

JAMA'AT-E-ISLAMI AND TABLIGH JAMA'AT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ISLAMIC REVIVALIST MOVEMENTS

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Abstract: Since the turn of the 20th century, a broad range of Islamic revivalist movements have sprung up in Muslim societies around the globe, especially where Muslims have formerly experienced, primarily through European colonisation, a gradual decline in key Islamic institutions and threats to their identity. Islamic revivalist movements have consequently emerged to inculcate religious principles en masse in the Muslim World through institutional developments, socio-political activities, missionary preaching, and propagation. Movements such as Ilyas's Tabligh Jama'at and Maududi's Jama'at-e-Islami are at the forefront of this enterprise and have both demonstrated their potential for bringing about important spiritual and social changes, particularly in Muslim-majority societies. Having been initiated in the Indian subcontinent, both movements currently have global and transnational influence. These two movements, however, have some fundamental differences with regard to their attitude towards polity and social development. In this paper, we compare and contrast the major characteristics of the two movements. A comparative appraisal of these two significant revivalist movements is expected to contribute to an understanding of the socio-religious discourse surrounding the phenomenon of Islamic revivalism. With this comparison, we argue that the differences in their methods are complementary rather than antagonistic, and generally pursue a similar greater goal: reviving Islam and returning society to a stable and harmonious state.

Keywords: Revivalism; Islamic Polity; Ummah (Community); Reform; Movement.

Introduction

Many Muslim intellectuals and Islamic scholars of the modern era generally hold that numerous Muslim rulers over the centuries have not approached Islam as a comprehensive and holistic way of life, as enshrined in the great texts of Islam (Qur'an and hadith). The rulers are also often described as failing to embody

the socio-political values of the Muslims in the early Islamic era, abusing their power to promote and safeguard their own political and personal interests.¹ This was reflected in numerous Muslim empires, such as the Moghuls (1526–1857), Safavids (1501–1736), and the Ottomans (1299–1923). Their governance in the name of Islam was, in many respects, a mere façade behind which the king, not the Islamic scripture or the Qur’anic injunctions, dominated the state structures and the organisation and coordination of the Muslim populace.

In addition, the influences of colonialism and neo-colonialism, including current American imperialism, have been deep and pervasive. European rulers trained aspiring new Muslim elites in European languages, facilitating their path to adopting European values and developing ways to create government machinery that has divided the Muslim World into disparate territories. The Muslim ruling class, while shielded against such processes of indoctrination, have surrendered their autonomy and sovereignty and therefore left the Muslim masses vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.² Nevertheless, attempts to make Muslims embrace the European bourgeois civility through Christianisation, Europeanisation, and modernisation has proven futile. In fact, the breaking down of old customs and habits, and alteration of social institutions and family conditions have caused the opposite reaction, increasing cynicism and resentment towards Europeans.

In the eye of Islamic revivalist movements, European dominance and manipulation and widespread Muslim elite apathy coupled with internal feuding, corruption, and decadence, have ensured the continuation of Muslim division and malaise to this day.³ However, Islam, against all the odds and its misuse, remains a force to be reckoned with and remains deeply embedded in the ontological structure of the Muslim individual and their communal existence. Islam has become a primary motivating factor for new Muslim personalities to assume political roles and give birth to new Islamic revivalist movements.⁴ Founded upon shariah (Islamic law) and Islamic traditions, new Islamic revivalist movements attempt to capture public attention and bring about global transformation through reforms in the personal, socio-cultural, and political realms.

However, the emergence of armed conflicts and clashes in many Muslim societies in the new century has added a complex dynamism to the religious and social reality of Muslims. As this situation escalated globally and resulted in the birth of the ‘War on Terror’, the groups and movements engaged in these conflicts generally claimed their doctrinal outlook originated from Islamic revivalist thinking. As a result, authors and analysts often use different terms such as Islamic fundamentalism, militant Islam, Islamic resurgence, Islamism, and Islamic revivalism in an interchangeable fashion.⁵ Such generalisation

has led to erroneous judgments and invalid analyses because many revivalist movements, such as the Tabligh Jama'at and the Jama'at-e-Islami, have no history of engagement in violence as a means of fulfilling their objectives.

