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The Impact of Abdulhamid's Pan-Islamic Policy on Indian Muslims Living Under British Rule

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THE IMPACT OF ABDULHAMID'S PAN-ISLAMIC POLICY ON INDIAN MUSLIMS LIVING UNDER BRITISH RULE

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ABSTRACT

The impact of Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic policies on Indian Muslims living in British colonies in the late 19th century is examined in this study. This multidimensional study contextualizes Indian Muslims' experiences under British colonial rule through historical analysis, archival sources, and diplomatic documents. The literature review explores the Sultan's participation in late 19th-century pan-Islamic movements, while the introduction summarizes Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic aspirations. The next parts examine the practices of British colonialism against Indian Muslims, the body of study on the subject's connection to Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic goal, and the research approach, which places a strong emphasis on the analysis of primary sources. Results show how the spread of pan-Islamic concepts has an impact on the politics, culture, and educational attainment of Indian Muslims. The study focuses on how Abdulhamid's theories were received differently, how they were incorporated into regional sociopolitical groups, and how this led to modifications in community dynamics and leadership. The paper adds to the field of Islamic studies, world history, and current conversations on Islam and identity. It concludes with a summary, consequences, and recommendations for additional research.

Keywords: Abdulhamid II, Pan-Islamic policy, Indian Muslims, British rule, Pan-Islamism.

1. Introduction:

The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the advent of European imperialism in the late 19th century heralded a dramatic change in geopolitics.¹ In light of this, Sultan Abdulhamid II of the Ottoman Empire instituted a pan-Islamic strategy intended to promote harmony among Muslims around the globe.² This approach, which is often called "pan-Islamism," aimed to fend off the incursion of Western forces while fortifying the Muslim community as a whole. The Indian subcontinent was coping with the socio-political fallout from British colonial authority at the same time as other parts of South Asia.³ Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic agenda and the conditions facing Indian Muslims under British rule came together to form a dynamic interaction with significant ramifications for comprehending the historical development of both areas. At a time of increased

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geopolitical unrest, Sultan Abdulhamid II took the throne of the Ottoman Empire in 1876.⁴ Once a powerful nation, the Ottoman Empire was facing internal conflict as well as foreign threats from European countries. Abdulhamid II took a pan-Islamic stance in response to these difficulties, aiming to bring Muslims together under the Islamic flag.⁵ In order to strengthen political and cultural power, this strategy placed a strong emphasis on a shared Islamic identity that cut over national and ethnic divides.

The creation of educational institutions, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic initiatives were examples of Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic strategy.⁶ Using his status as the Caliph, the spiritual head of the Islamic world, the Sultan effectively advocated for the rights and interests of Muslims everywhere.⁷ This policy went beyond simple symbolism; it included concrete steps to alleviate the issues faced by Muslims living under foreign authority, especially in areas where European colonial powers were predominated. Africa and Central Asia (the nations inhabited by Turks) were also focal points of the Pan-Islamic movement. For Indian Muslims, Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic policy was especially significant in this regard.⁸ Indian Muslims, who were struggling with issues of identity, representation, and autonomy, found hope in the Sultan's efforts to unite Muslims under the Islamic banner.⁹ In reaction to the difficulties presented by British colonialism, Indian Muslims were able to affirm their shared identity thanks to the framework that the pan-Islamic discourse offered.

1.1 Aims & Objectives of the Study: This study examines the impact of Sultan Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic policy on Indian Muslims in the late 1800s. It examines historical narratives, diplomatic records, and primary sources to understand how the Ottoman Empire's pan-Islamic values influenced Indian Muslims under British colonial rule. The study also explores the socio-political and cultural implications of the pan-Islamic strategy, examining how it affected political consciousness, community, and cultural expressions.

1.2 Significance of the Study: This study contributes to understanding global Islamic political movements by examining Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic strategy and its impact on Muslims in India. It also sheds light on the experiences of Indian Muslims during the late 19th century, bridging gaps in historical narratives and navigating the influence of pan-Islamic ideas. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Indian Muslims' identities, responses to external influences, and participation in global movements.

