

THE POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF MAJLIS-I-AHRAR: A CRITICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to look at the political activities of Majlis-i-Ahrar, with special reference to Shahidganj mosque issue, which created unrest generally among the Muslims of the Punjab and particularly of Lahore. Majlis-i-Ahrar has been established by the Nationalist Muslims who had close relations with the Indian National Congress. Primarily, the Majlis-i-Ahrar drew its political support from the middle and lower strata of the Muslim Society, who could be easily exploited on religious issues. Majlis-i-Ahrar, as a political force, was active in cities and towns but in rural areas it was known as propagator of Islamic values. The remnants of Khilafatists and some religious urban Muslims were its votaries and it was founded under the Chairmanship of Afzal Haq. Basically, it included the people who dissatisfied with the Unionists and lost hope in Congress and League. It is often said that Majlis-i-Ahrar was a party framed under the impact of October 1917 Revolution in Russia. It was probably one of the most considerable mass-based regional party, which worked for the religious, political, economic and social uplift of the Muslims of Punjab. In 1935, the Shahidganj mosque issue proved to be a test-case to judge the political maturity of the Ahrar leaders. In the ¹beginning the Ahrars enthusiastically participated in

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the Shahidganj agitation, but in 1936, keeping in view the coming elections, decided to keep themselves aloof from this agitation and leave the matter entirely to the Anjuman-i-Tahaffuz-i-Masjid. It caused a serious setback to Ahrar's reputation and incurred bitter hostility among their workers. The Ahrars remained silent and their opponents got opportunity to propagate that they are perhaps more serious to participate in the elections. The Ahrars once make the decision and then take it back, which showed their immaturity, though they had several good mob orators. The Ahrar leaders surely know the technique to bring the people out for demonstrations but they did not have the aptitude to mobilize any popular scheme. They often acted imprudently and frittered away their energies in unplanned confrontations and self-contradictory policies.

Key words: Majlas-i-Ahrar, political activities, Shahidganj Mosque, Nationalist Muslims, political force

Socio-religious and geo-political conditions of India had played an important role in the formation and growth of political institutions. Another important factor was the process of gradual constitutional development which had given birth to the protection of human rights at community level. Further, the ever-growing communal conflicts, in this region, caused an upsurge of religious revivalist movements. These factors led to the establishment of political organizations at All India level. Indian National Congress (INC), which was organized in 1885, though claimed itself to be a non-communal party, actually dominated by the Urban Hindu elite. Among the Muslim political elite, the All Indian Muslim League (AIM), established in December 30, 1906, was the major organization which attempted at creating political consciousness among the Muslims of the sub-continent. In Punjab its provincial branch, Punjab Provincial Muslim League (PPML), established in 1907, had played an effective role in creating political awareness among the Muslims. After Fazl-i-Hussin's (1876-1936) separation from PPML, it had become dormant because its entire

leadership was based on the support of the urbanities, hence, in the rural sphere it could not play any remarkable role. In 1935-1936, its leaders tried their best to restore peace and security in the province when due to Shahidganj issue emotional upsurge was at its peak. The National Unionist Party was one of the most powerful non-communal organizations in the Punjab, which had created immense trouble for PPML while ruling here from its emergence in 1924.

Some other Muslim political parties emerged in Punjab during 1930s with programmes to safeguard the Muslim rights. Majlis-i-Ahrar was more prominent among these political parties due to its militant character and it created some difficulties for the provincial government. Actually, it was founded on the remnants of the Khilafat Committee, as the members of the Punjab Khilafat Committee criticized Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar (1878-1931) and Jan Muhammad Chotani (1873-1932) on the issue of funds and the differences on the Nehru Report. Another issue which widened the gulf between the central Khilafat Committee and the Punjab Khilafatists was the demolition of tombs by Ibn-i-Saud as Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar and Abdul Kalam Azad were against this act¹ with its militant character, Majlis-i-Ahrar created some difficulties for the Unionists. Its leaders, being Nationalist Muslims, favoured the INC and strongly supported its civil disobedience movement.² Primarily the Ahrars drew their support from the middle and lower class Muslims who could be easily exploited on religious issues. As a political force, it was active in cities and towns but in rural areas it was known as propagator of Islamic values. Lahore, being headquarter, was its main centre of activity, while its branches were formed almost in all the major towns of Punjab. The remnants of the Khilafatists, along with some urban Muslims, who were against the predominance of rural influence, were its votaries such as Syed Ataullah Shah Bukhari, (1891-1961), Maulana Habib-ur-Rehman, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Ghazi Abdul Rehman, Afzal Haq, Daud Ghaznavi, Maulvi Mazhar Ali Azhar, and Maulana Abdul Qadir Qasuri. On December 29, 1929, it was founded under the presidentship of Afzal Haq (1895-1942).³ Its nucleus consisted of those Punjabi Muslims who had split with the

