



# Nawab Viqar-Ul-Mulk: A Visionary Leader In The Aligarh Movement And Early Muslim Politics

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## Abstract

Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk was an eminent personality and a true champion of Muslim nationalism in India. He made an incredible contribution to early Muslim politics and the Aligarh movement. He successfully manoeuvred the Aligarh movement and Muslim politics towards its goal when it became stagnant after the demise of Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk. Through this paper, the author has tried to highlight the various traits of Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk's personality and his contribution to the Aligarh movement.

**Key Words:** Aligarh Movement, Viqar-ul-Mulk, Muslim Politics, Sir Syed, Mohsin-ul-Mulk, etc.

After the death of Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk, Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, a remarkable and daring Muslim political figure, came to the forefront to take the responsibility for leadership of the Aligarh Movement. He was the successor of Mohsin-ul-Mulk in the same way as the Mohsin-ul-Mulk of Sir Syed as a leader and guide of the Aligarh movement. He was a dynamic personality and infused a new spirit into the Aligarh movement. The affairs of Aligarh College and Muslim politics were severely impacted by the death of Mohsin-ul-Mulk. However, Viqar-ul-Mulk as a successor of Mohsin-ul-Mulk tried his best to control the declining situation of Muslim politics and the affairs of Aligarh College. S.M. Ikram described the scenario of the time in these words, "These changes were partly due to few incidents, and partly to certain developments in the general outlook of Muslim India, but perhaps the important single factor responsible for them was the personality of Mohsin-ul-Mulk's successor."<sup>1</sup>

Maulvi Mushtaq Husain (Viqar-ul-Mulk) was born on 29 Muharram 1357 hijri.<sup>2</sup> According to the Gregorian calendar, he was born on March 24, 1841, in a village in district Moradabad.<sup>3</sup> The name of his great-grandfather was Diwan Abdul Momin Khan, who was on the post of a minister in the court of the Mughal Emperor, Shahjahan. The decline of the Mughal Empire created lots of disturbances for the Muslim nobles and other employees. Diwan Abdul Momin Khan's family was one of them. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sheikh Fazal Hussain, one of the descendants of Diwan Abdul Momin Khan and father of Mushtaq Husain, was settled in the district of Moradabad.<sup>4</sup>

Mushtaq Hussain got his primary education in Maktab in a village. Maulvi of Maktab taught these children how to recite the Holy Quran, and later these children were instructed to write down their lessons (alphabets of Arabic) on small wooden boards.<sup>5</sup> After getting an education in Maktab, Mushtaq Hussain became a pupil of Maulvi Rahat Ali Amrohi. Maulvi Rahat taught him advanced Arabic lessons, the Hadith and the Fiqh. It was impossible to get jobs in the government sector without having education in government schools. Therefore, he had to study in such schools. He was a diligent, hardworking, well-disciplined, and well-behaved student. He started his journey by earning as an assistant teacher from ten rupees monthly in a district school where he had studied in his early days.<sup>6</sup>

In 1861, a famine severely affected the United Provinces, and under these conditions, Sir Syed Ahmad was entrusted with the charge of relief work in the Moradabad district. Meanwhile, he assigned the responsibility of relief work at Amrohat to the young and dynamic Mushtaq Hussain, who performed his duty so flawlessly that he attracted the attention and affection of Sir Syed from which a strong relationship and mutual understanding grew between each other. The responsibility given by Sir Syed to him proved a great chance, and many of his seniors became aware of his talent and honesty. He was promoted in the government services. Thus, he was promoted and transferred many times and finally appointed under Sir Syed at Aligarh. Sir Syed was in the post of a subordinate judge. During these days, Maulvi Mushtaq Hussain began to prepare for the government examination of Tehsildar, and he succeeded in his effort in 1872. A famine severely hit the Gorakhpur people, and Sir Syed was appointed to distribute relief to the famine-stricken people of the area. Sir Syed requested from Sir John Strachey for Mushtaq Hussain's services to work under him. Maulvi Mushtaq Hussain showed unbridled independence throughout his tenure as a government official and refused to be intimidated by his superiors' threats or pressure, even though they were Britishers. While Mushtaq Hussain was in the service of the British government, he used to go to the mosque during office working time. Some English officers objected to this act of leaving office during office hours. These officers advised him not to do this activity, but Mushtaq Hussain did not notice their objection. Due to this controversy, he prepared his resignation and submitted it to the office. Though his salary was a hundred rupees (a delicious sum), he did not care about money and chose the prayers. However, his resignation was not accepted, and with the intervention of some prominent British officers, he was allowed to pray during office hours.<sup>7</sup>