1.3 Research Methodology: This study's research approach is a thorough research design-driven historical analysis based on primary sources and archival materials. The study design focuses on digging into historical settings through the careful examination of primary sources and diplomatic records from the late 19th century in order to uncover the nuances of Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic agenda and its influence on Indian

Muslims under British rule. A careful selection of relevant speeches, letters, and documents is the first step in the data collection process. Next, historical narratives are critically analyzed to reveal complex viewpoints. The data analysis that follows takes a two-pronged approach: theme analysis is used to detect important patterns and trends in the primary sources, and comparison analysis is used to validate and confirm findings.

2. Historical Context of Abdulhamid II's Reign

2.1 Pan-Islamic Movements in the Late 19th Century

Pan-Islamic organizations gained momentum in the late 1800s as intellectual and political figures argued for the unification of the Muslim Ummah (community) to confront the threats of Western imperialism. An increasing awareness of a shared religious identity that transcends national and ethnic barriers defined this time, which represented a significant turning point in the history of Islamic political philosophy.¹⁰ The fall of the Ottoman Empire, which served as the Islamic Caliphate's protector, and the incursion of European powers into Muslim lands (India, Africa & Central Asia) were the subjects of pan-Islamic movements. Prominent academics like Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani were instrumental in advancing pan-Islamic ideas. Prominent Islamic reformer Al-Afghani highlighted the necessity for Muslims to put aside sectarian divisions and band together in the face of outside dangers. He had an impact not just on the Middle East but also on South Asia and other Muslim regions.¹¹ In an effort to revive the Muslim world and challenge Western supremacy, Abduh, an Egyptian jurist and religious scholar, argued for the adoption of modern sciences and a reformed Islamic educational system.

2.2 Abdulhamid's Role in the Pan-Islamic Movement

During his reign of 1876–1909, Sultan Abdulhamid II became a pivotal role in the pan-Islamic movement. Abdulhamid deliberately adopted pan-Islamism as a political instrument to mobilize Muslim support and defend the Ottoman Empire in the face of both internal and external threats.¹² His contributions to the movement included cultural, educational, and diplomatic endeavors. In order to bolster his legitimacy and win over Muslims worldwide, Abdulhamid strategically positioned himself as the Caliph, the world's spiritual leader.¹³ In order to address the problems of Muslims living under foreign authority, particularly in areas controlled by European imperial powers, the Sultan engaged in diplomatic endeavors.¹⁴ This includes lobbying for Muslims facing territorial issues in Bosnia and Macedonia as well as assistance for the Palestinian Arab community against Zionist colonization. In order to increase the unity of Muslims worldwide, Abdülhamid II fostered ties with Central Asia and Africa, which was a critical role in the Pan-Islamic movement. He contributed to

the wider Pan-Islamic vision throughout his reign by launching diplomatic and cultural activities that intended to forge a sense of brotherhood among Muslims in Africa and Turkic-speaking communities in Central Asia. Through the creation of educational institutions and cultural exchanges, Abdulhamid promoted pan-Islamic principles on a cultural level.¹⁵ These programs placed a focus on common religious and cultural values in an effort to promote a sense of unity among Muslims. The Sultan's initiatives reached Muslim populations throughout the world, particularly those in South Asia, and were not limited to the Ottoman Empire.

In terms of education, Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic vision was realized through the founding of organizations and schools that were shaped by these ideas.¹⁶ Through these educational programs, Muslim youngsters were to be instilled with a feeling of Islamic identity and solidarity, thereby producing a generation that would be aware of their common ancestry and able to fend off other influences. Understanding the larger dynamics of Islamic political thinking during the late 19th century requires context, which is provided by the historical setting of Abdulhamid II's reign, which was characterized by the emergence of pan-Islamic groups and the Ottoman Sultan's strategic application of these ideals. Abdülhamid II actively pursued diplomatic relations with other regions, particularly Turkmenistan in Central Asia and Africa, by sending ambassadors among other things. His larger plan to promote Pan-Islamic unity and defend the rights of Muslims living under Ottoman control included these diplomatic efforts. In terms of diplomatic, cultural, and educational aspects, Abdulhamid's involvement in the pan-Islamic movement influenced the conversation on Muslim unanimity and opposition to Western imperialism.

