



# Analytical Study of Fazlur Rahman's "Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism"

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**Abstract:** In Islam, there is freedom of every thought and along with that, respect for every thought. In the present era, freedom of thought is considered the summum bonum. It is generally believed that this freedom is the result of the scientific revolution in the West. The immediate and proximate cause of this revolution is indeed the modern scientific revolution, but this scientific revolution itself was the result of the unified revolution of Islam. What is meant by the modern reconstruction of Islamic Thought? What this means is that the new intellectual and practical problems that have arisen in the present age should be addressed in such a way that it comprises the complete concession of the spirit and temperament of Islam on the one hand, and on the other hand, it fully embraces the modern requirements. A lot has been said and written about how modern Islamic thought developed in the current period. Probably the first person to write and draw attention to this subject was Syed Jamaluddin Afghani. Similarly, the names of Sheikh Muhammad Abdah, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Mohammad Iqbal, Syed Amir Ali, Namik Kamal, etc. can be taken in this regard. All these people tried to redefine Islam. It had two purposes. One is to make modern ideas compatible with Islamic principles, and at the same time to reassure Muslims that Islam is still important and relevant for their guidance. The current review paper is an endeavor to meticulously present the outline of the revivalist and reformist approach of Fazlur Rahman presented by him in his book "*Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*".

## Review Paper

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## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary anthropologists generally study religion as a social phenomenon. This is not true for Islam. Islam is not a product of social conditions, rather is a divine religion, and eternally a sacred religious system. To form an opinion about Islam, it is necessary to keep this specific nature in front. Some scholars believe that there is a need for reform in Islam. But this is just a misunderstanding. The examples given in this regard are not related to Islam itself but to the development of Muslims themselves. This only proves that Islam needs to be purified from the increase of misconceptions and fallacies to reform the practical deviations of Muslims. This does not prove the need for reform or revision in Islam itself. This type of action is necessary. But to do so, in more precise words, would be to purify Islam from external and alien influences and not to reform Islam itself. However, the change in times can sometimes create problems even for the true spirit of Islam. These are the problems for which *Ijtihad* is needed, which refers to the re-application of the rules of Islam and not the change or reformation of the original rules of Islam.

Presently, Muslims suffer the greatest deprivation in their history. Due to Westo-Phobia, Muslims have to suffer two major losses. This is a deprivation that no greater deprivation can be for the Muslim *Ummah*. One of them is that they failed to address the West in a realistic manner i.e., through *Dawah* because of odium. The second loss was that the West was the champion of modern civilization. But present-day Muslims have become hostile to modern civilization because of their hatred of the West. As a result, the new opportunities opened up by modern civilization disappeared from the eyes of the Muslims. Due to this, Muslims have become a backward community in the present times.

Now the task for the Muslims was to use scientific knowledge to bring their knowledge to a desired level and play the role of guidance for others in this matter. But historically they are completely ineffective in this matter. Throughout the whole of the twentieth century, there is not a single person in the entire Muslim world who has a clear sense of this task, and who performed this job in an anticipated manner. It would be fair to say that the Muslims remained completely unaware of this great possibility. In this

case, probably no direct contribution of Muslims can be marked at the level of the *Ummah*. Though, some Muslim scholars, adopting an unconventional approach, made great efforts to reach a certain conclusion, among which Dr. Fazlur Rahman is a notable name.

### **Analytical Study of "Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism":**

Fazlur Rahman is widely considered one of the most influential Muslim Modernist Scholars in both the Western and Muslim worlds, having made substantial contributions to the resuscitation (Revival) and modernization of Islamic Thought. He was born on 21 September 1919 C.E., in what was then British India's Hazara province, and died on 26 July 1988 C.E., in the same district. He studied the challenges that Muslims face in both thought and practice, encouraged the establishment of a Muslim legacy based on Islamic values, and focused on the study of philosophy and theology via Classical Islamic Scholarship, according to scholars. He also challenged Muslim intellectuals, particularly conservatives, and the Muslim community at large to rediscover true Islam, not only for their benefit but also for the sake of the whole of Mankind. Traditional Kalam, Theology, History, Modern Thought, Revival and Reform, and Quranic Studies are among the fields in which he has contributed to Islamic Studies.

"Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism" edited by Ebrahim Moosa is a posthumous publication of Fazlur Rahman, published in 2000 by *Oneworld Publications*, England. The book based on 226 pages, comprises five main parts, *Early Sects and Formation of Sunni Orthodoxy*, *Developments from Irja: Politics, Sufism, and Gnostic Extremism*, *Early Medieval Reform: The Sufi Reform and the Role of al-Ghazali*, *Later Medieval Reform*, and *Indian Reformist Thought*.

Rahman was incorrigible on two aspects in his criticism of the orthodox view established by Hadith scholars (*Muhadithun*). One from the Qur'an's perspective, stressing that the Qur'an was revealed upon the Prophet's (Pbuh) heart; and secondly, from the medieval understanding and concept of the soul and spirit developed a doctrine that was incompatible with the process of revelation.

Reform and revival were the essential components of the framework of Fazlur Rahman's philosophy. His primary concern was to lay the foundation for reconsideration which will be realized eventually through education. He criticized *Ulama's* traditionalist-conservative pedagogical methodology, which he believed was one of the most neglected areas of education reform. This section of Muslim culture is opposed to the improvements caused by cultural and intellectual modernity. Fazlur Rahman and others felt that this opposition was to be borne by Muslim

communities as a whole as a consequence of which the Muslim society was behind other contemporary societies that advanced economically, politically, and scientifically.