The history of Islamic revivalist thinking is characterised by an incessant pattern of internal revitalisation and reform rooted in the principles of what are called in Arabic *islah* (reform) and *tajdid* (renewal). For revivalists, the single most vital purpose is to align prevailing realities and social change with the divine and universal standard of the Qur'an and Sunnah through a process of reform and renewal. The combination of *islah* and *tajdid* has given revivalists a special strength to constantly challenge existing states of Muslim affairs by promoting a return to Qur'anic injunctions and the Sunnah of the Prophet, as well as rejecting foreign accretions that have polluted the original message of Islam.

This paper is fundamentally about contemporary Islamic revivalist movements of a civil and pietist nature. The paper adopts the definition of Islamic revivalism as advanced by Ali, which refers to:

...movements concerned with the removal of accretion in normative and ritualistic Muslim practices with the aim of replacing them with pristine Islamic cultural and spiritual values leading to the reaffirmation of principles of the shariah (Islamic law) and the effort to remake society based on the blending of religion and politics.

The paper focuses on two major contemporary Islamic revivalist movements, incidentally with an Indian origin: Abul A'la Maududi's Jama'at-e-Islami and Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi's Tabligh Jama'at. These movements, whilst having a similar Islamic worldview based on the teachings of Qur'an and hadith, can be markedly distinguished by the way they implement *islah* and *tajdid*.

The paper argues that for the Tabligh Jama'at, *islah* and *tajdid* involve self-reformation, self-improvement, and personal spiritual elevation; for Jama'at-e-Islami, it denotes social and political reformation and transformation. As far as social development and political transformation are concerned, the Tabligh Jama'at takes a bottom-up approach, while Jama'at-e-Islami takes a top-down approach with an emphasis on the establishment of a separate and distinct Islamic political system. The paper further argues that Jama'at-e-Islami's method of Islamic preaching and promoting Islam in many respects resonates with other Islamic revivalist movements, such as Hassan al-Banna's Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (Muslim Brotherhood) and Taqiuddin an-Nabhani's Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), whilst Tabligh Jama'at has a uniquely personal and

intimate method of learning and teaching Islam manifested in its well-developed *khuruj* (preaching) programme. These movements are similar to each other but are also different. They converge as a movement because they share a reactive fervour responding to the crisis of modernity in which religion is constantly undermined by forces of Westernisation and secularism, but diverge in their methods and strategies in preaching and promoting Islam.

Jama'at-e-Islami

Jama'at-e-Islami, currently one of the largest Islamic movements in Asia, was established in 1941 by a prolific Indian theologian-writer, Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979), in British India. It was initially founded as a religious movement aimed at the socio-religious development of the Muslim community in the colonised Indian subcontinent. Jama'at's campaign was heavily based on Islamic literature and Islamic knowledge (albeit focused on selected writers), and this intellectual commitment has since remained a major feature of the movement.

In the March 1941 edition of the magazine *Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, Maududi, the editor of the magazine, wrote an outline for a new Islamic movement, explaining why such a group was needed. This article triggered correspondences with like-minded people from all over the Indian subcontinent. He invited them, about 75 people, to his magazine's office in Lahore to attend a conference, and where the Jama'at was formally established.⁷

While establishing a new Islamic political movement at a crucial time, just a few years before the partition of India and Pakistan, Maududi had to explain explicitly why his stand was different from that of both the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League, two major nationalist and secular political groups at that time. His refusal to accept a future nationalist state was so strong that he even wrote, "If there is any greater enemy of Islam after Kufr (disbelief) and Shirk (associating anyone with God), that would be this devil of race and motherland".⁸ Maududi's own objective is summarised in the World Almanac of Islamism as follows:

Maududi believed the only way Muslims could safeguard their political interests was to return to a pure and unadulterated Islam that would not accommodate Hindus. He denounced nationalism and secular politics and held that the Islamic state was a panacea for all the problems facing Muslims.⁹

This revivalist approach has ideological similarities to the approach of Muslim movements in Middle Eastern countries, such as Al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt. According to the World Almanac of Islamism, Hassan al-Banna:

felt that the weakness of the Muslim world could only be cured by a return to the original form of faith, applying its prescriptions derived literally from the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition to all aspects of modern life – including the political arena.¹⁰

Maududi's greatest religio-intellectual contribution is his commentary on the Qur'an, namely *Tafhimul-Qur'an* (The Meaning of the Qur'an), written 1942-1972. The Qur'an, being the theological source of Islam, will always play a foundational role in any Islamic activity. Just as Syed Qutb's Qur'anic exegesis, *Fi Zilalil Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'an), has shaped the understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world, Maududi's exegesis also influenced the Jama'at in the Indian Subcontinent. The introduction of this exegesis is a compulsory-read for people in the Jama'at, where Maududi outlines his objectives while explaining the theme of the Qur'an:

The Central Theme that runs throughout the Qur'an is the exposition of the reality and the invitation to the right way based on it. It declares that reality is the same that was revealed by Allah Himself to Adam at the time of his appointment as vicegerent, and to all the Messengers after him, and the right way is the same that was taught by all the Messengers. It also points out that all theories contradictory to this reality invented by people about God, the universe, man and his relations with God and the rest of His creation, are all wrong and that all the ways of life based on them are erroneous and lead to ruinous consequences.¹¹

Maududi's primary focus was on changing and Islamising the educated elite of society. He considered the educated segments of society to be the major catalyst of societal change and was frequently concerned about the increasing influence of Western ideas and culture in their lives. In doing so, he projected in his ideas a continuous confrontation between Islam and other thoughts. His strategy was to motivate the educated and developed section of society to embrace Islam as a complete way of life, with the long-term aim of eventually Islamising the whole society.

Maududi migrated to Pakistan after the 1947 partition of Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India. The Jama'at movement continued to operate in India with an autonomous and independent leadership, but with a strong ideological influence from Maududi's writings. Emerging as an influential social movement with a strong voice on religious issues in Pakistan and India, the movement started to become more involved in political issues in the late 1940s. In 1951, it participated for the first time in a provincial election in Pakistan. Several years after the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, the Jama'at also started its activities in the new-born country of Bangladesh.

Maududi had always adhered to the strategy of maintaining coherence with existing social and political structures and continuously attempted to establish an Islamic system, regardless of the current situation and political structures in the greater Indian Subcontinent. In an interview aired on Radio Pakistan in 1978, seven years after East Pakistan separated from West Pakistan and became Bangladesh (whose full text was later published as a book), Maududi said:

You will please keep it in mind that we shall have to start from the point where we are and keep our destination distinctly clear before us so that with each step, we march towards it. Whether we like it or not, the elections shall have to be a starting point, because this is at present the only peaceful course for changing the system of government and rulers....in the first election we may not fully succeed in changing the people's mode of thinking or choice, but if the system of election is kept clean a time is bound to come when the government would be completely in the hands of honest men. Thereafter we can review the system of election and succeed in re-establishing the ideal Islamic method originally adopted for this purpose. You cannot, in any case, attain your goal at once and immediately.¹²

In its early years, the Jama'at intentionally refrained from political activities, such as participating in elections. This was due to the earlier theological reasoning by Maududi and his fellow religious scholars, who regarded participation in Western-style politics as prohibited in Islam. But in 1951, Maududi came to the conclusion that political participation would be an acceptable way to further establish Islam in the people's personal lives (*Iqamat-e-Deen*) and to reassert the governance of God in their collective lives (*Huqumat-e-Ilahiyyah*)—his two primary agendas.¹³

Since then, the Jama'at has functioned as an independent and full-scale

political movement in Pakistan (Jama'at-e-Islami Pakistan), India (Jama'at-e-Islami Hind), Bangladesh (Bangladesh Jama'at-e-Islami), Sri Lanka (Jama'at-e-Islami Sri Lanka), India's occupied Kashmir province, and Pakistan's Azad Kashmir (Jama'at-e-Islami Kashmir). Expatriates from these countries who are influenced by the movement's ideology have formed several religious-social movements in various countries, including the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), Islamic Forum Europe, and UK Islamic Mission.¹⁴

Although the Jama'at organisations in different countries enjoy an amicable relationship amongst themselves, they operate completely autonomously, as their policies, programmes and authorities are different in accordance with local contexts. However, all of them share a common aim of educating people with a focus on Islamic political reading and establishing a democratic model of Islamic governance, based on the literature produced by Maududi.

