

# ROLE OF MUSLIMS IN KHILAFAT MOVEMENTS IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY FROM 1919 TO 1922

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to describe the role of Muslims in Khilafat movements in Madras Presidency from 1919 to 1922. The word 'Khilafat' means Caliphate. Historically, the Caliph was the successor to the Prophet Mohammed. In theory, the Caliph was both the spiritual and temporal ruler of the Muslims all over the world. Naturally Indian Muslims has also recognized the Caliph as their religious head. But when Turkey, the seat of the Caliph, entered into the First World War on the side of Germany against Britain the Indian Muslims were in dilemma. They had to stand between the Caliph and the British Government. They decided to defend their religious head. The British with a view to grab support of the Indian Muslims assured that Turkey would be treated sympathetically, that nothing would be done against the Muslim holy places in Asia Minor and that the Turkish Empire would not be dismembered. The Indian Muslims, therefore extended their loyal cooperation to the British Government by enlisting Muslims in strength for service in the army. But when the war came to a close the Turkish Sultan was deprived of all real authority and his Empire was disintegrated. The Indian Muslim thought that this was a clear violation of the solemn promise given to them by the British Government. To protest against this the Indian Muslims launched a mass movement.

**Key words :** Khilafat Movement, All India Khilafat Committee, Muslim Students' conference

## Introduction

The Indian Muslims considered the violation of the promise made by the British Prime Minister Loyal George on 5 January 1918 as a great betrayal of faith on the part of Great Britain. They therefore started the Khilafat agitation. The objectives of the agitation as to pressurize the British Government:

1. To protect the boundary of the Turkish Empire it had been in 1914.

2. To preserve the spiritual and temporal authority of the Turkish Sultan as the Caliph of Islam. Two new bodies, viz., All India Khilafat Committee and the Jamiat-al-ulama-e-Hind, were founded in 1919 to organize the Khilafat agitation.

### **All India Khilafat Committee**

To organize the All India Khilafat Committee, a provisional Committee was formed in Bombay on 20 March 1919. Muhammed Chottani, a wealthy local merchant, was its President. This committee worked seriously to establish the nationwide Committee. An All India Khilafat Committee was formed under the leadership of Moulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Hassarat Mohani in 1919. Branches were started all over India to hold meetings in order to keep Muslims informed of the Khilafat issue and to convert Muslim feelings into effective action against the British Government. The Jamiat was the religious counterpart of the Khilafat Committee. Its aims were to promote unity among the ranks of the ulama, to develop leadership according to the tenets of Islamic law, to strengthen contact with the rest of the Islamic world and to promote friendship with non Muslims, particularly the Hindus of India.<sup>1</sup>

### **Khilafat Movement in Tamil Nadu**

In order to make the Khilafat Day a grand success, the prominent leader's birth from Hinduism and Islam of Madras signed a Memorandum of Appeal to be circulated among the people of the city. Through this appeal they requested the people.

- a) To suspend their business on the Khilafat Day
- b) To offer Prayers for the just settlement of the Turkish Issue
- c) To organize meeting in all towns and villages and to send telegrams to the Madras Government conveying their concerns of on the Turkish issue.

In Madras Presidency the Khilafat Movement was organized by Abdul Majid Sarar and Yakub Hassan with the support of Hindus leaders.<sup>2</sup> The All India Khilafat Committee decided to establish the First All India Khilafat Conference on 21 September 1919 at Lucknow, Gandhi whole heartedly supported the Khilafat movement because he saw in it a God sent opportunity to promote the Hindu-Muslim unity.<sup>3</sup>

He took it a device to forge unity between the Hindus and the Muslims, the two major sections of our country and guided them rightly on the path of freedom.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the British Government organized peace celebrations on 17th October 1919, and it also appealed to the Indians to join the celebrations. So the Lucknow conference decided to observe 17th October 1919 as a first Khilafat day.

In response the Muslims in Tamilnadu celebrated it on 17th October 1919, in Madras as a 'First Khilafat Day' with the support of the Hindu leaders.<sup>5</sup> In Tamilnadu, most of the shops of the Hindus and Muslims were closed and prayers were conducted in all Mosques, during the celebration of the

First Khilafat day. The Khilafat leaders of the Madras Presidency Basheer Ahmed Sayeed, Abdullah Majid Sharar, Moulavi Syed Murthuza Sahib of Trichinopoly, Akbar Hussain and Yakub Hassan gave the idea of holding a Muslim Students' Khilafat Conference.

The servants of Islam' or the Khilafat volunteers' corps played a vital role. They were mostly young students who constituted a major strength in the Khilafat volunteer's corps estimated about five hundred. They were provided training in drill and made some show of military discipline, marching through the streets carrying a 'Union Jack' flag with a Crescent on it. No attempt was however made to give this body of volunteers a permanent organization.<sup>6</sup> On 17th October 1919, evening mammoth processions were organized from different parts of Madras to the Triplicane area in which a large number of people took part.<sup>7</sup> Finally these processions ended in the beach and it was estimated by the Madras Government that twenty thousand people participated in the meeting which was held in front of the Presidency College.<sup>8</sup>

The Madras Provincial Congress Committee in its meeting held on 16th March 1920 passed a resolution requesting all communities and classes to observe hartal on the Khilafat day by cessation of all business.<sup>9</sup>

The years 1920-1922 constitute a distinct watershed in the evolution of Indian nationalism under the leadership of the Indian National Congress. This momentous period witnessed not only the launching of the Khilafat and Non-cooperation campaigns but also marked the commencement of what has often called the "Gandhian Era" of the Congress Movement.

