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A Review of Political Services of Maulana Ahmad Reza Khan Bareilvi & Other Sunni Scholars of the Sub-Continent

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ABSTRACT

Ulama & Islamic scholars are the most important figures for the entire Muslim society. In the Indian sub-continent, their influence has transcended the socio-religious realm to include the political realm as well. This paper is an attempt to examine the role of Molana Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi, his Students & other sunni scholars in the Sub Continent politics. It also seeks to build a trajectory of their future influence in Indian & Pakistani politics. There are four parts to the paper. The first part will examine the historical role of Molana Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi in the Indian sub-continent. The second part will examine his political services during the period between 1857 to 1921. The third part will highlight the Sunni ulama to start seriously contesting for political power. Lastly, the paper will look at how the Sunni ulama were again to play an important role in post - partition India & Pakistani politics.

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Introduction

Mawlana Ahmad Rida Khan was the grandson of Mawlana Rida Ali Khan (d. 1282/1866), the great theologian and warrior who fought along with General Bakht Khan against English invaders in 1250/1834. General Hudson announced a reward of Rs. 500.00 for the one who would behead him. An English historian writes that Rida Ali Khan did his best against English colonialism and supported the freedom fighters with horses and weapons.

Being the grandson of such a brave freedom fighter, he could not remain aloof from the Freedom Movement. Although he did not take any active part in the armed struggles, yet he proved the legitimacy of the armed struggle of Mujahideen with its prerequisites for its effectiveness and paved the way for freedom with his brilliant philosophical enlightenment based on the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. It may be understood better in comparison with his forbidding the Muslims from the untimely migration to Afghanistan which resulted in their empty handed return for suffering even more. It was his love of freedom that the personalities like Mawlana Faḍl-i-Haq (d. 1278/1861) and the Martyr poet Mawlana Kifayat Ali Kafi (d. 1275/1858) had been one of his

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favouriterole models.

He was against Hindu-Muslim Unity. This was the basic idea which can rightly be called the foundation of Pakistan.

After 7th July, 1920 announcement of non-co-operation, when the Islamia College, Lahore, was entangled in a non-co-operation movement, with the suggestion of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (the Poet of the East) and the members of Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam, Prof. Hakim Ali the Vice Principal of Islamia College, presented his resignation before Ahmad Rida Khan. He was seriously ill at that critical juncture but he gave his verdict un-dauntedly which was published as a treatise with the title of: -

“AL-MUHAJA- AL-MU‘TAMINA”

His historical influence:

The Imam rendered valuable services to the Ummah when it was passing through a crucial period (1856– 1931), particularly for the subcontinent where Muslims had lost their Mughal Empire. On the other hand, Khilafat was breathing its last and Islamic states were facing dismemberment. The Muslims in the subcontinent were subjected to oppression by English rulers, who were promoting Hindus as their secret allies and putting them against Muslims. In such a situation, Imam Ahmad Raza created awareness among Muslims of the subcontinent and of the world. He wrote extensively to encourage Muslims to face the challenges of the time and prevent further disintegration of the Ummah. Imam Ahmad Raza also put in great efforts to persuade Muslims of India to acquire modern day education to compete with the world in the fields of Science and Technology, besides all other disciplines. As a self respecting Muslim scholar, Imam Ahmad Raza never accepted gifts, presents, donations etc from the then rulers, Nawabs, Rajas or the British rulers, etc. He strongly believed in the two-nation theory and always stressed on Muslims' unity. He enjoyed command over the Arabic language and literature and several of his books are described as masterpieces of Arabic literature and treasure of religious teachings.

Now we discuss his views on various political matters as under:

"Hijrah from Darul Islam is unlawful as there is desolation of the mosques, disgrace of graves & ruin of women, children and old aged people.

"Financial assistance is not wajib for poor and assistance by action for help is even less mandatory, therefore the order of Jihad and killing is not incumbent on the Muslims of present India"

The Quranic Verses have in abundance declared cooperation with all Kaffirs Unlawful, whether they be Majoos or Jews or christians or Hindus.

Imam Ahmad Raza had Fiqhi differnces with those who considered the political government of Turkey as Khilafat in the sense of Shari'ah. Maulvi Abdul Bari of FirangiMahl & Abu'lKalam Azad had not admitted the Qureshiyat necessary for Khilafat but according to Ahlesunnah Qureshiyat is the condition for Caliphate & he (Imam Ahmad Raza) proved this condition in the light of Hadith & refuted the views of Maulvi Abdul Bari and Abu'lKalam Azad. However, Imam Ahmad Raza had his own programme of providing help to the Turks. Imam Ahmad Raza presented four points programme for economic & social welfare of Muslims.

