

Formation of the All India Muslim League and its Response to some Foreign Issues – 1906 – 1911

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Abstract

The All India Muslim League (AIML) was formed on December 30, 1906 mainly to protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Muslims of India but the extra-territorial issues also did not escape its attention. Therefore, references to the international issues continued to emerge in the AIML proceedings in the coming years. The first major international issue which attracted the AIML's attention was mistreatment of the Indians in the British colonies particularly in the Transvaal state of South Africa. The AIML urged the British cabinet to secure complete and equal rights and privileges of the British citizenship for the Indians with a permission to settle in the British colonies on equal terms with the 'white races'. The Pan-Islamic sentiments also got reflected in the AIML proceedings. However, international concerns of the AIML, rather whole of the Muslim India, were best exhibited in the case of Turkey.

Key Words: Muslim League, South Africa, Turkey, British, India

The western styled political parties and associations were introduced in South Asia after the British assumption of power. The first political organization established by the Muslims of the British India was the Muhammadan Association formed at Calcutta, which held its first meeting on January 31, 1856 (Mujamdar, 1965: 221). In April 1863, Nawab Abdul Latif (1828-93), the first Muslim member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, founded the Muhammadan Literary Society at Calcutta, which *inter alia* aimed at creating interest in politics among the Muslims and bringing the Muslim requirements to the notice of rulers. Soon more than 500 distinguished Muslims, from all parts of India, became its members and consequently, the Society presented various addresses to the Viceroy and the Lieutenant Governors requesting redressal of Muslim grievances. The Government of India (GOI) also approached the Society on several occasions to get its opinion on issues affecting the Muslim community (Ikram, 1965: 102).

On May 12, 1878, Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928) founded the Central National Muhammadan Association at Calcutta and soon its branches were formed throughout India. The Association aimed at the well being of the Muslims using all legitimate and constitutional means, and their political regeneration

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by moral revival, and to obtain a recognition of their just and reasonable claims (Mujamdar, 1965: 224-227; Chughtai, 1962: 61-62). In 1887, the Association attempted to hold an all India Muslim conference in order to **create** some degree of solidarity among the 'disintegrated' Muslim masses. However, its endeavours could not be materialized otherwise 'the history of the Muslim League would have been anticipated 20 years earlier'(Chughtai, 1962: 61-62). In 1883, under the guidance of Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-98), the Aligarh based Muslim leadership founded a Muhammeden Political Association with **the** object to protect the Muslim political interests; make efforts for their material advancement, and to represent their legitimate interests, rights and requirements before the GOI (Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1888, April 7).

The foundation of Indian National Congress (INC) on December 28, 1885, claiming to represent all communities of India, posed another challenge to the Muslim leadership. In its very first session held in 1885, the Congress passed a resolution urging the reconstitution of the Legislative Councils on a representative basis thus suggesting a Hindu domination in them. Syed Ahmad vehemently opposed that proposal arguing that in such a case, the Muslims would be in a permanent minority and instead exhorted the Muslims to raise their educational status. In December 1886, he founded All India Muhammeden Educational Congress to create communal consciousness and solidarity among the Muslim community of India along with raising their educational standards.

In August 1888, Syed Ahmad founded the Indian Patriotic Association, which *inter alia* aimed at informing the British nation that the INC did not represent all communities of India (Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1888, September 25). He also approached leading Islamic organizations and sought their assistance for fostering combined resistance to the INC. Consequently, almost every prominent Muslim personality and institution showed their resentment against the INC and resolutions of that effect were passed in the Muslim gatherings held at Lahore, Allahabad, Lucknow, Madras, Meerut and several other places (Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1888, July 21). In 1892, the Indian Council Act was enacted accepting the INC demands to some extent which was again opposed by Syed Ahmad. He maintained that in a country like India, where homogeneity did not exist in any one of these fields, the introduction of representative government could not produce any beneficial results, rather it could only result in disturbing the peace and prosperity of the country (*The Pioneer*, 1883, October 5).

On December 1893, in a meeting of influential Muslim leaders held at Aligarh, it was decided to form the Muhammeden Anglo Oriental Defence Association to promote political interests of the Muslims and place their point of view before the GOI and the British public. During 1894-96, the Association remained quite active and its demands were almost identical to the concessions, which were later asked by the Simla Deputation (Jain, 1965: 128). For instance, in a memorandum, drawn by Syed Ahmad in 1896, the Association *inter alia* demanded separate communal electorates with the

Muslims voting for the Muslims only and weightage in representation of the Muslims in municipal councils and district boards (*The Pioneer*, 1986, December 24; *MAO College Magazine*, 1986: 507-19).