### **Gandhi and Khilafat Conference**

In the Second All India Khilafat conference held at Delhi on 24th November 1919, Gandhi was elected as President and asked the Hindus to co-operate whole heartedly with the Khilafat movement. And similarly Gandhi joined with the Muslim leaders like Moulana Mohammed Ali and Shoukath Ali, M.A. Ansari, Hakim Ajmak Khan, Abdul Kalam Azad, Saifudeen Kichalu, Shorwani and Zahir Hussain who were in the movements against the British.<sup>10</sup>

According to Amritsar session of Congress, the Khilafat deputation led by Moulana Mohammed Ali met 'Lloyd George' the British Prime Minister on 17th March 1920, but in vain. In accordance with the decision of the All India Khilafat Committee at Delhi, it was decided to observe 19th March 1920, as a 'Day of Mourning'. In the meantime Gandhi issued a manifesto on 10th March 1920, embodying his ideals on the future course of action to be followed by the Khilafatists if their demands were not concealed.<sup>11</sup> This Manifesto is historically important as it contained the first definite elaboration of Gandhi's doctrine of Non-violent non-cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

In Madras Khilafat Committee meeting was held on 17th March 1920 with Yakub Hassan Sahib in the chair. This was attended by many popular leaders like KhudusBhasha Sahib, SayadMurtuza Sahib, Jamal Mohammed, Satyamurthi and others. Moreover the Delhi and Madras committees decided to observe 19th March 1920 as a 'Second Khilafat day' and to request the people to offer prayers at Mosques for the good settlement at Turkey and to hold meetings of the kind in cities, towns and villages.<sup>13</sup> So that the hartal was successful and it passed off peacefully in Tamilnadu and other parts of Madras Presidency.<sup>14</sup>

### **Madras Muslim Students' conference**

Subsequently a Manifesto was published calling upon not only the Muslim Government Servants in civil, military and police services but also the student's community to join in the celebration of this hartal. In this regard, a conference of the 'Madras Muslim students' was held in the Lawley Hall in Madras on 15th March 1920 with Yakub Hassan in the Chair. About more than four hundred students vigorously participated from throughout Tamilnadu and the leaders of Tamilnadu who attended this conference were SayadMurtuza Sahib of Trichirapalli, Abdul MajidSarar, MahadiHussain, KasturirangaIyengar, C.Rajagopalachari and others and resolutions were passed.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore an appeal was issued and signed by a number of Mohammadans and Hindus calling on all the people in Tamilnadu to observe a hartal on 19th March 1920. In the city of Madras a fairly complete hartal was obtained and in connection with the Khilafat day a public meeting was held on 19 March 1920 on the beach opposite of the Presidency College. To join this meeting procession of Mohammadans marched through the streets with Turkish flags and revised slogans in praise of Almighty God. They were accompanied by processions of the members of various labourunion who marched along with the slogan of Hindu-Mussalman-ki-jai.<sup>16</sup>

Many processions were organized from different parts of the city of Madras and they assembled in the Triplicane area. During the procession the people shouted slogans Hindu Musllman Ki Jai, Turkey Ki Jai. Then the meeting began as scheduled on the Marina Beach opposite to the Presidency College. Fairly a good number of young men, mostly students were selling the badges and flags and helped in preserving order. These badges were purchased by many Hindus and Muslims and wore by them. This conference was attended by some twenty five thousand men, of which 20% were Hindus.

In 1920 a public meeting was organized in Madras and 25,000 persons attended it.<sup>17</sup> The Muslim students'Khilafat conference was formed by Abdul Masjid Sharar and SayedMurtuza Sahib and was supported by Akbar Hussain and Yakub Hassan, Mahboob Ali Baig and RaifuddinAhamed were Law college students. Mahadi Ali Mirza, Amir Ali, ZyedHaneer, Mirza Baker Ali and Abdul Wahab were collegiate students were the principal members of the conference. This association formed a permanent

committee of nine students consisting of the above mentioned individuals. The main object of the committee was spread this movement among the students population. Rahmatullah Khan follower of Abdul MajidSharar was also a student of the college and a large number of school boys joined the Muslim volunteer corps that had been organized as part of Khilafat activities in Madras.<sup>18</sup>

