
The Khilafat movement (1918–24), the first and the foremost mass movement of Pan-Islamic nature in the twentieth century, emerged in the aftermath of the Turkish defeat in the First World War. It dominated the political stage of British India for at least half a decade. The extent and intensity of enthusiasm aroused by it eclipsed even the long established political parties like Indian National Congress and All-India Muslim League. However, the movement, despite its popularity across the country and the fervour it created, failed to achieve its declared objectives. The objectives were (i) “to maintain and promote the power and authority of the Ottoman Caliphate”, and (ii) “to take a decision about Jazirat al-‘Arab and the holy places of Islam in conformity with the shari’ah”.

Despite its failure, the Khilafat movement deeply affected the Muslim politics of British India. Thanks to it, the political arena no more remained the preserve of the upper class Muslims. The ‘ulama’, petty businessmen, journalists, medical practitioners and other professionals made their way to the forefront of public life. The movement also gave the Muslim community the courage to ventilate its grievances and to set examples of sacrifice for the cause of Islam, and provided leadership skills necessary for political mobilization.

The movement has been the subject of numerous studies, from personal narratives to academic works written from a variety of angles. Was it a national movement in its nature and its Pan-Islamic colouring was some sort of a camouflage used by the younger leaders in order to discredit the socio-political leadership of the old guard who were prone to side with the British establishment? Or was it a genuine expression of the Indian Muslims’ faith in the global unity and brotherhood of the Muslim ummah which led to the rise of the Khilafat movement, its pragmatism notwithstanding? The author of the present study agrees with the latter notion and meticulously traces the long history of the Indian Muslims’ attachment to the Khilafat. In this respect he even denies the influence of the outside intellectuals on the development of Pan-Islamic sentiments in British India. Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Afghānī (1838–97) is usually credited for the spread of such sentiments through his visits to India, but the author categorically refutes this common perception as a myth that was invented at a much later stage (pp. 35–7).
The working of the Khilafat movement, with all its facets and episodes, from its beginning to its decline, especially the hijrat to Afghanistan and the Non-cooperation movement, have been treated in much detail. The hijrat to Afghanistan was an ill-conceived idea, with an emotional appeal based on a black and white division of the world into Dār al-Islām and Dār al-Ḥarb. The non-cooperation episode, on the other hand, was a thoroughly meditated and well calculated move on the part of the Khilafat’s Muslim leadership. It was supported by the Indian National Congress, though the former’s stand was more of a religious nature, and the latter’s was mainly actuated by political motives.

The author has utilized the British government records, the personal papers of the individuals involved in the movement, contemporary periodicals and newspapers, and almost whatever else has been published on the subject in English and Urdu. Its selected bibliography covers 35 pages (pp. 476–510). The quality of the study, in respect of the details with which it comes forth, gives it an edge over other studies on the subject. At the same time, though, one occasionally feels that the work makes a cumbersome reading precisely because of its excessive concern with details.

The religious nature of the Khilafat issue brought the ‘ulamā’ to the centre stage of Indian politics. They gave support to the movement and organized themselves on modern lines to play their role continuously and more effectively. The ‘ulamā’ formed a group since they shared a common characteristic — their expertise in the Shari‘ah. They, however, did not form a solidly unified group because they were divided among themselves on theological issues. Their division on various issues such as hijrat to Afghanistan and non-cooperation with the British government and cooperation with the Hindus has been especially mentioned by the author. Did non-cooperation with the British represent the dominant position of the ‘ulamā’? If not so, why did the detractors of this position fail to carry the day? The reader sometimes remains bewildered, speculating on these questions for the author does not seem to come forth with a clear answer. The ambition of the author to include a maximum of details, even those of minor significance, and to draw upon the maximum number of sources including those of secondary importance has made the task of the author even more arduous. He has introduced a host of less-known people like Maulāvī ‘Abd al-Ghaffār, a NWFP Khilafat activist and Āghā Ṣafdar of Sialkot, but mistakes in biographical sketches of well known persons like Maulānā Abū ’l-Kalām Āzād have crept in. He is stated to be “originally from Agra” (p. 65). Maulānā’s own claim is to be a “Dehlavī”. It is further said: “He was born and bred in orthodox environment but Sayyid Ahmad Khan and later Shibli Nu’mani helped him to
outgrow the inherited traditions” (p. 67). Āzād’s stay with, and deep regard for, Shiblī Nu’mānī is a fact, but Sayyid Aḥmad Khān did not help him to outgrow the inherited traditions. For Sayyid Aḥmad Khān died in 1898 when Āzād was only ten years old and was living with his parents in Makkah. In Āzād’s sketch it is said that he was educated at Nadwat al-Ulamā’, Lucknow (p. 462). The fact is that Āzād stayed there as an assistant editor of al-Nadwah, the organ of the seminary, but not as a student. At one place, Sayyid Aḥmad Khān is introduced as “a scion of a noble family of the United Provinces” (p. 25). The fact is that he was born in Delhi where his family had been living for the last four generations. The brothers ‘Abd al-Ḥāmid (d. 1932) and ‘Abd al-Mājid (d. 1922) hailed from Badaun; they were not of “Farangi Mahal” as stated (p. 76).

