

KHILA FAT MOVEMENT: A PATHWAY TO PAKI STAN

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L.H. Qureshi appraises the Khilafat Movement thus:

“Though the Khilafat Movement achieved no ostensible success, yet it was of considerable value as an instrument of creating public consciousness in the Muslim masses. It provided a broad-based leadership and taught the techniques of organizing a mass movement to the Muslims. These proved great assets in the struggle for Pakistan.”³²

World War II resulted in the defeat of Germany and her allies, Turkey being one of them. Sultan of Turkey was a vestige of the Ottoman Caliphs. He was a symbol of the sacred institution of khilafat which had started with Hazrat Abu Bakr as successor to the Prophet (S.A.S).

The Ottoman Empire began to dwindle since the advent of the eighteenth century. About the middle of the nineteenth century this Empire came to be called “the sick man of Europe”. Now with her total defeat in 1918, things took a horrible turn. Allies looked bent upon dismembering her to the extent of extinction. It agitated the soul of the muslim Ummah, in particular the Muslims of the Sub-continent. They, although themselves, were the British Slaves yet determined to do all they could for the preservation of Turkish Sovereignty which meant saving the symbol of khilafat-i-Islam. Khilafat, though, had lost its effect as a political force yet it served as a spiritual rallying point for the Ummah, atleast for the majority of the Sunnis. The Muslim leaders of the Sub-continent who almost all of them belonged to the Muslim League, brought about an organisation in 1919, for the protection of Ottoman Caliphate which later on came to be known as the “Khilafat Committee”. Main purpose of this organization was to launch a forceful mass movement to pressurise the British Rulers so as to soften their attitude in respect of their dealings with the Khalifa. Thus Maulana

³² The Struggle For Pakistan, 1979 P.41

Muhammad All and his elder brother Maulana Shaukat Ali helped by Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr. Ansari, Maulana Zafar All Khan, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and other began to deliver speeches in favour of the Turkish Sultan. There were fiery speeches and they stirred the soul of Muslims in all parts of the country.

The above named Muslim leaders had openly supported the Turkish stance when the Sultan threw his lot with the Germans. Maulana Muhammad Ali's article "The choice of Turks" tremendously moved the Muslims. This obviously could not be tolerated by the British rulers who were fighting against the Turks. Ali Brothers and Maulana A.K. Azad were interned. All Brothers were released only when the War ended. This act of valour had raised their stature in estimation of the public at large.

Mr. Gandhi, as is well known, had been supplying recruits to the British rulers from the beginning of the War to the end of 1917. It was Mr. Gandhi who had written to the Viceroy, "If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps I would make them withdraw all the Congress Resolutions and not whisper 'Home Rule' or 'Responsible Government' during the pendency of the War. I would make India, offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment.³³". He was after the War, decorated with the medal kaisar- i-Hind for his appreciable services (Jinnah and Gandhi, Lahore 1976-P. 28). Till 1919 he had not grown into a big leader. Indulal Yajnik say:

"The last Congress that he attended was in Calcutta, 1917. He could hardly then be designated as a leader of any importance in Congress politics illness prevented him from attending the two Sessions of 1918. But one year more and he was acclaimed at the Amritsar Congress at the end of 1919 as one of the three or four principal leaders of Congress organisation in the country³⁴".

At this juncture the Khalifa leaders especially the All Brothers sought Mr. Gandhi's help to strengthen the Khilafat Movement and add to the

³³ Gandhi As I know him, by Indu Lal Yajnik, Danish Mahal Delhi pp. 49,50.