Congress over the Nehru Report.⁴ They got full support from those Muslims who believed that they did not enjoy that social and political importance which their majority in the province entitled them.⁵ Later on, the elements, which were dissatisfied with the Unionists for their role in the Shahidganj issue, also provided support to the Ahrars. So until 1935, it could claim massive support of certain sections of the Punjab Muslims. It included people “who had lost hope in both the Congress and the League and were radically opposed to British Imperial policies in the sub-continent”.⁶ To some extent, “it was a party framed under the impact of October Revolution in Russia (1917) and the Communist ideas that it had disseminated”.⁷ According to Abdullah Malik, the Ahrars had developed a liking for the ideology of the Soviet revolution because it pronounced deliverance for the oppressed masses from the extortions of the Capitalists, so much so, the persons like Maulana Hasrat Mohani, professed to be a communist.⁸ In 1931, Maulvi Mazhar Ali Azhar said in his address that the Nationalists of India had yet to learn that this world was a plain not only for the rich, it is to be shared by the poor as well.⁹ Tehrik-i-Ahrar was certainly impressed by the Soviet Revolution, as it gradually “developed a highly disciplined volunteer cadre, who wore red dress, had their regular drill with a band and drum. They carried an axe fitted with a long stick. Religion was their binding force and the national activists set or directed them into political action”.¹⁰ Thus represented curious mixture of religious orthodoxy and social progressivism. Syed Ataullah Shah Bukhari, the first president of the Majlis wished the Muslim youth to be in the vanguard for independence of India. In July 1931, Maulana Habib-ur-Rehman declared in his presidential address that the Muslims would share the authority in the government of India based on equality. He appealed to the Indian Muslims to unshackle the chains of slavery because only the nation that brought freedom for India would be exalted.

There had always been a confusion and ambiguity about the clear-cut aims and objectives of the Majlis since its very inception, when it was established in the Congress camp at Lahore. Syed Ataullah Shah Bukhari the first President

of the Majlis wished the Muslim youth to be in the vanguard for independence of India. In May 1936, Afzal Haq, in his presidential address in Ahrar Political Conference at Amritsar declared that the Ahrar stood for the independence of India and uplift of the Islamic world. In April 1939, Majlis-i-Ahrar approved a revised constitution of the organization lying three main aims and objectives: to achieve complete independence of India through peaceful means, to guide the Muslims correctly about Islamic politics inside and outside India and to work for religious, Political, economic and social uplift of the Muslims. Anti-British policy with a leaning attitude towards socialist ideas and co-operation with INC had been the main traits of the Majlis. As earlier mentioned it was a fact that the Ahrar leaders were influenced by the Communist Revolution of Russia and Marxist ideas behind it were reflected in their speeches. Maulana Habib-ur-Reman while presiding the annual session of the Majlis Ahrar in 1931, gave the idea of establishing the government of the poor in place of a capitalist government. Likewise, Sahabzada Faiz-ul-Hasan, talked in terms of socialist philosophy i.e., the class struggle between the capitalists and the workers, unjust distribution of production etc. He made no bones in preferring socialism to fascism and other contemporary ideologies.¹¹ Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar also expressed similar ideas. Ismail Zabih, the administrator of Majlis Ahrar wrote in an article that the Majlis was “the champion of such a revolution in the country which should improve a lot the suppressed people”.¹²