Later, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was transferred from Aligarh to Banaras. Nawab Samiullah was appointed to the post of Sub-judge in place of Sir Syed. Viqar-ul-Mulk continued to perform his duties under Nawab Samiullah just like he was working under Sir Syed. While he was working under these two prominent personalities of the Aligarh movement, he was much affected by the virtues of these men and their love and concern for the cause of the Aligarh movement. It had got an important place in his heart, and he started working for it. In 1866, he took the Scientific Society membership and held the post of in-charge of Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq printing. 'The Society for the Promotion of Education among Muslims' invited essay writing on a competitive basis for publication in this magazine in 1870. Society chose the topic of debate on the pitiable condition of Muslim education, and it aimed to bring an educational awakening to Muslim society.<sup>8</sup>

Viqar-ul-Mulk (Mushtaq Hussain) participated in this contest and analyzed the situation. He pointed out that the backwardness of Muslims and the deplorable condition of Muslims was due to a lack of modern education. Muslims should get a modern education, and Aligarh would be the best choice for this program. He got the second position in this essay writing after Mohsin-ul-Mulk ranked first in this competition. In 1873, the suggestions of Viqar-ul-Mulk were applied, and the College Foundation Committee decided to establish a primary school at Aligarh. Meanwhile, the foundation of the school was done, and Maulvi Samiullah Khan was the Secretary of the Aligarh branch. Therefore, in the absence of Sir Syed, he was appointed as a caretaker of this school. But in reality, it was Viqar-ul-Mulk, a devoted worker of the Aligarh movement, who was the driving force behind the school's efforts.<sup>9</sup>

In 1875, he received a proposal to serve Hyderabad State, and he accepted it, and his service years were written in the record of Hyderabad. In 1878, he prepared a report on the reorganization of the state's judiciary, which was adopted. As a result, the state's judicial administration underwent a series of progressive reforms. These works done by Viqar-ul-Mulk attracted the attention of Nawab Sir Salar Jung. Seeing his honesty, intelligence, and hardworking nature Nawab Salar Jung promoted him to a judicial Minister. During the 1877 famine, Viqar-ul-Mulk devised a comprehensive strategy for providing relief and aid to the famine-affected people, including establishing houses for the impoverished and disabled. His ideas were fully accepted, and he was entrusted with being in charge of this relief work. He used to visit the famine-stricken people in their camps and spent a long time with them. He used to console them, make them feel good with his generous behaviour, and give them financial help. In one of his speeches, Sir Salar Jung praised him for his humanitarian work.<sup>10</sup>

He served nearly seventeen years in the State of Hyderabad and achieved great success. His devotion to the services of Hyderabad and humanity earned the title of Nawab, and his full title was Nawab Mushtaq Hussain Viqar-ul-Mulk. Due to the local intrigues which were commonly associated with the old order in an Indian state where the representative of the British Crown pulled powerful strings from behind the curtain, he resigned from the State services when he was at the peak of his career. At the time of his resignation from the state services, he was getting a lucrative salary of four thousand and five hundred rupees per month, and most of the part of his salary was spent on helping the poor and needy people. Despite all these events, he

kept in his mind the cause of Aligarh, and he did not miss any opportunity to serve this cause while he was in Hyderabad.<sup>11</sup>

After tendering his retirement from the Hyderabad state services, he settled down in Amroha and lived a semi-retired life for about eight years. In 1900, a language controversy arose, which was called the Hindi-Urdu controversy. This controversy was between Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Lieutenant Governor Sir Anthony MacDonnell, who supported Hindi over Urdu. Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk came to the forefront in support of the Urdu language. At first, he tried to conciliate with the Governor, and he asked to take his interview related to this controversy. He also wanted to explain the importance of the Urdu Language and its sentimental attachment to the Muslim community. However, these efforts of Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk went in vain because the Governor refused to give him an interview. But Viqar-ul-Mulk did not lose hope, and he did his best for the support and promotion of Urdu.<sup>12</sup>