Tabligh Jama'at

Tabligh Jama'at (Convey the Message of Islam Group) was originally founded by Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi (1885–1944), a Deoband-educated Muslim scholar in 1927 Mewat, south of Delhi, India. This was when British colonial power was firmly established in India and the *Meos* (people of Mewat) were forced to confront their ambivalent position on the issue of religious identity. *Meos* were overwhelmingly poor small landholders with few local leaders or large landlords amongst them.¹⁵ Their deepening poverty was the result of their growing indebtedness to the local *Banias* (Hindu traders).¹⁶ The consequence was that many *Meos* became so indebted to the *Banias* that they were forced to forfeit their land to them because they could not continue to pay their debts. Mayaram notes:

In Mewat, to begin with, the combined pressure of the colonial state and the princely state of Alwar, manifested as bureaucratic rationality, were responsible for the original alienation of the Meo peasantry.¹⁷

The *Meos* increasingly saw the colonial regime and the upper Hindu castes as their enemies. This and a series of other socio-economic and political crises, as well as the diminished “moral and religious condition of the Mewatis *which was* a result of want of education, isolation from the civilised world and indifference towards religion [Italics added],”¹⁸ produced the circumstances in which the Tabligh Jama'at found fertile grounds to pursue its activities.¹⁹ Tabligh Jama'at emerged in direct response to the rise of the Hindu Arya Samaj sect which,

in many respects, had British colonial support. From this sect emerged two proselytising movements, *shuddhi* (Purification) and *sangathan* (Consolidation), which engaged in large-scale efforts to win back ‘strayed’ Hindus who accepted Islam during the period of Muslim political hegemony in India. Tabligh Jama’at embarked on a mission of Islamic faith renewal and awakening among the *Meo* community of Mewat, and subsequently the wider Muslim community in India. It sought to do this by seeking out ordinary Muslims and inviting them to undertake missionary work, *da’wa* or *tabligh*.²⁰

Vahed noted that the “Tabligh aimed at the transformation of society by social actors without political mediation”.²¹ It steered away from active political activity and engagements; hence the description of the movement as apolitical remains valid even today.²² As an apolitical religious movement, Tabligh Jama’at placed particular emphasis on personal renewal, spiritual elevation, and a revival of the prophetic tradition. Based on the missionary-preaching method, Tabligh Jama’at established itself over the years as a transnational network with a membership estimated at between seventy and eighty million,²³ and “has become the largest Islamic revivalist movement in the world with members present in more than 200 countries, covering all five continents”.²⁴

Membership of Tabligh Jama’at is voluntarily and those who join cover their own expenses. Participants are from varying socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds:

Tabligh includes many levels of participation, from those who have virtually no other activity to people engaged in household or paid employment who yet manage to meet the movement’s standards for participation in gatherings and travel, to those who join on occasional missions, to those who may occasionally or regularly pray where Tablighis congregate and listen to their discussions.²⁵

In order to have systematicity in his work, Muhammad Ilyas devised six basic principles. First is the *Shahada* or article of faith, which is the assertion that there is no deity but God and that Muhammad is His messenger. The second principle is *Salat*, the five daily prayers. The third principle is *‘Ilm* and *Dhikr* (knowledge and remembrance of God), and the fourth *Ikram-i-Muslim* (respect every Muslim). The fifth principle is *Ikhlas-i-Niyat* (emendation of intention and sincerity), and the sixth *Tafrigh-i-Waqt* (to spare time). These six principles formed the basis of the movement’s ideology: “Tabligh ideology derives its lineage from the nineteenth-century reformist ulama who challenged the popular veneration of the medieval saints....”²⁶

Jan Ali (2012) notes that Tablighi ideology centres on the relationship between the faithful and God. The central claim is that nothing is more important and worth pursuing than establishing this relationship and cherishing it. According to Tablighi ideology, which in many respects is a reflection of orthodox Islamic belief, Islam consists of certain beliefs, (in one unique God, the existence of angels, God's revelations and His prophets, the Last Day, the next life) and the manifestation of those beliefs in forms of worship (prayer, charity, and fasting)—all of which relate to the faithful's relationship with God.²⁷

The relation between the Tablighi and God is embedded in a common socio-physiological basis, which is in itself social.²⁸ A Tablighi achieves this through his introduction to the movement and training in the message of Islam (*tabligh*), routines and rituals, through which he learns about God, gets to know about His omniscience and omnipotence, and ultimately, through pure spiritual devotion, feels a constant nearness to God.²⁹ The command to convey the message of Islam could be explained as an invitation to join Tabligh Jama'at and participate in its routines and rituals to practice the faith in the omnipresence of God, who is always with the faithful.³⁰

The joining of the movement is linked to the notion of 'remaking' the Muslim.³¹ This is the overall objective of the movement. According to Tabligh Jama'at, the modern world is sunk in *jahiliyah* (ignorance). The Tabligh Jama'at aims to change this *jahili* state by actively opposing popular Islamic practices, purging them of foreign accretions and infusing authentic Islamic values and practices into Muslim daily life. It seeks to do this through the revival of Islam involving replacing culture with scripture.