In the election manifesto approved by the Working Committee of the Ahrar Parliamentary Board, a detailed programme was given according to which the Ahrar ministers would accept minimum salary and it would be ensured that low-paid employees could meet their expenses within their lawful resources. Cottage industry including hand-looms would be encouraged. Beggary would be eliminated by converting the beggars into good and responsible citizens. Measures would be taken to increase the agricultural resources. Facilities would be provided to educate every child and researchers would be encouraged.¹³ The programme also included improvement of public health and judiciary,

reformation of police department, elimination of bribery and modification in the *Punchayat* system.¹⁴ In short, the aims and objectives of the party were as follows:

1. To work for the economic, educational, and social uplift of the Muslims.
2. To awaken political consciousness and infuse the spirit of Islam among the Muslims.
3. To strive for the full freedom of the country by peaceful methods.
- 4: To cooperate with all organizations, whose interests were not contrary to Ahrar Party.¹⁵

Its aims and objects already showed that the party was organized for the social, political, and economic welfare of the Muslims. So far as the educational development was concerned, its leaders like Ataullah Shah Bukhari, were against the English educational set up and wanted to expand the traditional Islamic learning. Maulana Habib-ur-Rehman, in 1931, during its annual session declared “that the Ahrars do not want to do any injustice to any other nation”.¹⁶ The motive behind it was to remove the exploitation of the have-nots created by the haves and to protect the Muslims from selfish political organizations.¹⁷ Generally, the Ahrars reflected Congress methodology in their political designs and represented Islamic fundamentalism in their religious outlook. In short, Ahrar Party was probably one of the most considerable Muslim mass-based movements that India produced. It aimed at protecting the poor Muslim masses from the clutches of the rich Sahukars and Taluqdars by adopting the radical measures.

According to Dastoor-al-Amal every adult and wise Muslim of British India or Princely states who believed in the main objectives of the Majlis could become a member of local branch after signing a declaration and paying an annual fee of two *annas*. Every branch at village or town level must have at least ten members and this local branch could send its two representatives in the branch at district level. If the primary members acceded fifty, for every extra fifty members one more representative was to be sent in district level branch. For

every 200 primary members at district level two members would be elected to represent at the provincial Majlis which in turn, would elect twenty five per cent of their members for Central Majlis-i-Ahrar.¹⁸ The Central Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam was to consist of elected representatives of various provincial branches and all ex-presidents of the organization (provided they retained their primary membership). Salar-i-Azam Jayoosh Ahrar Hind would be an ex-officio member of the Central Majlis. The Majlis would meet at least three times a year.¹⁹ Office bearers of the Central Majlis would include a President, two Vice Presidents, one General Secretary, one Secretary, one Secretary Jayoosh (volunteer corps) and one Treasurer. The President would nominate all other office bearers and preside the annual Ahrar Conference.²⁰ There would be a Working Committee (Majlis-i-Aamila) consisted of 21 members including the office bearers. A quorum of at least five members would be maintained in its meetings.²¹ The first Conference of Majlis-i-Ahrar was presided by Maulana Habib-ur-Rehman, was held at Lahore on July 11-12, 1931, in which a resolution was passed in favour of separate electorates.²² By August 1931, many new branches of the Majlis were established in important cities of Punjab like Multan, Rawalpindi and Ferozpur. Ataullah Shah Bukhari was appointed the president of the Central organization.²³ In the beginning this organization was confined to the province of Punjab but its leaders involved themselves in successive agitation campaigns and became politically prominent when they decided to take part in the Kashmir Jihad Movement in May 1931. Gradually, it grew and expanded outside the province particularly due to its agitation against the Kashmir State. As a result of assistance received from outside the province of Punjab, on January 3, 1932, the provincial committee decided to rename "The Majlis" as "Majlis Ahrar-i-Islam Hind".²⁴ Mainly, Muslim intellectuals Supported Muslims from the Punjab, participated in Kashmir Jihad Movement as Rawalpindi and Sialkot became centres of this Movement. Famous scholars like Muhammad Iqbal and many others were fighting to safeguard the rights of the Muslims of Kashmir and demanding a responsible government. The Ahmedis also won favour with the Kashmiri