Viqar-ul-Mulk and his companions were urging the Muslims of India to get positions in the governmental services of India. By taking key positions in governmental services, they could do their best for their community. They would spread education as well as they would organize themselves politically. The Indian National Congress was established in 1885 and dominated by the Hindu community. In 1893, Sir Syed also founded the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental Defence Association for the political and legal protection of the Muslims of India, in which he got the support of Theodore Beck. After Sir Syed Mohsin-ul-Mulk took responsibility for this organization he revived this organization. Viqar-ul-Mulk supported him in this effort. He devoted his services to protecting and strengthening this organization, for which he toured most of the part of India where he delivered passionate speeches. He also adopted the writing method to spread the message in his community. However, he got an inadequate response from the Muslims as they were mired in political sluggishness. The first meeting under the patronage of the Defence Association for Urdu was held in Lucknow in 1901. The response to this meeting was feeble as Viqar-ul-Mulk realized himself, but he did not lose hope. He and his companions continued their efforts to strengthen the Muslim community politically and on other grounds too. However, they got the result in 1906 when the foundation of the All India Muslim League took place.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, Viqar-ul-Mulk had spent some years in the service of Aligarh College and helped Mohsin-ul-Mulk to the best as he could do. In the meantime, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India (1899-1905), declared the partition of Bengal in 1905, which was in some ways beneficial to the Muslims of India. However, the Hindu political leaders objected to it on the grounds of political disunity, and they thought that the partition would weaken the Indian National Movement. That is why they vigorously agitated against the partition. Over time, the agitation became violent. However, the British government declared it as a settled fact that could not be settled at last. The partition of Bengal was repealed in 1911. The news of the repeal of partition came as shocking to the Muslims, and they felt that they were at the mercy of the Hindus of India.<sup>14</sup>

The government's decision to repeal the partition of Bengal spread frustration and anguish among the Muslims, and they clearly expressed their anger through their speeches and writings. Viqar-ul-Mulk stated that:

“The partition proved to be Allah's blessing for the Muslims and the rights of 66% of the population which were hidden from the eyes of the public and the Government were brought to light. The Muslims of the province started making progress day by day. It was a great political blunder on the part of the Government to revoke the partition without assuring the Muslims about steps to be taken for their security in future. It could be said that the Government had shown an unjustifiable apathy towards the Muslims.”<sup>15</sup>

In this way, Viqar-ul-Mulk expressed his views about the annulment of the partition and said it wrong. He also said that the government was ignoring the interests of the Muslims.

He further said:

“It is now clear as the midday sun that, in light of recent events, asking Muslims to rely on the Government is useless. Now that such reliance is no longer feasible, what we should rely on, after the grace of God, is the strength of our right arm, for which we have the example of our respectable countrymen.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk suggested that the Muslims of India should learn the lesson from this event, and they should not rely on the government. If they wanted to live a happy and respectable life, they should work on their own and keep their strong faith in God and secondly on his shoulders.

These lessons taught by Viqar-ul-Mulk carried immense importance in the history of Muslim India about which Dr. Safdar Mahmood and Javaid Zafar wrote: “history stands witness to the fact that the Muslims followed the same path which was pointed out by Viqar-ul-Mulk. They relied on God and themselves and eventually achieved Pakistan.”<sup>17</sup>

Viqar-ul-Mulk wrote numerous articles urging Muslims to wake up from their slumber and become active and dynamic. His articles incited Muslims to take action. The “Pioneer” and the Anglo-Indian papers criticized him for deviating from Sir Syed's loyalty policy towards the government. However, on the other hand, Muslim papers, particularly Moulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar's “Comrade” of Calcutta and Moulana

Zafar Ali Khan's “Zamindar” of Lahore, wrote many articles in support of Viqar-ul-Mulk.<sup>18</sup>