Imam Ahmad Raza refuted Maulvi Abdul Bari on following Mr Gandhi & Cooperating with the Kaffirs & Mushriks.

He also refuted those theories of Science which were against Islamic thoughts. He refuted Newton, Kepler, Gallileo, Hershel & others.

Imam Ahmad Raza refuted the Nadvah. He received fatwa from Ulama of the Holy Hermain & Published the book entitled with "Fatawa-al-Hermain.

Imam Ahmad Raza refuted the Naturism

Besides rebuttal of Moharram mourning, unvieling of Taziyah, & false mysticism etc, he also rebutted card playing, other fun & sports, the funeral feast & false customs of marriage etc.

Political Activates from 1857 to 1921:

During this period, Sunni ulama were again to play an important role in soon to be created India & Pakistan politics. They worked actively for their political representation.

This treatise formulated in this regard was a valuable document for freedom fighters. It paved the way and changed the ideas of the great politicians like Dr. Muhammad Iqbal and Quaid-i-Azam M.A. Jinnah. His disciples and pupils took active part in freedom movement. They had discussion with Abu al-Kalam Azad and Ali Brothers (i.e. Mawlana Muhammad Ali and Mawlana Shaukat Ali) on 13th Radjab 1339/1920. A public meeting was held at Bans Bareilly under the auspices of Jam'iyat-Ulama-i-Hind. Maulana Abu Al-Kalam Azad, the first Minister of Education of India was on the stage. Ahmad Rida Khan's disciple Mawlana Sayyid Sulayman Ashraf, Mawlana Muhammad Zafar Al-Din, Mawlana Hamid Rida Khan (the elder son of Ahmad Rida Khan) Mawlana Burhan al-Haq, etc., were also invited. They had open and free discussions on political issues publicly with Mawlana Abu al-Kalam Azad and blatantly refuted his idea of so called Hindu-Muslim Unity.

In 1946/1366, an ideal conference was held at Binaras, India. Hundreds and thousands of Ulamas (followers of Ahmad Rida Khan) from all over the Indo-Pak Sub-continent attended this conference. A resolution was unanimously passed in favour of Pakistan and thenceforward his desciple and followers expanded and enhanced their political activities all over Indo-Pak Sub-continent. Among them the following were prominent:

1. Mawlana Sayyid Muhammad Muhaddith (d. 1383/1963).
2. Mawlana Muhammad Naeem al-Din (d. 1367/1948). 36
3. Mawlana Sayyid Muhammad Ahmad (d. 1380/1961).
4. Mufti Muhammad Umar (d. 1385/1966).
5. Mawlana Muhammad Abd al-Aleem (d. 1374/1954). 37
6. Mawlana Muhammad Sharif (d. 1371/1951).
7. Mawlana Abd al-Hamid Badayuni (d. 1390/1970).

Ahmad Rida Khan had strong hold on Muslim masses and it was the masses that made the Movement of Pakistan a success. The majority of the Muslim voters was under his influence, his disciples and pupils. So, the credit rightly goes to him and his followers. Historians of the world especially of Indo-Pak Sub-continent should draw their attention to this most significant aspect of freedom movement. It is even more important to note that Imam Ahmad Rida highlighted the focal point that the love of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) is the summum bonum of Islamic politics and has played important role in the history of Muslim world.

Imam Ahmad Raza's Politics was very simple & based upon Islamic thoughts. He, opposed Hijra movement, Jihad movement, Khilafat movement and Non-cooperation movement because they were

launched by Gandhi & Hindus for their vested interests & not for welfare of Muslims & nor in the Sympathy of Osmani Sultanate of Turkey and the later scenario proved his visionary conclusions as an undeniable reality. In fact, the Hindus liberating India from British govt., wanted to rule over the country forming it as "Ram Raj" & making Muslims as their subjects and slaves.

In opposing Non-cooperation movement whatever Imam Ahmad Raza did, was never proved to be supporting the British govt., rather it was clearly in opposition of so called Muslim-Hindu Unity. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, he declared the cooperation with any Kafir and Mushrik Unlawful.

Conclusion

The regime of British empire was in fact demolished by the influence of Molana Ahmed Raza Khan Bareilvi & his Students in the Sub Continent politics. It also proved that the trajectory of future of Indian politics may lead towards right track through the proper practice of A'ala Hazrat's theory in the real world of country's society. We have examined his historical role & political activities in the period between 1857 to 1921 and of his students and other sunni ulama participating efficiently to play a remarkable role in regaining the political power.

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