With the dawn of the twentieth century, political status of the Muslims of India underwent a tremendous deterioration mainly due to the Hindu-Muslim riots, Hindi-Urdu controversy, absence of separate Muslim representation in the legislative and municipal councils, and feeble Muslim presence in the government services. The Muslims were growingly recognizing absence of a countrywide organization like the INC, through which they could effectively put forward their demands. For instance, in a letter addressed to *The Pioneer*, Moulvi Mehdi Hassan (b.1859) argued that while Syed Ahmad was alive, he had a great influence among the government circles, but after his death, a Muslim political organization was necessary to keep the government informed about the Muslim sentiments. Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk Moulvi Mushtaq Husain (1841-1917) observed that the Muslim community was in a predicament with difficult alternatives of either joining the INC or establishing a corresponding political organization of their own (Hamid, 1967: 47). Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk Syed Mahdi Ali Khan (1837-1907), in his article published in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, also advocated that after the demise of Syed Ahmad, 'the necessity of forming a Muslim organization was becoming more and more imperative' (*Aligarh Institute Magazine*, 1901: August 15; Fazluddin, n.d.: 379-394). Mian Muhammad Shah Din (1868-1918), while commenting on the political situation in the columns of the *Civil & Military Gazette* (Lahore), argued that the time had arrived when Muslim leaders should take practical steps to safeguard interests of their community (Ahmad, 1962: 344). Likewise, Mian Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1936) while addressing a meeting organized by the Anjuman-i-Himayat-i-Islam at Lahore, highlighted the absolute need of a political organization which could unify the Muslims and fight for their rights (Hussain, 1945: 45).

Mian Muhammad Shafi (1869 – 1932) also contributed a series of articles in *The Observer*, in which he presented a sketch of the proposed organization suggesting its name as the 'Indian Muslim Patriotic League' (*The Civil & Military Gazette*, 1909, December 23). In a meeting of the leading Muslims of India held at Lucknow on October 20-21, 1901, under the presidentship of Syed Sharafuddin (1856-1921), it was unanimously resolved that a Muslim organization should be formed to look after their social and political interests (Ahmad, 1977: 69). In July 1903, the Muhammadan Political Association was established at a gathering of the Muslims assembled at Saharanpur (*The Pioneer*, July 31, 1903). In March 1904, Mian Shah Din once again raised the issue of formulation of a central Muslim political organization, 'with a view to take such political action, as under the circumstances, might commend itself to the Muslim community' (Bashir, n.d.: 344). While these deliberations were going on, the provinces of Bengal and Assam were re-constituted in October 1906, to form two new provinces of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam (Zaidi, 1964: 114-122). The Muslims welcomed that move, as in the later province, they were in a majority. Nawab Salimullah (1884-1915) of Dacca (now Dhaka), the capital of the new province, was among the

prominent leaders favouring partition. He and his colleagues decided to organize the Muslim community into a compact body and to set up the Muhammadan Political Union to serve as a mouthpiece for the expression of view on all social and political issues related with the Muslim community (*A History of the Freedom Movement*, 1961: 16).

Meanwhile, on July 20, 1906, Viscount John Morley (1838-1923), the Secretary of State for India (SOSI), while delivering his budget speech in the House of Commons, hinted towards introduction of reforms and extension of the representative element in the Indian Legislative Council (Parliamentary Debates, 1906, July 20). The speech created great concern among the Muslims and, therefore, Aftab Ahmad Khan (1867-1930), Muhammad Yakub (1879-1942), Nawab Muhammad Ismail Khan Sherwani (1852-1922) and other Muslim leaders contacted Mohsin-ul-Mulk to represent the Muslim point of view to the GOI as it meant permanent Hindu domination. In fact, there was a general feeling among the young educated Muslims that old Aligarh leadership by refusing to join politics, remained unable to safeguard the Muslim political interests, and they did not suggest any plans for future except asking for funds to strengthen the M.A.O. College, Aligarh. There was also a general consensus that at present, no Muslim could get into the legislative councils by election and the Muslims appointed by the GOI's nomination could not be considered as their true representatives. Therefore, in case of introduction of election element on a more extended scale, the Hindus would capture the seats because of their majority, and consequently, the Muslims would remain unable to get into the councils by the elections. Therefore, they decided to submit a memorial to the Viceroy to draw his attention towards the Muslim apprehensions (Parliamentary Debates, 1906, July 20).

The draft memorial was prepared by Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk Syed Husain Bilgrami (1844-1926), with the help of Mohsin-ul-Mulk and others, and was discussed and finalized in a gathering of the Muslim leaders held at Lucknow on September 15-16, 1906 (Parwaz, 1990: 40-49). Consequently, the deputation comprising of 35 prominent Muslim leaders, headed by Sultan Muhammad Shah Agha Khan III (1877-1957), was received by the Viceroy, Earl of Minto II (1845-1914) at Simla on October 1, 1906. The deputation argued that the position accorded to the Muslim community in any kind of representation, direct or indirect, and in other ways affecting their status and influence, should be commensurate not merely with their population figures, but also with their political significance and their role in the defence of the British Empire. Referring to the inadequate Muslim representation in the councils, the deputation asserted that introduction of European type of representative institutions, without consideration of peculiar social and religious conditions of India, 'might place the Muslim interests at the mercy of an 'unsympathetic' majority'. The delegation proposed adoption of the separate electorates for ensuring Muslim presence in the municipal bodies, district boards and legislative councils. In reply, the Viceroy assured the delegation that the political rights and interests of the Muslim community would be protected in the electoral representation (Parwaz, 1990: 40-49).

