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KHILAFAT - CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to analyse as to why the Khilafat movement resulted in anti-Hindu riots and indescribable miseries to Hindu population of South Malabar. Still worse is the fact politicians tried to white wash the heinous crimes committed against the Hindus, especially in the name of religion.

KEYWORDS

KHILAFAT PAN-ISLAMISM DICHOTOMY OF BRITISH POLITICS DICHOTOMY OF MUSLIM POLITICS

RESEARCH PROBLEM

none

METHODOLOGY

consulting books and publications

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KHILAFAT – CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Nothing is more grievous than glossing over the injuries sustained by the victims; and nothing is more insulting to such victims, than glorifying the perpetrators of such acts of inhumanity. This exactly is the predicament of the descendants of victims of 1921 Mappila rebellion, because the politicians want to white wash the darkest chapter of the history of Malabar, obviously to appease a section of the society whose conquistador spirit is well

known and the politicians depend on their support in the elections. For the politicians truth is acceptable to the extent it is profitable in terms of electoral arithmetic. Unfortunately, even after a century, the traumatic events of 1921, continue to haunt the Hindu population of south Malabar.

Divisive agenda of the colonial rulers

British colonial Govt in India, has assiduously followed a divisive agenda and had earned the goodwill of Indian Mohammedans. Their political organisation (Muslim League) was borne in 1906 under the benign midwifery of the British Govt and was intended to taunt the Indian National Congress whose young leadership in the first decade of twentieth century, had started to assert their right to participate in the acts of governance of their country and equality before the law. Both the administration and the Muslim community enjoyed the bonhomie and the latter were unconcerned when the Ottoman empire whose Sultan also inherits the mantle of Caliph (Khalifa) of the Muslims world over, was dethroned in 1908 by the political grouping known as young Turks. Later, immediately before the war, the Turkish junta declared holy war (jihad) against the allies and the British empire, Indian Mohammedans also joined the chorus of restoring Khilafat and protecting the territorial integrity of Ottoman empire. The Khilafat movement after a few years of planning and preparation was flagged off in Nov 1920 when the Congress under Mahatma Gandhi adopted it as their political programme. The point to note is that by then, the Ottoman empire was defacto extinct if not de jure. At least all its territories in Europe were lost to the Balkan League (Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Herzegovina and Montenegro) in the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. The Sultan who also functioned as Caliph was deposed on 24-7-1908. The political grouping CUP (Committee of Union and Progress) who captured power was headed by the triumvirate of Enver Pasha, Talat Pasha and Jemal Pasha. They were in favour of a military state without the theocratic encumbrance. They however wanted to retain its status as an imperial power, though not as a Caliphate, but on the strength of military might and on the tenuous ideology of pan-Islamism. In other words, the nationalist Govt of Turkey, without its theocratic legitimacy wanted to exploit the religious sentiments of Mohammedans all over the world to ride the horse of imperial Islam. This was quite unacceptable even to the Arab world not to speak of Christian majority Armenia and Balkan States. Indian Mohammedans were therefore not sincerely championing the cause of Caliphate but the Pan-Islamist ambitions of Turkey.

The CUP with their apparently progressive outlook and policy of keeping religion out of the corridors of power and abolishing the Caliphate had of course impressed the West, particularly Germany. However, they soon realised that a secular administration cannot inspire the Ummah or ordinary Mohammedans who always prefer to be led by the Ulema. Therefore, Germany advised the Young Turks to force the Sheriff of Mecca to declare holy war (Jihad) against the Balkan States and their allies. Sheriff belong to the Quraish tribe of the Prophet himself and therefore commands tremendous respect and authority throughout the Arab world including Mesopotamia and Syria. Such a declaration, approved by the Sheriff of Mecca may even prompt Muslim soldiers in the British Army to desert their posts and shall frustrate the efforts of the allied powers. The Sultan was jealous of his influence over the Arabs and therefore kept the Sheriff (Hussain) and his four sons as hostage in Istanbul. He was invited rather ordered to confirm the proclamation of Jihad. Whatever may be the provocations and threat, Hussain did not oblige his captors. He believed that a true holy war could only be a defensive one, and this was clearly aggressive. Besides, Germany being a Christian ally made a Holy war look absurd¹. Had Hussain obliged the Turkish state, the outcome of the war would have been different. Turkish Junta in turn reacted by blocking supplies to his province. Hussain however took control of the holy shrine and the city. Turks started shelling from their bases on the surrounding hills. They did not spare even the Kaaba the holiest enclosure within the mosque. Hussain's son Faizal lead his Arab warriors towards Medena. However, he was late and the Turks were already encamped there in great numbers. The Arabs were not only outnumbered but ill-equipped against the Turkish forces. They sued for time and the Turks agreed. However, they had sinister design up their sleeves. They stealthily pounced upon the innocent villagers. What followed was gruesome massacres, molestation of women and loot. These two foolish acts of Turkish military alienated the Arabs. Sheriff's statement reflects not only his but the frustration of the Arab World: "We want a Govt which speaks out language and let us live in peace. And we hate the Turks"². This was the refrain throughout Arabia and the revolt was en-masse.

