

Muslim Response to Missionary Activities in India (1800-1900 AD)

Dr. Muhammad Abdullah*

The establishment of the British Empire in India and the missionary activities:

India has been an attractive centre of trade from the very old times. People have been traveling to India from the different sides for trade. A lot of French, Portuguese and Italian trading companies approached India, but at the end of seventeenth century East India Company emerged as successful among them. It got deep routes, with the help and patronage of Mughal Empire and thrown out the rest of the competitives from the arena.

Trade activities of East India Company were mass-friendly. That is why Mughal rulers helped the East India Company generously. Along with this local people were never hostile to the company. Anyhow at the end of 18th century the company had its political ends that were more than trade. This motive laid the routes to occupying India. East India company formulated its army. The Company due to the interior weaknesses of Mughals was able to snatch power from them. An open announcement came in 1857, the new rulers of India were the English.¹

The colonials used positive and negative both ways to strengthen their rule over India. Neglecting the true and pure welfare of the native people they took many steps to missionary activities. They abolished Muslim Auqaf, changed Muslim heir system, flourished English language instead of Arabic and Persian, and patronized foreign missionaries. One cannot say them mere blames as the intellectuals of then times showed severe reaction in their writings like W.W. Hunter and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. The ideas of these scholars are as under:

1. Sir Syed writes in this regard "In the famine of 1837 orphan children were handed over to these missionaries. The Muslims and Hindus who wanted to own these children were not allowed doing so. Sir Syed also had to hand over such children to those missionaries, he desired to bring them up. From the very beginning to the last end the helpless children wherever they were found or parent losing children were given to these missionary institutions".²
2. The particular target of these missionaries was to build educational institutions. These institutions were easy fallen preys i.e. the youngones were easily changeable. Many missionary schools were set up and religious education was started over there. It was said

Associate Professor, Sheikh Zayed Islamic Centre, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

that this was from the Government. The high officials when visit these schools brain washed the people to send their children in these schools. Examination was given from religious books; the younger examinees were asked who is your god? who is your solvator? They answered according to Christian religion. Such students were given rewarded. Such activities created hatred towards the people for the Government.³

3. Later on Government jobs were also bounded to such missionary institutions. Sir Syed says suddenly it was announced, the person who is educated from such schools, who knows such languages, will be preferred in this job. Even very low paid jobs were given at the recommendations of the Deputy Inspectors Commonly known as "Kala Padries". People took it very ill.
4. In 1848 when the English took over the Madras there was bulk of British, American and German missionaries, it spread in cities, towns even streets and preached Christianity. It was opened schools, set up hospitals and in these schools and hospitals the supremacy of Christianity was proved. Islam was condemned and ridiculated. The rulers also took part in such activities.⁴

Christian Missionaries and their activities in 19th century:

Although missionaries arrival in India was at the end of 18th century but so many missionaries erupted in India between 1800 to 1900 A.D. They were Catholic and Protestants. Protestants were favored by British government and remained dominant. In India Foreign missionaries translated Bible in local languages wrote books, arranged debates and established publishing houses. There was a dangerous influence on the natives. Hindus and some Muslims adopted Christianity. Here is a brief narration of their struggle of preaching Christianity.⁵

FOREIGN MISSIONARIES:

This type of missionaries came in, from United States, Britain, Germany and France. Majority of them was Protestants of England. They spread almost all of India and their activities can be seen at church societies. These societies centered at Delhi and its surroundings.

The strategy, they opted for the purpose was to understand the religion of local people and grasp over the local languages.⁶ That is why they wrote in English and Urdu too. Some prominent names are as under:

- | | | |
|----|----------------|---------|
| 1. | Hennery Martyn | d: 1812 |
| 2. | Thomas Scott | d: 1821 |
| 3. | William Carey | d: 1834 |

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 4. | Jhon Neuton | d: 1850 |
| 5. | Thomas Hunter | d: 1857 |
| 6. | Carl Pfander | d: 1868 |
| 7. | Charless William Forman | d: 1878 |
| 8. | Andrew Goden | d: 1887 |
| 9. | Robert Clark | d: 1900. ⁷ |

If I mention the biographies of all these missionaries it would be very lengthy. Let us have a detailed view of the Carl Pfander and his activities.

He is known as the big father of missionaries at India. He was born at Germany in 1803. He got his education from Georgia, United States of Russia. He oftenly used to go to Iran. He learnt the Persian language from Iran and started his mission in India in 1839. He resided at Muuhalla Abdul Massih.