Earlier, in a meeting of the Muslim representatives held at Lucknow on September 15-16, 1906, besides drafting the memorial to be presented by the Simla deputation, discussions were also carried out to form an All India Muslim political organization to safeguard the Muslim interests. It was decided to take advantage of the gathering of the Muslim representatives on eve of annual meeting of the All India Muhammadan Educational Conference (AIMEC) scheduled to be held at Dacca during the Christmas holidays and lay its foundation at once, formulate a constitution, and call upon the provincial leaders to set up its branches. On Muhammad Shafi's (1869-1932) proposal, it was also decided to name the proposed organization as Muslim League and Mohsin-ul-Mulk and Viqar-ul-Mulk were elected provisional secretaries of the proposed association to move forward in that respect (the Civil & Military Gazette, 1909: December 23; Robinson, 1974: 358-418; Zakria, 1970: 70-80).

Meanwhile, in November 1906, Nawab Salimullah of Dacca who earlier could not join the Simla Deputation due to an eye operation circulated another scheme for the formation of a Muslim political institution named as the All India Muslim Confederacy (*The Bengalee*, 1906: December 14). When the Muslim leadership assembled at Dacca in December 1906 to participate in the AIMEC deliberations, Salimullah's scheme also came under discussion along with other proposals. Eventually, a public meeting of the Muslim leaders was held on December 30, 1906, with Viqar-ul-Mulk in the chair. After deliberations, it was agreed that a political organization of the Muslims be established styled as the All India Muslim League (AIML), for furtherance of following objectives:-

- a) To promote among the Muslims of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government, and to remove any misconception that may arise as to intention of the Government with regard to any of its measures.
- b) To protect and advance the political rights and interests of the Muslims of India, and to respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government.
- c) To prevent the rise among the Muslims of India of any feeling of hostility towards other communities, without prejudice to the other afore mentioned objects of the League (*The Pioneer*, 1907: January 2; *The Englishman*, 1907: January 4; Rahman, 1984: 24-30; Rehman, 1970, July: 3-13; Ahmad, 1988, April: 20-41; Wasti, 1961, October: 33-40).

The Muslims generally welcomed formation of the AIML and soon its branches were established at various places of India (Aligarh Institute Gazette, 1908, August 26 & July 22; Ahmad 1988, December: 1-17). Its first annual session was held at Karachi on December 29-30, 1907, with Adamjee Peerbhoy (1845-1913) in the chair. The meeting approved constitution of the AIML and it also decided to initially limit its membership up till 400 members. The leaders, which formed the Simla Deputation, were amongst its first members. Later, at a special Council meeting of the League held at Aligarh on March 18, 1908, the Agha Khan was elected its permanent President while Syed Husain Bilgrami was appointed its

Honorary Secretary. In May 1908, the London branch of the AIML was also established with Syed Ameer Ali as the President, and Ibn-i-Ahmad as its Honorary Secretary (Wasti, 1965, January: 67-73).

Although the AIML was founded mainly to concentrate on internal problems being faced by the Muslims of India, but the extra-territorial issues also did not escape its attention. Even the factors leading to establishment of the AIML *inter alia* included the political developments taking place in Britain due to the Liberal government's policies. Therefore, in the inaugural session of the AIML held at Dacca on December 30, 1906, Salimullah, while moving the resolution for formation of the AIML, observed that gross ignorance prevailed in England regarding the real conditions of India. He argued that had the party now in power in England been familiar with the position and rights of the Muslims of India, the formation of League would not have been heaved of for a long time, if at all; and they would have gone on pursuing the traditional policy of attending solely to their educational needs (Ali, 1907: 7; *The Englishman*, 1907, December 17).

The references to the international issues continued to emerge in the AIML proceedings in the coming years. For instance, in the second annual session of the AIML held at Amritsar on December 30-31, 1908, Syed Ali Imam (1869-1932) while delivering his presidential address (Abbasi, 1983, January-June: 20-29)⁷ referred to the western democratic traditions, British constitutional history, American war of independence, British relations with her colonies, particularly Canada, Australia and grant of autonomy to the Boers in South Africa (Imam, 1908). Likewise, Syed Nabiullah (d.1925), in his presidential address delivered at the fourth annual session of the AIML held at Nagpur on December 28-30, 1910, referred to the 'unsatisfactory state of European politics, the ambitious designs of Germany, and the constitutional struggle going on within the British parliament' (Imam, 1908; Mirza, 1911: 10). He also mentioned, Japan's political revolution and adoption of western representative institutions, and her 'marvellous' progress in all branches of national life followed by her 'astounding' victories over Russia (Mirza, 1911: 10).