³⁴ "Gandhi As I Know him"-P.120.

pressure upon the British Government. Relating to this incidence Mr. Subhash Chander Bose states:

“About this time the All brothers and other Muslim Leaders were preparing to launch the Khilafat Movement and they too were looking out for allies.Nothing could please them more than to find that the premier nationalist organisation of the country would take up the cause of Turkey. So an alliance was at once struck between Mr. Gandhi and All brothers on the basis of two issues, viz the Punjab atrocities and the Khilafat grievances. The All brothers and their followers while keeping up a separate organisation---the All India Khilafat Committee would join the Indian National Congress and agitate for the redress of the Punjab atrocities and Khilafat wrongs and for the attainment of political freedom which was the only guarantee against such wrongs in future. On the other hand, the Indian National Congress would lend its full support to the Khilafat Organisations in the country and agitate for the redress of the Khilafat or Turkish grievances”³⁵

Subhash Chander Bose has made it clear that it was All brothers who prevail,; upon Mr. Gandhi. They knew that with the support of Indian National Congress they could serve better the cause of Khilafat. And thus Mr. Gandhi, by and by became a non-cooperationist. Swami Shardanand also- is of the opinion that when” Mahatimaji became hopeless of getting justice from the British bureaucrats and was led by All brothers unconsciously towards non-cooperation with the British Government itself ”³⁶

But Mr. Gandhi had his own reasons. Mr. Gandhi knew that the Muslims were enraged over the Khilafat much more than the Hindus were over Punjab atrocities. According to Subhash:

“About the middle of 1920, anti-British feeling was stronger among the Muslims than among the rest of the Indian population”³⁷ Jalianwala tragedy

³⁵ The Indian Struggle P.55.

³⁶ Inside Congress P.114.

³⁷ Indian Struggle -P.53.

had occurred in April, 1919, Rowlatt Bill had also been in the minds of Indians for more than a year, yet there was no tangible public protest which could really make manifest the degree of their disgust with the Bill and the magnitude of their resentment against it. But the khilafatists, as has been already stated, had already begun showing their anxiety regarding the Allies intentions to dismember Turkey. Mr. Gandhi when persuaded by the Ali brothers to join hands with them in launching a forceful movement could clearly visualise that by exploiting the Muslim sentiments he could build himself into a leader of All India stature. And he succeeded in achieving that purpose. Mr. Yajnik is very clear in this respect. He states:

“With every Khilafat Conference and Khilafat Committee meeting held, with every khilafat day observed, with every bit of fresh news percolating into India regarding the fate of the khilafat, Mr. Gandhi gradually developed from a persuasive speaker to an enthusiastic propagandist, and finally assumed the role of a leader of a great non-violent Jihad for the rescue and protection of Islam in the world.”³⁸

But Mr. Subhash Bose has his way of looking at things. It is a renowned fact that Mr. Bose had never liked the dictatorial behaviour of Mr. Gandhi. He hated “yesmanship”. Naturally, he did not relish seeing the enhanced strength of Mr. Gandhi on account of his assuming the leadership of Khilafat Movement and his success in obtaining the support of Khilafat leaders with towering personalities in the field of politics. Mr. Subhash’s forebodings were as under:

“The Amritsar Congress had resolved in December, 1919, to work the Constitution but in the meantime public changed considerably: A special session of the Congress was therefore summoned in Calcutta in Sept. 1920, under the presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai, the well-known Punjab leader. Mr. Gandhi was fully aware that his new policy of opposition to the reformed constitution would not be accepted by an influential section in the Congress. He had, therefore, strengthened himself by an alliance with the Muslim leaders and the All India Khilafat Committee. In fact he was so sure of his position in the session that if the Congress has rejected his plan of non-violent

³⁸ Gandhi As I know him P. 127.

non-cooperation, he could have launched his campaign with the support of Khilafat organisation”³⁹

Subhash Babu’s statement is self-evident. Mr. Gandhi had in mind, killing two birds with one stone, assumption of leadership of Muslims on the one hand and with Muslim support defeating his opposition in the Congress. And Mr. Gandhi had yet two more birds to kill. One of them was the Lucknow Pact. Mr. Gandhi had not looked with fervent favour the Muslim League and Congress entering into a pact through which the principle of separate electorate had been accepted by the Congress. In the words of Mr. Yajnik in respect of Lucknow Scheme “the terms of communal Settlement were adopted almost entirely in the Montague Chelmsford Report and finally incorporated in the new constitutional reforms of 1919”.

