



Barelwi Ulama and the Khilafat Movement: Is Ahmed Raza Khan Barelwi against the Khilafat Movement?

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Abstract:

The paper attempts to understand the Ahmed Raza Khan's position on the Khilafat movement during the 19th century. The main objective of this paper is to understand the Khilafat movement and its position in the 19th century by various nationalist leaders including Ahmed Raza Khan. The paper argued that Ahmed Raza Khan was not against the Khilafat movement but he was stern critic of the modus – operandi of the Khilafat movement. He expressed his opinion in fatwa that he was not categorically against the Khilafat movement and objectives, but he was against the way Khilafat leaders were handled.

Keywords: Khilafat movement, Khilafat leaders, Barelwi ulama, Ahmed Raza Khan.

Introduction:

The Khilafat movement was an attempt to force the British to preserve the Ottoman caliphate, and it emphasizes its international aspect, focused on the Indian Muslims' pan-Islamic sympathies for the Ottoman sultan-caliph following the defeat of Turkey in the First World War (Minault, 1982:1), which was eventually abolished not by British, but constitutionally Turks. Caliphate literally means succession, and the person who succeeds is called the caliph (Khalifa). But the word caliph generally assumed a person holding a religious office (Ahmed, 1916). Theoretically, the concept of caliphate in Islam was placed after the death of Prophet Muhammad, but it was temporal and spiritual authority, was not permitted prophetic power (Liebel, 2009: 373). The main task of the caliph was to protect Islam and to manage the worldly matters of the Muslims and the activities of the caliph could be accepted by the sultans of those countries which were quite different from each other (Buzpinar, 1996: 89). Mawdudi argues that 'the caliphate granted by God to the faithful is the popular vicegerency and not a limited one' and rules out a dictatorship. But the theoretical point of view which is contradicted by Mawdudi entire concept and practical programme for the takeover by an organized party led by a supreme *amir*, even though 'elected' by the party rank and file (Ahmed, 1967: 219). Moreover, Mawdudi the whole plans was, he wanted the re-establishment of

the Khilafat, which was done under an effort to revive the Islamic way of life. Initially, he was the member of the Khilafat movement and its *Tehrik-e Hijrat* (migration movement) while the Ottoman caliphate still existed, Mawdudi verbally the need for a caliphate throughout the next several decades (Liebel, 2009:376).

Modernists like, Allama Iqbal and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, who were not only against the impracticality of the caliphate in Islam but practically they were opposed the Khilafat movement. Iqbal was one of the very few modernists who endorsed the abolition of caliphate by the Grand National Assembly under Kamal Ataturk. This explains Iqbal's dissension from the prevailing ulama orthodoxy in the Khilafat movement (Bonney, 2004:12). The distinction and disagreement reflected in his poetry also,

تو احکام حق سے نہ کر بے وفائی	اگر ملک ہاتھوں سے جاتا ہے جائے
خلافت کی کرنے لگا تو گدائی	نہیں تجھ کو تاریخ سے اگہی کیا
مسلمانوں کو بے ننگ وہ پادشائی	خریدیں نہ جس کو ہم اپنے لہو سے

If the territory is being lost let be it lost

You should not be disloyal to God's commands.

Do you not have knowledge of history?

You started begging for the Khilafat?

If we do not purchase with our own blood

Such sovereignty is a disgrace to the Muslim! ⁱ

Sir Syed's view on the caliph, there is no concept of caliphate in Islam as such. It is common belief that Prophet Muhammad was the last of all the Prophets. Therefore, Prophet cannot have any Khalifa or successor from the perspective of the prophet. But the Holy Quran suggests that in addition to office of the apostles, God establishes another office on his chosen people (Ahmed, 1916:1-27)ⁱⁱ. Based on the Islamic intellectual history, Sir Syed clearly expounds that the sovereign people who adopted the title of Khalifa were accepted only in those countries, which were subject to their direct rule, but no one recognized their caliphate or imamate beyond their territorial jurisdiction (1916:12). He further explains that it is illogical to say that the sympathy of Indian Muslims with Turkey caliph is due to the fact that they consider him as their religious head. He goes on to say that Indian Muslims support the Turkey caliphate, it is because, the sympathy is natural as a Muslim feels for another Muslim, and it has increased greatly as a result of education and newspaper and facilities in traveling which have brought about easy means of intercourse between the two countries (Muhammed,1972:254). He very strongly denounced the claims of Sultan Abd Ul-Hamid and urged that the Sultan's sovereignty or caliphate should be confined to his own territories (Rizvi, 1971:86).