The first major international issue which attracted the AIML's attention was mistreatment of the Indians in the British colonies particularly in the Transvaal state of South Africa which for the AIML 'assumed the second most important issue after the political reform scheme at home' (ahmad, 1989: 23). Soon after inception of the AIML, its Secretary asked the League members to express their views on the subject and the opinions received on it were presented in the first annual session of the AIML held at Karachi, December 29-30, 1907. The participants shared the dissatisfaction that prevailed among the Indians settled in Transvaal particularly about the registration regulations, but in view of the compromise recently arrived at in South Africa, it was decided 'to file the papers for the present, as no immediate action on the part of the League was needed now' (Khan, 1908: 1-38). However, mistreatment of the Indians in South Africa continued and it again came under discussion in the second annual session of the AIML held

at Amritsar on December 30-31, 1908 (Khan, 1908: 1-38). Consequently, through a resolution, proposed by Nabiullah and supported by Moulvi Munshi Mahbub Alam (1865-1933), and passed unanimously, the AIML deplored the spirit of recent anti-Asiatic legislation in the British colonies especially in the Transvaal state declaring it 'humiliating' to the Indians, and demanded a permanent compromise which could obliterate racial distinctions in political life within the British Empire (Khan, 1908: 1-38).

In the next AIML annual session held at Delhi on January 29-30, 1910, Hakim Muhammad Ajmal Khan (1864-1927), President of the Reception Committee, observed in his welcome speech that the condition of their fellow-countrymen in South Africa was 'woefully unsatisfactory' (*Proceedings of the Third..*, 1910: 1-20). Likewise, the Agha Khan in his presidential address delivered at the occasion, referred to the 'burning question' of the Indians in South Africa, who in his opinion, were wilfully subjected to persecutions, insults and indignity and were branded with the undeserved stigma of an inferior race. While praising their unequal but 'heroic' struggle, he urged that if no better method could be found of bringing the South African Government 'to see the glaring injustice and cruelty' of their acts to their brethren, they must ask the GOI to stop all indentured labour to South Africa 'as a mild step of retaliation' (*Proceedings of the Third..*, 1910: 1-20). At the end of the session, Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar (1878-1931) moved a resolution supported by Zahur Ahmad and later adopted unanimously. It expressed the AIML's admiration of the intense patriotism, courage and self-sacrifice of the Indians in South Africa, who were heroically suffering persecution in the interests of their country, and appealed to all Muslims to help them with funds and in other ways (*Proceedings of the Third..*, 1910: 1-20). It also urged upon the GOI the necessity of prohibiting the recruitment of indentured Indian labour for the South African Union as a measure of retaliation, so long as any South African colony adhered to the present 'selfish' policy and denied the Indians their just rights as citizens of the British Empire. It also appealed to the BG to assert its supremacy in matters of Imperial importance to obliterate racial distinctions in political life within the empire (*Proceedings of the Third..*, 1910: 1-20). Seth Yakub Hassan (1875-1940) moved a similar resolution in the fourth annual session of the AIML held at Nagpur on December 28-30, 1910, condemning the sufferings of the Indians in Transvaal and other areas of South Africa (Mirza, 1911: 10).

Nawab Salimullah of Dacca, in the course of his presidential address delivered at the fifth annual session of the AIML held at Calcutta on March 3-4, 1912, emphatically protested against the unjust treatments of the Indians and the serious disabilities imposed on them in British South East Africa (The Bangalee, 1912: March 3-6; Bahadur, 1912: 1-5). He argued that the perpetuation of the grievances of their countrymen in that land, in spite of the most vigorous condemnation both in India and in England, weighed heavily on the hearts of all Indians irrespective of caste and creed. He hoped that any action taken towards the amelioration of the condition of their countrymen would be hailed with immense satisfaction and joy by all the

communities in India (Bahadur, 1912: 1-5). At the end of the session, Muhammad Ali moved a resolution appreciating the tough fight of the Indians in South Africa and while protesting against racial distinctions, urged the British Government (BG) to remove them (Bahadur, 1912: 1-5). Muhammad Shafi proposed another resolution urging the GOI to take steps to put an end to the system of recruiting Indian labour under indenture system. Maulvi Rafiuddin Ahmad (1865-1954) while seconding the resolution observed that the treatment meted out to the Indians in South Africa was one of the major causes of the Indian unrest. Later, both the resolutions were passed unanimously (Bahadur, 1912: 1-5).

In his presidential address, delivered in the seventh annual session of the AIML held at Agra on December 30-31, 1913, Ibrahim Rahimtullah (1862-1942) also referred to the 'feeling of indignation and horror' which had spread throughout India in regard to the treatment meted out to their fellow countrymen and women in South Africa (Rahimtullah, 1913: 1-5). Pointing to appointment of a commission of enquiry by the Boer Government, he criticized the men chosen to sit upon it and demanded that the Indian representatives should also find seats upon it otherwise 'the enquiry will prove a white washing one and the sore will remained unhealed' (Rahimtullah, 1913: 1-5). Referring to the bad treatment extended to the Indians in the British colonies of South Africa, Canada and Australia, Rahimtullah questioned about the position of the people of India in the British Empire. He asked that whether they occupy identically the same position as the other British subjects or were they so in theory only and urged the British cabinet to secure complete and equal rights and privileges of the British citizenship for the Indians with a permission to settle in the British colonies on equal terms with the 'white races' (Rahimtullah, 1913: 1-5).