Carl Pfander as a Writer:

Before his arrival at India Carl Pfander had written his famous book *Meezan ul Haqq* (balance of truth) both in English and Persian. Arriving at India he learnt Urdu and translated the same and spread it all over the India. Some of his famous books are:

1. Miftah al Asrar (key of mysteries)
2. Tariq al hayat (way of the life)
3. Hall al Ishkal (solution of difficulties)
4. Divinity of Christ

But the most dangerous is *Mezan ul Haqq*. This is totally against Islam, Prophet (SWS), and the Holy Quran. It instigated the Muslims and created the atmosphere of debates and challenges.

A.A. Powell writes, the *Meezan al Haqq* (Balance of truth) was the book which the Missionaries and Indian Ulama alike, would later regarded as the starting point of the controversy between them, and which remains until now the single most provocative Christian contribution to Muslim – Christian polemical interchange.

One of these books, the *Meezan al Haqq* (Balance of the truth) was to become the focus not only of the Muslim counter-attack on Christianity which was subsequently to have its starting point in Agra, but would soon after-words be translated into most of the languages of the Muslim world where it notoriety has survived for the last century and a half. In a real sense Pfander can be seen as a paradigm of 'Evangelical Orientalism' and the catalyst whose writings and activities created the high colonial interface with world of Islam".⁸

Carl Pfander as Missionary Debater:

Along with these writings he debated with the Muslims at Delhi, Agra and Peshawar. The Muslims debaters were Al-e-Hassan Mohoni, Syed Rehmat Ali Gopamvi, Muhammad Kazim Ali, Syed Ali Hassan, Doctor Wazir Khan and Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanvi.

Local Disputants:

One can find some local preachers, who were influenced by the foreigners they adopted Christianity giving up their original religion i.e. Hinduism, Sikhmat and Islam like

Rev. Abdul Masih	d: 1827
Rev. Daud Singh	d: 1883
Rev. Safdar Ali	d: 1899
Rev. Babu Rullia Ram	d: 1892
Rev. Rajab Ali	
Rev. G.L. Thaker Dass	d: 1910
Rev. Abdullah Athim	
Rev. Imad ud Din	d: 1900
Rev. Ram Chandra	d: 1880. ⁹

These missionaries following Pfander also wrote books against Islam and held debates. Some times they were very bold against Islam. Following example, an extracts of Rev. G.L. Thakar Das reveals the story.

- (i) Izhar-i-Is'wi, A critical reply to the Ijaz-i-Is'wi compiled by Maulvi Rahmatullah and Dr. Wazir Khan of Agra. Published by the American United Presbyterian Mission, Punjab in 1883. Pages 432.
- (ii) The Adam-i-Zururat-i-Quran, (The Quran not needed) published by U.P. Mission. Ludhiana 1882, Pages 135.
- (iii) Muhammad **Be karamat** (Muhammad wrought no miracles) reply of book **Mooj'zat-i-Muhammadiaya** as Quran by Ghulam Nabi. Published by the Punjab Religious book society, Lahore 1895, Pages 33.

Like, Rev. Thakar Das, Rev Imad ud Din wrote twenty four books, mostly on controversial issues, and they took part in debates. ¹⁰

Muslim Response to Missionary Activities:

Muslim scholars studied missionary literature seriously particularly Carl Pfander, as he lies about Islam, Muhammad (SWS), the Holy Quran and Islamic teachings. This was basically an attack on the belief of the Muslims so the reaction of the Muslims was very comprehensive, they competed in writing books, arguing the supremacy of

Islam. Second step was debating face to face. The following pages would show the response of the Muslims towards the missionaries.

Sayed Ali-Hasan Mohani (d: 1872)

Sayed Mohani was born at Mohan near Lucknow. He served as Judge at Hyderabad Daccan. He was the first Muslim scholar who studied in India the activities of these missionaries. He became close to the missionaries. His two books are Al-Istifsar and Al-Istibshar.

Al-Istifsar is very short and it provides an answer to book Hal-al-Ishkaal by Carl Pfander. While kitabul Istifisar is lengthy. It is very comprehensive raised 28 assumed questions and gives explanatory answers. This book reveals the facts about Bible, Trinity, Annulment, Salvation, Jihad, Holy Quran, and Holy Prophet (PBUH). He also answers, Pfander's book, Meezan-ul-Haq published in 1833. After this commentary the said missionary writer revised his book and republished it in 1849".¹¹

"Imdad Sabri writes about Kitabul ul Istifisar, Maulana Al-i-Hasan wrote this book in competing with Phander's Meezan-ul-Haq and Smith's Din-e-Haq, comprising 800 pages. This book is full of research, information and arguments so it is the best book in this background".¹²

Syed Al-i-Hasan held a written debate with Carl Pfander between July 22, 1844 to February 4, 1854. It consists 8 letters.

