

# Ali Brothers and Khilafat

## Abstract

The dawn of the 20th Century marked the growth of Muslim politics in India. Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali appeared on the political horizon and made it their mission to firmly withstand their callous masters and were determined to overthrow their treacherous rule. From 1906, the turn of century upto 1938, important issues affecting Islam and India attracted the Ali brothers to undertake heavy responsibilities for the mobilization of Indian Muslims in the National politics. Attention.

Ali brothers have the opinion that, "the basis of pan-Islamism is one God, one Prophet, one kaba and one book the Quran". To them, the Khilafat was the most essential institution of the Muslim community throughout the world. Therefore, they use this pan-Islamism for the mobilization of Muslim masses

**Keywords:** Khilafat, Ali Brothers, Gandhi Support to Khilafat.

## Introduction

Ali Brothers decided to switch over to journalism, because they felt, under the circumstances, this was the only way for the mobilization of Indian Muslims in the politics. Therefore, they started the "Comrade". The "Comrade" soon became a front rank organ throughout the country, because of its bold views, flawless language and thoughts. During the Balkan War Ali brothers started publishing the "Hamdard" a daily newspaper in Urdu. Through the "Hamdard" they tried to reach out another segment of Muslim Society, consisting of petty Government servants, schoolteachers, merchants, artisans, and the Ulema in small towns and villages, who did not know English. By the "Hamdard" they disseminate their ideas on a large scale to the Urdu knowing masses.

## Aim of the Study

To analyse the role of Ali Brothers in Khilafat Movement.

Balkan Wars increased anxiety of Indian Muslims against the British Government. Therefore the Ali brothers visited London in 1913 to convey their community's feeling over the future of Turkey. The Secretary of State refused to meet them. Mohammad Ali said, "he feel betray both in India and Abroad."<sup>1</sup> Mohammad Ali gave the need for preserving in the institution a utilitarian quality when he told the London audience that, "the supernatural Sangathan of Muslims in five continents"<sup>2</sup> – built around the Khalifa and supporting each other through that institution whenever there was a threat to the security of any Muslims. At the same time events were also moved fast in India, because the Indian Muslim dissatisfaction increased against the British Government by the speeches of Mohammad Ali. The Viceroy worried about Mohammad Ali's influence in Muslim community. In the eyes of the British officials Mohammad Ali indeed, became a bogeyman, the epitome of Muslim fanaticism and discontent.

When British Statesman Lloyd George and Asquith- publically said that "Turkey is to be wiped off the map of the World." Thus British policy towards Turkey and the remarks of English statesmen re-awakened the radicals. The growing prospect of hostilities between Turkey and Britain in 1914, presented the Ali brothers as 'strictly religious' men. Mohammad Ali wrote a lengthy article in Comrade entitled, "The Choice of Turks". The out spookiness of the article nevertheless led the Government to take action against their newspapers. After the declaration of war between Turkey and Britain, Government forfeited Ali brother's deposited security and the paper was shut down. Now they realized that it was not enough to fight with the pen alone, and if they wanted to shake the religious feelings of Muslim masses, it was necessary to spread their views in the ordinary public. Therefore, they came out in the field and joined the ranks. They made friends with several young Western educated Muslims. They stressed the humanitarian aspect of their work



**Vijay Kumar Khare**

Associate Professor & Head,  
Deptt. of History,  
D.B.S. College,  
Kanpur

and sought the moral support of eminent Hindu and Parsi leaders such as Gokhle, Pheroze Shah Mehta and Wacha.<sup>3</sup> Ali brother saw the sense in joining Congress and using its platform for articulating their grievance.

The Ali brothers were more concerned with the future of Muslims in India than elsewhere. Their religious faiths and politics fused as they turned increasingly toward the theme of religious self-assertion and Islamic solidarity. For Mohammad Ali politics was just a means to achieve certain higher social and religious ideals.<sup>4</sup> They close to stay out of legislatures and other self-governing bodies, and attempted to develop an independent base by reaching the man in the street, the Maulvi in the mosque, the Sufi in the Khanqah and the Zamindar in the Haveli. They tried to bridge the wide gulf which separated the educated classes from other groups amongst Muslims, and succeeded in promoting the Khilafat movement.

Ali brother claimed that, "All-India Khilafat Committee, more than either the Congress or the Muslim League was truly representative of Indian feelings. It represented a powerful body of opinion that could be mobilized either for or against the Government. Amidst a huge gathering at Jama Masjid in Delhi, Ali brother apprised the Muslims of the righteousness of their cause and emphatically affirmed that the defeat of Turkey was the defeat of Islam. They characterized the Balkan war as the last fight of Turkey. When England declared war on Germany, Mohammad Ali said, "He need not conceal his jubilation at the prospect of a great war between powers. He clapped his hand and lifted his hand in prayers and said Europe deserved punishment for its infamous conduct toward Turkey. Turkey would have peace for some time."<sup>5</sup> This type of anti-British inflammatory speeches clear the mind of the Muslims, if they wanted to save the Islam then it was necessary that they took part in the Indian politics against the British Government.