Arab hatred for Turks

Sheriff Hussain was forthright to confess their hatred for Turks. It is as old as Abbasid Caliphate that was usurped by the Seljuk Turks. Seljuk Turks were the precursors of Ottoman Turks. They were originally from Mongolian steppes bordering extreme north-western China. Chinese call them Shingnu or Xingnou, meaning barbarians, because rich provinces of China were frequently being raided by these tribes. In India, we call them Huns. Only to prevent their raids, the first Chinese empire constructed the great wall in third century BC. Left with no alternative and their own land unsuitable to sustain the burgeoning population, they migrated west-ward and occupied the terrain between Sinkiang and Caspian shores. The Seljukian empire that sprang up north of Iran and later occupied eastern Anatolia is one among the several branches of this racial stock. Many Turkish clans who ruled India i.e., Khilji, Lodhi, Tughlaq, Mughals etc were Turkish in origin. Their language Turkish comparatively not developed like Arabic is without a script. They had ancient cuneiform script that was abandoned long back. Incidentally this script was discovered in excavations of Mongolian steppes, hence the presumption about their original home land. They adopted a modified form of Persian-Arabic script and continued it till first half of twentieth century when they changed this to Roman alphabet. Except for the religious rituals in the mosques, Arabic was prohibited in the corridors of power. The Arabs who had greater and richer legacy of language and literature felt insulted. More over the Turks were late converts to Islam and came as helpers. They unseated the Arabs from the top notch of the faith that was their signature contribution to the world.

Indian Mohammedans – Their outlook and the approach of the Raj

Indian Mohammedans are not emigrants from any other territory and are the same racial stock as that of the majority Hindus. Muslim invaders, many of them mercenaries from the Central Asian countries, preferred to beat the retreat, once sufficient loot is accumulated to live off comfortably in their home territory. Permanent soldiers and nobles who are close to the conqueror stayed back. This residue of man power was not sufficient to govern such a vast country as India. So, the invaders co-opted local converts, who were well-bred and civilized in comparison to the Turkish tribes. Islam's policy of exclusivism only prohibits admission of non-Muslims to the corridors of power. Once converted, it allows no discrimination on account of status of birth and family, e.g., even slaves ruled over the empire (Slave dynasty) for a century. Thus, Indian Muslims enjoyed privileged positions especially in Northern India, including Deccan and Bengal. They were proud of their association with the rulers who were Turkish in origin and can only behold this race with abject feeling of subordination and loyalty. British conquest ousted them from the corridors of power. Even then, especially the elite preferred to stay aloof, shunned Hindus who though educated and cultured, are idolaters and therefore infidels (Kafirs). Social inter course with the infidels are taboo. Similarly educated Hindus considered beef-eating Muslims unfit for close association and friendship. They also invented a new word "mlecha" to identify Muslims and even Christians. This position is well explained by Dr K M Munshi:

"What with the conquistador spirit of the Muslim master-racists and the psychological, social and cultural exclusivism of the Hindus, contact between the communities remained superficial, no integration was possible".³
(Dr K M Munshi, Pilgrimage to Freedom, P/65)

This is not to deny the social interaction that existed at the lower strata of the society due to the Bhakti movement, Sufism and Saints like Kabir. That was not sufficient to integrate two communities – the majority exclusivist and the minority harbouring conquistador mentality. On the other hand, the sizeable Muslim population in Balkan states, Greece and Russia, are fully integrated because, except for brief Turkish domination, this community enjoyed no special status being a minority. Sri Aurobindo as early as Nov 1909, stated that "Mohamedans base their separateness and their refusal to regard themselves as Indians first and Mohamedans afterwards, on the existence of great Mohamedan nations".⁴ It appears that this mentality suited the British colonialists who encouraged them and the result is partition of the country on religious lines. This

schism had also suited the English Merchants who had employed desperadoes to conquer the country. They could conquer India without much efforts and sacrifice within a century. The conquerors faced a united opposition only in 1857 because that revolt was engineered by neither the native Hindu Kings nor the Muslim challengers to the throne. The initiative came from the ordinary soldiers. Though not up in the social strata, they understood the value of traditions and heritage and tactfully anointed the last Mughal, Bahadur Shah Zafar as the emperor. Kings, lords and petty chiefs without reservations on account of caste and creed rallied round him and put up a sterling military performance against the usurpers. Though the British authorities managed to get a Fatwa (command) issued from the Caliphate of Turkey advising Mohammedans to support the English, the Indian Mohammedans by and large ignored it, probably because they are fighting for a Muslim ruler or Nizam e Mulk.

Muslim response to national movements and State bias against the Hindus

Elite and educated amongst the Muslims who were held in high esteem by the faithful, advised them not to support the Congress being a party of the Bengali Hindu elite and Madrassi (South Indian) Brahmins and it is undesirable to remain under their domination. This suited the British bureaucracy who overtly encouraged Muslim exclusivism. Colonial Govt disregarding the public sentiments announced partition of Bengal and the Congress under the leadership of moderate constitutionalists like Surendra Nath Banerjee, started agitation. British response was ruthless suppression and even this veteran was taken into custody at Barisal. This infuriated the youth and they intensified the agitation. Their public meetings were well attended. The Govt responded by prohibiting public parks and schools for hoisting such meetings against the policy of the Govt. For the Govt the partition is a fait-accompli and the citizen should recognize it. Muslim felt that the Govt measures is in his favour and eventually he shall be better positioned to extract concessions from the Hindu zamindar with regard to payment of rent. "At an anti-partition meeting at Iswargunj in June, a Mohammedan is reported to have said: so long we were kept down by the Hindus. The Govt wants to raise us in its arms. Shall we not get up into its arms?"⁵ (AB of CS Nair P/194) Lt Governor of the province was Sir B Fuller. He was unabashedly partisan. "Referring to the Hindu-Mohammedan question, he had said that he was a man with two wives and the Mohammedan was his favourite."⁶(P/194). Despite Muslim support who were in a majority in Bengal and state repression, the Swadeshi movement succeeded and the Govt was forced to withdraw partition, as the movement had affected the interest of the Manchester business.