After the annual session of the All India Muslim Educational Conference in December 1906, the All India Muslim League was established during a meeting presided by Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk. In his presidential address, he said:

“Gentlemen, that which has drawn us here today is not a need which has only now been felt by us. When Congress was founded, this need had even then been felt. The Muslims are only one-fourth in number as compared with the total population of the country, and it is manifest that if at any time the British Government ceases to exist in India, the nation which is four times numerous more will rule the country. Now, let each of you ponder what will be our condition at that time. Then our lives, our property, our honour and our religion will all be in jeopardy. Woe betide the time when we have to live as subjects of our neighbours who want to take revenge on us for Aurangzeb's policies after hundreds of years.”<sup>19</sup>

Whenever the British government did anything against the interest of the Muslims of India, Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, who was the champion of Muslim rights, never hesitated to criticize the government policies. He used to come to the forefront and opposed the policies of the government. Even after his retirement, he kept his focus on the welfare of the Muslims of India. Whenever the young Muslim minds needed any help or guidance from him, he passionately raised his helping hands to support and guide them. When the Muslims of India were in disarray over the issue of Turkey, Viqar-ul-Mulk showed his fearless approach to this matter. In the 1913 Kanpur Mosque incident, the District Magistrate Tayler ordered the Police to open fire on the empty-handed Muslims. Consequently, several Muslims died due to this cruelty.<sup>20</sup> Viqar-ul-Mulk expressed his anger on this tragedy and “exhorted the Muslims to vehemently protest against the brutal behaviour of Tayler, the District Magistrate, for, he warned, if you do not, then in the future every sub-inspector of police will behave like Tayler towards us”.<sup>21</sup>

When the Muslims became dissatisfied with the government’s delay towards the proposed Muslim University in Aligarh, some Muslim leaders suggested working together with the Hindus. However, Viqar-ul-Mulk strongly discarded the idea of joining hands with the Hindus. He further expressed his opinion and said that both communities could have cordial relations with each other, but they should not join the same platform for their different interests.<sup>22</sup>

Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, as Secretary of the Board of Trustees, had a significant and constructive influence on the College and kept the Aligarh movement moving forward. During his tenure, Aligarh College made tremendous progress and earned huge respect in India. Due to this progress, Aligarh became the centre of Muslim politics and educational activities in India. The student of this College was on the way to progress, and they were getting significant places in the administration. In short, it can be said that this was the age when Aligarh College was achieving its glory.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the time, Viqar-ul-Mulk was praised by others for his glorious contribution to Muslim society, but in some respects, he was criticized too. During his tenure, the educational standard of the College began to decline. Besides, he sometimes became more orthodox in the matter of sect, and therefore, the rift between Sunni and Shia arose. He tried to make the College a stronghold of Sunni orthodoxy, which was not in the interest of the College. Maulvi Badruddin, a keen supporter of Viqar-ul-Mulk, had written in his account of the College. He wrote:

“As the Aligarh College was giving education to boys belonging to different Islamic sects, its policy was to confine religious education to what was barely essential, and what had been agreed to, from the beginning of the college.”<sup>24</sup>

However, Sir Syed’s policy was different from Viqar-ul-Mulk. Sir Syed provided a common platform for the whole Muslim community to gather collectively. However, Viqar-ul-Mulk deviated from the policy of Sir Syed. The result of this was the alienation of the Shias, and they founded a separate Shia College in Lucknow.<sup>25</sup>

Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, from the beginning of his career, gave his best to serve the cause of the Muslim community. Whether in education, politics, or society, he came forward in every field to serve his

community. He was evident in his thoughts. Whenever he got a chance to criticize the policies of the British government, which were against the interests of the Muslims, he did not hesitate and criticized fearlessly. He almost changed the scenario of Muslim politics after coming into this field. His health conditions did not allow him to continue his services in the Secretaryship post, so, he resigned from the post in 1912, at the age of 71. After his resignation, he settled at Amroha. Furthermore, he had severe health issues and was diagnosed by Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari. However, in the first quarter of 1917, his health completely deteriorated, and he departed from this world on January 27, 1917. He was buried in his ancestral graveyard at Amroha.

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