Muslims by establishing an All-India Kashmir Committee under the chairmanship of Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud :

This eventually led to a show-down between the Ahrars and the Ahmedis, and they remained [at] daggers drawn ever thereafter. The Ahrars felt that, on the pretext of the Kashmir Committee, the Ahmedis had actually begun to propagate their own creed. Apprehensive of increasing Ahmedi influence in Kashmir, such firebrands as Afzal Haq, Syed Ataullah Shah Bokhari, Mazhar Ali, and later on Shorish Kashmiri, started denouncing them in public speeches and aroused considerable mass support for their stand.²⁵

Being a pro-government leader, Fazl-i-Husain was against the Ahrar agitation²⁶ in Kashmir as he angrily stated that “he would finish the Ahrars in one day”.²⁷ Anyhow, when the Muslim members of the Kashmir Committee found that the work being done under the Committee was nothing but preaching of Ahmedi doctrines, they disassociated themselves from it. The Ahrar movement in Kashmir attracted small Jathas from different places like Ahmedabad, Ajmer, Aligarh and Calcutta, which showed their influence beyond the Punjab. They forced the Maharaja of Kashmir to dismiss his unpopular premier, Hari Kishan Kaul. Then they diverted their attention towards the Ahmedis who were threatening Islamic unity within Kashmir.²⁸ During the early 1930s, clashes occurred between the Ahrars and the Ahmedis and the Ahrars made determined efforts to prevent the Ahmedis from burying their dead in Muslim graveyards.²⁹ It was not all, the Ahrar opposition came to its logical conclusion in November 1935, when a resolution was passed at Sialkot Conference according to which the Ahmedis were declared non-Muslims. The Ahrars’ plea, that the Ahmedis were a great threat to orthodox Islam, gained support because of the increasing political influence of a prominent Ahmedi, Zafrulla Khan.³⁰ Other political extremists along with these orthodox Muslims joined the anti-Ahmedis movement which made the Ahmedis intensely loyalist as in future they looked towards the government for protection.

In 1935, the Shahidganj mosque issue proved to be a test-case to judge the political maturity of the Ahrar leaders. The Unionists were clever enough to estimate the importance of the issue, so they manipulated this religious issue in

such a way so as to involve the Ahrars into it and to seize it by offering civil disobedience.³¹ Moreover, the Muslims had much expectations from the Ahrars on account of their religious orientation. In the beginning, the Ahrars enthusiastically participated in the Shahidganj agitation. On July 12, 1935, a meeting was held after Juma prayers in the Badshahi mosque, attended by 15,000 Muslims. Prominent Ahrar leaders including Mazhar Ali Azhar, Afzal Haq, Habib-ur-Rehman and Ataullah Shah Bukhari, attended this meeting. Attaullah Shah Bukhari announced that: “a separate organization, named the Anjuman-i-Tahaffuz-i-Masjid, had been formed a few days earlier including Zafar Ali Khan, Muhammad Alam, Syed Habib and Malik Lal Khan to deal with the Shahidganj affairs. The Ahrars considered it desirable to leave the matter entirely to the new body and not complicate the position by interfering as an organization”.³² The Unionists exploited this statement and it caused a serious setback to Ahrars’ reputation and incurred the bitter hostility of even their own workers. Actually, the Ahrars wanted to keep themselves aloof from the Shahidganj agitation because they:

Probably regarded the Muslim cause as a bad one, and they wished to avoid being embroiled in a struggle out of which Muslims were unlikely to emerge with credit. There were rumours that the government had prosecution in view, had a restraining effect on their leaders who had no desire to go to jail with elections to the new council coming next year.³³

