sects, between the Sufis and the Sharia. The sharpest controversy is between the Shia and the Sunnis. This opinion was strongly opposed by Shaykh Waliyullah, asserting that the Shia, like the Sunnis, were still Muslims. In response to the above conflicts between the schools of thought, Shaykh Waliyullah tried to create an atmosphere of peace between the different schools of thought.
3. Influx of non-Islamic customs and teachings into Muslim beliefs. in Shaykh Waliyullah's view, Indian Muslims were heavily influenced by Hindu customs and teachings. Therefore, the Muslim faith had to be cleansed of these foreign things. Muslims must be brought back to the true teachings. Return to the main sources, namely the Qur'an and hadith, not to books of tafsir, fiqh, kalam, and other sciences.
4. As a result of not returning Muslims to the Qur'an and hadith, most of them are taqlid and this is what makes Muslims stagnate. Therefore, ad-Dahlawi strongly opposed taqlid and encouraged ijtiḥad. The teachings of the Qur'an and hadith must be developed through ijtiḥad in accordance with the times.

The debate on theological issues did become a discourse during ad-Dahlawi's lifetime, in addition to uncertain political issues. This is then one of the reasons why ad-Dahlawi reconstructed theology at that time. Because, between the Islamic camps with each other did not find common ground, so they forgot about the challenges of an increasingly changing era. Not to mention the scholars who tend to be skeptical of the times, so that it is then imitated by the people. Therefore, to solve this problem ad-Dahlawi then provides solutions listed in several of his books. In other words, the updates made by ad-Dahlawi must be contextualised with the demands of the times at that time, so that their relevance will be seen. The theological updates include:

1. Tawhid

According to ad-Dahlawi, tawhid is the basis of all good deeds for humans. Furthermore, he said that tawhid has four levels. Firstly, that which is obligatory is Allah alone. Secondly, the one who created the heavens and the earth and everything in them is only Allah. Third, that only Allah rules and controls the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. Fourthly, only Allah has the right to be worshipped. Ad-Dahlawi's description above if contextualised at that time would be relevant. This is because at that time according to ad-Dahlawi, Muslims mixed the teachings of Islam with Hinduism, so that the act was close to shirk. In addition, it was also to anticipate the glorification of an individual who was considered pious. This kind of condition is then criticised by ad-Dahlawi by introducing further what is meant by Tawhid. On that basis, the principles of tawhid developed by ad-Dahlawi are the same as Ibn Taymiyah, Muhammad Abd Al-Wahab, Muhammad Abduh and so on.

2. Human Deeds

An important issue that is also inseparable from theological debates is the problem of human actions. Since the early schools or sects in Islam the issue of human action has been a long debate. For those who see humans as valleys, lacking strength and power, they will argue that humans do not have the power to perform actions, so they will be trapped in the Jabariyah school. Whereas those who view human behaviour as strong, having the power to act on their own, will be trapped in Qadariyah. This debate then got longer and coloured the discourse of the early Islamic period, for example the Mu'tazilah, Jabariyah, Asy'ariyah, which represented the early Muslim schools that debated human actions. For ad-Dahlawi, humans have two tendencies, namely the tendency to goodness and the tendency to badness. It is up to man himself to choose or follow one of these two inclinations. However, the human power to perform actions is based on divine encouragement in accordance with his pleasure. This means that man is not compelled to perform actions, as that would make God tyrannical, but it cannot be said that man has an absolute determination to perform actions. Man does good with God's help that he has received through his commandments and man does evil because he ignores God's commandments (Munir, 2017., pp. 27-28).

3. The Form of God.

Around ad-Dahlawi's life, there was much discussion about the conception of God's existence in the field of Sufism between the opinion of Imam Muhyi ad-Din ibn Al-Arabi who used the concept of Wahdat al-Wujud and the concept of the Indian scholar, Imam Rabbani Ahmad Sirhindi regarding Wahda ash-Syuhud (Unity of Appearance). The concept of Wahdah al-Wujud means that God essentially resides in this world, while Wahdah ash-Syuhud means that God seems to exist in this world.