Changing the *jahili* state of the world is an aim shared by all Islamic revivalist movements. These movements also share the ultimate objective to restructure Muslim society in line with the shariah, at least at its basic level as a starting point. What distinguishes these movements is their methodology, not their goals. Hence, what sets the Tabligh Jama'at apart from other Islamic revivalist movements is its methodology of preaching and missionary work, particularly the *khuruj* (preaching tour) to 'remake' Muslims.

Tabligh Jama'at's 'remaking' of the Muslim is thus a response to the failures of modernity and, as the movement claims, the departure of Islamic spiritualism from the lives of many Muslims. By encouraging Muslims to reinvent themselves and seek higher spirituality through preaching tours, Tabligh Jama'at makes inroads by conquering the hearts of Muslims. Seeking to penetrate the core of Muslim consciousness and making Muslims seek out God, the movement claims to restore faith in God. In seeking out God, the 'self' plays a central role. There is a mutual dependency between 'self' and social environment. Individuals are

not separate from or independent of the social environment and vice versa.³² Therefore, Tabligh Jama'at seeks to create an interpersonal context in which the Tablighis can nurture the 'self'. The general social environment poses various behavioural challenges which, according to the Tabligh Jama'at, steers Muslims away from religious conviction and self-improvement. It, thus, seeks to remedy this by turning the interpersonal context into a social facilitator influencing individuals' performance in self-improvement, particularly in religious rituals and practices.

To achieve its goal, Tabligh Jama'at has members working "in more than two hundred countries"³³ spread all over the world. As for membership, some estimate between seventy to eighty million active members globally.³⁴ Tabligh Jama'at has become an important and highly dynamic transnational movement with a consistent exchange of personnel in all local areas, as well as overseas. It is worth noting that these established personal networks are strengthening transnational social spaces not only in local areas, but globally. In this sense, one way of explaining what attracts Muslims to Tabligh Jama'at, making a commitment to religion, valuing the travelling cultures, and severing ties with traditions—is the satisfaction arising from the movement's self-empowerment programme. This has been the reason why many Muslims forfeit their worldly pursuits and commit themselves to the Tablighi path.

Discussion

These contemporary Muslim revivalist movements represent the general Muslim sentiments towards both imperialism and the inefficient and often self-serving authorities of Muslim states. Imperialism is perceived as an evil institution, and the Muslim elite is condemned as corrupt and motivated by greed. There are no proper strategies and policies that address the issue of inequality in the sharing of wealth and "corruption is thus seen by the masses not as an abuse of power in itself, but as an immoral practice preventing the fair distribution of riches".³⁵ The desire of the Muslim masses for the extirpation of imperialism and the taming or overthrowing of Muslim governments has, therefore, become embodied in the objectives of the revivalist movements. The objective is to replace the prevailing governing structures and bring about a comprehensive implementation of Islam in all spheres of life and institutional organisations and put a stop to the processes of Westernisation and secularisation in Muslim societies.³⁶ "In this respect, the *revivalist* movements does represent the people's wish to assert their existence vis-a-vis the fossilised political system that had been born in the resistance to the colonial power".³⁷ Thus, "the movements proceed on the basis

that the vast majority of the Muslim masses want a complete implementation of Islam and that the masses have a deep sense of being cheated of this desire by hypocrites under a multitude of guises".³⁸ Such a tactic has proven popular with the masses, facilitating a strong alliance with the revivalists.

Mutuality versus Differences

Fundamentally, Jama'at-e-Islami and Tabligh Jama'at share three key common dogmas. First, both movements stress the importance of understanding Islam as a comprehensive way of life – a complete system. Islamic teachings and values must be reflected permanently in all spheres of life, and the rules of the law (shariah) must permeate both personal and social living.