Men like Shibli Nomani had same stance what Sir Syed aforementioned above. He indicated in his article "Khilafat" which had appeared in 1899, he explained that the Ottoman caliphate is not a precept of religion, nor a fact of history, for the Muslims who are living under the Turkish sultanate. He wrote another article in 1908 on the

“*Musalmano ko Ghyar Madhab Hukumat ka Mahkum ho Kar Kiyun-Kar Rahna Chahiye*”: in which he tried to show it on the basis of the Quran, Hadīth, fiqh, and history, that Muslim should remain loyal to whichever government they might have occasion to live under (Murad,1996:91). Shibli’s attitude towards Ottoman Turkey was so romantic and emotionally based that he never tried or desired to know what was really happening inside the Empire (1996:92). Individual like Obaidullah Sindhi was separated from all the pan-Islamic movements during the colonial period. In fact, he refused to recognize any international religious convention or any religio-political institution such as Khilafat; rather he focused on the democratic form of government run by the elected representatives. Even he belittled the role of the caliph in an institutionalized political system at a time when the primary of the Ottoman Caliphate was “an article of faith among Indian Muslims (Anujm, 2013:23). Sindhi’s view on the issue of Khilafat had ended after renounce the throne of Imam Hasan in 660 A.D. and despite their great claim, rulers after the Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman Empire were only kings and not caliphs per se (2012:23).

Ahmed Raza Khan friend like Maulana Abdul Bari toured in the different parts of the India to campaign on issue of Khilafat and urged them that defending the Khilafat and holy place was essentially one of the illuminating shariah and he emphasized that the ulama should be leaders of the Muslims in this question. In Bengal, he cited passages from Quran and Hadīth exhorting the believers to support one another and followed with an eloquent plea for unity among the ulama, only then could they actually work as a spiritual guide for the Muslims. Maulana Abdul Bari, he even organized the number meeting and Jalsa in Deoband, Bareilly, Badaun, and Lucknow to gather support among the different school of thought. In addition, he also gathered support from the khanqah and Sufi brotherhood such as dargah of Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer; he took advantage of the presence of throngs of Sufis and their disciples to urge a united pronouncement on the Khilafat question, prayers for the sultan-caliph in all Friday khutbahs and the calling of an all-India conference of ulama (Minault, 182:79).

Khilafat Movement and Barelwi School Ulama:

Khilafat movement was initiated in the 20th century to support the Turkish Khalifa and the Barelwi ulama was fully endorsed the Khilafat movement. But few Barelwi ulama became a strong supporter of the Khilafat movement, but juxtaposition with the opponents of the Khilafat movement, the number was too low. But here it is important to note that, were Ahmed Raza and his disciples against the Khilafat movement. The point here should be noted that Ahmed Raza Khan was not against the Khilafat movement and even holy places, but the reality is different from these narratives is existed in the literatures. Ahmed Raza was not a politician but he was represented as a statesman of the Barelwi movement. He studied and issued a fatwa on the non-cooperation and Khilafat movement and came to conclusion that it is necessary to support the Ottoman Empire and holy places. He expressed his opinion in fatwa that he was not categorically against Khilafat movement and objectives, but he was a stern critic of the modus-operandi of the Khilafat movement. He believed that Jamiat Ulama Hind and Khilafat Committee were wrongly represented by the Khilafat movement. Ahmed Raza passionately believed that the leadership of the Khilafat movement has been captured by the Hindus, which was a threat to the Muslim in the future. The leadership of Gandhi and esprit de-crops with the Hindus led him to conclude that the Muslims were being sacrificed to achieve

the interests of the Hindus. He at once voiced his suspicions and warned against the coming dangers (Ahmed, 2004:21-22).

Even he was against the Gandhi's ideas in the context of the Hindu-Muslim unity, and Khilafat movement. But in overall, Barelwi ulama have expressed disagreement over the unity between Hindu-Muslim and it was specific reasons were delineated the religious and political. They understood the unity between Hindu-Muslim was essentially an impossible. When Gandhi announced to support the Khilafat movement and non-cooperation movement, Ahmed Raza was categorically opposed it. Gandhi was a sagacious leader, and he fully defended the Khilafat movement, as a consequence he gained a trust among the Muslim leaders and ulama. However, Gandhi was appealed Muslim communities to support the non-cooperation movement. He enthusiastically supported the Khilafat movement because he saw it primarily as an anti-British issue, he was mainly drawn the attention to the Muslim leadership into nationalist movement, and his plans big boost to Muslims to reorganize and redirect the Congress into a mass movement. The alliance with Gandhi and the Congress was given a space for the Khilafat leaders because their recognition by nationalists as Muslim spokesmen helped to establish their claim Indians and British alike to be the leaders of the United Muslim constituency (Minault, 1982: 11).