Regarding these debates and differences, ad-Dahlawi commented that there is no difference between the two concepts. Both opinions are essentially the same, the difference is only in terms of language. According to ad-Dahlawi, every form is not some kind of attribute or emanation of God, but consists of non-emanative properties. The form depends only on God. For example, if someone made a horse out of wax, we would say that the form is a horse. However, on closer inspection, the horse is actually only in its form, while the actual form is wax (Munir, 2017., p. 30).

Ad-Dahlawi tried to combine the two opinions, but at the same time also rationalised from a mystical understanding of Sufism. With his rationale, he strengthens the use of reason to capture the form of God in the world, namely by looking at the signs of God's power in this world.

Seyyed Ahmad Khan's Islamic Reformation

Seyyed Ahmad Khan was born on 17 October 1817 AD in Delhi and died on 27 March 1899 AD at the age of 81. Ahmad Khan was born to a father named Mir Muttaqi who was known as a pious ascetic and had great influence in the Mughal empire, especially during the time of the Mughal Akbar Shah II. After resigning from his position, Mir Muttaqi spent time with Ghulam Ali, a Mujaddid of the time. Ahmad Khan was invited by his father to study with Ghulam Ali. From here, Ahmad Khan learnt a lot of religious knowledge. Meanwhile, Ahmad Khan learnt the science of state and Western culture from his grandfather Sayid Hadi, who was a court official during the time of Alamghir II (1754-1759 AD) (Nasution, 1975, p. 165). The title Seyyed was given to Ahmad Khan from his father who was a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad through Husin.

Ahmad Khan lived where the British already had power in India. This can be seen from the rebellion from 1757 to 1857 which then caused the British to have power in India. From there, Seyyed Ahmad Khan concluded that Muslims must cooperate with the

British. And Seyyed Ahmad Khan himself became the mediator of both parties. To help smooth the assimilation between Muslims and British culture, Seyyed Ahmad Khan advocated the need to remove social barriers. At that time he issued his famous fatwa saying that it was not prohibited by law for Muslims to eat together at the same table with Christians (Jameelah & Marcus, 1981, p. 78).

In 1869 AD Seyyed Ahmad Khan had the opportunity to visit England. His aim was to see how a developed country lived in order to transfer it to India. He was impressed by what he saw in England, and he was convinced that the superiority of the British over the Indian Muslims was not only in terms of education, science and technology but also social, moral and spiritual matters. In one of his letters written in London on 15 October 1869 to his relatives in India, he said:

“Without favouring the English, I say truthfully that the Idnians, high or low, merchants or shop stewards, educated or illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, customs, habits and sincerity, they may be likened to filthy animals and skilful men....and the English have reason to regard us in India as ignorant and unrefined” (Jameelah & Marcus, 1981, p. 80).

His experience in England made Seyyed Ahmad Khan realise that he needed to help Muslims in India to live a modern life like in England. This experience also had an impact on Seyyed Ahmad Khan's own thinking. Before the 1857 revolution, Seyyed Ahmad Khan was heavily influenced by an earlier Indian thinker, Saikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi. Through ad-Dahlawi's thoughts, Seyyed Ahmad Khan criticised the traditions and culture of Muslims at that time which were far from Islam itself. However, after Ahmad Khan travelled to England, Ahmad Khan saw not only in the aspect of theological renewal, but also other aspects related to the modern world. Therefore, according to Seyyed Ahmad Khan, there needs to be a theological renewal to correct the decline experienced by Muslims. Seyyed Ahmad Khan further said:

“As before, today, we need a modern theology, by which we must either reject the doctrines of modern sciences, or undermine their foundations, or also show that they are compatible with Islam. if we want to spread these sciences among Muslims, about which, I have just said, how much science is not compatible with Islam today, then it is my duty to defend Islam as much as I can, rightly or wrongly, and reveal to the people the original and brilliant face of Islam. My conscience tells me that if I do not do this, I will be a sinner before God.” (Jameelah & Marcus, 1981, p. 80).