Biased Judiciary

In Eastern Bengal and Punjab, even the judiciary were not free from bias as can be seen from the following incidents mentioned by Chettur Sankaran Nair in his auto biography. Political atmosphere was surcharged throughout the Eastern Bengal with the formation of Muslim League in December 1906. Nawab of Dacca, one of the pioneers had gone to Comilla to work out pro-partition agitations. Mohammedans were excited and when assembled in large numbers they resorted to rioting. Incidentally, in the Club House all European Officers right from Divisional Commissioner to District Magistrate were present to entertain the Nawab. They took no notice of the riot and Police refused to interfere. When Hindus retaliated and a Mohammedan was shot dead the riot stopped. Three Hindus faced trial for murder. One was sentenced to be hanged and the other two awarded the sentence of transportation for life. In 1907, their lordships criticised the trial court for accepting the evidence of the one class of citizens against another class whose evidence was rejected. They also ruled: "the best and most reliable witnesses would have been the Commissioner of the Division, the Magistrate of the District and SP Byrne, but none of them were called by the prosecution. The non-appearance in the witness box of the Commissioner of the Division and the Magistrate of the District has not been explained and we have every reason to believe that SP Byrne who could have given evidence on this, as well as other points of importance was purposely withheld from appearance at Comilla or the Court at trial"⁷. (P/197 ibid). Observation of the High Court proves the allegations that the British bureaucracy was undoubtedly partisan and the lower judiciary had also not acquitted themselves creditably. High Court quashed this conviction and their lorir

Riot in Comilla was followed by similar atrocities against Hindus in Jamalpur. Here mischief mongers announced by beating drums that the Govt have permitted looting the property of Hindus and to marry Hindu

widows by Nikah form. It was not clear whether the Govt at any level had conspired to unleash such misinformation or otherwise. There was however no action from the Govt to deny this unlawful assertion. The following judgement of the High Court vindicates the allegation of bias raised by the Hindus:

“The Mohammedans were the supporters if not the tools of the Govt. Mohammedan’s oppression was government oppression. Self defence against the aggressiveness of the Mohammedans involved opposition to the Govt. In a word, the objective was the government and not the Mohammedans, the likelihood of whose joining hands eventually with their Hindu compatriots was occasionally the subject of comment and prophecy”⁸(P/199 ibid).

Whatever may be the convictions of the Govt and the Congress leadership the anxiety expressed in the above judgement did not come true. Temporary bonhomie between these two communities during Khilafat agitation was short lived and the schism only widened over the year. All that was left after Khilafat was the legacy of Pakistan.

The British attitude was in no way different in Punjab. In South-Western Punjab, a few years before the war there robberies, The robbers were Muslims and the victims Hindus and Sikhs. The Govt response was lukewarm. Shir Nair states that five to six thousand robbers were sent for trial and out of them only 676 were convicted. Govt had constituted a tribunal for speedy trial headed by a Mohammedan. Hence the low rate of conviction. To be precise on the subject, we can safely conclude that the Indian Mohammedans had no grievances against the colonial Govt in India. The causes-belli for the Khilafat agitation lies in the politics of Anatolian peninsula viz a viz Asia Minor or pan-Islamic ambitions of Ottoman Turkey.

Indian Mohammedans started Khilafat agitation with two declared objectives i.e., (i) to preserve the Khilafat and (ii) to maintain the integrity of the Turkish empire. Both these demands were preposterous. The Turkish people dethroned the Sultan in 1908. Being the Sultan, he was ipso-facto the Calipha for all Muslims of the world. Even the Mohammedans in the Turkish empire e.g., the Arabs, Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Syrians and Palestinians were definitely averse to the continuance of the Caliphate. How can any power, how-so-ever mighty it may be force it down the throat of unwilling nations? We must also remember that the Caliphate was not legitimately inherited but usurped by Ottoman Turks in AD 1517. Sultan Salim I conquered Egypt and brought the reigning Caliph to Istanbul as a hostage. The fact is that the people of Turkey abolished the Sultanate and foreclosed any option to world powers to meddle in favour of the Caliphate. As regards the second objective, the statement of British Prime Minister Lloyd George in parliament in Jan 1918 may be recalled:

“While we do not challenge the maintenance of the Turkish empire in the home lands of the Turkish race with its capital in Constantinople, Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine are in our judgement, entitled to a recognition of their several national condition⁹. P/255 ibid) Ottoman Turkey disintegrated because non-Turkish nations revolted against the empire making the task easier for its enemies. Here we may recall the contents of the Congress resolution passed in the special session called to consider the Khilafat question.:

“In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and imperial Govts have signally failed in their duty towards the Muslims of India and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledged word given to them, and that it is the duty of every non-Muslim Indian in every legitimate manner to assist his Muslim brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him”. In retrospect, we can only view this resolution as a mere political grand-standing. Dr Ambedkar observed: “All that the Congress Special session at Calcutta did was to adopt what the Khilafat Conference had already done and that too not in the interest of swaraj but in the interest of helping the Muslim in furthering the cause of Khilafat”¹⁰(Pakistan or Partition of India. P/168)

The smoke screen of khilafat

Turkey is known in history as “the sick man of Europe”. This remark is attributed to Czar Nicholas I who reportedly told British Ambassador in 1853 “we have on our hand a sick man – a very sick man.... He may

suddenly die upon our hands”¹¹ (P/241 *ibid*). With great difficulty Ottoman Turkey survived another half a century and the Balkan War was the last convulsion of the sick before death. Czar was not overstating the issue, as the Balkan States and Greece were up in arms with active encouragement of Russia, who invoked religious affinities to promote pan-Slavism – an agenda of aggrandisement. Russia’s illustrious commander, General Suvorov would have got even the eastern Thrace liberated for Greece, but for the machinations of Metternich, the Austrian politician. Austria wanted to avert similar demands from Italian states whose territory was under its occupation. Crimean war was followed by several Russo-Turkish encounters forcing Turkey to shed more and more territories in the Balkan. Italy conquered Libya in 1911, Before that England occupied Cyprus and many islands in the Aegean Sea were occupied by Greece. In 1912, Balkan league (Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Russia) declared war on Turkey. Bulgarian revolt exposed the decadence of Turkish war machine. More than the Bulgars, cholera played havoc with the Turkish forces. Bulgarian Turks and war widows fled to Turkey. Turkey sued for peace and ceded their most prized possession Adrianople and consequently the Sultan lost his throne. Balkan war was closely followed by the world war by the end of which Turkey lost all its European territories except a small strip of land measuring 66 thousand miles across the Bosphorus. Loss of European territory can be understood for the simple reasons that being Christian majority, these states wanted to be free from Muslim rule. However not only Christian territory, Turkey also lost Islamic Arabia, Mosul, Syria and Palestine. “The Turks were bound to the Arabs by the ties of religion. The religious tie of Islam is the strongest known to humanity. No social confederacy can claim to rival Islamic brotherhood in point of solidarity.”¹² (P/238 *ibid*). Whatever may be the claims of the clergy and the Churches, nationality is also crucial for determining loyalty. Arabs refused to be yoked with Turkish. Once the Sultan was deposed the tie of Caliphate came to naught. Indian Mohammedans were aware of the Arab revolt. They were also aware that the reigning young Turks were not religious and had kept the ulemas at bay. Their call for Jihad was prompted by their German ally and for the same reason was rejected by the grand mufti of Mecca. Jemal Pasha one of the Turkish triumvirates was active in Afghanistan to incite Indian Mohammedans to revolt. The Afghan king Amanullah Khan was even approached by them to invade India. British intelligence unearthed the conspiracy known as “silk letter” conspiracy. They increased grant to the Afghan king and ensured his neutrality. All these developments happened well before Khilafat resolution of 1919. It therefore follows that the leaders of the Khilafat conference, to quote Dr Ambedkar were practising *gravamin politics*. Latest example of this strategy is the agitation and the propaganda unleashed against CAA of 2019. The Act is in no way affected Muslims who are Indian citizens. However, the propaganda was, it is intended to deprive citizenship rights of Muslims. The fact is that their real agenda was to gain all the concessions that were conceded to non-Muslims refugees from neighbouring countries also to the illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh and Rohingya.

Dichotomy in British politics

Imperial Britain was maintaining good relations with Ottoman Turkey. Ottoman Turkey held Admiral Nelson in high esteem, because his heroic action of defeating Napoleon and saved Turkey from a French invasion. When East India company was threatened by the mutiny in 1857, Sultan in his capacity as Calipha issued a fatwa advising Indian Mohammedans to co-operate with the company rulers. However, there were elements within the empire who felt really hurt by the genocide Turkish forces carried out against Armenian Christians in 1891 and again in 1908. In the later massacre, including those perished in the long marches through the Syrian desert without food and water, one million Armenians perished. So, when Lloyd George assured the Parliament that Britain is not fighting to liquidate Turkish empire and can allow Turkey to hold Asia Minor and Thrace, there were lot of criticism against this policy in local newspapers¹³. (ABCSN P/255) The Anglican Church also resented giving up Istanbul. “Archbishop of Canterbury and York, Bishops of London and Manchester also felt deprived of their dream of reclaiming Constantinople and making it again the seat of the united Anglican and Greek Orthodox Churches”¹⁴. (BSHS Beyond the Rampage/224). Of course, we can dismiss it being an opinion of the clergy who have no role in British politics. However even in the Imperial forces, there were elements who nursed a deep sense of hurt for the unfortunate Armenians and for conversion of Hagia Sofia as a mosque. One such instance is mentioned by Robert Graves in his work titled Lawrence and the Arabs. Lawrence and Col Aubrey Herbert entered Turkish camp to negotiate a temporary halt of the siege against their garrison in Kut, because several soldiers in that garrison were sick and also practically starving the Arabs civilians who were sympathetic to Britain. After settlement though not entirely satisfactory, the Turkish commander told his British counter parts: “After all, gentlemen, our interest as empire builders are much the

same as yours. There is nothing that need stand between us". Col Herbert reportedly quipped: "only a million dead Armenians".¹⁵ (P/32 *ibid*). Deep inside the British psyche, like any other European nation, there were scars on account of injuries inflicted on adherents to Christianity within the Turkish empire. As empire builders British record in India is not fundamentally different from that of Turkey, nor their methods in Northern Ireland beyond reproach.