At the end of the session, Nawab Zulfiqar Ali Khan (1873-1933) moved a resolution through which the AIML emphatically protested against the provisions of the Immigration Act passed by the South African Government. It urged the Crown to veto it and insisted that the BG and the GOI should adopt such measures as would ensure the Indians in South Africa a just and honourable treatment. The League expressed its abhorrence of the cruel treatment to which the Indians were subjected in South Africa during the recent passive resistance movement and strikes, and disapproved of the personnel of the Committee appointed by the South African Union to enquire into the matter. The League also urged the BG and the GOI to take the steps needed to redress the grievances relating to taxes, indentured labour, domiciled educational test, validity of Indian marriages and other questions bearing on status of the Indians in South Africa (Hassan, 1914: 1-10). Through another resolution moved by Syed Hassan Bilgrami and seconded by Nawab Muhammad Musa Khan Sherwani (1872-1944), the AIML opined that the present status of Zanzibar should not be changed, and that the present rights, privileges and status of the Indians in British East Africa and Uganda should remain intact. Both the resolutions were later carried unanimously (Hassan, 1914: 1-10).

Through a resolution passed at the end of the ninth annual session of the AIML held at Lucknow on December 30-31, 1916, the AIML stressed that it was essential that the system of indentured labour be terminated and all recruitment therefore, prohibited within the ensuing year. Moreover, at least one Indian representative, selected upon the recommendations of bodies voicing the Indian public opinion, should be appointed by the GOI to participate in the forthcoming Inter-Departmental Conference to be held in England for the consideration of the question (*Proceedings of the Ninth...*, 1917: 1-17). Through another resolution, the AIML referred to mistreatment and low status of the British Indian residents in the self-governing dominions and crown colonies and emphasized the growing sense of injury felt in India at continued ill-treatment and injustice meted out to these Indians residents and strongly urged to reconsider their status from a wider and more imperial standpoint (*Proceedings of the Ninth...*, 1917: 1-17).

The Pan-Islamic sentiments also got reflected in the AIML proceedings as to the Muslims, love and care of their co-religionists is an article of their faith deeply rooted in the Islamic injunctions. For instance, speaking on the scheme of council reforms in the second annual session of the AIML held at Amritsar on December 30-31, 1908, Syed Ali Imam regretted that it had failed to recognize the interests of the Muslim community. While arguing that proportion of seats allotted to them should commensurate with their importance, he maintained, they 'have also the weight of their Pan-Islamic relations to enhance, the value of their position in India' (Khan, 1909: 1-38). Likewise, the Agha Khan in his inaugural address delivered at the third annual session of the AIML held at Delhi on January 29-30, 1910, maintained that they had committed to them the sacred duty of helping forward, with their sympathy, advice and practical help, the interests not only of the Indian Muslims, but also of their co-religionists outside India (*Proceeding of the third...*, 1910: 1-20). He argued that the Muslim community that carried culture to the Pyrenees and to Central Asia, and the community that could still recall with emotional pride the greatness of Cordova and Damascus, could not be dead to its sense of duty (*Proceeding of the third...*, 1910: 1-20).

However, international concerns of the AIML, rather whole of the Muslim India, were best exhibited in the case of Turkey which since the rise of Ottomans and their claim to the caliphate after conquest of Syria and Egypt by Selim-I (1512-20) (Asrar, 1972: 111-120), had become the focus of attention of the Muslims of India (Nadvi, 1921; Ahmad, 1964: 10). The Muslim rulers of Gujarat and Deccan were the first to establish political relations with them (Ghauri, 1961: 98; Farooqi, 1989: 186-187). However, the situation got changed with rise of the Mughal power in India since 1526, as they did not recognize the Ottomans as the universal caliphs; however, the diplomatic exchanges continued up to the late eighteenth century (Qureshi, 1999: 14). In spite of that, cultural benchmarks of the Muslim India during the Sultanate and Mughal periods remained predominately Turkish in nature having Central Asian lineages (*Government of Pakistan*, n.d.: 5-6; Maghrabi, n.d.: 185). With the exception of the Suris and the Lodhis, the

Delhi Sultans and the Mughals were all Turks by race and consequently, they established strong Central Asian (Karim, 1969: 93-94)—Turkish norms in every aspect of life, a trend that was greatly strengthened due to presence of large number of immigrants from Central Asia (Qureshi, 1962: 87-88). Perhaps the best example of the Turkish impact on the Muslim India was emergence of Urdu as a new *lingua franca*, which had strong Turkish and Persian influences. Especially its forms, thought and imagery were adopted from Central Asia and Iran and its poetry was marked with the remembrance of 'Lands that had been left behind long ago but never forgotten' (Zulfiqar, 1986: 1-10; Ayyubi, 1969: 46-465; Dolu, 1975: 78-110).

