Muslim Reformers In 19th Century

The beginning of 19th century was a period of spiritual awakening and Islamic revivalism, giving birth to Muslim reformers who were not only concerned to advance teachings of Islam but also reconstruction of society in accordance with the Quran and the traditions of the Islamic prophet along with western teachings. It was a time when westernization and colonialism was at its peak. The Muslim Ottoman empire as well as the Mughal reign was under attack by. As an aftermath of world war war I many muslim territories were colonized and others experienced some kind of dependency which was rather psychological, political, technological or economic. What the Muslim world needed was clear path to bring them out of tyranny.As the Islamic preaching were lost with the Muslim rulers greed and selfishness(pg.3) and the Europeans continued to monopolize the situation with reigning the Muslim territory. The Muslim preachers understood the need of drastic measures to be taken to stop extinction of Muslims and Islam. Few Muslim reformers took it upon themselves to drive Muslim ummah out of this agony onto the right path. The most prominent among them was Jamal Al-Din Afghani.

Jamal Al-Din Afghani may rightly be called the founder Islamic Modernism. Al-Afghani didn't only see Islam and its teaching as a spritual medium(ref) towards the hereafter but as a force of solidarity of Muslims. Al Afghanis primary goal primary goal was to rebuild a strong Islamic state capable of withstanding Western encroachments. Essentially Jamal ad-Din was calling for an end to all traditional religious theories and interpretations that might stand in the way of Muslim unity and self-strengthening and for a modern interpretation of Islam that would inculcate the virtues of national cohesion, anti-imperialism, and modern science and technology.

He was one of the first important leaders to try to reinterpret traditional Islamic ideas so as to meet the agonizing problems brought by the increasing incursions by the West into the Middle East. Rejecting either pure traditionalism or uncritical imitation of the West, he began what has become a continuing trend among Muslim modernists emphasizing pragmatic values needed for life in modern world. These included political activism, the freer use of reason, and efforts to build up the political and military power of Islamic states.2

The air of political activism was not only limited to the borders Al-Afghani's homeland but spread far across the Muslim regions. Al- Afghani knew that Muslims were not in a state to stop these encroachments by putting up a physical fight against. It was only through inculcation of teachings of Islam that freedom could be achieved.