Mr.Yajnik elaborating further, lays down:

“Mr. Gandhi again played a very minor part in-this historic session. It was rumoured that he informally advised some of the zealous Hindu leaders to unbend a little more in settlingthe communal problem with the Muslim leader.”⁴⁰

Swami Shardhanand (d:1936) was amongst those who disliked the Lucknow Pact. He states, “I attended the Lucknow sitting of the Congress also as a visitor but behind the scenes I had to do something with the negotiations that were going on. The Hindu-Muslim pact was privately discussed in my presence. Pandit Madan Malaviya and Mr. C.Y. Chintarmany v. re both against the pact. They could not agree to communal representation and communal votings. In informal talks, I too, was in agreement with their views”.⁴¹

Of those zealous Hindu leaders who did not like the Lucknow pact is prof. Balraj Madhok, presently the president of R.S.S. Sangh in India epitomised in the following words, the thinking of Hindu public in general.

³⁹ The Indian Struggle PP. 55,56.

⁴⁰ Ibid P.19.

⁴¹ Inside Congress, 1946.P.41.

“The Congress by making this pact recognised that the Muslims as a Community were different from the rest of the Indians and thus by implication prepared the ground for the two nation theory”⁴²Prof. Balraj Madhok wrote this book in March 1947, only about five months before the Pakistan.

By assuming leadership of both the Khilafat Committee and the Congress, Mr. Gandhi felt he had smashed the two nation principle. Hindus and Muslims had become united under the banner of one leader. Apparently it looked so. And the fact remains that although the Hindus and Muslims did remain united for more than about four years yet the Muslim League had suffered a real rebuff. It could not come to its own until October, 1937 when the Muslim League Session was held at Lucknow. It was a momentous Session. Anyway, it was Mr. Gandhi who smashed the spirit of Lucknow Pact of 1916.

Mr.S.K. Majumdar commenting on Mr.Gandhi’s interest in the Khilafat Movement says:

“Therefore, he (Mr.Gandhi) was determined that the flame of the Khilafat Movement must be kept ablaze. With that end in view, he felt that if he himself be sent to prison for his activities in the Khilafat cause, his non-cooperation Movement would acquire tremendous strength among the Muslims. he was bent on retaining the Muslims under his banner and under his leadership for what he considered his life’s Session”.⁴³

Mr. Gandhi stood elated. He had succeeded in killing the spirit of the Lucknow Pact wherein lay the acceptance of the fact that Muslims and Hindus were two separate nations represented politically by the Muslim League and the Congress respectively. Now there no longer were two nations. There was only one Indian nation led by their supreme leader Mr. Gandhi. Thus he had built himself into a formidable personage capable of showing his political muscle to the government as well as to his opponents in the Congress party itself. But Mr. Gandhi did not feel satisfied with this enhancement of his influence resulting from the surrender before him of the

⁴² Hindustan on the Cross roads P.37.

⁴³ Jinnah and Gandhi-p.63.

Muslim leadership. He could not stop at that. He wanted, overly and covertly, some more gains to extract from the surrendering Muslims. He coveted cow protection. He emotionally was a devotee of the sacred cow. He had written an article published in his own magazine “Young India” on the 12th October, 1921 to which Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad All Jinnah referred in his address in Delhi in April 1943, on the occasion of the annual session of the Muslim League. About his own religion Mr. Gandhi had said:

“I call myself a Sanatani (orthodox) Hindu because firstly. I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishdas, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures and- therefore in Avatars and rebirth”. (Here Quaid-e-Azam had added “ultimately he himself become an Avatar”).