Acquaintance with the Turkish way of life turned into devotion with fall of the Mughal Empire and the British conquest of India after which the Muslims were looking for 'an alternative psychological and spiritual centre'. Soon the caliphal claim of the Ottoman Sultans was widely accepted and their name started to be mentioned in the Friday *khutba* in some Indian mosques (Khan, 1876: 155). Turkish *fez* and coat not only became part of the Aligarh students' uniform but were also adopted by the modern Muslim elite (Ahmad, 1988: 89)¹⁵. When in the summer of 1876, the Turks were suppressing Russian-instigated Bulgarian insurrection, the Indian Muslims pressurized the BG to remain friendly with the Turks (Qureshi, 1962: 25). Next year, when in April 1877, Russians invaded Turkey, considerable enthusiasm was generated among the Indian Muslims and besides publicly displaying anti-Russia feelings, they urged the BG to side with Turkey. Large public rallies were held in all major cities to demonstrate support for Turkey (Khurshid, 1963: 189-284). Moreover, several associations were founded throughout India to raise funds for Turkey to which every segment of the Muslim society donated generously and consequently, raised a considerable amount for the Turks help (Khurshid, 1963: 275). It was followed by a wave of enthusiasm for the Ottomans, which got reflected in the Muslim vernacular press and Urdu literature especially in prose, poetry, plays and novels (Sadiq, 1985: 345-357). Several Turkish works were translated into Urdu and many adaptations were made from the Turkish literature. Besides, several travelogues were written after visiting Istanbul, which created very sympathetic attachment with Turkey and consequently, after the Russo-Turkish war, pro-Ottoman sentiments of the Indian Muslims 'registered a rapid increase in intensity' (Malik, 1988: 9). In April 1897, when hostilities erupted between Turkey and Greece over the Crete issue, which resulted in Turkish victory, the Indian Muslims took the issue as one of the crescent versus the cross and resultantly, countless addresses of support were forwarded to Turkey and generous donations were made to the Turkish Patriotic Fund (Qureshi, 1962: 45).

During the first decade of twentieth century, the Muslim India's emotional attachment with Turkey became stronger. The Indians Muslims living in Britain played a significant role in that direction, and 'did everything in their power to combat anti-Islamic, anti-Turk propaganda'. As early as 1886, a pan-Islamic society named as Anjuman-i-Islam was founded in London with its branches in India and other Muslim states (Qureshi, 1962: 50). In 1903,

another association called 'The Pan-Islamic Society of London' was established by Abdullah al-Mamum Suhrawardy (1875-1935), which was later named as the 'Islamic Society' and Ameer Ali succeeded Suhrawardy as its president (Kidwai, 1908: 1). The Society instituted personal relations with the Ottoman Sultans and highlighted Muslim sentiments regarding Turkey and other issues effecting Islam through its journal *pan-Islam* (Kidwai, 1908: 1). The Indian Muslims under the initiative of Muhammad Inshaullah (1870-1928), editor of the *Vatan* and patronage of Pir Jamaat Ali Shah (1841-1951), generously contributed for raising funds for the construction of the Hijaz Railway (Inshaullah, 1908; Shah, 1973; Landau, 1971). They also denounced Iran's exploitation by Russia and Britain following the Anglo-Persian convention (1907), French belligerence in Morocco, and Turkish setbacks in the Balkans (Jafri, 1965: 225-231). The Indian Muslims enthusiastically welcomed the Young Turk revolution of 1908 and their emphasis on constitutionalism was termed as 'an ebullition of Islam's democratic spirit' (IOL&R, L/R/5/833). The AIML also expressed its support for the Young Turk action and thanked the BG for remaining friendly with Turkey (*Achieves of Freedom Movement*, n.d.: 39).

The Italian annexation of the Ottoman Tripoli in September 1911, with covert support of the British and French Governments, also led to open expression of pan-Islamic and pro-Turkey sentiments by the Indian Muslims. The protest public meetings were held in all major cities of India condemning Italian 'war-mongering' and expressing support to Turkey which was also joined by the Muslim press (*Daily Zamidar*, 1911, December 27). Under the leadership of Muhammad Inshaullah and Zafar Ali Khan (1873-1956), large chunks of money were collected and sent to Turkey (*The Civil & Military Gazette*, 1912, April 2). A Red Crescent Society was founded in Calcutta under the guidance of Abdullah Suhrawardy to collect funds for aid of the Tripolian effectives (*The Pioneer*, 1911, October 6). The London Muslim League (LML) suggested to recruit volunteers for the help of Turkey and arranged a medical mission to Tripoli for assistance of the Ottoman soldiers (*The Civil & Military Gazette*, 1912, January 12-April 25; Abbasi, 1988: 1-75). The AIML, with the active support of leading businessmen like Fazulbhoj Currimbohy (b.1872) and Ibrahim Rahimatoola, launched a boycott campaign of the Italian goods (Mirza, 1912, February 15).

The AIML response to the Tripolian crisis was best exhibited during the fifth annual session of the AIML held at Calcutta on March 3-4, 1912, when during the course of his address, Badruddin Haider, Chairman of the Reception Committee, excused that embarrassing series of reverses which were befalling on their community in foreign lands led to an inadequate reception of the League delegates (*The Bangalee*, 1912, March 3-6). He observed that the Muslim community all over the world was passing through very stirring times as coming events were casting their shadows before them and the whole Muslim world waited at on the tip-toe of expectation to see what the womb of futurity had in store for them. He maintained that the course of action pursued by Italy in the present case was utterly unjustifiable and wholly uncalled for and questioned that how any internal

