

Role of Indian Mujahids in the Revolt of 1857

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Abstract

This study explores the crucial role of the Indian Mujahids in the historic Revolt of 1857. Though British authorities branded them as "Indian Wahabis," they were, in truth, devoted followers of the eminent Islamic reformer Shah Waliullah Dehlavi. The movement was ideologically shaped by his son, Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlavi, who courageously declared India a *Dar al-Harb* (Abode of War), justifying armed resistance against British rule. This call to jihad, born out of a passionate resolve to end colonial domination, found a charismatic leader in Sayyid Ahmad Berelvi. Under his guidance, his disciples waged a determined struggle against British imperialism, sustaining the flame of resistance well into the 19th century.

Keywords: Indian Mujahids, Indian Wahabis, 1857 Revolt, Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlavi, Sayyid Ahmad Berelvi, Sepoy Mutiny, Freedom Struggle.

1. Introduction

Divergent opinions have been expressed regarding the nature of the great outbreak of 1857. Volumes have been written on this subject, both by contemporary and later writers, and it is almost an impossible task to deal with the different views and arguments advanced to support them. The revolt of 1857 against British rule in India is regarded as one of the biggest anti-colonial uprisings in world history. Not surprisingly, the historiography on 1857 is vast even if impacted heavily with the Nationalist and Marxist interpretations of the event. Such writings on 1857 fitted its history in the meta-narrative of the 'secular' nation state. The omissions in such history writings were many. But the most pronounced was the missing Muslim. Specially, those Muslims who were scholars of Islam and whose political activism in the years leading to 1857 borrowed from their religious imaginary. The Muslims who belonged to this category found no space in the narratives of the Nationalist and Marxist accounts of the revolt of 1857. Such ideologically motivated histories separated *ulama* political activists from their liberal coreligionists. More importantly, their fight against the British is seen less 'patriotic' than that of the high caste Sepoys or Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar.

Hindu rebel leaders like the Rani of Jhansi or Tantia Tope who used religion as much as the Muslims *Jihadis* did in mobilizing anti-British support became the nationalist icons of both Nationalist and Marxist interpretations of 1857. And this of course raises questions on how 'liberal' our Marxist and Nationalist history writing traditions can be regarded?

The course of these religious movements, in common with almost every aspect of Indian life, was affected by the most spectacular event in the history of nineteenth century India, the uprising of 1857. The causes of this outbreak have been a matter of endless dispute ever since. The range of opinion varied then, as it still does, from those who see it as a simple mutiny by disgruntled soldiers to those who

see it as a nationalist war for an independent India. That the Mujahids were patriots and made matchless sacrifices for their motherland is undisputed. But the irony of modern Indian history is that their aims and missions have not been properly represented. With the result that their achievements and sacrifices are still obscure.

Traditional historians refer the names of Nana Sahib, Tantia Tope, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi and Kunwar Singh as the valiant heroes. Of course they cannot be forgotten. Mangal Pande, who raised the banner of revolt in Bengal, is also remembered. Every community except the Sikhs and the Parsis actively participated in it.

A comparative study of the Mujahid Movement and the revolt of 1857, shows that it was the way in which the respective interests of the Hindus and the Muslims were affected that largely determined the character of the two movements. The establishment of British rule in India was looked upon by the followers of the Prophet fundamentally as the challenge of Christianity to Islam. Consequently the call for *jihad* given by the Mujahids was religiously inspired, revivalist in character and was motivated by an anti-British sentiment. ‘The programme elaborated by the Mujahids and by the theorists of Waliullahi school, was of higher generality, founded on the common duties of all true believers in the *dar-al-harb* to hand together for a political no less than a religious aim (Seal, A. 1968, pp. 13-14). The revolt of 1857, though a revolt of both the communities, was not just a revolt against the British; it was the Muslims’ last bid for the recovery of their privileges.

Both the Hindus and the Muslims assiduously organised the fronts in 1857 against the British power. Nana Sahib had a Muslim advisor, Azimullah. The Rani of Jhansi employed Muslim gunners. But few remember Moulavi Ahmadullah, sheriff of Faizabad, who played a prominent part in organising the revolt against the British rule in 1857. He was so popular among the masses, that at a time when once Maulavi Ahmadullah Shah was addressing a gathering of ten thousand people, the magistrate ordered the police man to arrest him but he refused to do so (Nezami, T. A. 1969, p. 90). The revolutionary forces under him inflicted such heavy losses on the British that they declared an award of Rs 50,000 for his capture, dead or alive. He was betrayed by the Raja of Powain for the vast sum of money. He was shot dead, his head cut off and sent to his British master (Ray, S. 1979, p. 21).