Theological Reform

When Seyyed Ahmad Khan was still in Delhi he was a traditionalist Muslim figure. However, after leaving Delhi, Ahmad Khan's thinking was much developed and puritanical in character because he was influenced by the reformer Saikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi and the Wahabi movement. In addition, Seyyed Ahmad Khan was influenced by the condition of Indian Muslims who at that time had made contact with the British.

Seyyed Ahmad Khan saw the decline of Muslims also due to the existence of a very large taklid. Trust in the scholars and religious leaders needs to be reconstructed by returning to the Qur'an and hadith. With this foundation, Ahmad Khan believed that Islam could adapt to science and technology, as developed by the West. Ahmad Khan saw that so far the Indian Muslim community in particular had been trapped in the interpretations given by the ulama, so that it made it difficult for Muslims to develop science.

Seyyed Ahmad Khan wanted an open mind in Muslims. The consequence of this assumption is that Muslims according to Seyyed Ahmad Khan must have high rationality. In some accounts, Seyyed Ahmad Khan was indeed influenced by Islamic rationalism and the liberation of Western thought, therefore Seyyed Ahmad Khan tried to use it to reform. In this context, Seyyed Ahmad Khan regarded the Qur'an as decisive for Islam, while everything else was auxiliary, including the hadith. He also rejected taklid. In his book entitled *Essays on the Life of Mohammed*, which contains many answers to Western criticism, it also proves that Islam is a respectable religion in the Western perception (Ali, 1995, p. 20).

It is this effort that can make Islam fit the context of its times. At a time when Muslims in India were experiencing confusion regarding the compatibility of religion and modernity, Ahmad Khan tried to find legality from the text of the Qur'an and Hadith with his rationality. Seyyed Ahmad Khan argued that Islam is a religious teaching that can co-exist with the new age. He also added that the change of times is a destiny, and the teachings of Islam are also subject to that change. Therefore, there is no conflict between the changing times and the natural laws created by God (Hassan, 2009, pp. 159-186).

Seyyed Ahmad Khan pointed out that the interpretation of Islamic teachings is very much related to time and place, namely:

1. Polygamy is against the spirit of Islam and it will not be allowed except in compelling circumstances.
2. Islam strictly forbids slavery, including the slavery of prisoners of war even though it is authorised by sharia.

3. Modern banks, trade transactions, loans and international trade that comprise the modern economy, even if they include the payment of interest, are not rightly considered usury because they do not contradict the Qur'anic law.
4. The Qur'anic and Sunnah-based laws of hand-cutting for thieves, stoning and flogging a hundred times for adultery are barbaric because they are reserved for primitive societies that lack prison space.
5. Jihad is prohibited except in cases of compelling self-defence (Jameelah & Marcus, 1981, p. 82).

Science Renewal

The renewal of scientific thought carried out by Ahmad Khan is related to the scientific dichotomy. So far, Muslims have been trapped in a scientific dichotomy, causing there to be no meeting point between the science that comes from Islam and outside Islam. According to Ahmad Khan, when Islam was victorious in the past it could not be separated from the effort to combine one another, between religious science and other sciences. This harmony then gave birth to an advanced Islamic civilisation. At the same time, Europe, which at that time was still backward in terms of thought, studied Islam. Europeans were not ashamed to study the sciences that had been inherited by Muslims, from there Europe began to rise. While on the Islamic side began to retreat. Therefore, according to Ahmad Khan, it is now Europe's turn to repay its debt to Muslims (Malik, 1995, p. 101). In other words, Muslims must learn from Europe for the betterment of their nation.

Ahmad Khan believed that humans are capable of learning all sciences within certain limits. Ahmad Khan considered that humans have the ability and power to learn science with their intellect, and humans are able to determine and perform actions. In other words, the rationalism developed by Seyyed Ahmad Khan can be categorised in the qadariyah school (free will and free act). Humans are given by God with all the power and physical ability to realise their will. Humans have the freedom to utilise the powers that have been given to them by God (Nasution, 1975, p. 168).

However, Ahmad Khan believed that every living creature has a predetermined character or nature. This God-ordained nature is what the Qur'an calls *sunnatullah*, which does not change. Islam teaches human beings to submit to the natural laws that God has made. Between natural law, as God's creation, and the Qur'an as God's word, there is no contradiction between the two. Therefore, the two must go hand in hand (Nasution, 1975,

p. 168). With this view, Seyyed Ahmad Khan wants to say that the changes of the times are in line with what God says as *sunnatullah*, so that science and Islam do not conflict with each other.