mismanagement by an autonomous power could give a rival power the right of territorial acquisition (*The Bangalee*, 1912, March 3-6). Pointing to the fact that the cold-blooded atrocities committed by the Italians had elicited strong and unqualified condemnation from almost all great international powers, he urged to devise vigorous declarations of policy, sufficiently practical to prevent a possible recurrence of such unfortunate and disreputable instances of international greed and stressed that the BG in particular had its duties clearly outlined for it by the serious gravity and the magnitude of its own political stake. He maintained that the Muslim community of India, therefore, confidently expected that it would not be long before the British cabinet would become alive to its serious responsibilities, and, discarding the present halting policy of passive neutrality, would attempt to bring about some sort of reconciliation which might be acceptable to both the contending parties. He stressed that action in that matter was urgently called for and procrastination would only intensify gravity of the situation (*The Bangalee*, 1912, March 3-6). At the end of session, Muhammad Shafi moved a resolution, seconded by Nawab Sarfraz Husain and later carried unanimously, which expressed deep abhorrence of Italy's raid on the Tripolian coast, and hoped that the European powers would not fail to oblige Italy to recognize Turkish sovereignty in Tripoli (*The Bangalee*, 1912, March 3-6).

In October 1912, the Balkan states' combined assault on Turkey again led to countryside spread agitation and condemnation by the Muslim press and politicians of India besides collection of donations for assistance of the Ottomans (Saeed, 1986: 190-192). Under leadership of Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (1880-1936), an all India medical mission was arranged which included several qualified doctors and male nurses (shahjahanpuri, 1979: 119-163). It served in Turkey for about eight months and its valuable services were deeply appreciated by the Turkish Government (Khaliquzzaman, 1961: 20-26). As a matter of fact, the Balkan crisis created great pro-Turkish sentiments among the Indian Muslims and henceforward, Enver Pasha (1881-1922), Talat Pasha (1874-1921) and Niyazi Bey (1873-1912) became household names in the Muslim India and their pictures could be seen at every prominent place owned by the Muslims (*Punjab Polic Abstract of Intelligence*, 1913, August, 2,9,16; Sherwani, 1995: 138-154). Renowned historian, Iftikhar H. Malik has rightly observed that the Balkan wars motivated the Muslims across the South Asia with a new fervour of pan-Islamism which had attained anti-British denunciations as they were openly siding with the enemies of the Ottoman Turkey (Malik, 1988: 184-185).

The AIML held its sixth annual session at Lucknow on March 22, 1913, under the presidentship of Muhammad Shafi who in his presidential address criticized the 'illiberal' policy of the Liberal Government of Britain towards Muslim states and alleged that 'the high sounding principles of liberalism loudly proclaimed but seldom acted upon by its apostles' (*Presidential Address.*, 1913: 1-7). While praising the 'heroic' struggle of the Arabs and the Turks in Tripoli against the Italian invasion, Shafi deplored that the

European powers took no steps to stop that 'unwarrantable aggression' (*Presidential Address..*, 1913: 1-7). Referring to the Balkan uprising and declaring it 'utterly unjustifiable action', he regretted that the European powers did not move even 'their little finger to stem the flood' and above all, victories of the Balkan states were acclaimed as 'triumphs of the cross over the crescent' (*Presidential Address..*, 1913: 1-7). He severely criticized the British Prime Minister (BPM)'s rejoice at the fall of Salovica, regardless of the sentiments of 100 millions Muslims living in the British Empire, on the ground of 'its having been the gate through which Christianity had entered Europe'. He deplored that for the first time in modern history, a section of the European press openly proclaimed the 'startling' doctrine that the Turks had no right to remain in Europe (*Presidential Address..*, 1913: 1-7). Pointing out to support of the European powers to the Balkan states' claim to retain all territories captured by them, Shafi questioned that whether there was even a single European war during the hundred years, in which the conquering nation had retained the whole of the conquered territory? (*Presidential Address..*, 1913: 1-7)

Shafi further observed that rapid succession of disastrous events in the Muslim world had produced a profound effect on the Muslim opinion and sentiments in India, who could not subscribe to the 'curious' doctrine that Turkey must in future, be contented to remain a purely Asiatic power. Their sympathy had gone out, 'spontaneously and unstintedly' to their suffering brethren in the Near East and north of Persia as manifested in the great monetary sacrifices made by them in order to afford relief to the Turkish sufferers. Urging Muslim India to take lessons to their hearts from those sad occurrences, he maintained that had the Turkish leaders, instead of being engaged in internecine strife, been united in putting their own house in order, the results would had been entirely different (*Presidential Address..*, 1913: 1-7).

Through a resolution passed at the end of the said session, the AIML drew attention of the BG towards the Macedonian 'butcheries' and demanded that she should take action against the wholesale massacres and outrages that had been perpetrated by the Balkan 'invaders' amongst the Muslim population of Macedonia. It also deplored the 'unjust' war declared by the Allies against the Turkish peoples and deeply regretted attitude of the Christian Europe, 'which meant the destruction of the Musalman power in Europe and of the integrity and honour of the Ottoman Empire'; and viewed with great dissatisfaction the open expression of sympathy, by responsible British cabinet members with the Balkan states in their 'unrighteous' war on Turkey (*The Pioneer*, 1913: 24-26).