Dichotomy in Muslim politics

Dr Ambedkar contends that Muslim politics has become perverted ¹⁶. (P/257, *Pakistan or Partition of India*). This statement is in the context of Muslim agitation for representative Govt in Kashmir which is a Muslim majority state ruled by a Hindu King. However, for Hindu majority kingdoms under Muslim rule no such demand is ever raised. Similarly Indian Mohamedans under the banner of Khilafat Committee was clamouring for restoration of Khilafat whereas the new rulers of Turkey who enjoyed immense popular support abolished the Khilafat itself and made Turkey a modern republic. Even then, our Khilafat Committee was supporting the new rulers by way of aid in their campaign against Greece in Smyrna. The committee went to the extent of diverting normal Jhakkat (charity) for Smyrna. The Mappilas of Malabar are descendants of Arabic merchants who were permitted to marry Malabari girls and therefore had emotional ties with the Arabians. The entire Arabia was in revolt against Turkey for their foolish attack on Mecca and inhuman treatment against residents of Medina without exception to women and children. The Mappilas were aware of this revolt and were still campaigning for Khilafat. Definitely, this is an act of deception to promote pan-Islamism i.e., a Turkish empire.

Khilafat movement and beyond

Dr K M Munshi unreservedly concedes that the "khilafat movement after a brilliant beginning, petered out taking along with it the last chances of Hindu-Muslim unity ¹⁷(*Pilgrimage to Freedom/22*). Chettur Sankaran Nair says: "The Indian non-Mohammedans did not trouble themselves about the Khilafat claims, Mr Gandhi and his followers took it up as an anti-British movement to secure Mohammedan support to his non-cooperation movement. Even that non-Mohammedans sympathy with the Khilafat movement, has vanished."¹⁷(*Gandhi and Anarchy, P.33*). Obviously Gandhiji was quite unrealistic to expect the Hindus to sympathise with the Khilafat. That was not at all their concern, nor the concern of the Mohammedans of other Muslim countries. The movement was built on a serious misrepresentation of fact that Khilafat was abolished by Britain. In fact, the Sultan who was also doubling up as Caliph was dethroned by nationalist movement of Turkey and later Kemal Pasha assuming power as the first President of Turkish republic abolished the Caliphate itself. Decades before Kemal Pasha took this historic decision, even prominent Mohammedan thinkers like Jamaluddin Afghani had suggested modernisation of political institutions. Except for Khilafat leaders of India, no Muslim country wanted to touch the Khilafat even with a barge pole. Indian Khilafat leaders had approached Kemal Pasha through telegram urging him to restore the Caliph. He did not respond and therefore, they deputed Prince Aghakhan and Kwaja Amir Ali to meet Kemal Pasha. He told them that being Shia Muslims they need not worry on account of Khalifa of Sunni Muslims. Then, they suggested that he himself assume Khilafat. Coming from citizens of British or French administered countries lawfully not capable of obeying the dictates of the Caliph, that suggestion was also not acceptable to Kemal Pasha whose assessment of Islam as the religion of the defeated and sole reason for the down fall of Turkey, was strongly conveyed to the Indian representative. They got similar response from the Saudi King Ibn Aziz and later Shah Pahlavi of Persia. Thus, rejected by the Muslim world the duo returned to India to accelerate the movement against the British administration. Non-violent, non-cooperation had its own limitations and once the men in the forefront were put behind the bars, people lost enthusiasm and consequently the movement petered out. It caused a greater harm to communal unity. Mutual trust between the communities was lost giving fillip to communal riots throughout the country even on flimsy grounds. For the first time Hindu realised that his next door Muslim neighbour, though in India, is not emotionally Indian, whose loyalty transcends the national boundaries to Mecca and Turkey. By supporting the movement to further such transnational concepts, the Congress party in a way conceded the existence of separate Muslim nation within the geographical limits of India. On 18 May 1926 Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“With the mentality of the ordinary Mohammedan it was bound to produce the reaction it has produced; you fed the force; it gathered power and began to make demands which the Hindu mentality had to rise up and reject. That does not require super mind to find out, it requires common sense.”¹⁹ (India’s Rebirth/171)

Obviously, Sri Aurobindo does not absolve Gandhi of his responsibility in assuming the leadership of Khilafat movement that only resulted in communal disharmony.

Mappila rebellion in Malabar.