Second, the institution of sovereignty belongs to Allah (God). In Islam, it is God-sovereignty that gives socio-cultural, economic, and political life a distinctive constitutional shape and separates it from any other form of life-style or method of living. The sovereignty of God is the cornerstone of Islam which expresses the core ideas of Islamic living, including the fundamentally vital notion of God's legislative exclusivity. Sovereignty is exclusively God's domain, "it has always been and always will be occupied by God or by the idea men have of God. The men appointed or elected to exercise power do so with the sole aim of applying divine teachings".³⁹ Like Maududi, Ilyas understood sovereignty to be a divine station, but he never discussed sovereignty in the context of a political organisation or a state structure. Although he shared his Islamic worldview with Maududi and in it also embedded the notion of an Islamic state, unlike Maududi Ilyas steered away from political discussions and engagements, always opting for spiritual pursuits rather than political endeavours. It is for this reason that the movement he founded had an apolitical character. Naumani summarises Ilyas's attitude towards state-building or political engagement as follows:

when you (Muslims) are not able to defend and maintain Allah's commands in your own individual being and, in your life, (for which you are sovereign and face no barriers), then how could the task of governing the affairs of the world be entrusted to you? Allah's purpose to hand over the affairs of state to the community of the faithful is to implement in the world the will and commands of Allah. When you are not practising it within your limited prerogative, then with what hope could the guardianship of the world be delegated to you?⁴⁰

In contrast, Maududi combined spirituality with politics and had clear and strong views on the issue of an Islamic state. He saw the Islamic State as the solution to the debilitating conditions of Muslims across the world. Prior to the formation of his organisation, Maududi visited Mewat and interacted with Ilyas in 1939. Maududi was impressed with Ilyas' well-organised work and praised him for his *dawah* (preaching) initiative and commitment to Islamic development. Although he argued that socio-political issues required prioritised attention through a hierarchal organisation, he still "hailed Ilyas as the heir to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, both important figures in the tradition of revival and reform of Indian Islam".⁴¹ Despite this, Ilyas and Maududi were both focused on infusing Muslim living with pure Islamic principles, and this resonated with revivalist movements in general. For all involved, "the intent was not to retreat to the society of seventh-century Arabia but rather to return to pure Islamic principles as they saw them. They argued that in the Prophet's time and immediately after, there had existed a social order in conformity with the will and command of Allah. That model should once again be the inspiration for a Muslim renaissance in the twentieth century".⁴²

Third, there is an urgent need for a holistic approach to religious life in which shariah forms the bedrock and the sunnah (prophetic ways) permeates everyday living, both at personal and social levels. In this formulation, Islam is a complete way of life and the only way of life. How this can be achieved, however, requires numerous gradual steps beginning with developing a spiritual interest. This involves steering away from materialism and concentrating on spirituality and the inner-self. Here Ilyas's and Maududi's common Sufi ideology is revealed. Both leaders had a background in Sufi learning and practices. They denounced materialism, pursued a life of spiritual elevation, and sought contentment in contributing to the development of a God-conscious society and world order.

Whilst these three dogmas are common to the Jama'at-e-Islami and Tabligh Jama'at, there are other points they differ on. It is not unusual for movements with the same or similar objectives to differ on some values or principles, and these two movements are no exception. Instead of looking at what points they differ on, here we wish to focus primarily on the difference in their methods of promoting and popularising Islam in the modern world

Within the mission to bring Islam back as a dominant system in the modern world, the role of Muslim leadership is critical. There is no other obstacle as great as allocating power to a pious, educated, and charismatic Muslim leader who possesses demonstrable ability to bridge the gap between Western-educated elites and the Muslim masses in predominantly Muslim countries. Islam's success very much depends on this relationship and, therefore, Jama'at-e-Islami

has focused on the elitist classes who possess the power to change the destiny of their countries to persuade them to espouse Islamic values and practices more deeply. It has been suggested that this is achievable through a robust Islamic educational programme, which Jama'at-e-Islami claims to possess. According to Maududi, the ultimate leadership is a God-conscious institution with the power to create an ideal society established through *hakimiyyah* (divine governorship).⁴³