3. British Colonial Rule in India

3.1 Overview of British Policies Towards Indian Muslims

The onset of British colonial governance in India brought about revolutionary shifts in the domains of politics, society, and economy. For Indian Muslims, the British East India Company's objectives, which were initially centered on political unification and economic supremacy, had a significant impact. Muslim communities' experiences during this time were shaped by the conquest of new territory and the implementation of land revenue regimes, most notably the Permanent Settlement of 1793, which altered landownership and socioeconomic institutions.¹⁷

Policies implemented by the British colonial administration, which were frequently typified by a divide and rule approach, were crucial in communalizing identities and inflaming tensions between various religious communities, such as

those between Muslims and Hindus.¹⁸ The establishment of distinct electorates according to religion exacerbated societal divisions and made it possible for the British to take advantage of religious disparities for their own political ends.¹⁹ These policies had a complex effect on Indian Muslims, inspiring cooperation from some sections of the elite community while inciting opposition from others who felt their socio-political status was in jeopardy. The difficulties were exacerbated by the Mughal Empire's contemporaneous fall, which was historically linked to Muslim governance in India and further marginalized Indian Muslims' political agency.²⁰ As a result, Muslims in India had to negotiate their identity and status within the framework of British colonial control in a complicated way.

3.2 Impact of Colonialism on Muslim Identity and Socio-Economic Conditions

Indian Muslims' identities and socioeconomic conditions were profoundly impacted by colonial rule. The rebuilding of financial frameworks disturbed customary examples of occupation, especially for those took part in agribusiness.²¹ The shift in land ownership and revenue systems altered existing social hierarchies and contributed to economic disparities.

Under colonial rule, Muslim identity underwent change that was historically shaped by a combination of religious, cultural, and political factors. The communalization of personalities, filled by the strategies of the English organization, prompted the explanation of a particular Muslim character because of seen underestimation.²² Indian Muslims' feelings of loss and displacement were exacerbated by the rise of British-controlled institutions and the decline of Muslim political power. Instructively, the foundation of pilgrim organizations dually affected Indian Muslims. On one hand, openness to Western instruction gave roads to social versatility and admittance to groundbreaking thoughts. Then again, the educational plan frequently underestimated native information and added to a feeling of social estrangement among Muslim understudies.²³

Indian Muslims faced a complicated sociopolitical landscape as a result of the intersection of issues of identity and the economic changes brought about by colonialism. The development of a cutting edge, industrialized economy tested conventional financial designs, influencing Muslims who were frequently overrepresented in specific areas. As a result, many Muslims' economic circumstances deteriorated, contributing to the community's socioeconomic disparities.

4. Abdulhamid's Pan-Islamic Policy and Its Impact on Indian Muslims

4.1 Dissemination of Pan-Islamic Ideals

The hallmark of Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic policy was the implementation of calculated diplomatic measures meant to promote Muslim unity worldwide. The Sultan tried to increase his legitimacy and appeal to Muslims all across the world by presenting himself as the Caliph. His diplomatic activities included larger attempts to strengthen the political and cultural unity of the Muslim ummah as well as assistance for the Palestinian Arab community opposing Zionist settlement and advocacy for Muslims facing challenges to their territory in Bosnia and Macedonia.²⁴ In order to improve Islamic education and cultural links, Abdülhamid II dispatched academics and educational missions during his reign. These missions might have been dispatched to regions with a preponderance of Muslims, such as Africa and Central Asia. Supporting Muslims' educational requirements in Central Asia and fostering harmony among Turkic-speaking populations were the two main objectives. Initiatives taken by Abdülhamid II demonstrated his dedication to advancing Islamic education and Muslim unity, in line with his goal of an Ottoman-led Islamic world that was powerful and cohesive.

The influence of Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic strategy reached Muslim intellectuals in India who were crucial in forming British India's sociopolitical environment. When it came to tackling the problems caused by British colonial rule, Indian Muslim intellectuals found resonance in the propagation of pan-Islamic principles that emphasized a common Islamic identity. Influenced by pan-Islamic ideas, academics such as Maulana Barkatullah promoted a united Muslim reaction to colonial tyranny and participated in cross-border talks.²⁵ The creation of a collective consciousness that transcends regional ties and reflects a broader transnational link founded in common religious identity was facilitated by the influence of pan-Islamic rhetoric on Indian Muslim intellectuals.