In Lucknow the famous Maulavi of Fyzabad, from all accounts can legitimately claim to be the brain and the hand of the conspiracy. It can be asserted with confidence that he was working in closest cooperation with the group of Mujahids and the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (Ashraf, K. M. Dr. 1957, p. 87). The “Wahabi” sentiment had permeated the heart and mind of rugged soldiers like Bakht Khan who was the dominating figure of the revolt and the leader of the central government at Delhi (Ashraf, K. M. Dr. 1957, p. 87). He “arrived in Delhi with a band of Mujahid organisers and appointed his spiritual guide Maulavi Sarfaraz Ali as the *Imam* of the contingent of religious warriors (Mujahids) numbering several thousands” (Ashraf, K. M. Dr. 1957, p. 87). Bakht Khan was himself a Mujahid as were also Muhammad Ghafi, Risaldar, and Moulavi Imam Khan, also a Risaldar. Moulavi Abdul Ghaffur and Moulavi Sarfaraz Ali were also Mujahid. Actually Maulana Sarfaraz Ali was a disciple of Karamat Ali of Jaunpur, the famous *Caliph* of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi and a leading figure in the Mujahid Movement (Faruqi, Z. H. 1963, p. 20, f. n. 3). “If one reads through the official and British records of 1857 one gathers the vague impression that Muslim revivalist groups and the Mujahids in particular had something; to do with it. There are casual references to calls for *jihad* (struggle) in almost all places, to *fatwas* of Maulavis in big cities, to the display of the Green Flag in important rebel centres—all of which suggest a certain Muslim revivalist colouring to the events of 1857.” (Ashraf, K. M. Dr.

1957, p. 71). But most of the Historians of freedom struggle could not see the role of Mujahids in the revolt of 1857.

According to Dr. R.C. Majumdar, “the strong military organisation of the Wahabis at Sittana could have rendered great service to the cause of the Mutiny by attacking the British in the north-west, as that would have considerably hampered, if not altogether stopped, the constant flow of men and money from Punjab to Delhi but they kept quiet during the most eventful period of 1857-58” (Majumdar. R. C. 1963, p. 278). But the inferences drawn lack historical evidence. History records that during the period from 1850-58 the British Government had despatched sixteen expeditions totalling 33,000 regular troops and finally decided to send a strong force consisting of 219 artillery- 551 cavalry and 4017 infantry under General Sir Sidney Cotton who defeated the Mujahids (Datta, K. 1957, p. 86).

Sir John Kaye, believed that the prime movers in the revolt of 1857, were the Muslims. Mr. Brown held that they were mostly the Mujahids of Patna, who aimed at overthrowing the British Government and then to re-establish Muslim rule. When the War of liberation broke out Inayat Ali was actively waging war on the Frontier, their many important Mujahid personalities in Bihar could not make much headway and they were thrown into jail. W. Tayler, the commissioner of Patna Division, carefully watched the activities of Shah Mohammad Husain, Maulavi Ahmadullah and Maulavi Waizul Haqq (Nizami, T. A. 1969, p. 36). In his words, “From private information obtained from many sources I had reason to believe that the saintly gentlemen were busying themselves to a very unusual extent, and what rendered their conduct peculiarly suspicious, was that an intimacy appeared to have suddenly sprung up between them and one, Looft Ali Khan, the rich banker of the city, who being a Sheah (*Shi'i*), was an unnatural subject for such connection and who was generally believed to be secretly engaged in traitorous designs” (Taylor, W. 1858, p. 47) Tayler reported that there were two special quarters from which danger might be looked for at Patna, firstly the partisans and adherents of the Lucknow Party since the annexation of Oudh; secondly from the numerous and fanatical sect of Wahabis.... He observed further that the Mujahids were a well-knit group with an efficient secret organisation, so that without writing a line a Mujahid leader could convey a confidential message from Patna to Lahore in an incredibly short time and the order from the chief would be met with unquestioning acquiescence. He, therefore decided to ‘take possession’ of their leaders as hostages in order to ensure the good conduct of the ‘whole brotherhood’. Accordingly on June 19, 1857 he invited some local gentlemen, including the three Mujahid leaders, Shah Muhammad Husain, Ahmadullah and Waizul Haq for supposed consultations regarding the steps to be taken in case of an outbreak in the town. At the end of the meeting he put the three Mujahids under preventive detention (Datta, K. K. Dr. 1976, p. 303).