“Secondly I believe in the Varnasharma Dharma atma

the law of the Caste-System) in its vedic forms. “Thirdly, I believe in the protection of cow as an article of faith, and fourthly, I do not disbelieve in idol-worship.”⁴⁴

This, Mr. Gandhi had written in 1921, the year khilafat Movement had started. His Hinduism, and that also of the orthodox Sanatani brand, went on deepening day by day. Here we refer to this stance of his as related by Mr. J.E. Sanjana. It is a highly interesting study:

“But Mr.Gandhi’s convictions of the subject of cow-killing are so deeply rooted and passionately held that he is not content with soul-satisfying fallacy so common among good people who want to read their own convictions into ancient texts. In his presidential address at the Belgaun Cow Conference,Mr.Gandhi referred to these opinions of “big scholars and pandits” that cow sacrifice is to be found in the vedas, etc and to such sentences in his own High School Sanskrit text books as that “formerly Brahmans used to eat beef”, and proceeded, Inspire of such sentences, I have continued to believe that if such a thing be written in the Veda, then perhaps its meaning mz. J not be what we make it out to be. There is another possibility also. According to my interpretation or according to the conviction of my innerself (atma) and for me learning or Sastriac scholarship

⁴⁴ Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah, Sh. M.Ashraf Lahore ed: March 1960, Vo1.I, P. 482.

are not authoritative, but only the conviction of the inner self is authoritative, - if the statements like those cited above have no other meaning, then it must have been the case that only those Brahmans used to eat cow who could again revive the cow after killing her - I have not studied Veda, etc. I know many Sanskrit books through translations only. So what can an ordinary person like me say on such subjects? But I have faith in myself.”⁴⁵

It becomes clear that his sentiments regarding the sanctity of the “Cow” were so deep-rooted that he could refute even what the Vedas and Shastras contained contrary to what his inner self i.e. atma dictated. His faith was what he himself believed in. Here the significance of the words of Quaid-e-Azam quoted above becomes clearly understandable “And ultimately he (Mr. Gandhi) himself became an Avatar”. Perhaps an Avatar could set aside, what Vedas ordained or contained. Mr. J.E, Sanjana quotes the devotional words of some important social and political figures of the Hindu community, who regarded Mr. Gandhi an Avatar and a prophet or even more than that.

“Dr. P. Sitaramayya has said that enjoyment of superconscious state which Mr. Gandhi enjoys is the privilege of a Mahatma and that Gandhi is one of those Avatars who descent on earth in order to purify the world. ‘Most Congress papers have said and say, year in and year out that Mr. Gandhi is several Prophets and Avatars rolled into one; for instance patna Congress daily said three years ago ‘He is today the living Jesus, Mohamed and Buddha - and this crescendo has reached its climax in Babu Sirkrishan Sinha’s proclamation that ‘Mahatma is more than God’-And as none who has not faith in the Mahatma cannot be a good Congressman, it is no exaggeration to say that cow-protection if not cow-worship has become a cardinal doctrine of the Congress creed, at least implicitly, for the vast majority of Congressmen who are Hindus”⁴⁶

As Mr. Gandhi called upon the Hindus to support Muslims on the question of khilafat he hoped that the Muslim leaders in return would, of their own accord, stop slaughtering cow. But according to Mr. Yajnik Mr. Gandhi went about his business in a very shrewd manner. Apparently his

⁴⁵ Caste and Outcaste, Thacker & Co., Ltd., Bombay 1946, 2PP.109,110.

⁴⁶ Ibid P.11.

stance was, that it did not behove to Hindus” to bring in the cow question in this connection or to use the occasion to make terms with the Mussulemans”-and then Mr. Gandhi artfully added:

“But it would be anther matter and quite graceful and would reflect great credit on them if the Mussulemans of their own free will stopped cow slaughter out of regard for the religious sentiments of the Hindus and their sense of duty towards them as neighbors and children of the same soil.”⁴⁷ And the response was not late. It came in ‘ the form of a Fatwa issued by Maulana Abdul Bari Frangimahalli that the Muslims out of regard for the sentiments of their Hindu countrymen should give up cow slaughter.’⁴⁸