4.2 Reaction of Indian Muslims

A complex web of interrelated variables shaped the late 19th-century Indian Muslim communities' embrace of Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic views. Given the geopolitical context of British colonial authority in India, certain Muslim groups viewed the Sultan's vision as a source of inspiration and unity, while others regarded it cautiously. Through diplomatic channels and cultural interactions, Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic principles were disseminated, influencing Indian Muslims' religious consciousness and sense of a common Islamic identity.²⁶ Diverse interpretations and responses within the Indian Muslim

community were reflected in the varying reception across various areas and social strata.

One important aspect of the response among Indian Muslims was the assimilation of pan-Islamic principles into regional socio-political groups in British India. Some leaders and activists were motivated by Abdulhamid's desire to integrate pan-Islamic values into their opposition to British colonialism. The development of a collective Muslim identity that went beyond geographic affinities was aided by the pan-Islamic rhetoric.²⁷ Early 20th-century movements like the Khilafat Movement demonstrated how pan-Islamic principles were incorporated into India's larger fight for political rights and self-governance. The way that local socio-political movements and pan-Islamism intersected demonstrated how Abdulhamid's views might be tailored to the particular problems that Indian Muslims faced while living under British rule.

4.3 Socio-Political Changes

In the late 19th century, Indian Muslims' political consciousness was profoundly influenced by Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic program. The propagation of principles that were pan-Islamic helped Muslims become more conscious of their common religious identity and the difficulties that the Muslim ummah faced.²⁸ The articulation of demands for political representation, autonomy, and acknowledgment within the framework of British colonialism was a manifestation of this newly discovered political consciousness. Indian Muslims had a sense of unity and solidarity as pan-Islamic ideals were incorporated into their political discourse. This had an impact on how they interacted with colonial authorities and took part in larger socio-political activities.

Changes in leadership structures and community dynamics among Indian Muslims were brought about by the spread of pan-Islamic ideologies. Abdulhamid's vision contributed to the formation of a collective Muslim identity, which in turn prompted a reassessment of leadership roles and intra community interactions.²⁹ The growth of figures who promoted unity and struggle against perceived injustices was aided by the pan-Islamic discourse. During this time, the conventional leadership structures underwent changes as individuals motivated by pan-Islamic philosophy took on significant responsibilities in assisting the society in overcoming the difficulties brought about by British colonial control. A shift in goals and leadership styles was sparked by the incorporation of pan-Islamic values into community dynamics, which revealed a greater understanding of common political and cultural issues.

5. Challenges and Resistance

5.1 British Response

Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic aspirations provoked a variety of responses from British colonial officials. A combination of diplomatic maneuvers and counter-measures against the impact of pan-Islamic ideology defined the British approach. From a diplomatic standpoint, the British government kept a careful eye on Abdulhamid's attempts to stir up Muslim feeling around the world, especially in areas that it ruled.³⁰ By highlighting the British commitment to religious tolerance and downplaying the political significance of the Caliphate, attempts were made to counterbalance the Sultan's power. When British officials realized that Muslim communities may unite in opposition to colonial rule, they took calculated steps to lessen the impact of pan-Islamic ideals on these communities.

5.2 Suppression of Pan-Islamic Activities in India

British colonial authorities responded to the spread of pan-Islamic ideas in India by taking action to quell any actions they saw as posing a danger to imperial interests. Increased surveillance and crackdowns on Muslim activists resulted from the rise of pan-Islamic movements and the adoption of these principles into regional socio-political initiatives.³¹ Pan-Islamic activities were banned by the British government, which saw them as subversive and aimed to stifle any possible challenges to their rule. The British tactic to limit the spread of pan-Islamic rhetoric and preserve control over the many religious communities on the Indian subcontinent included the imposition of severe rules, prohibitions on meetings, and the monitoring of influential figures.

5.3 Internal Challenges

Internal obstacles prevented the spread of pan-Islamic concepts as the Muslim community in India struggled with divides along different lines. A cohesive reaction to Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic activities was frequently hampered by socioeconomic, regional, and sectarian divides within the community.³² While some groups supported the idea of a unified Muslim identity, others expressed skepticism, underscoring the conflicts that already exist within India's heterogeneous Muslim community. The community's capacity to respond to British colonial control and Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic vision was impacted by these internal differences.