On the issue of leadership, the Tabligh Jama'at differs from Jama'at-e-Islami in proposing that, by adopting a complete prophetic way of life, Muslims will not only achieve an understanding of and ability to interpret Islamic scriptural doctrine, but will gain direct guidance from Allah in all spheres of daily life. Thus, the focus of the Tabligh Jama'at is not Muslim leadership, but the "self". For the Tabligh Jama'at a sound and successful society is produced by ordinary Muslims whose attention is directed towards the sovereignty of God and God-consciousness. One key outcome of this is that it helps shape the modern sense of the self and gives Muslims a sense of their instrumentality in the world or their competence to design it. This new and important responsibility to God leads to the "inward turn". Through inner struggle and self-reformation, God is discovered and, therefore, the Tabligh Jama'at encourages its members to take tours of preaching – *khuruj*. Going out on *khuruj* re-ignites Muslims' fading faith and brings them back into the company of Allah or godliness. It is a way of remaining connected with Allah and in a state of Islam, divorced from what Maududi calls *jahiliyah* (ignorance). The sociological implications of turning Muslims inward, into the 'self', as a process of reviving Islam is to render Islamic revivalism as an individual project. This is in stark contrast, for example, to Maududi's sociology of Islam as a comprehensive way of life and a holistic system where Islamic revivalism is conceptualised as a social or collective project leading to the establishment of the caliphate and the eradication of *jahiliyah*.

Tabligh Jama'at, Jama'at-e-Islami, and other Islamic revivalist movements have developed along separate lines without any attempt at consolidation or coordination. Whilst they started as non-elitist and accessible, focusing on bringing about a gradual social and cultural reform, it was not long before they drifted into different directions. From being a broad-based revivalist movement emphasising *tarbiya* (education of the individual), the Jama'at-e-Islami was forced to become a closed and hierarchical political party. The Tabligh Jama'at, however, remained politically uncommitted and engaged in the self-reformation of marginalised nominal Muslims and promoting prophetic ways as a universal solution to world problems. Armed with its six points, it proceeded on a crusading mission, attracting people with only

theological thirst and not social and political aspirations. Consequently, the Tabligh Jama'at has a flat and flexible organisational structure and, thus, it is easy for anyone to enter or exit it, which is an important factor in the Tabligh's transnational success.

Another difference can be noticed in a consideration of whether there be a social and cultural programme integral to the movements' work or if they should merely focus on general revivalist principles. This is an important question, and the experiences of these movements reveal divergent tendencies. The Jama'at-e-Islami leans towards a more fundamentalist approach, whereas the Tabligh Jama'at remains distant from constitutional and political reforms to embrace a more esoteric lifestyle embodied in Sufi mysticism. The primary objective of the followers of the Tabligh Jama'at remains to become religiously better persons, regardless of the surroundings they live in. Siddiqi observes:

Adopting a Tablighi guided life gives an assurance of being saved from what followers consider as non-Islamic activities. Tablighi followers from Bangladesh and the UK consider the movement as a protection from all types of non-Islamic activities. This reflects the views of becoming 'good Muslims' in a modern and complex time. Tablighi guided life offers its followers a way to achieve the aim of being 'good Muslim' in the society that is evident in both Bangladesh and the UK. For Tablighi Jamaat followers, acceptance of a Tablighi life means entering into a new value system, which is a conscious choice that every dedicated Tablighi follower makes.⁴⁴

In contrast, the Jama'at-e-Islami has notable socio-political contributions in Muslim-majority countries in the South Asian subcontinent, so much so that it is generally considered as the South Asian counterpart of the Muslim Brotherhood. The most notable feature of these movements is that "these groups are moderate in that they pursue their political aims through democratic and constitutional means within existing nation-states"⁴⁵. In line with this global political Islamic revivalism, the Jama'at-e-Islami has been playing a significant role in national politics in various countries as well as in establishing religiously motivated welfare services such as various educational and financial institutions.⁴⁶

The core difference between the Jama'at-e-Islami and the Tabligh Jama'at is their method of reviving Islam and the nature of the literature authored by their respective founders and subsequent supporting scholars. The books widely read by Tablighis and authored by Tablighi scholars, such as Muhammad Zakariyyah Kandhlawi (1898-1982) and Muhammad Yusuf Kandhlawi (1917-1965), are

centred on piety and the virtues of Islam, encouraging their readers to return to the way of Allah and practice Islam passionately and whole-heartedly in their personal lives. Maududi, the founder of the Jama'at-e-Islami, however, wrote extensively on topics such as society, economics, politics, gender, and so on. His preoccupation with social change was even reflected in his theological scholarship, such as his famous exegesis of the Qur'an. In this way, Maududi introduced a political reading of religion for his followers.⁴⁷