Mr. Gandhi’s devotion to cow knew no bounds only a few quotations are laid down here to make manifest that Mr. Gandhi’s religion was focussed on the cow. And as he clamped his religion on his politics, hence his politics can in a way be called “cow-politics”. He said:

“Cow-protection is a gift given by the Hindu religion to the world.”⁴⁹

“Hindu-Muslim unity has a close connection with cow- protection”⁵⁰

“In my opinion, the question of cow-protection is not smaller than the Swaraj; in some respects I consider it to be far bigger than the question of Swaraj”⁵¹

These words clearly show that Hindu-Muslim unity had no meaning if the Muslims could not refrain from slaughtering cow. Besides Mr. Gandhi went to the extent of proclaiming that he could not accept Home Rule or Dominion-status or even Freedom if the cow was not protected. And here is yet another expression of Mr.Gandhi and this deals with the Quran alongwith his own peculiar way of interpreting things:

⁴⁷ Gandhi As I know Him P. 116.

⁴⁸ Ibid 116.

⁴⁹ Ibid P. 101.

⁵⁰ Ibid P. 102.

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“So far as I understand it is written in the holy Quran that it is a sin to take the life of any living creature unnecessarily. I desire to develop the strength of making the Mussulemans understand that to live in India with the Hindu and to kill a cow is equivalent to murdering a Hindu: for the Quran says that Allah has ordained that Jannat (Paradise) is not for the murderer of an innocent neighbour.”⁵²-That is to put this superb ratiocination in plain language, a Mussaleman slaughtering a cow within the four corners of India for food or for the Baqar Id sacrifice will, according to the Quran, be consigned by Allah to hell.⁵³

And this peculiar Mahatmaic logic becomes more ratiocinating when Mr. Gandhi proclamis “I regard slaughtering of a cow as my own murder”- First cow stood for an innocent human being. Here slaughter ‘hence, was equal to murdering an innocent person and the Quran consigned the murderer to hell. But hell was the punishment for an ordinary innocent murder. Surely a special Hell to be created for the one who murdered Mr.Gandhi, the Avatar, an embodiment of Prophets. This is how Mr. Gandhi a Barrister and an enlightened citizen of the modern world played politics in the subcontinent. His voice was the voice of the Hindu Congress, in clearer terms, the voice of the Hindu community. Could then the Muslims and the Hindus coexist? They, no doubt, inhabited the same land for centuries, but they never lived together. They lived separately.

Anyway it was the khilafat Movement that had brought together the Muslims and the Hindus at such a mass scale for the first time since the advent of Islam in South Asia, more than twelve hundred years ago. Yet it was just an appearance which evaporated soon like thin fog vanishing before the sun.

S.K. Majumdar explained this phemonenon in the following lines:

“Hindu-Muslim unity over the khilafat Movement was never based on firm foundation. To the Muslims it was a religious movement without any thought of Indian freedom, where as for Gandhiji it was

⁵² Ibid p.103.

⁵³ Ibid P.103.

a weapon for his own ends. Gandhiji said; “I claim that with us both the khilafat is a central fact, with Maulana Muhammad All. because it is religion, with me because in laying down my life for the khilafat, I ensure safety of the cow, that is, my religion, from the Mussalman knife”⁵⁴-preservation of the khilafat was equal to the preservation of the cow. But this cow entailed much more than the words quoted above could convey. The cow in Mahatmajī’s view or rather according to his conviction meant all what Hindus aspired for. And in Mr.Gandhi they had found their most artful mouthpiece.

Mr. Yajnik puts the matter threadbare: “It has already been noted that Mr.Gandhi imported a new religious terminology in his propaganda sense he espoused the Khilafat cause and the non-cooperation programme. India was not to fight for mere political liberty. It was out to install nothing less than Ramrajya or Dharmarajia - Empire of Truth and Love amidst a world torn by military and economic dissensions.”⁵⁵

As already stressed, people to people contact took place for the first time in the hectic days of the khilafat movement. Thousands of Hindus and Muslim sat together in public meetings, walked side by side in political processions and similarly went to prisons in thousands. Thus they saw each other for the first time in twelve hundred years, from very close quarters. Therefore they fell apart. The schism that now occurred was much wider than ever before.