In order to pacify the Muslims, the Punjab government, on July 14, 1935, announced in a press communiqué that it would hand over the Shah Chiragh³⁴ mosque to the Anjuman Himaiyat-i-Islam. Official expectations were not fulfilled as on July 14, 1935, in a huge meeting of about 10,000 Muslims with 1000 blue shirt volunteers, it was decided to protest against the irresponsible attitude of the government. This volunteer force was raised by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan to fight for the Shahidganj mosque.³⁵ In his speech Maulana Zafar Ali Khan asserted “the return of Shah Chiragh was right on its own merits but the Muslims would surely take Shahidganj and for this they would raise ten thousand volunteers for civil disobedience movement”.³⁶ The same night government arrested four radical

leaders, Maulana Zafar Ali, Syed Habib, Feroz-ud-Din Ahmad and Malik Lal Khan. On July 19, trouble again broke out in Lahore. After Juma prayers at Badshahi mosque, fiery speeches encouraged the Muslims to walk towards Shahidganj. The government imposed curfew over the city but Muslim demonstrations continued till July 21, 1935. On July 23, the Muslims held a meeting at Wazir Khan's mosque and decided to start disobedience movement. Feroz Khan Noon who had been "representing the Muslims, and [acting as] channel of communication between the Muslims and the governor, expressed his dissatisfaction with this programme"³⁷. He himself and other Muslim Unionists were of the view that the Muslims could not afford to forfeit the good-will of the government. The Unionist leaders held a meeting on July 23, 1935, and suggested that Fazl-i-Husain might be requested to come at once for a day to advice and guide.³⁸ Fazl-i-Husain was against the agitation³⁹ and for him "the only possible solution was to negotiate an agreement to refrain from building on the site of the mosque".⁴⁰ Shahab-ud-Din followed his advice and made an appeal against civil disobedience movement by the Muslims. But the agitators and those who espoused direct action neglected such appeals because of sympathy and public esteem all around, and their wrong-doing was converted into heroism and martyrdom.⁴¹ On the other side, the Unionist leaders failed to convince the governor that 'the Sikhs had acted unreasonably'. Azim Husain pointed out that "Feroz Khan Noon was unable to give any definite lead and blamed both sides for not listening to government".⁴² Feroz Khan Noon himself wrote to Fazl-i-Husain, "he was helpless because the governor was cowed by the Sikhs and refused to listen to Muslim grievances or claims".⁴³ Meanwhile, with the help of the government, the Sikhs got sanction from the municipality to erect a building near the demolished mosque. During this period, the government tried to divert the Muslim attention from the Shahidganj issue by introducing two bills— Graveyard's bill and Auqaf bill. Fazl-i-Husain pointed out that both the bills would cause further unrest among the Muslims. Moreover, he added that it might distract the Muslim attention from Shahidganj for time being, in the long run

dissatisfaction among the Muslims would continue to grow on account of government favouritism towards the Hindus and the Sikhs and the ineffectiveness of Muslim members of government, who allowed Muslim interest to suffer.⁴⁴ Khalid Latif Gauba raised Shahidganj issue in the PLC and condemned opening fire upon the Muslims. But his adjournment motions and questions were disallowed because of the Unionists' cold attitude. Though from a legal point of view, Muslims' claim was weak but from a religious point of view, it was exceptionally strong. The Muslims' case rested clearly on an assertion that according to Shariat, a mosque when dedicated as Waqf to God, remained a mosque forever.⁴⁵ It meant that there was a clash between the law of the government and the law of Shariah, and the Muslims were ready to offer any sacrifice.

The Ahrars remained silent and their opponents got opportunity to propagate that "they had held aloof because of the forthcoming elections".⁴⁶ The Ahrars were perhaps more serious to participate in the elections and secure more seats to exercise influence over the Punjab government. In 1936, this incentive forced them to join the League Parliamentary Board. In September 1936, they withdrew from the Board and decided to contest the elections independently. It once again showed their immaturity though they had several good mob orators and their party was fairly well-organized.⁴⁷ The Ahrar leaders thus made frequent swings from one type of politics to another and were increasingly condemned by the press for their inconsistency.⁴⁸

It is true that the Ahrars suffered a lot due to the opposition of well-organized and equipped ruling party which had sufficient political experience to deal with such emotion-ridden forces under the guidance of its leader. The Ahrar leaders surely knew the technique to bring the people out for demonstrations but they did not have the aptitude to mobilize any popular scheme. As a result, their "energies were frittered away in unplanned confrontations with the Unionists, the Ahmedis and the British, who saw to it that the Ahrars were kept involved on a variety of fronts and cleverly exploited differences between leading Ahrars".⁴⁹