Powell writes about the book, Al-i-Hasan's 800 hundred pages rejoinder, the Kitab-i-Istifsar, rhetorically entitled Book of questions, was ready for publication in Lucknow. It took the form of a comprehensive refutation of Christianity, one part of which questioned the doctrine of the Trinity on the basis of the logical presences he had already argued so lengthy with Pfander.¹³

3.2 Maulana RahmatAllah Kairanvi d: 1891

He was born at Kairana near Muzzafarnagar. He got his early education at Delhi and Lucknow and started teaching at Kairana. Soon he started studies about the increasing influence of Christianity at India.¹⁴

For a time the ordinary Muslims shrank from listening to their preaching and from studying their books and Pamphlets, therefore neither did any Indian Alim pay any attention on the refutation of those pamphlets. But after some time had passed there began to be a waking in some of the people of the aversion they had felt, and some of the illiterate people were in danger of stumbling therefore some of scholars of Islam turned their attention to their refutation.¹⁵

Maulana Kairanvi¹⁶ wrote ten books. These books show his deep study about Christianity. He condemns Carl Pfander's writings. Some of his important books are as under:

i) Izalat al-auhan (Destroyer of Imagination)

This is his first book, consisting 864 pages. It was originally in Urdu then translated in Persian. It argues in favour of the Prophet's miracles, that were opposed by the Christians.

Powell writes "Not unexpectedly, Rahmatullah Karanvi's efforts at refutation were first directed towards the dilution of the missionary threat by responding in kind through tract warfare. Commencing during Delhi crisis of 1852 he prepared during the next few months a number of publications, each specifically designed to meet one or more of the various threats recently identified by fellow ulama in Delhi and Agra. The first of these the Azata al-auham (Destoryer of Imaginations) written in Persian and published in Delhi 1852-3, was a long and detailed reply too Pfander's Mizan, on the margins of which significantly Munisf Al-Hasan's Kitab-i-Istifsar, was also reprinted.¹⁷

ii) Azalt-al-Shakuk (Destroys of Doubts)

This is written in Urdu in two volumes. Powell writes about this book Al Izalat Alshakok, he was preparing for publication in Urdu, the Azalatal Shaukak (Destroyed of Doubts) a two volume work which was aimed specifically, at rebutting Abdull ah- Athim's doubting question of a few months previously.¹⁸

iii) Asahh al ahadis fi ibtal al taslis

Intended as a subsection of this book, but published separately and earlier was an important tract, entitled "Asahh al ahadis fi ibtal-al-Taslis" (most clear sayings in refutation of the trinity).¹⁹

iv) Ijaz-i-Iswi

It was published in 1853, having 601 pages, was written in Urdu. Its theme is that how the Bible got changes with the passage of time. It also provides the response to Pfander's Meezan ul Haqq and particularly its third chapter. Imdad Sabri wrties "This book provides the best retort about the Christ in a comprehensive and argumentative way. These arguments have been taken from the sacred and historical books of the Christians".²⁰

v) Izhar-al-Haq

The best famed book of Maulana Karanvi is Izhar-al-Haq. The II volumes book was written at the request of Sultan Abdul Hameed II in Turkey, It was written in Istanbul in 1864-5, and the first edition was published in Arabic in 1867-8. Originally written in Arabic. The main significance of the Izhar al Haqq rests then, not on any claim to originality, nor to any advance in scholarship, but on the synthesis it presented of all Maulana Rahmat Allah Kairanvi's previous research on Christianity, and on the wider readership it now proved capable of reaching.²¹

Maulana Rahmatullah as Paralet

Maulana got a widespread fame as rejoinder. He competed with the missionaries face to face. His two argumentative debates are very famous. He was assisted by Doctor Wazir Khan who had a deep study about Bible. He was a good scholar of English. The first debate held at the house of Rev.

French in 1854 and it was said the small debate. Competitors were Thomas Walphy French and father William key. Doctor Wazir and Maulana Karanvi were on the other hand. The topic was Falsification of Bible. It took only one sitting.

In the event however, it was not Pfander himself, but his own second, a young English missionary named Thomas Valply French, whom Wazir khan and Rahmatullah failea first encountered in face-to-face discussion.²²

Second big debate took place at Akbar Abad. It held in the open masses in 1854. There was an exchange of letters between Kairanvi and Rev. Pfander. The terms and topics were settled. It was to be held at Aagra in April 10, 11 1854.