One of the towering personalities of those days who preached Hindu-Muslim unity was Mr. Annie Besant, the founder of Theosophical Society in South Asia. She witnessed the rise and the fall of the khilafat movement, she made the following remarks about what resulted from that movement:

“But since the khilafat agitation things have changed and it has been one of the many injuries inflicted on India by the arrangements of khilafat crusade, that the inner Muslim feeling of hatred against

⁵⁴ Jinnah and Gandhi P. 6

⁵⁵ Gandhi, As I know him P. 160.

“unbelievers” has sprung up naked and unashamed as in the year gone by.”⁵⁶

It is obvious that Mr. Annie Basant has shown what the Muslims felt. It is only the one side of the picture. And this very side has been depicted by Swami Shardhanand also in the following lines:

“There was another prominent fact to which I drew attention of Mahatma Gandhi. Both of us went together one night to the khilafat conference at Nagpur. The Ayat (verses of the Quran) recited by Maulanas on that occasion contained frequent references to Jihad against and the killing of kafirs. But when I drew his attention to this phase of the khilafat Movement, Mahatmaji smiled and said - “they are alluding to the British bureaucracy” in reply I said that it was all subversive of the idea of non-violence and when a revelation of feeling came, the Muhammadan Maulanas would not refrain from using these verses against the Hindus”.⁵⁷

We know that even in 1921 when the feeling of Hindu-Muslim Unity was at its zenith a bloody Hindu-Muslim clash took place in Southern India. The violent Muslim Moplas who were generally peasants rose in open rebellion against the British administration. The Hindu landlords and capitalist traders sided with the government. Hence the clash between Muslim Moplas and Hindus was the natural corollary.

The question is why did the Swami, and other Hindus saw only how the Muslims reacted. Was there no Hindu reaction? It was just natural that the Hindus listened to what the Hindu Leaders said tinged with references to Hindu heroes of the past. The Muslims listened to what the Muslim leaders stated and no doubt with reference to the past glory of Islamic peoples. Hindus and Muslims both left the public meetings filled with the enthusiasm for freedom, but a Hindu thinking as a Hindu and a Muslim as a Muslim. Freedom was visualized not as Indian Freedom, it was rather visualized in terms of Hindu Rule or of Muslim Rule. Alluding to this state of affairs Mr. Yajnik lays down impartially what he felt:

⁵⁶ The Menace of Hindu Imperialism by Swami Dharam Teerath Maharaj, Lahore P. 254.

⁵⁷ Inside Congress P. 123.

“And this occasion proved a veritable signal for orthodox and mediaeval Maulanas, Maulvis and Ulemas on the one hand, and for orthodox Hindu Sadhus, Saints and Sanyasis on the other, to rush to the new platform. Consequently, religious arguments and sacred texts easily usurped the place of political expediencies and rational argument. The authority of Rama and Krishna, Allah and Koran was invoked in every second sentence in the political speeches. Large masses were addressed henceforth as Hindu and Mohammedan, instead of Indians.⁵⁸

Anyway the Hindus agitated as Hindus and Muslims as Muslims. They were filled with forceful desire for freedom. Their sentiments were afire. They were fundamentally, communal sentiments. The result was that when the khilafat and Non-cooperation came to an end the pent up communal emotions burst into Hindu-Muslim clashes throughout the country. The result was that the two major communities of the country fell apart never to come to terms after that. Shudhi and Sangthan campaign was the immediate outcome of the cooperation between the Congress and the Khilafat Movement. Muslims had to lead off inevitably. And they, finding no other way out, took to the path that led them to Pakistan.

⁵⁸ Gandhi, As I know him P.117.