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Muhammad Irshad
M.Phil Pol. Science,
Department of IR & Political
Science, Qurtuba University
Peshawar, Pakistan

British imperialism, its impacts on Muslims and nationalism in British India

Muhammad Irshad

Abstract

The instant paper is an analytical and critical study with regard to British imperialism in the subcontinent and its impacts on Muslims and Indian Nationalism; it is a glimpse on history of oppression and suppression by the British ruler and hatred towards Muslims of India. This study encompasses two aspects; 1) the impact of imperialism and Indian Nationalism; and 2) An effort has been made in the instant paper to solve the puzzle which has long been a question mark in the minds of Muslims educationalist i.e the fatwa issued in favour of political cooperation with Hindus; whether it was issued for Muslims interest or just replacing British Imperialism by Hinduism (Indian Nationalism)? Obviously it is a struggle to wrap the basic and more important aspects of this fatwa and subsequent struggle in light of that fatwa. This study is practically based on impact of imperialism on Muslim's society, culture and their life both public and private. The instant paper is a roadmap on locating problems, shortcoming which is still a puzzled question in Muslim society, The aim of this study is formulation a logical report to know the reasons of cooperation with Hindus and united struggle, that would enable us to reach rationale point of consideration.

Keywords: British imperialism, Muslims and nationalism in British India

Introduction

The Adverse impact of the British rule on the political, economic, social and culture spheres resulted in sharp reaction of the Indian people against the foreigners. This led to a series of the anti-British movements throughout the country. The tribes, different religion, and indigenous people start revolt against exploitative rulers and several big clashes have been recorded which cause death of more than 15 lakh peoples ^[1] But after abortive battle for independence (1857), the fate of the Muslims in the Sub continent was eroded with obscurity and depression. The Britisher eminent considered Muslims as the expected hostile to Christianity and Britain at large, as a result they have adopted the strategy of oppression and repression against the Muslim because Hindu of india had accepted the British imperialism and had started English education as well as they had rendered services under the supervision of British imperialists ^[2]. That is why Sir Syed Ahmad Khan aptly said that *“there was no calamity in these days which was not attributed to the Muslims and there is no doubt that any calamity which fell from the sky might not have come straight to some Muhammadan houses bringing ruin and destruction.”*

The Muslims were undeviating victim as they were considered the main source of revolt against the British imperialism; for this reason, Muslims were deprived of their political, military, civil, judicial and economic power, in short on every sphere of life ^[3]. After 1857 Indian Muslims were affected in every sphere and could not recover for a long time. They have been suffered from intellectual disorder, material deprivation and educational perplexity ^[4] Nonetheless after a consistent struggle of Muslim of sub continent win independence and achieve a homeland of their own on 14 August, 1947.

Impact on Muslims Political

While Muslims were ruling, Persian was the state language; nevertheless, British`ers replaced it by English ^[5] which had badly affected and deprived them of higher posts in the state and a muslim could hardly achieve a post above the rank of ink filler, office boy etc. *“there were scarcely a Government office in India in which a Muslim can hope for any post above the rank of a porter, messenger, filler of inkpots and mender of shoes”* ^[6] and whereas

Corresponding Author:
Muhammad Irshad
M.Phil Pol. Science,
Department of IR & Political
Science, Qurtuba University
Peshawar, Pakistan

Shariah Law was repealed which led to the termination of the offices and services of Muslim legal advisors altogether. It has been published in the Government Gazette that the appointment in courts will be given to none but to Hindus. Though Urdu language was the common invention of both the Muslims and Hindus of the subcontinent ^[7] but Hindu didn't oppose the replacement of state language i.e Urdu into English.

Economic

As the economy increased, so too did the Indian infrastructure. However, the British held most of the political and economic power and they used this to restrict Indian-owned industries including cotton textiles. This led to a loss of self-sufficiency for many locals and, in the late 1800s, India experienced a severe starvation ^[8] especially Muslim of subcontinent were agrarians and most of them were living in villages; those were at that time were self-sufficient economic units however due to excessive interference of British imperialists. The permanent settlement took away the charge of lands etc. from the hands of Muslim Landlord to the Brahmanic revenue collector. The villagers became poor and poor day by day. The British imperialists have cut of the trade links of the Muslims with foreign countries and highly reliance on import of machinery which had badly affected the value of handicraft products of the Muslims of subcontinent.

Culture

Beyond economic concerns, the British had a more-or-less hands-off policy when it came to religious and social customs in India. However, British missionaries increased during the imperial era, with hopes to spread Western Christianity. Many of the British officials working in India were racist, impacting the political climate. Many Indians who worked with British officials for administrative purposes were portrayed as disloyal or deceitful to their Indian brethren by the British ^[9].

In the 19th Century missionary activities of the Christians became very ardent and the English liberal movement that gave religious liberty to the Catholics bore fruitful results. To combat this Muslims and Hindus started various movements to reform the society because the British was playing an influencing role to convert their cherished old ideas and institutions and adopted western customs and culture.