Fazlur Rahman appreciated and revered *Ulama's* sophisticated academic legacy. His criticism was that the *Ulama* had mostly forgotten essential aspects of the tradition, especially critical thinking, and creativity. This academic legacy had lost its former scope, variety, and essential apertures in its twentieth-century guise. What was left was an atrophied and skeletal tradition that only added to the stagnation. He accused the *Ulama* of abandoning the most effective part of their academic legacy: change and creatively addressing modern problems. If reformed, this restored academic legacy could serve as the foundation for Islamic renewal, informing social movements in the Muslim world with an ethical and activist agenda.

Rahman envisioned a project similar to that of Shah Waliullah, whose intellectual legacy provided Muslims in the Indian subcontinent with an impressive, dynamic, and diverse intellectual movement for nearly two centuries. Fazlur Rahman claimed that genuine representatives of the Muslim faith can be distinguished by their vision. This vision must be tempered by analytical and ethical-spiritual leavening. This he discovered in people such as al-Ghazali from the twelfth century and Ibn Taymiyyah from the fourteenth century. What drew him in was the intellectual revival, more than concrete theories, pioneered by certain thinkers, and the resulting influence on social reform. Primary as well as tertiary educational institutions had to nurture such a mission while still providing the greatest possible opportunities for intellectual development and nourishment. Education had to be free of ideology and irrational fears of change. In this regard, the position of science, social science, and humanities were all critical components of the envisioned intellectual reform. He described education's primary issue as there is a lack of creative synthesis and an organic partnership between the traditional and the modern educational system. Traditional and modern learning institutions are, for the most part, opposed, to producing two groups of individuals that cannot interact with each other. In his opinion, the current educational structure that replicated *Ulama* needed transformation. As a result, he urged *Ulama* not to oppose reform by equating their self-interest in influence and control with Islamic academic values.

During this era of renaissance and transformation, Fazlur Rahman found the movement called Islamic fundamentalism. For him, it was a chance to examine the early and later stages of Islamic theology and politics. The book "Revival and Reform" is one such effort. Time prevented Rahman from commenting on Islamic fundamentalism. He wanted to

show that at different points in history, the principles of law and political philosophy lost their connection to the Qur'anic ethics. After the formative and legislative phases of Islamic society, ethics were subordinated to various overarching issues, including power, creating a community (*Ummah*), and preserving the Islamic way of life (*Khilafat*). Any remnants of ethics in political theory and law remained partially in the discourses of *Sufism*. Reform of the law began with the jurists like al-Ghazali and Izz al-Din ibn 'Abd al-Salam. Jurists separated their beliefs from their work, even where such things are not being done. The most devastating indictment in this book is leveled at Ash'ari-Sunni's thoughts. Fazlur Rahman thought that Asharism, through its presence in the Muslim world until now, was succeeding the two evils of the religion of predestination and a suspension of ethical judgment (*Irja*). In Muslim theory and practice, he consistently emphasized the harmful consequences of *Irja* [1].

Much like his thoughts on history, the other side of his ideas would often be conditional and unfinished. Fazlur Rahman imparts a degree of transparency to this design. If Islamic thinking is to be strong, then it must be fundamental. It would introduce profound transformations and challenge the hereditary understanding of interpretation and revelation. Such conservative intellectuals as Ibn Taymiyyah and Shah Waliullah are a source of motivation for traditional Muslim philosophy.

Rahman's works go beyond Islamic philosophy. One of his top priorities was to overhaul Islamic education. He called for changing the way Islamic education is structured, and how Qur'anic hermeneutics is interpreted, along with eliminating any existing Hadith which contains false information. This scholarly work has been widely endorsed by an abundance of books and articles. He focused on method-driven renewal and change in all of his work. He had a great deal of work to do, and this was one of the most significant initiatives of his career. While many reformers of the modern era engaged in a mass movement, Rahman avoided the political fray and was not involved in a movement of any kind. In contrast to activists, he preferred to limit himself to academia and keep his methods non-confrontational.

## CONCLUSION

The problem of the modern development of Islamic Thought is the problem of modern *Ijtihad* concerning the present complications. Since the scholars of the present age are not ready for *Ijtihad*, they have not been able to do the work of modernizing Islamic thought yet. However, in Islam, there is a lot of emphasis on continuing *Ijtihad*, and Muslims have been encouraged in this regard, and only this bold *Ijtihad* can bring Muslims out of the current intellectual crisis or mental quagmire.

In the present age, favorable conditions have been fully created which can be used to achieve any goal without violence and bloodshed. These conditions and causes are present with further increases in favor of Islam. But the Muslim scholars and leaders did not understand these changes due to the negligence of modern sciences.

The only possible way to solve this problem in the current situation is to create a large number of people in the nation who have deep insight into both domains of knowledge. Those who are fully familiar with the spirit of religion and the system of religion. And on the other hand, they should also have a keen eye for modern ideas. Such people will have the insight that is necessary for the proper guidance of the nation in the modern age. So, to respond to this challenge, its feasible form is to establish such a central institution having an integrative and assimilative nature with such a curriculum where the education and training could be managed for the graduates of divariant clusters.

## REFERENCE

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