The usual causes of the riots like playing music during temples processions near the mosques or cow slaughter that hurts the Hindu sentiments were not the reason for Malabar rebellion. What happened in two Taluks of Malabar was not a communal riot. It was a well-planned rebellion of the Mappilas, ostensibly against the British Govt. However, once they tasted blood on 20 Aug 1920 and managed to defeat the small force in Thirurangadi – the scene of conflict – they anointed Ali Musaliyar as Khalifa of the kingdom of Al Doula (comprising two erstwhile taluks of Valluvanaad and Eranad. His reign was based on medieval barbarity and ordered that only one religion (Islam) is allowed in his domain. The result was forcible conversion or alternatively genocide, rape and arson until the Govt was able to bring in additional forces. Dr Ambedkar says: “This was just a Bartholomew. The number of Hindus who were killed, wounded or converted, is not known. But the number must have been enormous”.²⁰ (P/184) He compared this rebellion to the holocaust of Protestants by Roman Catholics aided and abetted by Police and the queen mother Catherine de Medici. It began in Paris and spread to provinces killing at least 5000 Protestants as per official estimates and 30000 as per the victims. The occasion was the marriage reception of the princess on 23-24 August 1572. The occasion also coincided with the feast of St Bartholomew. The bridegroom was Henry of Navarre, a protestant and therefore Protestants were present in the feast in large numbers. The queen mother secretly instructed the Paris Police Chief to assassinate Admiral Gaspard de Colony, as he was inconvenient to the Royal family being a Protestant. The general public took it as a license to kill all protestants. The victims were unprepared. In Malabar, Muslims and Hindus jointly formed the Khilafat Committee which was headed by Mahatma Gandhi at National level. So, Hindus never anticipated their Muslim partners to turn against them and were totally unprepared. The comparison is therefore apt and realistic. It may require a ream to fully describe the horrors of this genocide. However, we can get a general idea from a petition submitted by the ladies of Malabar to Lady Reading:

“Your Ladyship is doubtless aware that though our unhappy district has witnessed many Moplah outbreaks in the course of last one hundred years, the present rebellion is unexampled in its magnitude as well as unprecedented in its ferocity. But it is possible that your Ladyship is not fully apprised of all the horrors and atrocities perpetrated by the fiendish rebels; of the many wells and tanks filled up with the mutilated, but often only half dead bodies of our nearest and dearest ones who refused to abandon the faith of our fathers; of pregnant women cut to pieces and left on the roadsides and in the jungles, with the unborn babe protruding from the mangled corpse; of our innocent and helpless children torn from our arms and done to death before our eyes and of our husbands and fathers tortured, flayed and burnt alive..... These are not fables.”²¹ (Appendix V to Gandhi and Anarchy/100). Dr Ambedkar remarked: “but Mr Gandhi was so much obsessed by the necessity of establishing Hindu-Muslim unity that he was prepared to make light of the doings of the Moplas and the Khilafitists who were congratulating them. He spoke of the Moplas as the “brave God-fearing Moplas who were fighting for what they consider as religion and in a manner, they consider as religious”²². (P/178, Pakistan or Partition of India). Madame Annie Besant reacted to these comments scornfully: “Brave, god-fearing Mopla whom Mr Gandhi so much admires, who are fighting for what they consider as religion and in a manner they consider religious” Men who consider it religions to murder, rape loot to kill women and little children, cutting down whole families, have to be put under restraint in any civilised society”²³ (Appx III to Gandhi and Anarchy P/94)

Originally a congressman, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose was forced out of Congress by Gandhi that led to his heroic escape, formation of Indian National Army and war on Britain and her allies. He had observed the following on Khilafat and the atrocities against the Hindu community:

“The Moplahs of Malabar were a section of the Moslem community. Their rising was directed against the

Hindus: nevertheless, it was also an attack on the government and was such caused them considerable anxiety and embarrassment. It has significance also because it was the first incident to loosen Hindu-Muslim unity"²⁴. (S C Bose, The Indian Struggle, as quoted by B S Hari Shankar in Beyond Rampage/263).

Netaji did not belong to Hindu right and had a broad vision to cement national unity transcending communal ideocracies of any particular group. The INA he formed against the British imperialism epitomises his conviction that divergent elements can be combined to form a cohesive national force. His comments therefore be treated as dispassionate assessment of Gandhiji's Khilafat movement.

The 1921 Mappila rebellion was the culmination of series of 50 localised rebellions beginning from 1836. These rebellions were called *Halilakkamm* (religious frenzy) and by nature were suicidal jihads. The poor illiterate Mappilas were misled by their preachers as well as scheming rich Muslim land lords who had some score to settle with their Hindu neighbours. A Magisterial Report of 1871, reveals that during raids in the three taluks of South Malabar 17295 weapons including fire arms were recovered from the households of poor Mappilas who lived hand to mouth. Obviously, they were aided, abetted and armed by their rich land-owning co-religionists. The Mappila being illiterate was already under the spell of his preachers and when he got money and material and fire-arms from respectable land owners, he was doubly sure of the correctness of his course of action. Dr B S Hari Shankar has given the details of these religious frenzies in a tabulated form in his work "Beyond Rampage".(P/176 to 181) The following incidents prove beyond doubt that not only religious frenzy but also conspiracy of rich Muslim land owners was also at work behind the screen:

1849, Manjeri

Two Mappilas Thorangal Unniyan and Attan Kurikkal killed 4 Hindus and took post in the temple at Manjeri. Later they defiled the temple and partially burned it.

April 22 1851 Kulathur

Six Mappilas killed six land owning Hindus including the aged Kulathur Variyar. The later had objected to a scheme of constructing a mosque near the temple.