In his presidential address, delivered in the seventh annual session of the AIML held at Agra on December 30-31, 1913, Ibrahim Rahimtullah expressed a feeling of relief that at the end of the Balkan War, Turkey had not been turned out bag and baggage from Europe and though its European dominions had been curtailed, it still had a strong footing on the continent. He expressed satisfaction that however much the Muslims might be divided

amongst themselves, religious sentiments of Muslim brotherhood was a living force throughout the Muslim world as Muslims living in different parts of the world had all proved their readiness to come forward in a spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion to stand by their co-religionists in their hour of trial and trouble. He stressed that it was the living miracle of Islam that sentiments of Islamic brotherhood were seated deep down in the hearts of followers of our revered Prophet (SAW) and that the lapse of centuries had in no way blunted the effects of his noble mission (*Presidential Address...*, 1913: 1-5). Rahimtullah also criticized the British foreign policy maintained during the Balkan war which while ignoring the sentiments of its millions of Muslim citizens, failed to strive that Turkey should obtain fair and just treatment in the councils of Europe. He further accused that far from endeavouring to secure a fair play to the Muslim *Khilafat*, Britain was siding against it, and was cooperating with other European powers 'who are the declared enemies of the Turkish Empire' (*Presidential Address...*, 1913: 1-5).

After the tragic events which followed the Balkan disaster, the pan-Islamic trends of Muslim India were best exhibited by formation of a society named as *Anjuman-i-Khuddam-i-Ka`bah* in May 1913. Under the presidentship of Maulana Abdul Bari (1878-1926), the Anjuman pledged to protect Makkah and other holy places of Islam from the non-Muslim encroachments. The founders of the society were convinced that now Turkey was incapacitated and was no longer able to guard the Muslim holy places from non-Muslim aggressions. Therefore, they adopted a two fold strategy aiming at first to organize the Muslim community to resist any such attack and secondly to support Turkey to such an extent that 'it was capable of maintaining an independent and effective Muslim sovereignty over the sacred places of Islam. The members were required to take oath to protect the *Ka`bah* and other holy places at all costs (Qureshi, 1962: 60-61). Within two year of its foundation, branches affiliated with the Anjuman were set up inside and outside India viz., London, Istanbul, Cairo, and Singapore. The Anjuman was able to evolve a large membership and sizeable funds were raised by it. Besides, advocating close association between the Indian Muslims and the Turks, the Anjuman also tried to elevate Turco-Arab integration and suggested to raise a special force for the defence of the holy places. However, with the outburst of First World War (FWW), its activities had to be suspended (Qureshi, 1962: 60-61; Hassan, 1985: 64-69).

Besides the compelling external factors, which were being tackled by the AIML, there were certain disturbing internal issues also. The annulment of partition of Bengal in December 1911 (Mirza, 1911: 90; Zaidi, 1964: 202-203; Ahmad, 1961: 320-429; Malik, 1960: 1-28) and continued non-acceptance of the long-standing Muslim demand of grant of status of affiliating university to MAO College, Aligarh, led to the belief among the Muslim India, 'that to protect their rights they must depend upon themselves' (Qureshi, 1962: 62). Even a moderate like Viqar-ul-Mulk, who was one of the founders of the AIML, began to convince the Indian Muslims of the need of depending upon on their own strength instead of relying on the government assurances (*Daily Zamindar*, 1912, February, 2). Abdul Halim Sharar (1860-1926) denounced

the 'policy of mendicancy' being adopted by the AIML while Maulana Shibli Numani (1857-1914), joined by Zafar Ali Khan, urged upon the Muslim community to 'shun the old guards and resort to political agitation' (*Daily Zamindar*, 1912, April, 9). The Muslim press, especially the *Vakil*, advised the Muslims to follow the Hindu agitational tactics which succeeded in cancellation of division of province of Bengal (*Vakil*, 1912, January 6). The Muslim agitation over the demolition of a portion of a mosque by the Cawnpore municipality and its ruthless suppression by the local authorities which resulted in several casualties, led to a country-wide protest and anguish among the Muslim India which ultimately compelled the Viceroy Baron Hardinge of Penshurst (1858-1944) to rush to Cawnpore to mediate and pacify the Muslims by releasing detainees and restoration of the demolished part at the state expense which was taken by some as success of the Muslim agitational power (Jafri, 1963: 328-412; Shahjahanpuri, 1948: 215-216; Nizami, 1913).

All these events had a tremendous impact upon the Muslim India's mind which was terribly shocked at Muslim states' humiliation abroad and their pathetic condition inside India. Consequently, the AIML began to change from an assemblage of petitioners into forceful agitators. It changed its political ideals from the assurances of loyalties to the demand of self-government suitable to India (Bahadur, 1954: 83-92). Therefore, the AIML Council in its meeting held on December 31, 1912 passed a resolution amending the League aims and including the attainment of system of self-government suitable to India in its objectives by bringing about, through constitutional means, a steady reform of the existing system of administration (*The Pioneer*, 1913, January 2).

Notes:

Also see Fazluddin, comp., *Majmua Lectures wa Speeches Nawab Mohsinul-Mulk* (Lahore: n.pub.), 1901, pp.379-394.

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