The campaign against the Government carried on by the Ali brothers resulted in their internment under the provisions of the defense of India Act in May 1915 in the limits of Delhi province, at Mehruli. In November 1915, they were transferred to Chhindwara. They were forbidden to attend public meetings but permitted for attending the prayers in the Chhindwara city mosque on every Friday. It was the best place and best chance for the Ali brothers for the motivation of the Muslims against the British Government.

During their internment the war had seen much vicissitude in Europe, but the agitation activities of Indian Muslim were also on the rise. The Ali brothers watched all the developments from the irksome isolation of internment, and their observation provide a commentary on the times and evidences of the gestation of the Khilafat movement. Actually Ali brothers sought to bring the Hindus and the Muslims together. In the editorial of the "Comrade," he wrote, "we deeply feel many hazards of increasing controversy, between races and races, creeds and

creeds and earnestly desire a better understanding between the contending elements of the body politics of India."

The question of the release of the Ali brother became a political issue of the first magnitude. Various local Anjumans, such as the Anjuman-i-Aqaid and the Anjuman-i-Miamul Ghurba also agitated for the release of Ali brother. Their internment caused a good deal of excitement and an agitation ensued with the object of forcing Government to cancel it. Meetings to pressurize the Government to release Ali brother were very commonly held in those days.

Ali brother also proceeded to speak in the local mosque -openly to their friends against Government policy towards Turkey and proclaimed that henceforth they would refuse to abide by the terms of their internment.<sup>6</sup> After the release of Ali brother in 1919, they were welcomed as heroes, their long internment had given them a halo martyrdom. Although Ali brother's pan-Islamism was more anti-European and anti-Christian than anti-British but they took Nationalist stance and joined the Indian National Congress. They declared they would go back to prison rather than see their country in chains. In fact it was striking to note their continued devotion to the congress movements. Ali brothers said, "those Muslim who objected to cooperation with the congress were playing into the hands of government."<sup>7</sup> As indeed to its leader Gandhi ji, 'the most Christ likes man of our time'<sup>8</sup>. In fact Ali Brothers greatly inspired Gandhi by a speech to Calcutta students in 1915, in which it was said 'Politics cannot be divorced from religion'<sup>9</sup>.

Ali brothers found no conflict between the Khilafat and the Independence movement in India. They advised Muslims to fight for the country's freedom. For a "slave India will be a scant help to the Turks and the Khalifa."<sup>10</sup> Because the relationship between Indians and the Turks was in the nature of a compact, because both Turkey and India were oppressed by the same imperialism. Once India was free and her forces could not be driven to fight against the Turks, both Turkey and Islam would be safe. Ali brother got inspiration from Islam in their effort for freedom. Mohammad Ali said 'Nationalism without religion kills our sense of right or wrong'.<sup>11</sup> A true Muslim should turn away from the shrine of Nationalism that has for its creed 'my country right or wrong'. Whereas Nationalism demands worship of one's country, Islam recognizes one sovereignty alone, the sovereignty of God, which is supreme and unconditional indivisible and inalienable."<sup>12</sup> Therefore Ali brothers tried to harmoniously blend the Indian Muslim's love for Islam and their love for India.

Ali brother greatly influenced by the ideology of Bal Gangadhar Tilak They acknowledged Tilak as their 'Political Guru'. Like Tilak they believed in providing a popular basis to the National Movement in the country. Tilak's influence which made Ali brother to realize the necessity and significance of mass contact.<sup>13</sup> And the Ali brother used religion to provide a mass base to Indian politics.<sup>14</sup> They were farsighted enough to realize that India could not achieve Independence unless the two major communities unite and fight under one banner. They worked

ceaselessly for Hindu-Muslim unity.