Jan 4 1852, Mattanur

15 Mappilas killed all 18 members of Kalathil Kesavan's household, defiled the temple and also attacked the house of Kalliad Nambiar. These rebels were supported by around 200 Mappilas who were funded by Kattale Mappilas. Latter had attempted to grab landed property and their attempt was successfully foiled by the Kalathil family. This was therefore a programme of vengeance.

Sep 9,1880,Melattur:

A Mappila killed one Harijan apostate and grievously wounded a porter. Obviously it is a fanatical outburst.

In 1884 a special commission chaired by T Madhav Rao with Chettur Sankaran Nair and C Karunakaran Menon as members was constituted to enquire into these incidents of religious frenzies. Karunakaran Menon has also published the views through an article that appeared in "The Madras review" of May 1897. The commission opined: "The lawless Mappila who forms a very small percentage of the total Mappila population of the district is mainly confined to the jungle tracts of Ernad and Walluvanad. There he flourishes in spite of malaria land poverty, free from the chastening influences of education and civilization. He is often a tool in the hands of designing men. His poverty drives him to recklessness, his ignorance makes him believe in the existence of an easy road to heaven. His religion is what is taught to him by his Mullah or Musaliar"²⁵. (P/182) However in the later half of the nineteenth century such frenzied rebellions were localised and not widespread as in 1921. Govt took corrective measures including Mappila Act and expulsion of preachers of Arabic origin. One such preacher who was exiled to Arabia was Sayed Fazal Thangal who was the preacher of Tirurangady

mosque. His expulsion caused great resentment among the Mappilas and two desperadoes amongst them assassinated the District Collector, who was actually their well-wisher. Punitive measures had their effect and lawlessness was controlled till Aug 1921. When khilafat became the agenda of the Congress, the disgruntled elements amongst the Mappilas became emboldened not only to challenge the Govt but also to target their Hindu neighbours by inhuman acts of violence including rape, rapine, murder and forcible conversions. The Khilafat movement provided them an alibi to organise ostensibly against the colonial government but secretly prepare for an attack on the Hindu population. A few of them had a grudge against Hindu land lords whose property was in their possession during the brief Mysorean interlude.

Communal riots in the third decade of twentieth century

We have seen that what happened in Malabar was not mere communal disturbance, but a systematic, planned genocide against the Hindus for which preparations were afoot from 1920. A society of Muslims namely Khuddam-e-kaaba was functioning, spewing hatred against the infidels and simultaneously Muslim League as a political organisation had swelled the ranks of Khilafat Committee. Therefore, nobody noticed or cared for the activities of the former organisation. They had accumulated weapons like swords and knives and once the failure of Khilafat movement became apparent, preyed upon the unsuspecting and unprepared Hindus. In other provinces there were communal riots for reason normally attributed to playing of music in front of the mosques or cow slaughter. Dr Ambedkar in his work *Pakistan or Partition of India* has dedicated a full chapter to describe communal riots that happened in a decade after Khilafat movement. Having been a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council – a position analogous to that of the Union Minister now- he was privy to Govt of India reports on communal situation. He has consulted all such reports to ensure accuracy. The only reason for riots in Sholapur (1925), Bareilly (1927), Calcutta (1925 April, May) was playing music by Hindus while taking out processions and passing before the mosque. We must remember that though the more orthodox Islam prohibits music in religious assemblies and during prayers, there are sects amongst Muslim's who admit even frenzied singing of qawwali. Therefore, this was not such an unpardonable offence to play music on the public road. In Punjab between 1927 And 1928 there were more than 25 riots that were not serious except two in Lahore. One was merely on a account of a chance collision between a Hindu and a Muslim youth that later take the gigantic proportion of a full blown communal riots. Another was on account of an attempt by the Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee to demolish a mosque within the premises of Shahidgunj Gurudwara. Of course, the Sikhs had obtained a court decree and were merely implementing it.

Another issue that often-ignited passions and caused riots was cow slaughter, eg, the incident in Softa village in Gurgaon. This village was predominantly Muslims and was surrounded by the villages where Hindus were in majority. Hindus in the neighbouring villages came to know that Muslims in Softa were planning to sacrifice a cow. Hindus surrounded Softa and Police interfered. They took the cow into their custody and assured the indus that they will not allow cow slHindus Hindus that cow slaughter will not be allowed. However, Hindus wanted to keep the cow in their possession that was not acceptable to the Police. During the discussion some miscreants from other side entered the village and set the Muslim households afire. Warning fire did not deter the Hindus and therefore the Police resorted to actual firing. In police firing and rioting 14 people were killed and another 333 injured. Even in the very cradle of Islam i.e., Mecca no one sacrifices a cow and therefore Muslim insistence to practice cow slaughter in India, is more an act bordering chauvinism.

