

Khilafat Movement and its Importance

Background of Khilafat Movement:

From the year 1876 to 1909, Abdul Hamid II was the emperor of the Ottoman Empire. As he was a Caliph, he was supreme from the religious aspect and also was a political leader of the Sunni Muslims all over the world. During the First World War, the Ottoman Empire had advanced over the Central Powers. Due to this the Central Powers were defeated. The territorial boundaries of the Ottoman Empire were reduced according to the Treaty of Versailles of 1919. At the same time, there was a Pro-western nationalist whose name was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. A national movement came into light under his leadership. He abandoned the Caliph's position and instead was in support of the western powers. Soon, there was an end to the influence and power of the religious leaders of the Muslims. Thus, the Muslims were anti-British in India.

Khilafat Movement in India:

The Turkish Empire had been divided by the Allied Powers. This made the Muslims upset as they were worried what would happen to their worship places because of the act of the Allied Powers. Meanwhile in India, the two Ali brothers- Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and Maulana Shaukat Ali created an All India Khilafat Committee in Lucknow. They joined hands with other Muslim leaders for this formation. Those other leaders included Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, Barrister Jan Muhammad Junejo, Hasrat Mohani, Raees-ul-Muhajireen Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Hakim Ajmal Khan. They had two demands which were: First, Jazirat-ul-arab, Arabia, Iraq, Palestine and Syria would still be under the Muslim empire. Second, the Sultan of the Caliphs must have enough territories left with him because that will help him to preserve the Islamic faith. But these two demands never got the acceptance.

After this Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and Maulana Shaukat Ali were arrested during the war but as soon as the war was over, they were released from the jail. While in the areas of Punjab, Bengal and North-West Frontier, this movement got escalated. Then 17th of October, 1919 was observed as Khilafat Day. After this a strike was held when the Hindus and Muslims joined hands with each other. Later on 23rd of November in the same year, they organized the All India Khilafat Conference in Delhi. After this, a Khilafat Manifesto was published in order to protect the Caliphate.

At that time Gandhi was going to start his Non-Cooperation Movement. So, the leaders of Khilafat Movement, that is, the Ali brothers joined hands with INC (Indian National Congress) for the Non-Cooperation Movement which was going to start. Khilafat Day was observed the second time on the 19th of March, 1920. Three months later another all party conference was organized in Allahabad. Finally, the leaders of the Non-Cooperation Movement decided on the agendas of the movement. There were three main agendas which were not paying taxes to the government, boycotting the titles given by the government and also boycotting army, police, civil service and every Government offices present.

But the Khilafat movement ended very soon. This happened because Mustafa Kemal Atatürk abolished the Caliphate and after which the movement was not relevant anymore. Abdülmecid II was the last Caliphate. He was expelled with his family. After being expelled, they took shelter in Istanbul. It was in Istanbul that he spent the rest half of his life looking and catching butterflies. In the year 1948, he died.

Role of Mahatma Gandhi in Khilafat Movement:

It was not Mahatma Gandhi who told the Ali brothers Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and Maulana Shaukat to start the Khilafat Movement. It was incidents like Jalianwalla Bagh which disturbed the entire country, the Ali brothers and leaders like Maulana Azad. This is how they organized Khilafat movement. This was a mass movement organized for the Muslims present in India. Gandhi found an opportunity to make his Non-Cooperation go ahead. So, he suggested the Khilafatists that only Non-Cooperation could help them to tackle with the British government if they did not fulfill their demands. Finally, on the 17th of April, 1920 the leaders of the Khilafat Movement adopted the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi at the Khilafat Conference which was held on the 17th of April, 1920. They rejected posts and titles and membership of Councils. They were also against the posts which were given under the Government and also the appointments which were given in the military and police. They supported the non-payment of taxes. Thus, with the help of Gandhi, the Khilafat Movement helped both the communities, that is, the Hindus and the Muslims. This was a big opportunity for them as with the situation at that time would not let both the community unite not even in the next hundred years.

Gandhi supported the reason for the beginning of Khilafat movement. So, the mutuality between the Hindus and Muslims increased. He gave a direction to the movement which resulted in unity and mutual non-violent non-cooperation movement.

Hindu Muslim Unity and Khilafat Movement:

The colonial rule resulted in the unity of the Hindus and the Muslims. During the period of 1919 to 1922 Congress and the Khilafat Movement was in the light. This is why their leadership and their actions overlapped. At that time Gandhi had a thought that if they had to fight against the British and defeat them, it would be possible only if the Hindus and Muslims were together and remained united. Both the communities stood together, held strikes and demonstrations with a popular slogan- 'Hindu-Muslim ki Jai'. But this was only for a short period of time. After 1922, the Non-Cooperation Movement and Khilafat Movement started to have problems. This further resulted in conflicts between the two communities. There were a few sections in the Muslim community which started paying more focus to Swaraj. This brought a fresh and new interest in the Muslim League that was lost since the year of 1918.

There were some loyal and enthusiastic khilafatists. They began to believe that only Non-Cooperation was not enough for them. They needed more help and support from the government. There were a few Muslim leaders as well who doubted on India and its leaders that they would not be able to get freedom just through the ideas and actions of civil disobedience. Due to all these many old issues again came in the front. Thus, the unity which was present between both the communities for sometime broke which resulted in communalism. This was a sad period due to the disintegration of the two communities. Due to this, the struggle for freedom became more difficult. Later, the British maintained its relations with the Muslim community like before and thus the community became loyal to them. Thus, the bond of brotherhood became just a combination of interests. By now, it was understood that India was soon going to be partitioned.

Growth of Hate:

Due to commissions on one another made by Government, there were mistrust among and mutual apprehensions because their motive was not significant and declared. Even Gandhi was not able to understand his leaders of Khilafat Movement to support their movement. Later, it was found that those leaders took the help of Mahatma Gandhi only for their benefit and so that their purpose is achieved.

Importance of Khilafat Movement:

The Khilafat Movement turned out to be an important mass movement due to three reasons. First, it helped the Muslims from the urban areas to come in the national movement. It was good that the movement supported the development of the section of the community. Second, The Muslims got a opportunity to take part in the national affairs because of the Khilafat Movement. This made them realize that the nation was concerned for them and was doing something in order to solve their problems. Third, the movement supported anti-imperialism. So, the movement would help all to fight against imperialism which did not support democracy.

End of the Khilafat Movement:

In the year 1921 during the month of September, Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar and Maulana Shaukat Ali were arrested. After this there was a incident at Chauri Chaura. After this incident even he suspended the Non Cooperation Movement. Then, Gandhi was also arrested in the year 1922. Soon, because of a revolution started by Mustafa Kemal Pasha, the Caliph was deposed of his power. Thus, Turkey was slowly of the verge to become a secular state. Eventually, all these led to the end of the Khilafat movement as slowly it started losing its importance.

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