There were five main topics:

1. Naskh (asrogation)
2. Tahrif (corruption)
3. Taslis (trinity)
4. Risalat-i-Muhammedi (Prophet hood of Muhammad)
5. The Quran

Judges were appointed by two sides. The high ups of the city, Bureaucracy, journalists and representatives of the newspapers were also present in these debates. It lasted for two days. Though both declared their success. Maulana Kairanvi, anyhow, was the winner and Rev. Pfander confessed the falsification of the Bible.²³

Powell declares the topped debate in India between Muslims and the Christians.²⁴

3.4 Dr. Wazir Khan d: 1873

Dr. Wazir Khan belonged to Bengal. He got his medical education from Caluta Medical College, for further education he went to England. From his return from Europe, he settled permanently at-Aagra and worked as sub-Assistant Surgun in hospital.

No body knows that how did he develop studying Christianity. He brought many manuscripts of Old & New Testament and their communities from England.

He knew along with English Hebrew, and Greek, though he did not took up the writing as regular option but he took part in debates with Mulana Rathmatullah Karamnvi in Augra. He had a correspondent after debating of Akarabad, with Rev.Pfander from May 15, to August 17, 1854.²⁵

3.5 Syed Nasir ud Din Dehlvi d: 1903

He got the prevailing education from his grand father. For some time he remained with Nawab Jahangir Khan of Bhopal. His publications are more then 25 most of them or an answer to the missionary activities some of the books are as under:

1) Naveed-e-Javeed

This is his very lengthy book published in Nusrat al-Maktabe Delhi in 1296 AH, Pages 632. It has the answer of objections that were raised against Islam.

2) Uqoobat-al-thaleen

This book was written in an answer to the questions that were raised by Rev. Imad-ud-Din. He answered Rev. Imad ud Din's book. Hidayat-ul-Muslamen. This book published in Nusrat ul-Matabe Delhi in 1865, ages 196.

3) Isteesal

Syed Dehlvi wrote as an answer of Rev Ram Chander Rasala Maseeh-ud-Dujal. He provided the comprehensive and argumentative answer to the book.

4) Misbah-ul-Abrar

This is an answer to the Rev Pfander's book Miftah-ul-Asrar, published in Nusrat al Matabe Delhi.

5) Meezan ul Meezan

This is very important book in this regard that provides an answer to Meezan-ul-Haq. A part from these books Nasir-ud-Din took part in debates also.²⁶

3.6 Muhammad Qasim Nanootvi d: 1880

He is well known as the founder of Madrasa Deobanad. Though he was not the founder, but he strengthened the Madrasa. He was a great scholar of intellectual and philosophy when he was a teacher at Matba Mujtabai. Missionary activities were on full swing. Maulana first all prepared his pupils who took part in debates and then came in the arena himself two or the debates are very prominent.

Manazara Shahjahan pur

This debate was with Rev. Nolis. Maulana provided solid arguments against trinity and in favor of oneness of Allah the Almighty.

Second debate held in 1878. Maulana was assisted by Syed Nasir-ud-Din Dehlvi. Rev. was assisted by Rev. Scott. This debate was published as debate of Shahjahan pur.²⁷

There are many other names except these names who took part in noble cause like, Syed Muhammad Ali Mongari, d:1927, Maulana Abdul Haq Haqani, d:1917, Sharaful Haq siddiqui Dehlvi d: 1936 and Maulana Sanaullah, Amratsary d: 1948 They left their services in writing and debates.

4. Conclusion

One can have the following points from this paper:

1. The literature of 1800-1900, and Muslim response on it. This response is a historical memorial for us. It has been observed that these books are getting lost or being lesser day by day. May be after a century or less, one may not find them anywhere. So it is the dire need of day to preserve them carefully considering them very precious.
2. The literature in this regard i.e. Missionary activities and Muslim response is in Urdu, basically this was the era when Urdu language was getting its mass mode, so this literature has an important role towards the evolution of Urdu.
3. This studies show the influence of missionaries in sub-continent. This also show the kinds and categories of people who were impressed by this missionary flood. What were its causes! Then did these two groups of society remain goodly termed or did they get a distinctive positions?
4. As in the middle of the 19th century Muslims respond in this regard literary and orally, so this period may be called the age of debate.
5. In spite of this Muslim missionary dialogue one finds a friendly behavior and mutual understanding between them, they respected, called good names each other and high ups interest in this matter show they remain friendly.

