

Haji Shariat Ullah

Early Life and Education

Haji Shariat Ullah was born in **1781 in Faridpur, Bengal**, in a poor farming family. He studied basic Islamic knowledge in his village and later went to Calcutta for further education. Then he traveled to **Makkah**, where he performed Hajj and studied Islam deeply for about **20 years**. He was influenced by reformist ideas like those of Shah Wali Ullah. When he returned to Bengal, he wanted to remove wrong practices and revive true Islam.

Social and Religious Conditions in Bengal

At that time, Muslims in Bengal were suffering. They were under **British colonial rule** and Hindu landlords (zamindars) exploited peasants by charging heavy taxes and forcing labor. Muslims were mixing their religion with Hindu customs, ignoring true Islamic duties. Poverty and ignorance made the situation worse. Religious leaders were not helping the poor, and Muslims were divided and weak. This situation motivated Haji Shariat Ullah to start a movement to reform society.

The Faraizi Movement

In **1818**, he started the **Faraizi Movement**. The word *Faraizi* comes from *faraiz*, meaning the basic duties of Islam. He told Muslims to focus only on the **essential practices**: prayer, fasting, zakat, and hajj. He opposed un-Islamic rituals, Hindu-influenced traditions, and superstitions. His message was simple: perform your obligations, leave innovations. The movement spread among **peasants in rural Bengal**, giving them confidence, dignity, and a stronger Islamic identity.

Resistance and Challenges

The movement faced strong opposition. Hindu landlords hated it because it reduced their power over peasants. The **British** feared it as a possible political revolt. Even some Muslim elites resisted him, saying he was too strict. His followers were often arrested, punished, or harassed. Internal divisions also made unity difficult. Despite these challenges, the movement created a **moral and spiritual awakening** among poor Muslims.

Legacy and Contribution

Haji Shariat Ullah died in **1840**, but his movement was carried on by his son **Dudu Miyan**, who made it more political and organized. The Faraizi Movement helped peasants fight against unfair taxes and strengthened the Islamic identity of Bengal's Muslims. It reminded Muslims of their religious duties and gave them courage against oppression. It also inspired later reformist and independence movements in India. Haji Shariat Ullah is remembered as a **pioneer of Islamic revival in Bengal**.

