

Islam in Russia

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The History

The long history of Islam in Russia is grand and glorious as well as doleful and dreadful. Many stringent steps were taken against Islam and the Muslims during and after the Russian Revolution. Those tough and tight measures, however, failed to wipe out the Muslims and their rich cultural heritage.

On the contrary, the present position rather confirms the fact beyond doubt that like all other Muslim regions of the world the Russian Muslim areas are also in the grips of a rising wave of awakening.

Despite strict Russian censure of the media the entire world has known by now how vigorously the people of the Muslim majority areas of Russia have asserted their separate political identity and revitalized their distinctive cultural heritage. The more recent upsurges in all the Muslim states of Russia are simply eye-opening for everyone. All awakening movements among the Russian Muslims have always been distinctly Islamic in letter and spirit.

Islam and Muslims in Russia

Islam entered on the Russian scene in the seventh century A.D. (first century A.H.). Even during the Rightly Guided Caliphate at Madinah, the Muslim armies had started making penetrations into Russian soil. In 642, Azerbaijan came under Muslim control. The Muslims also occupied the extreme border town of Darbund in 658. After the conquest of eastern Caucasia (Qafqaz) Islam began to spread in these areas without any resistance. The Muslim armies crossed river Oxus in 673. Bukhara fell to the Muslims in 674.

The series of such conquests went on up to the tenth century when Islam became the most popular religion in the entire central Asia. With the passage of time these very areas began to be considered as the main centres of Islamic civilization and culture. Thereafter Islam's popularity went on increasing in the whole of Russia. Such developments inspired and encouraged missionary activities of the Sufi saints of central Asia Qafqaz.

Unfortunately, however, Russia had a tight grip over the Muslim territories from the middle of the sixteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. But despite her oppressive operations there was never any decline in the spread and popularity of Islam in Russia.

The pace of Islam's dissemination maintained a high momentum in eastern Russia. The Russian Muslims of these areas maintained their brotherly links with the rest of the Muslims world for quite a long span of time. Central Asia and Qafqaz played a vital role in promoting the Islamic civilization and its culture for full one thousand years. These areas enjoyed the same honours in the rise and glory of Islam as have gone to the lot of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and the indo-Pak subcontinent. Taimur's capital was Samarqand. From the literary point of view, Persian became popular in Bukhara for the first time. Khawarizam was the ancestral city of the renowned Muslim physician-cum-philosopher, Avicenna.