



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Muslim Politics And Freedom Movement: A Study Of Barak Valley

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The southern part of Assam mainly consists of three districts viz. Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. These three districts are collectively known as Barak Valley. The Muslims of Barak Valley played a glorious role in the freedom movement of India. Though a section of Muslims under the banner of Muslim League demanded Pakistan, but their demands were strongly countered by the nationalist Muslims of Barak Valley.

The first anti-colonial struggle of Muslims in Barak Valley was recorded in 1832. Sona Mia Choudhury, a landlord of Satkarakandi in Sonai rebelled against the British annexation of Cachar for which he was persecuted and held up in British jail. The incident of Sona Mian Choudhury may be traced as the first anti-British rebellion in Barak Valley. It indicates that anti-colonial sentiments prevailed among the Muslims of Barak Valley from the very beginning of the colonial rule.

The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 had its impact in Barak Valley. Ron Tila (Malegarh) of Karimganj district witnessed the sacrifice and bloodshed of Indian mutineers. Three hundred soldiers of 34 Native Infantry Regiment of East India Company stationed at Chittagong rebelled on 18th November 1857. The mutineers broke the jail and looted Rs. 2,72,67 from the district treasury. Besides, the mutineers also took possessions of arms, ammunition and three elephants. They wanted to move towards Delhi via Daka. But when they heard the road leading towards Delhi was blocked by the British forces, they changed their road and decided to move towards Manipur for shelter. When they reached Ron Tila, they had a fierce clash with British force under Major Byng. The rebels were led by Subdar Ayodhya Prasad Singh, Sher Khan and Rizbul Khan. They showed brilliant warfare skills. Major Byng fell in the fight along with six sepoys. 26 Indian soldiers, with freedom in their heart laid their lives.

Sambodhan Funglo, a Dimas hero led anti-British movement in the North Cachar (which was within the jurisdiction of Cachar). Sambodhan Funglo had offered the Deputy Commissioner Colonial Boyd a mortal blow leading to his death in Silchar. .

The Muslims of Barak Valley closely associated themselves with the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement. The programs of Khilafat and Non-Cooperation Movement like boycotting foreign goods, establishment of swadeshi shop, use of khadi etc. were popular. Significantly, a Swadeshi Bazar was started at Bagbari of Karimganj district. Under the leadership of Maulana Mohammad Yakub and Khan Bahadur Rashid Ali, a Khalifat Committee was formed in Silchar. In 1921 when Mahatma Gandhi along with Saukat brothers reached Silchar then non-cooperation and use of swadeshi goods achieved a new milestone. Khilafat and Congress workers jointly formed a strong force of 90000 volunteers to carry the programs of the movement. Mohammad Gulzar Ali Mazumder who was the Secretary of the volunteer force successfully led the volunteers.

The Muslims of Barak Valley showed their unprecedented valour and courage during the Quit India Movement. The Congress workers formed a War Council to launch a widespread Satyagraha. The local Jamiat-ul-Ulema leaders like Hurmat Ali Barlaskar, Maulana Abdul Jali Choudhury, Maulana Ibrahim Choudhury, Abdul Matlib Mazumder, Maulana Muhammad Ali, Gulam Sabbir Khan, Maulana Moshaid Ali and others offered wholehearted cooperation to the Congress. 'Do or Die' slogan of Mahatma Gandhi became very popular among the Muslims of Barak Valley.

On the eve of independence when communal forces became very strong, Deobondi Ulema and Deobondi networking madrassas of Barak Valley tirelessly worked for independence of a united India. Deobondi Ulema from the very beginning were the champion of united India and always opposed for a separate homeland for the Muslims. Deobondi Ulema of Barak Valley used traditional mobilizing method through internal interaction, meeting at prayer, address the gatherings at Friday prayer, Islamic program (waz mahfil) and similar such occasions to inculcate love for freedom and independence of a united India. The role of Maulana Abdul Jalil Choudhury, Maulana Ibrahim Choudhury, Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Moshaid Ali deserve special mention.

A Convention of the Nationalist Muslims was held in Silchar on February 20, 1947 at the behest of Khan Saheb Rashid Ali Laskar who unequivocally opposed the demand for Pakistan. Another big meeting was held in Silchar on June 8, 1947. In both the meetings, large numbers of Muslims were participated. The leaders like Abdul Matlib Mazumder, Muhammad Ali, Maulana Ibrahim Ali Choudhury played a great role in organizing both the meetings. It was taught to the masses about the outcome of partition on the basis of religion.

Thus, the Muslims of Barak Valley left an indelible impression and emotional integration. They not only participated in all the movements launched by national leaders but also devised their own schemes and actions for the freedom of the country. The heroic stories of the sacrifice of freedom fighters are the source of inspiration for new and upcoming generations. We must in all humanity salute all those who had sacrificed their today for our tomorrow.

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