While, both groups see Islam as a complete code of life, the Tablighi's desired change starts at an individual level, with a focus on self-reformation. This attainment of religious purity demands distance from confusion-arising worldly issues such as political and economic problems. The Jama'at-e-Islami, on the other hand, seeks to approach those worldly matters socially and politically in an attempt to Islamise society. With the Jama'at-e-Islami, the approach is top-down, described by many as a method of "Islamisation from above" which wants to effect change at a social level by establishing Islamic governance.⁴⁸ The established authority will therefore have the mandate to implement changes in both individual and social groups. These different methods of reviving Islam, despite some similarities regarding their religious origin, are summarised by Ahmed as follows:

While the Jamaat-i-Islami's main emphasis is on the resacralisation of political life and the establishment of an Islamic state with the Qur'an and Sunnah (the way of the Prophet) as its constitution and the Sharia as its basic law, the Tabligh movement, on the other hand, focuses its activities on the moral and spiritual uplift of individual believers, asking them to fulfil their religious obligations irrespective of whether there is an Islamic state or not. However, in view of their literalist interpretation of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet, as well as their common hostility toward Islamic liberalism, both of these movements can be described as fundamentalist movements. Both claim that they are working for the revival of pristine Islam. Both are regarded as equally legitimate Islamic response to the challenges of modernity and are thus mainstream rather than fringe movements. Both of them enjoy enormous support in certain important sectors of Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi societies, and their influence has reached far beyond the country of their origin.⁴⁹

However, it is to be noted that the apolitical nature of the Tabligh Jama'at does not negate its political importance, both historically and in the modern

world. The movement focuses on spirituality and piety, but its collective identity formation is itself of great political importance, a fact realised by the pioneers of this very apolitical movement. Zacharias stated in this regard:

TJ as an Islamic revivalist movement was born of efforts to rectify the ways in which Muslims practised Islam, as well as to increase the number of Muslim subjects in colonial India. This was part of a wider movement to increase the share of political power for Muslims in India under new openings for political participation being enacted toward the end of British rule. The aim was to increase Islam's significance, and this continues to be one of TJ's goals to this day.⁵⁰

Similarly, the Jama'at-e-Islami has gone through various transformative phases in different societies, as well as regarding its political methodologies. While growing increasingly political in Muslim-majority Pakistan and Bangladesh, the same party in Muslim-minority India has become a religious organisation focused on welfare, education and community services, only branching out to be involved in politics as a separate entity called 'Welfare Party of India'. In India, the Jama'at-e-Islami has gone through a drastic ideological transformation with regards to its religio-political worldviews, with its members claiming to be struggling for a secular and democratic India, which is a far cry from its original political stance, in which secularism and popular democracy were considered irreligious doctrines and antithetical to Islam.⁵¹

Conclusion

The Jama'at-e-Islami and the Tabligh Jama'at both demonstrate through their historical journey and contemporary activities that revivalist movements are often products of a particular time and space, responding to local conditions or international situations, or sometimes both. In fact, it is deeply embedded in the ideology of Islamic awakening that it will not only bring about political and social reforms through institutional developments and the establishment of an Islamic state, but also an eternal restoration of Islamic glory in the world at large.

The significant Muslim population in South Asia distinctly shows increasing influence in personal spaces and socio-political contexts of Islamic revivalist movements such as the Tabligh Jama'at and Jama'at-e-Islami. Confronting colonialism has been replaced by opposition to Westernisation and secularisation. Furthermore, other complex factors in Muslim societies, such as increasing rates

of literacy as well as alleviating economic inequality and political instability, have contributed to the flourishing of these revivalist movements. Considering the historical memory of a glorious past juxtaposed with the prevailing Muslim situation and a yearning for a better and brighter future, it can be safely assumed that Islamic revivalist movements will play a vital role in future of Muslim societies.

Given the size and international influence these two movements exercise, their existence and significance cannot be overlooked, particularly by political figures and policymakers across the world. The following, thus, must be noted:

- The Jama'at-e-Islami and Tabligh Jama'at have a growing role as transnational Islamic revivalist movements which have important policy implications that cannot be ignored if relations between people and groups are to improve in society;
- Islamic revivalist movements might share certain aims and objectives, but their methods differ: they, therefore, should not be treated as being the same;
- Islamic revivalist movements are not hostile to modernity, only to secularisation and Westernisation;
- Islamic revivalist movements represent a strong cultural and political force in international affairs; heed must be paid to this fact in political discourse and policy formulation;
- Any study of Islamic revivalist movements must consider their historical and socio-political context, including official state policies towards them;
- Due to globalisation, Islamic revivalist movements are no longer embedded in local contexts but have international reach and significance.

Notes

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