Two pamphlets namely *Rangila Rasool* and *Risala vartman* that were scurrilous of the prophet caused communal riots that in Punjab and NWF province. From Kohat all Hindu families were forced to migrate for the alleged blasphemy committed by their co-religionists. Similarly, Afridi tribes ordered Hindus to vacate the villages in the Khyber pass. In these cases the authors were hunted and killed. When the killer Mohammedan was tried and convicted for murder there were unprecedented crowd to accompany the funeral procession to the burial ground. Such was the fury that its impact was felt in Sind and undivided Bengal. The above riots were of course for reasons that are well known to both the communities. However, there was no reason for a riot that

took place in Delhi in June 1927, when in the old city, a pony suddenly bolted. The crowd of bystanders panicked resulting in a communal riot. The more appropriate explanation may be that the communities had lost mutual trust and were behaving like enemies arraigned in opposite camps. Dr Ambedkar quotes figures of casualties in Bombay city while summing up: "Taking the total period of 9 years and 2 months from February 1929 to April 1938, the Hindus and Muslims of the city of Bombay alone were engaged in a sanguinary warfare for 210 days during which period 550 were killed and 4500 were wounded".²⁶ 233 (P/204 ibid)

The worst sufferers of these riots were women. Ambedkar quoting statistics presented in Bengal provincial legislature, states that "about 35000 women were abducted in Bengal during the short period of five years between 1922-27. He continues:" The attitude towards women-folk is a good index of the friendly or unfriendly attitude between the two communities."²⁷ (P/205 ibid) Obviously, relationship of these two communities was unfriendly. It also has something to do with the Islamic law conceding proprietary right to men over women folk. Definitely Khilafat only emboldened the lumpen elements amongst the Muslims to commit atrocities, because even after heinous crimes committed in Malabar their leadership were busy justifying them. Even Gandhiji justified the atrocities on Hindus by Mappilas saying "the brave God-fearing Moplas who were fighting for what they consider as religion and in a manner which they consider religious"²⁸. (P/178 ibid) A layman cannot comprehend what is the bravado in violating the honour of the fair sex. Nor he can suffer such religion that makes the man worse than a beast. Sri Aurobindo concluded the outcome of Khilafat movement on 1 Aug 1926:

"The attempt to placate the Mohamedans was a false diplomacy. Instead of trying to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity directly, if the Hindus had devoted themselves to national work, the Mahomedans would have gradually come of themselves.... This attempt to patch up a unity has given too much importance to the Muslims and it has been the root of all these troubles"²⁹. (Sri Aurobindo, India's Rebirth/179). The yogi with his tongue in cheek, comments on the futility of building Hindu-Muslim unity though confirmed communalists in the forefront of the Khilafat movement. Gandhiji's association ennobled them and threw unsuspecting ordinary Muslims under their leadership. Swami Shradhananda commented in the Liberator of 26 Aug 1926:

"There were other indications also, showing that the Mussalmans considered the Congress to be existing on their sufferance and if there was the least attempt to ignore their idiosyncrasies, the superficial unity would be scrapped asunder"³⁰ (As quoted by Dr Ambedkar on P/180 of Pakistan or Partition of India).

Even Congress leaders except the hard-core disciples of Gandhiji were not faltered to admit this political strategy as correct.

Conclusions

Except for a brief spell of less than an year, there was no united enterprise or campaign by Hindus and Muslims. Khilafat movement with a brilliant start collapsed and with it buried the hope of Hindu-Muslim unity for ever. Even Muslims with modern and national outlook deserted Congress. Jinnah was anything but not a Muslim fanatic. Congress support to the Khilafat and dominance of Ali brothers frustrated him. He was sure that he cannot continue in the nationalist camp without undermining his acceptance amongst Indian Muslims. So he walked out of the congress and later accepted the leadership of the Muslim league to bolster its demand for partition. Pakistan is the legacy of Khilafat.

FINDING AND CONCLUSIONS

The Khilafat movement was simply a smoke screen for the Indian Muslims to promote Pan-Islamism and to dominate South Asian Politics. Whereas for Congress and Gandhiji it was an attempt to co-opt Muslims in the struggle for independence and to promote Hindu-Muslim unity. The Congress attempt miserably failed and the movement only widened the gulf between the two communities. The ultimate outcome was the poartition of the country.

- 1- Robert Graves, Lawrence and the Arabs, P/16
- 2- Ibid P/48
- 3- Dr K M Munshi, Pilgrimage to Freedom, P/65
- 4- Sri Aurobindo, India's rebirth, P/64
- 5- Chettur Sankaran Nair, Autobiography, P/194
- 6- Ibid P/194
- 7- Ibid P/197
- 8- Ibid P/199
- 9- Ibid P/255
- 10- B R Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India P/168
- 11- Ibid P/241
- 12- Ibid P/238
- 13- Chettur Sankaran Nair, Auto-biography P/255
- 14- Dr B S Harishankar Beyond Rampage, P/224
- 15- Robert Graves, Lawrence and Arabs, P/32
- 16- B R Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India, P/257
- 17- K M Munshi, Pilgrimage to Freedom, P/22
- 18- Chettur Sankaran Nair, Gandhi and Anarchy, P/33
- 19- Sri Aurobindo, India's rebirth, P/171
- 20- B R Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India, P/184
- 21- Chettur Sankaran Nair, Gandhi and Anarchy, Appx V, P/100
- 22- Madras Review, May 1897
- 23- Chettur Sankaran Nair, Gandhi and Anarchy, Appx III, P/94
- 24- S C Bose, The Indian Struggle (As quoted by B S Hari Shankar in Beyond Rampage P /263).
- 25- B R Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India, P/204
- 26- Ibid P/205
- 27- Ibid P/178
- 28- Sri Aurobindo, India's rebirth, P/179
- 29- B R Ambedkar, Pakistan or Partition of India, P/180

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