Subsequently, the draft terms of peace reached between Allied powers and Axis Powers in April 1920 was unsatisfactory to the Muslims and it served to stimulate the agitation. The meeting of the All India Khilafat Committee held in Bombay on 12th May 1920 sought the support of Gandhi. He advised them to resort to Non-cooperation programme, drawn up by the congress sub-committee, Gandhi also requested the Hindus to join the movement. Thus, he had taken the unprecedented step of identifying himself with a Muslim religious movement. The meeting of the All India Congress Committee held in Benaras on 30 May 1920 decided to convene special congress session in Calcutta in September to consider the question of Non-cooperation. From then on, until September 1920, the scheme of Non-cooperation was published in the columns of Gandhi's young India'. Having pursued for months and elaborate campaign through the press and the platforms, Mahatma Gandhi prepared to launch the Non-cooperation movement in August 1920.<sup>19</sup>

### **Third Khilafat Day**

In the meantime, in response to Gandhi's instruction on 1st August 1920 the Third Khilafat day was observed in Tamilnadu under the inspiration of Rajajiand Yakub Hassan. It was declared a day of hartal, signalling the inauguration of the Non-cooperation campaign. There was a general hartal with offering of the prayers and meetings on the Madras beach. Shops remained closed both in Madras city and in the mofussils. The month of August was further signaled by the arrival of Shoukath Ali and Gandhi in Tamilnadu. The invitation to these two leaders seems to have been sent by Yakub Hassan without the knowledge of the other members of the Khilafat committee and the announcement that they were coming to Madras took the public as well as the government by surprise. They arrived in Madras on August 12, 1920 and were given a grand welcome at the railway station.<sup>20</sup> A meeting was held at the same evening on the Marina beach at which the attendance was estimated to be about 20,000 and Gandhi made a long speech explaining his ideas on Non-cooperation. This was the first appearance of Gandhi in Madras, since the beginning of the Non-cooperation campaign and his first speech Gandhi proposed Non-cooperation as means to gain two specific objects the redemption of the "promise" given to Muslims in connection with the Khilafat and the redress of the "Punjab wrong", that means Jallianwallabagh Massacre.<sup>21</sup>

## Khilafat to Non Cooperation Movement

In Tamilnadu, students played a vital role in the Khilafat and Non-co-operation movement. It was in the light of these developments that the Nagpur congress during December 1920 declared the object of the congress to be the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means. This was a definite departure from the earlier creed of the congress. Henceforth, the Congress was determined to work for the attainment of self-government outside the British Empire. In pursuance of its programme, the Nagpur Congress resolved to take effective steps to call upon the parents and guardians of school children under the age of sixteen years to make greater efforts to withdraw them from schools. Owned, aided or controlled by the government and concurrently to provide for their training in national schools or by other means, call upon students aged delay, irrespective of consequences, from the institution mentioned above, if they felt in against their conscience to continue in institutions dominated by a system of government which the nation had solemnly resolved to put an end. Such students were advised either to devote themselves to some special services or to continue their education in national institutions, call upon trustees, Managers and teachers of government affiliated or aided schools, and municipalities and local boards to help to nationalize them and so on.<sup>22</sup>

On 24th November 1920, a meeting of the students of Madras was held at the SoundaryaMahal, under the Chairmanship of C.Rajagopalachari in order to consider the question of the boycott of government and aided schools and colleges. Students of Pachaiyappa's College and the Madras - Christian college presented themselves in large number at the meeting. At the outset, when C.Rajagopalachari was asked about the steps that his sons took as regards the question of boycott, he replied that both his sons R.Ramaswami and R.Krishnaswami agreed with his suggestions to withdraw from the colleges.<sup>23</sup> Subsequently P.V.Subaiah, P.K.Ramachari, KondaRajaram and L.R.Muthukrishnan were the four students of Madurai who discontinued their studies in the S.S.L.C. class.<sup>24</sup> Even George Joseph withdraws his children from their school on account of the Non-cooperation movement in Madurai.<sup>25</sup> Responding to this call many students came out of the schools and colleges in Trichirapalli including K.S.Subramaniam, R.Krishnaswami, Mohammed Usman and others.<sup>26</sup> Further more, Mayavaram S.Ramanathan and Ignatius who had left St.Joseph's college to involve in the movement, were arrested on the charge of violating section 144 of C.P.C., while addressing a public meeting held at Uraiyur market in February 1922.<sup>27</sup>

The Khilafat movement, however, suffered a severe setback after the suspension of the Non-cooperation movement by Gandhiji and the Congress on 12th February 1922. Then the Khilafat leadership was split into two parties-nationalist Muslims and the Khilafat group. The Nationalist Muslims Group consisted of M.A.Ansari, Abdul Kalam Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Yakkub Hassan and

others and the Khilafat group was led by Ali Brothers. The Nationalist Muslims group merged with the Congress whereas the Khilafat movement was slowly disappeared.

The Khilafat movement was started with the motive of protecting the Caliphate in Turkey. This was the problem of Muslims only. The movement became effective one with the involvement of Hindus. Both Muslims and Hindus considered the British Government as their sole enemy. Gandhiji in the Khilafat Movement a rare opportunity for promoting various causes for which he was much concerned. For Gandhi, Khilafat was the Kamadenu as it offered him "an opportunity of uniting Hindus and Mussalmans, as would not arise in a hundred years".

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