Educational Reform

The reforms initiated by Seyyed Ahmad Khan extended beyond theology and encompassed the field of education. Seyyed Ahmad Khan believed that advancing the Muslim community required an adequate educational system to prevent them from falling behind the times. Rooted in his foundation of rationalism, Ahmad Khan sought to integrate Islamic education with modern culture. He believed that through human capacity and action, guided by the divine laws of nature (*sunnatullah*), humanity could progress by blending Islam with modern Western scientific knowledge.

Amid India's worsening socio-political conditions, Ahmad Khan realized that if people did not embrace modern education, the situation would deteriorate further. To ignite the spirit of the Muslim community, Ahmad Khan adopted the motto "Educate! Educate! Educate!" He established his first school in Muradabad in 1859 and another in Ghazipur in 1863. These schools garnered support from both Hindu and Muslim communities, earning more public sympathy than the schools founded by Christian missionaries (Ali, 1995, p. 66).

In April 1869, Seyyed Ahmad Khan visited England. This trip profoundly influenced his perspective. Before his departure, he was considered a traditionalist Muslim, but after his time in England, he became known as a rationalist. During his European journey, Ahmad Khan observed significant advancements in technology and science, which inspired his vision for Islamic education upon his return to India. By 1870, Ahmad Khan returned to India with new ideas aimed at advancing Indian civilization. He believed that reforming Indian Muslim society required adopting aspects of European societal structures.

Ahmad Khan proposed that combining Western and Islamic education systems could address the backwardness of the Muslim community. He emphasized that many aspects of Western education were not incompatible with Islam. Despite facing controversy over his plans to establish a higher education institution, Ahmad Khan reassured Muslims that his approach did not conflict with Islamic principles. Following these efforts, in 1878, he established the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College (M.O.A.C.) (Smith, 1979, p. 29).

M.O.A.C. represented an educational system that bridged modern Western education with Islamic teachings. Subjects taught included English, economics, culture,

history, philosophy, and more, with English serving as the medium of instruction. Modern scientific knowledge formed a substantial part of the curriculum. At the same time, students were encouraged to challenge religious orthodoxy and embrace social reform. However, religious education was not neglected; Muslim students were required to practice their faith diligently. This institution was later renamed Aligarh Muslim University in 1920 and became one of the largest centers of Islamic culture in Asia (Nasution, 1975, p. 170).

Conclusion

The social, political, and religious conditions in India following the collapse of the Mughal dynasty significantly contributed to the decline of the Muslim community during that era. Additionally, internal stagnation within the Muslim community hindered Islamic development. These two factors caused Islam in India, particularly from the 18th century onwards, to experience considerable setbacks, not only in religious matters but also in social, political, and educational spheres.

Addressing these concerns, Syaikh Waliyullah ad-Dahlawi sought to reconstruct Islamic theology (*kalam*). His reform efforts focused primarily on theology, aiming to purify Islamic teachings from elements of polytheism (*shirk*) and superstitions (*khurafat*). Ad-Dahlawi believed that the stagnation of Indian Muslims was due to the blending of Islamic and local traditions. Hence, his reforms emphasized the concept of *tawhid* (the oneness of God), the nature of God's existence, and human actions to restore what he saw as deviations in Islamic theology.

Meanwhile, the socio-political changes resulting from the Mughal dynasty's downfall and British colonialism exacerbated Muslim challenges in the mid-19th century. This decline motivated Seyyed Ahmad Khan to reform the Islamic paradigm of his time. As British rule expanded in India, Muslims struggled to reconcile modern Western knowledge with Islamic teachings. Seyyed Ahmad Khan addressed this issue by assuring Muslims that Islam was not at odds with modern science. He viewed the dynamism of changing eras as part of *sunnatullah* (the divine law of nature), requiring Muslims to engage actively with new knowledge. By doing so, Islam could remain relevant and adaptive to contemporary times.

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