Education

As discussed that Persian was replaced by English; soon after this action they have blocked the government sanctions for charity schools and confiscated / resumed their free grants. The donation made by well-to-do Muslims were misappropriated under the false pretences of just administration; many of the events of maladministration were recorded. They had appointed Hindu teachers who were promoting Hindu culture in the classes owing to which Muslims remained far from government institutions. Only 17 Muslims out of 525 students did their graduation from the University of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1870.

Nationalism in general

The term "Nationalism" is generally used to describe two phenomena. a) The attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity, and b) the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to

achieve or sustain self-determination. It is often defined as a group struggle having common origin, ethnicity, or culture ties or we can say having common interest, ideology and set goals. Nationalism has long been ignored a topic in political philosophy however it came into focus again in the philosophical debates after different clashes on the world map such as French Revolution, Rwanda former Yugoslavia etc. and many a political thinker held "Nationalism" responsible for reshaping the world and adding new states to world map along with state boundaries and national lines changing the entire face of global politics. It became hardly to ignore this term (Nationalism) and in the last decade the Nationalism has shifted towards issue of international justice, probably in response to change on the international scene. Many a writer who believes in internationalism such as Toynbee, considered "Nationalism" responsible for bloody wars in the world and consider it a negative force. However many a writer appraise "Nationalism" and believes that it is the stage where the masses aware of their rights wherein they started struggle for active participation in the government affairs; and when their rights are not accepted by the imperialist rulers then as a result revolt took place, which has also been endorsed by the Internationalist that revolt always took place when ruler loses creativity and put reliance on pure force.

The rise of nationalism in British India and Muslim response

The nationalist movement emerged several times in history of sub continent of British India in different shapes before and after the abortive war for independence (1857) Nonetheless; the twentieth Century brought a number of crucial changes to the socio-religious landscape by organizing various movements yet succeeded and some failed. Nationalist movements peaked four times before the independence of 1947: first in the year 1905-7 and then three consecutive Gandhian campaigns 1919-22, 1930-4, and 1942 ^[10] and the most important pattern of modifications arose from the constitutional reforms. The most significant is granting separate electorates to the Muslims of British India in 1919 which gave Muslims of British India share in political powers, seat allocation in regional and central legislative bodies which in turn reforms a new form a political institution ^[11].

Three different communities Muslim, Hindu and Sikh were came up in organized manner and emerged for securing the interest of each other ^[12]. it was a joint struggle for liberating India from the foreign clutches. Muslim League was first politicized Muslims founded in 1906 the members of which were active in the Muhammadan Educational Conference established by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan; were the focal for Muslim of British India, which had Began Nationalist Movement expressing the concept of separate identity i.e Pakistan. Similarly Hindu also impressed and started mobilizing Hindus, awakening political consciousness, founding of the Punjab Hindu Conference in 1909 subsequent certain development took place in 1915 and 1930 of changing names from Sarvadeshik Hindu Sabh to Hindu Mahasabha.

In the 19 century various ideologies emerged in British India soon after the World War-I e.g Democratic Socialism from England, Marxist thought came with young educationalist so did the fascism from Italy and Germany etc. ^[12] and the Muslims Scholars and Ulama presented

some different ideologies.

The idea of Nationalism was initiated in Europe that was actually protested against the church, imperialism, and feudal lords; it was subsequently explained by the various schools of thought e.g. 1. Who support values of inner self, spirit, civilization irrespective of nation, nationalism; and 2. Second category who believed that technological development, eventually lead to the global integration; and 3. Rejected both above, and considered that Ethno antinational movement as reality and responsible for world disintegration; and 4. The last category of thinkers are inspired by Marx, rejected the concept of Nationalism and consider it as elite class device where they promoting (representing) self-interest as a whole. As a summary this concept was transmitted to colonies by then to different societies, though having own culture but the dominant tried to impose their culture. In the case of British India where Muslims were living they have more an expedient culture which is based on Quran and Sunnah.

As and when the idea of Western Nationalism transmitted to the Muslim world it had directly affected the Muslim and confronted them with the long cherished Islamic traditions. It was welcome in some countries like Turkey but the case of the British India was too different from the rest of Muslim world. Whereas Muslims were in minority and Congress was only dominating group with the objective to attain Swaraj (1885). Here on the other hand Ulama of Deoband issued a religious fatwa in favour of political cooperation with Congress, which had confused the Muslims of British India and didn't attract the Muslim at large, which is still a confusion in the minds of the Muslims.

Analysis

Back ground

Several preliminary questions raised in the minds of Muslims of the British India as:

Whether the Fatwa means to liberate India from foreigner Non-Muslim (Christians) and hand it over to local Non-Muslim (Hindus)? Didn't it mean to transfer authority from Christians to Hindus? Was it not contrary to the Islamic principles? Why Deoband pushed Muslims to popular sovereignty? Etc.