Reliance on the secondary sources at some places has resulted in statements of doubtful accuracy. For example, on the basis of Sharaf Qādirī’s authority it is stated that Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangōhī was definitely preaching loyalty to the British in 1898, since at one time he had called himself “an obedient [servant] of the sarkar” (p. 179). Qādirī based his narration on the report of Tadbkārat al-Rashīd, but the author of the said source interpreted sarkār not as the British administration but the creator of the world. Similarly the fatwā of jihād issued during the War of Independence (1857) does not have the signature of Maulānā Faḍl-i Ḥaq, but in the present study the fatwā is mentioned especially with his name (p. 19, n.).

In the discussion of the juridical position of the British India as Dār al-Islām or Dār al-Ḥarb, it is stated on the authority of a secondary source that “the rulings of Shah Abdul Hayy (d. 1828), the son-in-law of Shah Abdul Azīz declared India daru ‘l-Islam but pronounced Calcutta and its dependencies daru ‘l-ḥarb” (p. 177). The author’s secondary source, Muslim Attitudes, mentions Muhammad ‘Abd al-Hayy’s Majmūʿat al-Fatāwā as the source. Now Shāh ‘Abd al-Ḥayy, the son-in-law of Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz has no work titled Majmūʿat al-Fatāwā to his credit. However, a fatwā ascribed to him was reported by William Wilson Hunter in his The Indian Musalmans in the following words. The thrust of this fatwā is quite different from the impression one gathers from the author’s statement quoted above. Hunter’s words are:

The Empire of the Christians from Calcutta to Delhi, and other countries adjacent to Hindustan proper (i.e. the North West Provinces), are all the Country of the Enemy (Dar ul-Harb), for idolatry (Kufr and Shirk) is everywhere current, and no recourse is made to our holy law. Whenever such circumstances exist in a country, the country is a Dar ul-Harb. It is too long

1 For the fatwā and its signatories, see Muḥammad Ayyūb Qādirī, Jang-i Āzādi 1857 (Karachi: Pak Academy, 1976), 402–16.
here to specify all conditions; but the opinions of all lawyers agree in this, that Calcuta and its dependencies are the Country of the Enemy (*Dar ul-Harb*).\(^2\)

Hunter wrongly introduces Maulavi ‘Abd al-Ḥayy as the nephew of Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.\(^3\) Whether Hunter is correct or not in attributing this *fatwā* to Shāh ‘Abd al-Ḥayy, it is indeed frequently quoted by the later writers as his.

If the original source had been consulted, the *Majmūʿat al-Fatawā* of Abū al-Ḥasanāt Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ḥayy of Lucknow would not have been referred to as the work of a scholar of the family of Shāh Wālī Allāh and Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz.

To take another case, there were two other persons bearing the same name. One of them, Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān ‘Uṯmānī (d. 1929) was the sixth administrator (*muḥtamīm*) of Dār al-‘Ulūm, Deoband. He has been mistaken for Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān Lūdhiyānāvī (d. 1956) (pp. 187 and 274).

It is not surprising that a few minor mistakes such as those mentioned above should creep into a work of such huge proportions. That does not detract, however, from the fact that the author deserves acclaim of the historians of the freedom movement of India and Pakistan for having written so informative a work about a major religio-political movement of Muslim India in the twentieth century.

**Safir Akhtar**

\[\text{ }\]


This book is a wide-ranging and ambitious undertaking. It makes an attempt to trace the development of the relationship between Sufi masters and disciples in the Naqshbandī order among Indian Muslims since the emergence of this

---


\(^3\) Ibid., 104.