Ahmed Raza Khan made a clear stand that the unity between Hindu and Muslim is serious hurdle of societal progress exclusively for Muslim community. Individual like Maulana Azad and other nationalist ulama friend believed that Qur'an does allow the unity between Hindu and Muslim and it is permissible. On the other hand, Ahmed Raza completely discarded the view of Maulana Azad and other nationalist ulama, and he proved that the Quran does not allow such kind of unity between Hindu-Muslim. This is the reason Ahmed Raza was opposed the unity between Hindu and Muslim during the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement. He was not seriously concerned Muslims alliance with Mr. Gandhi. Based on these issues, he had disagreed with his closest friend Maulana Abdul Bari Firangi Mahali. On the basis of these issues, both have exchanged of letters on different set of ideas in voluminous notes, which was later, Ahmed Raza Khan son Maulana Mustafa Raza has compiled the correspondence between Ahmed Raza Khan and Maulana Abdul Bari Firangi Mahali in three volumes (Khan: 12). Khan was proffered the Sunni Muslims' not to accept Mr. Gandhi as the political leader of the nation. His Khalifa Naimuddin Moradabadi has carried forward the views of Ahmed Raza. Naimuddin Moradabadi close disciple of Ahmed Raza writes about the issue of Khilafat movement; the Muslims should take all possible measure to support the Ottoman sultanate, and protection of holy place, but Muslims should keep their religion safe and secure. Muslims should not be dependent on Hindus. They should be a master of own destiny and do not disengage their senses and reasons. They should continue to use their consciousness. They should show their shrewdness in terms of good and bad (Noori, 2007:95). Another disciple of Ahmed Raza like mufti Mohammad Umar Na'imi commented on the issue of Khilafat movement in support of the Ahmed Raza, he writes: 'to what extent surprise that defender of Islam and protector of the shariah, adherent of the Khilafat movement and holy place considered him an opponent, and Wahhabi believes that the rest of the word is a polytheist and being considered him as the opponent of the Khilafat movement' (Ahmed, 205). Although, in April 1920, a conference was organized by Barelwi organization Al-Ansar Al-Islam in Bareilly, in which the Barelwi ulama discussed the issues of conservation of sacred and holy

places and endorsed the Turkish Caliph. The number of step has taken place and demanded the number of issues to the British authority. It has been demand to the British government that to create unity between Arab and Turkey and send a delegation to create a mutual trust between Arab and turkey. It also demanded that British government make a law to protect the Islamic countries and avoid any kind of apprehension in future (Noori, 2007:86).

Ahmed Raza donated fund and encouraged his adherents and families to donate the fund for the Khilafat movement. When Indian National Congress was collecting fund for the Khilafat movement; Ahmed Raza strictly warned that the Hindus were exploiting the funds of the Khilafat movement. He said that thousands of rupees are misused and money was being spent in the wrong directions (Ahmed, 2004). For Ahmed Raza, Khilafat movement was purely an Islamic movement, but when the Hindus were given upper hand in it, Ahmed Raza at once said that it was no longer to be an Islamic movement. It had degenerated into Swaraj movement i.e. a movement for the independence of the Hindus, and enslavement of the Muslims (Ahmed, 2004: 22). Maulana Naimuddin Moradabadi throughout life, he has been against the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi. He writes that, suppose that, the Gandhi ideas and opinion are suitable for the Muslims if the Gandhi has changed his opinion and ideas, what Muslims will do. How sad it is, Muslims do not have any sagacious leader. He criticizes the Muslims that it is a curse for those who wanted to acquire the Caliph by selling their Deen. For the survival of Turkish Caliph, the Muslims have infidelity for the survival of Turkish Caliph. Moradabad had made it clear that the Barelwis support the Turkish Caliph for the sacrifice of Islam; otherwise, Barelwis and Turks have no relation with each other.

Conclusion:

This section does not corroborate the argument with Usha Sanyal; she argued that Barelwi school ulama opposed the Khilafat movement. But in reality that Barelwi ulama were fully endorsed the Khilafat movement, but Ahmed (1856-1921) had problem with methods, the way movement has been organized by the Muslim leadership. It is true Barelwi ulama were opposed the unity between Hindu and Muslim and even they also against the ideas of Gandhi and Deoband idea of composite nationalism on ideological grounds (Jalal, 2000:98). But with the regards to Khilafat movement, the Barelwi School ulama known as Barelwis were intentionally endorsed the Turkish Caliph and even they accumulated funds and encouraged their followers and families to donate the funds for Turkish caliph.

Endnote:

ⁱ Allama Iqbal, Bang-eDra-159) Daryuza's Khilafat, <http://iqbalurdu.blogspot.com/2011/04/bang-e-dra-159-daryuzaay-khilafat.html>

ⁱⁱ After the death of the prophet of Islam, Au Bakr succeeded him with the title of Khalifa. But he was not a Khalifa in the sense in which the Pope is regarded as a successor of St. Peter. He had no authority in religious matters, except that he was to carry into practice the teaching of the Prophet, help others to do the same, and look to the temporal needs of the Muslim community. He had no power whatever to declare lawful that which was unlawful in Islam, nor to declare unlawful that which was lawful. He had no authority to abrogate any religious authority commandment nor to introduce any new practices in Islam. He could not pardon the sins of any one, nor could he intercede with God for the pardon of any one's sins., see, Razi Siraj-ud-din Ahmed, *The Truth about the Khilafat*, Lahore: Printed at the Ripon Press, 1916, pp, 1-27

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