Opposition to pan-Islamic notions came from several sectors in the Indian subcontinent. The pan-Islamic discourse was criticized by several political figures, thinkers, and religious experts who saw it as a possible source of unrest and

instability.³³ Concerns about escalating inter communal conflicts, deflecting attention from regional problems, and possibly harming inter communal ties were the main reasons for opposition to pan-Islamic views. This internal resistance created a multifaceted environment of contrasting viewpoints inside the Indian Muslim community and complicated how Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic vision was received.

6. Cultural and Educational Influence

6.1 Educational Initiatives

The pan-Islamic policies of Abdulhamid II were clearly felt in areas where the Ottoman Caliphate had an effect on educational programs. The Sultan's goal of promoting Islamic unity found physical expression in the founding of educational institutions and schools. These educational establishments were intended to inculcate in pupils a common cultural and religious identity in addition to imparting knowledge. The schools sought to develop a generation of Muslims with a strong sense of commitment to the larger ummah. They were frequently funded by Ottoman monies or associated with pan-Islamic groups.³⁴ Institutions that aimed to strike a balance between modern education and the preservation of Islamic principles came into being as a result of the influence of pan-Islamic ideas on educational endeavors.

Curricula and educational philosophies changed as pan-Islamic values were included into educational programs. The curriculum demonstrated a focus on Islamic studies, literature, and history, showcasing the accomplishments of Islamic civilization. The concept of education changed to include ideals of solidarity, opposition to colonial tyranny, and dedication to preserving Islamic legacy.³⁵ By incorporating pan-Islamic values into the curriculum, Muslim communities were encouraged to feel proud and united and to develop graduates who had a comprehensive understanding of their religious and cultural identity.

6.2 Cultural Exchange

The pan-Islamic policies of Abdulhamid II had a profound effect on the cultural manifestations and practices of the Ottoman Empire's affected regions, including India. The resurgence of Islamic-inspired cultural practices was aided by the spread of pan-Islamic ideas. Inspired by the common history of the wider Muslim ummah, cultural forms such as art, literature, and architecture started to show a revitalized emphasis on Islamic identity.³⁶ A cultural environment that was in line with Abdulhamid's pan-Islamic vision was created by this cultural renaissance, which had an impact on everything from fashion trends to creative themes.

Under Abdulhamid II, there was a vibrant intellectual and cultural exchange between India and the Ottoman Empire. Scholars, artists, and cultural missionaries traversed between the two areas, promoting the exchange of ideas and creative customs. The literary, philosophical, and theological thought exchanges enhanced the cultural fabric of both societies.³⁷ An awareness of common history and identity was fostered between Ottoman and Indian Muslims thanks in large part to this cultural exchange. Beyond geographical limits, the exchange of cultural materials led to a deeper comprehension of the diversity and depth of Islamic civilization.

Conclusion

This research has examined the complex effects of Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic program on Muslims in India who were under to British authority in the late 1800s. Important discoveries have been made through the analysis of historical materials, diplomatic correspondence, and cultural influences that provide insight into the complex dynamics of this time. The political, cultural, and educational spheres of the Indian Muslim community were profoundly impacted by Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic policies. Indian Muslims responded favorably to the Ottoman Sultan's diplomatic efforts to advance pan-Islamic unity, which influenced their political awareness and created a sense of camaraderie. Pan-Islamic organizations and schools influenced artistic expressions, architectural styles, and intellectual endeavors, contributing to a cultural rebirth. Within the Indian Muslim community, these concepts were received differently, which resulted in both resistance and absorption.

The time frame under investigation demonstrated a complex interaction between internal and external elements that shaped Indian Muslims' reactions to concepts that were pan-Islamic. Internal difficulties, such as community splits and opposition from a range of sources, brought to light how difficult it is to negotiate a common identity among divergent viewpoints. The British response and suppression of pan-Islamic efforts in India, among other external problems, demonstrated the geopolitical factors that influenced the trajectory of events. To sum up, the research offers a thorough understanding of how Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic strategy has affected Indian Muslims in a revolutionary way. The results enhance our comprehension of the intricate dynamics of the late 19th century, when both local and global factors interacted to shape the course of a community coping with the hardships of British colonial rule.

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