Though their opponents blamed that they had no set programme, planning or policy, but in spite of their shortcoming, the Ahrars wielded considerable influence and proved to be a major rival force against the Unionists in the Punjab. The objectives and the policies of the Ahrar's were never clear and appeared to be self-contradictory. They were in favour of anti-British and allegedly non-communal policies of the Congress but at the same time they raised the slogan of Hakoomat-i-Illahiyya.⁵⁰ On one hand they preached the necessity of Hakoomat-i-Illahiyya but on the other, they were strongly against All India Muslim League which had resolved to establish a separate homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent. The non-communal stand of the Ahrar and their belief in the unity of India could not correspond with their slogan of Hakoomat-i-Illahiyya and at the same time because of this slogan they could not fit into the Congress scheme of things. They were anti-British but did not hesitate siding with the unionists against the Muslim League.⁵¹ Elections were so important to them that they remained aloof from taking part in the Shahidgunj Movement and paid for it heavily but on the other hand the most important leaders of the Ahrar like Syed Ataullah Shah Bukhari were fully convinced that elections were the greatest mischief (*fitna-i-azeem*) and every time he tried that the Ahrar must not take part in the elections.⁵² They wanted to establish "the government of the poor"⁵³ but they nominated Nawabzada Khurshid Ali son of Sir Zulfiqar Ali as their candidate to the Punjab Legislative Council in defiance of their socialist principles.⁵⁴ Even a venerated spiritual leader like Syed Jamat Ali Shah was accused by the Ahrar of having pro-Ahmadi views when he differed from them on the issue of Shahidgunj.⁵⁵

The Ahrar often acted imprudently. They picketed the cloth shops of the Muslim shopkeepers and dealers of fireworks in a period of economic distress. Their leaders did not care for the public sentiments in certain locations and created resentment against themselves by speaking unnecessarily against popular religious and spiritual personalities, highly venerated by the local people.⁵⁶ In fact the Majlis Ahrar had always been facing paucity of funds. Financial difficulties

had been the greatest hurdle in the way of the Ahrar. At one stage it was decided by the Majlis to appoint peddlers to hawk around to collect contributions from the public in Lahore. Toward the end of 1932, the Ahrar organ *Hurriyat* had to discontinue its publication due to non-availability of funds. Next year again the Mjlis was reported to be in deplorable financial position which continued to so till the Quetta earthquake, when the Ahrar Leaders appealed to the public to give contributions to the Ahrar for relief work instead of contributing to the Government.⁵⁷ How people gradually became reluctant to give contributions to the Ahrar? It is well demonstrated by the fact that on the occasion of Eid at Lahore the Ahrar could collect only an amount of **Rs. 41** from gathering of more than 40,000 Muslims.⁵⁸ In 1942 the Working Committee of All India Majlis-i-Ahrar had to postpone the annual session indefinitely due to shortage of funds apart from other considerations.⁵⁹ One possible reason for failure of the Ahrar in collection of contributions from the public was the frequent charges of embezzlement of funds. In 1932 on at least three occasions, apprehensions were raised regarding the funds etc. In Sialkot, the Secretary of the Majlis filed a suit against the treasurer accusing him of embezzlement.⁶⁰ In July, Zain-ul-Abdin Shah, the president of Multan branch resigned and refused to render an account of the funds at his disposal. There were instances of stealing the property of the organization by responsible workers of the Majlis. The Manager of *Hurriyat*, Hussain Mir, was dismissed on the charges of stealing 250 reams of newsprint.⁶¹ Sometimes the Ahrar workers were found guilty of stealing petty office goods and misappropriating cash from the office of the organization.⁶² Janbaz Mirza, General Secretary Majlis-i-Ahrar Amritsar, was accused by his Ahrar friends, of stealing Rs. 300 from the Ahrar office and he resigned form secretary-ship. There was a split again among the Lahore and Sialkot Ahrar in March 1933, and the Ahrar Leaders were accused of misappropriating funds and not accounting for expenditure. Next year the Jullundur Muslims accused Ahrar leaders of accepting bribe from kapurthala state authorities and of embezzlement of funds collected for propaganda purposes.⁶³ Abdul Karim Mubahillah of Amritsar was accused of

