

Faraizi Movement, Objectives, Ideologies, Leaders, Significance

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The Faraizi Movement was a significant socio-religious movement in 19th-century India, primarily active in East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh). Founded by Haji Shariatullah in 1818, the movement aimed to revive Islamic practices among Muslims in the region by emphasizing adherence to the fundamental tenets of Islam and eradicating un-Islamic customs.

The term "Faraizi" derives from the Arabic word fard, meaning obligatory, highlighting the movement's focus on fulfilling religious duties.

Faraizi Movement Background

The Faraizi Movement emerged as one of the significant socio-religious movements in the early 19th century in Bengal, during a period of intense social and economic distress among the Muslim peasantry. The movement was founded by **Haji Shariatullah**, a prominent Islamic scholar, around 1820 in the Faridpur district of Bengal (now in Bangladesh).

- **Meaning:** The term "**Faraizi**" is derived from the Arabic word "**Faraiz**," which refers to the mandatory duties prescribed by Islam.
- Haji Shariatullah sought to purify the religious practices of Bengali Muslims, which he believed had been corrupted by local customs and superstitions.
 - He preached the importance of adhering strictly to the Faraiz, the obligatory duties of Islam, such as prayer, fasting, and **zakat (almsgiving)**.
 - He urged Muslims to abandon unIslamic practices such as the worship of saints and shrines.
- The movement gained significant traction among the Muslim peasants, who were suffering under the oppressive zamindari system imposed by the British colonial administration.
- The Faraizi leaders encouraged the peasants to resist the unjust demands of the landlords, including excessive taxes and forced labour.

The movement gradually evolved from a religious revivalist movement into a broader socio-political struggle against the exploitative practices of the colonial and feudal systems.

Faraizi Movement Objectives

The Faraizi Movement had two primary objectives: religious reform and social justice. It aimed for religious reform by enforcing strict adherence to the Quran and Hadith to eliminate syncretic practices, while also seeking social justice by mobilizing oppressed Muslim peasants against exploitation.

- **Religious Reform:** The Faraizi Movement aimed to purify Bengali Muslims' religious practices by enforcing strict adherence to the Quran and Hadith, eliminating syncretic customs and superstitions.
- **Social Justice:** The movement also addressed socio-economic injustices faced by Muslim peasants oppressed by zamindars and British officials, mobilizing them to resist exploitation such as heavy taxation, forced labour, and land confiscation, advocating for their rights.

Faraizi Movement Ideologies

The Faraizi Movement was guided by several ideologies, as it emphasized strict adherence to Islamic law, opposed un-Islamic practices like saint worship, promoted social equality by challenging the oppressive zamindari system and advocated for economic empowerment through community solidarity and self-reliance:

- **Strict Adherence to Islamic Law:** The Faraizi Movement emphasized a strict observance of the **Faraiz (obligatory duties)** as prescribed by Islamic law, including daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, **paying zakat (charity)**, and abstaining from forbidden activities like gambling and alcohol consumption.
- **Opposition to Un-Islamic Practices:** Faraizi leaders actively opposed practices like saint worship, religious music, and shrine veneration, advocating for a return to the original teachings of Islam, free from superstitions and innovations.
- **Social Equality and Justice:** The movement championed social justice, particularly against the exploitative zamindari system, urging peasants to resist unjust demands and claim their rights, promoting equality among all Muslims.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The Faraizi Movement sought to economically empower the Muslim peasantry through community solidarity, collective farming, and self-reliance, encouraging mutual support during

hardships and fostering economic independence.

Faraizi Movement Spread

The Faraizi Movement had a significant impact in several regions of Bengal, particularly in areas with a large Muslim population. Some of the key areas where the movement was active include:

- **Faridpur District:** The movement originated in Faridpur, where Haji Shariatullah and his followers gained strong support among Muslim peasants oppressed by local zamindars' harsh policies.
- **Dhaka:** The movement also spread to Dhaka, where Faraizi leaders organized peasants to resist landlords' exploitation and assert their religious and socio-economic rights.
- **Jessore and Khulna:** The Faraizi Movement expanded to the Jessore and Khulna districts, where its message of religious reform and social justice gained widespread support among the local Muslim population.

Faraizi Movement Leaders

Prominent leaders like Haji Sharitullah, Dudu Miyan played a crucial role in the success and spread of the Faraizi Movement. Their leadership and dedication to the cause of religious reform and social justice were instrumental in mobilizing the Muslim peasantry and challenging the status quo.

Haji Shariatullah

Haji Shariatullah, founder of the Faraizi Movement, was an Islamic scholar from Faridpur, Bengal. Influenced by the Wahhabi movement during his Hajj, he preached Islamic revivalism, stressing adherence to Faraiz and rejecting un-Islamic practices. His call for religious purity and social justice gained wide support among Muslim peasants, paving the way for the movement's expansion.

Dudu Miyan

After Haji Shariatullah's death in 1840, his son Dudu Miyan led the Faraizi Movement. A charismatic leader, he united Bengal's peasants against zamindar and British oppression, urging resistance to illegal taxes and landlord authority. His efforts transformed the movement into a strong force for social justice with widespread peasant support.

Faraizi Movement Significance

The Faraizi Movement revitalized Islamic practices among Bengali Muslims, promoted socio-economic empowerment for the oppressed peasantry, resisted colonial oppression, and left a lasting legacy that influenced future reform movements in Bengal and beyond.

- **Religious Revivalism:** The Faraizi Movement revived Islamic practices among Bengali Muslims, emphasizing adherence to the Faraiz (obligatory duties) and rejection of un-Islamic customs, restoring religious identity and pride among the Muslim peasantry.
- **Socio-Economic Empowerment:** The movement championed social justice and economic rights for oppressed peasants, encouraging them to resist exploitation by zamindars and British authorities,

fostering unity and improving their socio-economic conditions.

- **Resistance to Colonial Oppression:** The Faraizi Movement organized peasants to resist British colonialism and landlord dominance, contributing to India's broader anti-colonial struggle.
- **Legacy of Reform:** The movement's focus on religious purity, social justice, and empowerment inspired future reform movements in Bengal and beyond.

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