The Muslims as discussed above in the preceding lines, facing an anarchic situation. There were mainly two communities ie. Muslims & Hindus in India who respondent to western Nationalism in their own way in accordance with their own creed and ideology. A great movement of Shah Wali Uallah had different aspect assume it this movement was a religio-polico-culture aspect. It had produced the charismatic personality, thinker and defenders. It provided the Muslim of sub continent the tactic to coup with various prevailing situations. They provided us with various fatwas religious degeees sometimes they fought the crusade in Punjab in the span of history of British Government. Invited some foreign power to free India from foreign clutches of the Europe. This movement on the eve of Khilafat movement merge into the all India National Congress (politically) question after question come and how to solve the puzzle and this movement 217 years from 1731-1947 how? Why? And what was the situation that Deoband merged into all Indian Congress? And wasn't it contrary to Islamic Principles? It was not accidently it has ideological roots in the past. Here to explain that when a reforming coming he divide his strategy into two phases first he try to

reach so deep and merge himself in the society with the purpose to find problems and to dig out the roots of evil from where it had emerged; And in second place when all cleared then he present his reforms, so did Shah Wali Ullah and his disciples.

Before declaration particularly all such situation which require a very highest political mind and formula this was situation in which JUH established 1919. One of its objectives was to establish cordial relation with Indian community in the same manner when Mulana Mehmood Hassan returned in 1920 to India, also sought cooperation from Hindu against the British Government. then Hussain Ahmad Madani emerged on horizon on Indian politics during his period he wrote Masla-e-Qomiat, in which he tried to justified territorial nationalism that all have equal rights and duties who are living under these boundaries on one and same nation whereas Mulana Madani presented his Madani formula for United composite Indian nationalism, which was against British Government wherein he mentioned that 45% seat for Muslim and 45% for hindus 10 for other in the local and Federal legislative body, Supreme Court would be guardian whereas the Muslims were not attracted because they had already seen hindu attitude towards the Muslims; and whereas Rasheed Ahmad Gangwi issued fatwa who was principle of Deoband that cooperation with congress is permissible provided that if not violating the principles of Islam. In the light of above jointly decided to send delegation to Russia, Japan, and turkey that some Ulamas like Mulana Ahmad Raza Khan was not in favour of Indian Nationalism.

Why the ulama failed to attract the imagination of Muslim? Why Muslims were pushed to a secular party? When a sensible person try to understand at first glance he became disappointed that an affiliated government was going to be establish wherein the Muslim were advocating popular Sovereignty rather than Sovereignty of Allah.

Conclusion

Hence to the conclusion I would like to add that soon after the World War-I, the Khilafat movement was launched in India in order to protect the Ottoman Caliphate. The movement provided a charter of life to the Ulama wherein they had, by this time, been increasingly marginalized by western-educated Muslims as leaders of the community. An influential section of the Deoband, severely opposed to the Muslim League, willingly joined hands with Gandhi, whose use of religious appeals they could easily identify with. These Ulama rightly sensed that 'modernist' Muslims, and those, such as many in the League, who employed Islam for their own secular interests, were a major challenge to their own authority, while Gandhi's willingness to work with them and indeed to accept them as representatives of Islam, would strengthen their own claims to speak for the Muslim community as a whole.

The second most attributed achievement of the cooperation with Hindu was the close collaboration between the Disband Ulama and leading activists from Aligarh in the course of the Khilafat movement brought 'traditionalists' and 'modernists' together for the first time. This resulted in a sharing of views between the two, leading to creative efforts to bridge the dualism that had developed in the Muslim educational system. Once a strongly pro-British bastion, Aligarh began resounding with voices calling for independence, and many of its students now spoke the

language of anti-colonialism. On the other hand, influenced by new links established with western-educated Muslims in the course of the Khilafat demonstration, numerous Ulama seriously raised the issue of madrassah reform. One outcome of this encounter between Aligarh and Deoband was the establishment in 1920 of the Jami'a Millia Islamiya in Delhi, inaugurated by the rector of Deoband, Maulana Mahmud ul-Hasan. The Jami'a saw itself as playing a leading role in preparing a new class of Muslims, educated in both 'modern' as well as 'traditional' Islamic subjects. It was also envisaged as a training ground for activists struggling for the freedom of India and for Hindu-Muslim collaboration.

This does not mean, however, that the pro-Congress Deobandi accepted the principle of secularism in the sense of a strict division between religion and the state. Although strict conservatives, they were pragmatists in politics, realizing the impossibility of an Islamic state in India as long as Muslims remained in minority. The immediate task before the Muslims, as they saw it, was to join hands with the Hindus to free the country from British rule. Once India won independence, they believed, Muslims would be able to work for the propagation of Islam, and then, finally, a day might come when it might even be possible to establish an Islamic state in the country.

Thus it has been established and crystal clear that Ulama issued Fatwa on the bases of ground reality and correctly sensed the situation of Muslims of that time. They had understood that some people manipulating the Islam and using the name of Islam for securing the vast self-interests. They observed the situation well and the fatwa in favour of cooperation with Congress is rightly justified as they have no other option left to exercise and rightly considered the situation of that time.

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