misappropriation of funds of Shuba-i-Tabligh which caused lot of resentment and disappointment among the sincere Workers.⁶⁴ Even at the highest level because of apprehensions against Maulana Habib-ur-Rehman, the money was remitted directly to Ataullah Shah Bukhari, who in turn, was suspected by Maulana Habib-ur-Rehman, of misusing party funds to purchase a house at Mitsar worth Rs. 3000.⁶⁵ After the death of Afzal Haq the Ahrar collected at least Rs. 12,000 in Afzal Haq Memorial Funds. Any memorial build in the memory of Afzal Haq is not known. He is buried at Miani Sahab, Lahore. Later, Maulana Mazhar Ali Azhar was accused of receiving an amount of **Rs. 95,000** from Congress and the Unionist Party which he could not deny.⁶⁶ In the Majlis-i-Ahrar, individual leaders were more important and prominent than the organization itself. In the absence of any apprehensive party programme, they were out to celebrate “Abdul Rehman Day”, “Bukhari Day”, “Afzal Haq Day” etc. Every leader had individual ideas. They did not have internal harmony of thought. It was only their anti-British feelings that had united them. They were anti-British but they had no positive clear-cut political programme. They fawned upon other anti-British organizations like INC and Jamiat Ulema-i-Hind. Despite their profession of socialist ideas, they failed to mobilize the support of lower strata of the Muslim society like the farmers, cultivators and artisans. Some of the important leaders left the Majlis one by one. The Ahrar did not participate in the movement for the restoration of Shahidgunj mosque in 1935. Later in 1938, when they started the campaign for the restoration of Shahidgunj, it made their position even more ridiculous. The main theme is that the political parties should avoid the unpopular behavior and respect the public sentiments. A political party should never make statements against the popular religious and spiritual personalities. It should also arrange their financial matters transparently. Otherwise, a political party may lose its popularity by losing the support of lower strata of the society like farmers, cultivators and artisans who may prove to be the backbone of the of the political authority.

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17. Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, pp.8-9.
18. *Dastoor-al-Amal*, pp. 5-7.
19. Ibid., p.8.
20. Ibid., pp.9-10.

21. Ibid., p.10.
22. *Confidential Report on Ahrar Movement in Panjab: 1931-1938*, p.6.
23. Ibid.
24. *Political Abstract, Panjab Intelligence Report*, January 9, 1932.
25. Iftikhar Haider Malik, *Sikandar Hayat Khan: A Political Biography*, p.49.
26. Owing to his close association with Zafrulla Khan and his stand against sectarian considerations, his sympathies were with the Ahmedis. According to Abdullah Malik it was probably due to the reason that the Ahmedis were better organized and being pro-British, more useful for Fazl-i-Husain. Abdullah Malik, *Punjab ki Siyasi Tehriken*, p. 209. Also see Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, pp. 184-186. For further details see Janbaz Mirza, *Karwan-i- Ahrar*, Lahore, 1975, pp. 179-183.
27. P.N.Chopra, ed., *India's Struggle for Freedom*, p.360.
28. S.Lavan, *The Ahmadiyah Movement*, Delhi, 1974, p. 151. It is important to note that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) of Qadian was the founder of this movement. His father's name was Mirza Ghulam Murtaza rais of Qadian in Gurdaspur district. After the death of Ghulam Ahmad, Hakeem Nur-ud-Din(d. 1914) succeeded him as Khalifa-tul-Masih and after his death Mirza Bashir-ud-Din (1889–1965) son of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was elected as Khalifa-tul-Masih al Thani. L.S. May, *The Evolution of Indo-Muslim Thought after 1857*, Lahore, 1970, pp. 137, 157.
29. Quoted in Talbot, 'The Growth of Muslim League in Panjab: 1937-1946', p.47.
30. Zafrulla Khan was appointed as officiating member of Governor General's Executive Council in place of Fazl-i-Husain from June to October 1932. It raised a chorus of protests from the Ahrars who claimed that Muhammad Iqbal should have been appointed instead. Fazl-i-Husain was criticized for abetting the creation of an Ahmedi 'imperium in imperio'. But he refuted the charge that he was disrupting the unity of the Muslims. See further details in Azim Husain, *Fazl-i-Hussain: A political Biography*, London, 1946, p. 314.
31. According to Sajjad Zaheer: "Fazl-i-Husain and the other Unionists considered Ahrars as their

