

Khilafat Movement (1919-1922)

The Khilafat movement was a very important event in the political history of India. The Muslims of India had a great regard for the Khilafat (Caliphate) which was held by the Ottoman Empire. During World War I, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) joined the war in favour of Germany. But Turkey and Germany lost the war and a pact commonly known as Istanbul Accord was concluded between the Allied Forces on 3rd November 1918. According to this Pact the territories of Turkey were to be divided among France, Greece and Britain.

During the war the Indian Muslims were in a very awkward position, because they had a deep-rooted devotion to the caliphate. They had profound respect for this holy institution. Therefore, their support to the British Government was subject to the safeguard and protection of the holy places of Turkey and on the condition that Turkey will not to be deprived of its territories. But the British Government could not fulfill both of these promises. The Treaty of Savers 1920 was imposed on Turkey and its territories like Samarna, Thrace and Anatolia were wrested from it and distributed among European countries. A wave of anger swept across the Muslim World and the Indian Muslims rose against the British Government. Muslim leaders like Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Moulana Muhammad Ali Johar, Moulana Shoukat Ali and others reacted against the British Government policy and were put behind the bars.

Thus, Muslims organized a mass movement, which came to be known as Khilafat Movement.

The aims of this movement were

- (a) To protect the Holy place of Turkey
- (b) To restore the Territories of Turkey
- (c) To restore the Ottoman Empire.

In December 1919 both the Khilafat Committee and Congress held their meetings simultaneously at Amritsar and a delegation was prepared which was sent to England under the

leadership of Maulana Mohammad Ali Johar to see the British Prime Minister, Cabinet Member and Members of Parliament and to explain the Indian point of view regarding the Khilafat. The delegation visited England in 1920. The leaders of the delegation addressed the House of Commons and saw the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George who paid no heed to the delegation's demand. The delegation stayed at London for eight months and won many hearts and sympathies of people in Britain delivering speeches. However, the delegation returned to India unsuccessful in October 1920.

After the unsuccessful visit to England the leaders of Khilafat Movement realized the fact that British were not in the mood to help them. Therefore, they realized that a new strategy needed to be adopted in order to reinvigorate the zest and zeal for freedom among a general populace. With this aim they decided to launch a movement of Non-Co-operation. When the leaders of Khilafat movement announced the Non-Co-operation Movement, the Congress extended its full support to the Khilafat Movement. The leaders of the two met at Amritsar and resolved to launch a country wide agitation under the leadership of Mr. Gandhi. The agitation was against the British government. The Jamiat-ul-Ulama Hind issued a Fatwa of *Tark-e-Mawalat*. The following points were included in it:

1. Renunciation of all Government titles.
2. Boycott of legislature and court.
3. Withdrawal of students from educational institutions.
4. Resignation from government posts.
5. General civil disobedience.

As a result of this proclamation of fatwa, hundreds of thousands people returned the titles and stopped sending their children to government schools and colleges. All those highly educated young men who could have rose to high government positions bade farewell to their bright future and accepted ordinary jobs in the private sector. The vacuum created in government offices was

joyfully filled in by Hindus, while the Muslim government employees willingly accepted starvation for the sake of the Muslim cause.

Under the hypnotism of Mr. Gandhi, Muslim ulama had issued a verdict and declared India as *Dar-ul-Harab* and the Muslims therefore needed to migrate to some other country or *Dar-ul-Salam*. Thousands of families sold out their properties for a tenth of their value and hastily left for Afghanistan, in August 1920. As many as eighteen thousand people marched towards Afghanistan, which was unable to bear the influx of the people. Thus, the Afghan authorities closed their frontiers. Eventually the Muhajarins had to return to their homes. A great number of old men, women and children died on their way during returning to homes and those who luckily reach alive their former places. They found themselves homeless and penniless. In fact, they faced great difficulties. Even the preachers of Khilafat Movement realized the fact.

In January 1921, nearly three thousand students of various colleges and schools boycotted their classes and a number of teachers most of them were Muslims tendered their resignation. The Movement became so powerful that the Government was obliged to pay attention to the problem. The British Government invited Seth Jan-Muhammad Chutani, the President of Khilafat conference to visit London to discuss the issue. A delegation under his leadership visited London and discussed the sentiment of Muslims but the delegation also returned unsuccessfully.

The Khilafat Movement came to an end when thousands of Indians were put behind the bar. The leaders in spite of their best efforts could not maintain the Hindu-Muslim Unity. One of the main reasons which caused a death blow to Khilafat Movement was the indirect announcement of Gandhi to discontinue the Non Co-operation Movement. Gandhi used an incident of arson on February 1922, when a violent mob set on fire a police choki at Chora Churi at district Gorakpur, burning twenty one constables to death as an excuse to call off the non-cooperation movement. It adversely affected the Khilafat Movement which thought to be integral part of movement. In 1924, Kamal Ataturk set up a government on democratic basis in Turkey by abolishing Khilafat as a system of government which served a finishing blow to Khilafat Movement in India and people had lost whatever interest that they had in the movement.

Failure of the Movement:

1. The abolition of Khilafat by Kamal Atatürk was a serious blow on Khilafat movement in the sub-continent and he exiled Sultan Abdul Majeed, a helpless Caliph and abolished Khilafat as an institution, due to this all agitational activities came to an end in the Sub-continent.
2. The Hijrat Movement made the Muslims disillusioned with the Khilafat Movement due to the declaration of India as *Darul-Harab*. A large number of Muslims migrated from Sindh and N.W.F.P to Afghanistan. The Afghan authorities did not allow them to cross the border. After this tragic event those who had advocated the Hijrat movement came to realize their mistake which resulted in failure of movement.
3. When Khilafat movement became mature and was reaching its climax. A tragic incident took place in the village of Chora Churi in which the police opened fire on the procession of local resident. The agitated mob in counteraction set the police station on fire which in result twenty-one police constables were burnt alive. Due to this incident the Ali brother and other Muslim leader were arrested and Mr. Gandhi put off the movement. As a consequence, the movement lost its intensity.

Conclusion:

The Khilafat movement was started to safeguard the Khilafat in Turkey, an issue which essentially belonged to the Muslims. By the involvement of Hindus the Movement grew forceful and there was possibility of meeting the movement with success. The British Government was the common enemy of the Muslims and Hindus. That is why, both the nations continued united efforts against it. But the difference between the Hindus and Muslims became even more pronounced and many other events showed that the opposition of Hindus to British Government was not lasting. When Khilafat Movement reached at its success, the Hindus especially Mr. Gandhi gave up from movement and leaved the Muslims alone and caused the failure of Movement.

The Khilafat movement proved that Hindus and Muslims were two different nations as they could not continue the unity and could not live together. The Khilafat Movement created

political consciousness among the Indian Muslims, which inspired them to constitute another movement for then Independence. Thus, they started Pakistan Movement.