Emergence of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

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INTRODUCTION

Egypt had been under informal colonial rule under British for almost half a century. The British entered into Egypt during the 1882 Anglo-Egyptian war by the 1888 at the convention of Constantinople, whereby the right to protect Suez canal was won by the British. Post the World War II, Egypt became a Protectorate state of the Britain after the fall of the Ottoman empire. Along with the British came major economic opportunities and huge inflow of expatriates. Egypt in the late 1880s and early 1990s had a very cosmopolitan vibe because of the influence of the foreign cultures.In a vibrant political, economic and social scenario, art and culture flourished. Soon, major cities like Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt channeled and mimicked other European cities (Osman 2011). There were cinemas, plays, music, art shows and exhibitions. Further the British government not only encouraged the immigrants but also gave protection to these foreigners living in Egypt. Separate laws and concessions were made for the foreigners. By early 1990s Egypts economy was run entirely by the Foreigners nationals and business shareholders.

Meanwhile, almost half of Egyptians in the Cairo lived in absolute poverty and in a stark contrast to their fellow expatriate. The economic exploit of the Suez canal already began to concern the locals. Most importantly the exploitation of Egyptian culture by the foreign and un-Islamic Culture was a major issues with the conservative Egyptian who saw these onslaughts as against the principles of Islam and considered it as 'Haram'. There began a growth of strong presence of ethnic and communal identity amongst the people. The first resistance came from the Social reformers and religious leaders like Jayyid Jamat al-Din and his disciple Muhammad Abduh. These reformers blended the ideals of Islamic regeneration with that of Nationalism. Interestingly, early resistance towards the colonial rule lacked any secular Nationalist undertone and primarily focussed on the Introduction of Islamic ideals. Their campaign aimed at total transportation of Egyptian societies on religious ground. Initially reformers were more resistance towards the western education and concerned less with the political crisis. Muhammad Abduh in fact was a liberal social reformer who wanted to stay away from politics and focused only on transforming the societies.

However, things drastically changed post the Arabi revolution in 1879, where the social reformers joined hands with the Millitant nationalist party in overthrowing the British, only to be crushed badly. Two immediate outcome of the revolution was that the British learnt its lesson and

decided less interference in the religious policies vis a vis the Egyptians. Second and most important outcome was the political and social vacuum created after the revolt. The political and social scenario was was ideal location for change and it is in 1928 that Hassan al Banna establishes Muslim Brotherhood in Islamia Egypt which was back then only one of the dozens of other small Islamic organisations that were in response to the British occupation. The original aim of Al Banna was for his new found organization to provide welfare and charitable services for the population while also educating and Islamising the society. Al Banna did not just confine its recruitment to people alone, he heavily recruited youths especially and it is perhaps why the Muslim Brotherhood is one of most followed Islamic organisation in many Islamic countries till date. The organisation came to present itself as the guardians of the native pop culture against the distortions of foreign and secular ideologies. It was this ability to link issues which were usually associated with reactions and backwardness, such as Islamic laws and strict public morality, to the national issues of independence and development that made it so popular amongst the masses and particularly with the younger generation (Alison Pargeter, 2013). While earlier reformers denounce politics, Al Banna made the Bortherhood 'Political'. The Brotherhood reacted strongly not just against colonialism and imperialism but against any Un-Islamic practices. In other words, Brotherhood was the only organization to combine missionary objective with carefully thought out programmes of social and economic reforms (Christina Harris, 1964).

Muslim Brotherhood emerged as a reaction against anything foreign to the Egyptian culture and faith. and by combining religious services with political ambitious Al Banna made the Brotherhood one of the reckoning force in the socio political history of Egypt.

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