serious rivals. He believed that Fazl-i-Husain was one of the secret instigators of Shahidganj

agitation.... his object being to involve the Ahrars in it. The latter were put in a dilemma as

they would not be able to participate in the impending general elections". Sajjad Zaheer, *Light*

on League-Unionist Conflict, Bombay, 1944, p. 16.

32. The Ahrar Movement in the Punjab 1931-1938. *Secret Report* from C. Ahmad, Deputy

Inspector General of Police, C.I.D., Punjab, October 10, 1938, pp. 45-46.

33. P .N.Chopra, ed., *India's Struggle for Freedom*, p.367.

34. Its structure was that of a mosque, which was used by the government. But according to

Ganda Singh, it was purchased by the government in 1860, from a person who used it as a

private residence and was then used as Sessions Court. Craig Baxter, *From Martial Law to*

Martial: Politics in The Panjab,1919-1956, Lahore,1985, p. 132. Also see Ganda Singh, *History of*

Gurdwara Shahidganj Lahore: From its Origin to November 1935, Lahore, 1935, p. 79.

35. *The Civil & Military Gazette*, Lahore, July 16, 1935.

36. Craig Baxter,ed., *From Martial Law to Martial: Politics in The Panjab,1919-1956*, p.132.

37. Azim Husain, *Fazl-i-Hussain: A Political Biography*, p.287.

38. During this political unrest, Fazl-i-Husain was at Abbottabad where he had gone to recover from his illness as he was suffering from one of the severe attacks of bronchitis and could not go to Lahore to take part in the controversy, *Ibid*.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

40. *Ibid.*, p, 287.

41. Waheed Ahmad,ed., *Diary and Notes of Main Fzal-i- Husain*, August 6,1935, Lahore, 1977, p.159.

42. Azim Husain, *Fazl-i-Hussain: A Political Biography*, p. 288.

43. *Ibid*.

44. Waheed Ahmad,ed., *Diary and Notes of Main Fzal-i- Husain*, September 23,1935, p.177.

45. David Paul Gilamartin, 'Tribe, Land and Religion in Panjab: Muslim Politics and the Making of Pakistan', Ph.D. *Dissertation*, University of California, Berkely, 1979, p.149.
46. Ikram Ali Malik, ed., *A Book of Readings on the History of Panjab, 1799-1947*, Lahore, 1970, p.559.
47. *Provincial Reports*, Vol., I, 1936-37, *Linlithgow Collection*, F 125/112 (NDC., M.U.ACC. No. 596).
48. Y.B. Mathur, *Muslims and Changing India*, Delhi, 1972, p. 110.
49. Iftikhar Haider Malik, *Sikandar Hayat Khan: A Political Biography*, p.48.
50. P .N.Chopra, ed., *India's Struggle for Freedom*, pp.168-169.
51. *Ibid.*, p.379. Also see Shorish Kashmiri, *Syed Attaullah Shah Bukhari*, Lahore, 1963,p.104.
52. *Ibid.*, p.98.
53. Afzal Haq, *Tarikh-i-Ahrar*, p. 12
54. *Police Abstract* of Intelligence Punjab, September 2, 1933.
55. *Ibid.*, September 21, 1935.
56. *Ibid.*, April 1, 1933.
57. *Ibid.*, November 26, 1932.
58. *Ibid.*, January 11, 1941.
59. *Ibid.*, February 28, 1942.
60. *Ibid.*, May 14, 1932.
61. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1932.
62. *Ibid.*, February 11, 1933 and April 8, 1933.
63. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1934.
64. *Ibid.*, November 9, 1940.
65. *Ibid.*, January 19, 1935.
66. For Detail see Shorih Kashmiri, *Boo-i-Gul Nala-i-Dil Dood-i-Charagh-i-Mehfil*, Lahore, 1972, pp. 343-344.