Today in the sub-continent religious aggression is increasing day by day on religious basis. Churches are being attacked. This is the dire need of the day that peaceful understanding and mutual harmony should be strengthen.

I hope the papers that were read in this session would be successful to change the present grim scenario.

REFERENCES

1. See: Imdad Sabri, *Firangion Ka Jal*, Delhi 1949; Rizvi, Khurshid Mustafa, *Jang-i-Azadi 1857*, Al-faisal Nashran-e-Kutab, Lahore 1990.
2. Ahmad Khan, Sir Sayyed, *Asbab Baghawat-e-Hind*, Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1997, P.41
3. Ibid, P. 43
4. Ibid, P. 45; also see Hunter, W.W. *The Indian Muslemans: are they bound in consuecne to rebel against the Queen* London 1871,(Urdu) P. 177
5. See: Wherry, E.M., *Our Mission in India 1834-1924*. the Stratford company, Bostan, 1926; Imdad Sabri, *Firangiyn Ka Jal*, Delhi 1949.
6. Neill, Sjtephen, *A History of Christianity in India 1707-1858*, University Press Cambridge, 1985.
7. See: Powell, A.A. *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, curzon Press, U.K., 1993, P. 89-101, 135-139; Wherry, E.M., *Our Mission in India 1834-1924*. Clark, Robert, *the Missions in Punjab and sindh*, church missionary society, London, 1904.
8. Powell, A.A. *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, P. 138-139; Abdullah, Muhammad, *Maulana Rahmat Ullah Kairanvi Ki Ilmi-o-Deeni Khidmat Ka tehqiqi jaiza*, (Unpublished thesis Ph.D.) University of the Punjab, Lahore 2000.
9. Details about the missionaries: Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Religious Conversion, movements in south Asia, continuities and change, 1800-1900*, Curzon press, U.K.; Wherry, E.M., *The Muslim controversy*, The Christian Literature Society Madras 1905; Clark, Robert Ren; *The Missions*, Church Missinary Society, London 190.
10. Geoffrey A. Oddie, *Religious Conversion, movements in south Asia, continuities and change, 1800-1900*, Curzon press, U.K.
11. See for Al-i-Hasan Mohani's life and work: Imdad Sabri, *Asar-i-Rahmat*, Delhi, P. 5-19; Powell, A.A. *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, P. 179.; *Kitab-al-Istifsar Dar-ul-Muarif* , Lahore. P. 55-66.
12. Imdad Sabri, *Asar-i-Rahmat*, P. 10.
13. Powell, A.A. *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, P. 189.
14. Ibid, 189.
15. Kairanvi, Rahmat Allah, *Izhar al-Haq*, Vol.II P. 223.
16. See Rahmat Allah Kairanvi's life and work: Imdad Sabri, *Asar-i-Rahmat*, Powell, A.A. *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, 1993, P. 219-223.; Abdullah, Muhammad, *Maulana Rahmat Ullah Kairanvi Ki Ilmi-o-Deeni Khidmat Ka tehqiqi jaiza*, (Unpublished thesis Ph.D.) University of the Punjab, Lahore 2000.

17. Powell, A.A. Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India, curzon Press, U.K., 1993, P. 226.; Kairanvi, Rahmat Izalat al Auham. Persian.
18. Powell, A.A. Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India, curzon Press, U.K., 1993, P. 226.; Imdad Sabri, Asar-i-Rahmat, Delhi, P. 334-367.; Kairanvi, Rahmat Allah, Izhar al-Haq.
19. Ibid, P. 226.
20. Imdad Sabri, Asar-i-Rahmat, P. 370., Kairanvi, Rahmat Ijaz-i-Iswi (Urdu) Agra 1854, (Revised ed Lahore.)
21. Powell, A.A. Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India, P. 295.
22. Ibid, P 238.
23. See the detail of Agra debate: Akbarabadi, Abdullah, Sayyed, Paahla hisse mubahsa-i-mazhabi lea, (Urdu) Agra, 1854; Akbarabadi, Abd Allas, Dusra lissa mubahasa-i-mazhabi ke (Urdu) Agra 1854.
24. Powell, A.A. Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India, curzon, P. 242.
25. Aasar-e-Rehmat Page 135.
26. See the journal, Alam-i-Islam aur Esayat, IPS, Islamabad. Akhtar Rahi, Sayyed Nasirud Din Dehlvi aur Masehi-Muslim Manazarati Adab, P.9.
27. Mubahas-i-Shahjan Pur, (Urdu) P. 92.