Ali brothers applied the Islamic concept of liberty to the Indian situation. Because they knew if they did not use the Islamic concept the Muslims would not participated in any Nationalist movement. Their idea on Nationalism had practical bearing on the growth of Muslim in India. Though when they elaborated the importance of religion in the life of man, had Islam always in their minds. But their philosophy of religion was comprehensive enough to include all the important aspects of life. "Islam guides man in every concern of life and teaches him how to live and how to die."<sup>15</sup> Therefore they made the Islam as a source of inspiration for the Muslims to the struggle against the alien British rulers. Mohammad Ali had confirmed belief in the fact that the basic teaching of Islam was peace and not war and hatred. He held that, "there is no clash between Hindus and Muslims. I am supporting the latter to serve India and Islam."<sup>16</sup> According to Mohammad Ali, the motives for Indian Muslim efforts towards Swaraj were still dual. They aimed at freeing India and freeing Islam. Mohammad Ali came to the conclusion that "the freedom of India is absolutely necessary for the freedom of Islam". His message to Indian Muslims was that if they wanted to secure the freedom of Islam they should join their Hindu brethren and work untidily with them. In late 1920, the Khilafat movement was changing with the changing political situation, but its symbolism remained the same. Therefore, Ali brother and Gandhi ji continued their indefatigable touring throughout the fall of 1920, promoting the various planks in the Non-co-operation platform. Swaraj was a cherished goal to Ali brother and they were happy to declare that if India won Swaraj it would "satisfy all the religious requirements of a Muslim in India." They now devoted themselves whole heartedly to the fight for Swaraj by playing into the non-cooperation movement with the non-Muslim brotheren, for only the way would it be possible to achieve Khilafat aim<sup>17</sup>. 'Together we will won Swaraj – a Swaraj that will enable us to secure justice for Islam'.

From January to February 1921, Mohammad Ali addressed meetings in several parts of Eastern and Western India. His presence gave a tremendous boost to the Khilafat movement. From April to August, Mohammad Ali spoke at conferences and meetings in various parts of U.P. The Ali brother attended almost all the Khilafat and Non-co-operation conferences, vehemently criticized the Government and condemned it in the bitterest terms. Mohammad Ali's speeches had created a tremendous stir in the country.

Ali brother's trial began on 26 October 1922. After the close of the evidence for the prosecution the Judge asked Mohammad Ali if he had to say anything in his defense. Replied to the Judge and Jury, Mohammad Ali made the longest speech ever made in the court. He was primarily religious and as said earlier during their internment they had made a deep study of the Holy Quran and they had replied to every question put by the court with reference to the Holy book and teaching of the Prophet. He told the court that the trial was not Ali brother V. the Crown, but the

God V. man. Since Mohammad Ali quoted the Holy Quran and the Prophet incessantly the court ordered him to stop and sit-down, because the court knew that his speech was very dangerous because he proved each sentence in the light of the teaching of Islam. And on 1 November Ali brother were sentenced to two year's rigorous imprisonment. The life of the Ali brother in jail was very deplorable. But they were happy that their sacrifices and hardships would not go waste.

#### **Conclusion**

Ali brothers released from prison on 29 August 1923 and in their first public address spoke of their sadness at finding on their shoulders the burden of freeing Islam and India. Ali brother used religious symbols, interspersed their speeches with extensive quotes from the Holy Quran and the Hadith, and related the institution of Khilafat and pan-Islamic ideology to the religious beliefs and practices of the Muslims. Their religious fervor did not come in the way of their National sentiments. As time passed they were drawn into the vortex of National politics and considered no cause dearer than India's freedom. They lived to achieve this object and died fighting for this holy cause. They were fought shoulder to shoulder with other National luminaries to liberate India and throw off the foreign yoke. Countless speeches made by them for the Khilafat-Congress platform go to prove their love for Islam as well as India. From the religious angle, they were Muslim first and Muslim last, but so far as their politics were concerned; they were Indian first and Indian last. For them, the Indian Nationalism was neither Hindu nor Islamic. It was secular and synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures. It was the secret of Ali brothers' success in agitation politics. The credit of the mobilization of the mass energy goes to them. Their Indianism was subordinate to their loyalty to Islam.

#### **References**

1. Ali, Mohammad-My Life-A Fragment, 35
2. Comarade, April 12, 1913
3. Gokhle Paper – December 23, 1914.
4. Ali, Mohammad- Za'ati Diary Ke Chand Auraq, p.14.
5. Home Poll- January 1915, File –180-82, N.A.I.
6. Home Poll-July 1919, File 32, N.A.I.
7. Notes on the Congress-Leaque Scheme, Allahabad, March 12, 1919.
8. Iqbal, A –Selected writings & speeches of Mohammad Ali, p 276
9. Khaliquzzman – Pathway to Pakistan, p.33
10. Congress Presidential Address =1923, p.709
11. Ali Mohammad- My Life-A Fragment, p.165
12. Sen,S –Birth of Pakistan, p.74
13. Shakir, Moin – Khilafat to Partition, p.87
14. Shakir Moin – Myths in Muslim Politics, p37
15. Iqbal, A. – Op.cit, p. 465
16. Nuqush – Makatib Number, p