Main leaders were treacherously arrested everywhere. The younger leaders like Farhat Hussain decided to go underground and prepared to strike back during Ambala Campaign in 1863 in the midst of terrific repression let loose, in the wake of defeat of the great uprising (Ray, S. 1976, pp. 16) On the eve of the revolt of 1857 Patna had come to be the rallying centre of different groups of persons engaged in anti-government activities.

Besides active hostilities the Mujahid sect developed a copious literature filled with prophecies of the break up the British Empire, and devoted to the duty of religious rebellious (Hunter, W. W. 1871, p. 66). Many Mujahid tracts and *fatwas* were in circulation, some of which were successfully unearthed by the Government (Department of Home (Judicial), Progs 28-9 of 30-7-1870). The cry of *jihad* rang out all over the Subcontinent, and the Muslim people from Delhi to Madras were stirred to action by the lofty sentiment of this call. Not surprising therefore to find the green robed Mujahids of Bareilly rushing at

the English guns and bayonets with cries of “*Din, din, Bismillah*” (in the name of Allah and for the sake of Faith) (Trotter, L. J. 1866, p. 335) or to witness them fighting to the last on the ramparts of Delhi. Later, the Court Martial gave expression to similar sentiments in its verdict, which was not only an indictment of Bahadur Shah, but also a judgment on “the deep planned and well concerted conspiracy” (Kaye, J., Malleon, C. G. 1890, p. 345) of the Muslims.

Mujahid Movement could not be stopped by the treacherous murder and arrest of its leaders in the East and West of India. The armed rise of all communities in India 1857 was inspired by Mujahid ideologies mixed up with the false hope and ambition of the then leaders. They were the passive resisters. Efforts were also made by the Muslim soldiers to evoke revolutionary spirit among the soldiers of the army. “The known restlessness of the Muhammadan fanaticism has been the first aggressor, the vindictive intolerance of that peculiar religion has been struggling for mastery, seditious conspiracy has been its means” (Kaye, J., Malleon, C. G. 1890, p. 347).

On 3rd July an uprising was organised by Pir Ali who was then one of the chief organizers of revolt. Great aim of Pir Ali and his collaborator Moshuuzzaman of Lucknow, was to effect a coordination of the activities of various groups and to harmonise the comparatively diffused feeling of discontent into a powerful and homogeneous movement against the government.

“A conquered nation”, wrote Dunlop in 1858, “naturally discusses the chances of independence, and the Musalmans of India, born to intrigue, and possessing a unity of action among themselves which the Hindoos have not, have constantly been engaged in plotting our destruction. All inquiries since the disturbances tend to prove that the fomenters of this mutiny, the inventors and propagators of the falsehood regarding the greasing of our new cartridges with cow’s and pig’s fat, and mixing bone dust with flour bazars, were Musalmans” (Dunlop, R. H. W. 1858, p. 152).

The leadership of the *ulama* remained almost unaffected during the uprising of 1857. Most of them believed the struggle against the English to be a *jihad* and participated in it with a burning zeal. Maulavi Inayat Ali preached *jihad* to some of the Indian troops. “That the Hindoo Sepoys were simply dupes and tools in the hands of the Moslems” (Dodd, G. 1959, p. 48).

Sir John Lawrence, Commissioner of Punjab, somewhat toned down these one sided opinions, but the charge of Muslim conspiracy still figured prominently in his address to the Court Martial. He considered the uprising primarily as a military mutiny and observed that after the fall of Delhi: “The Muhammadan soldiers and population became more actively hostile than the Hindus. This, indeed, is easy to understand, fanaticism and ferocity, being specially inculcated by the tenets of their religion” (Kaye, J., Malleon, C. G. 1890, p. 345).

For political reasons, the Court Martial was determined to mitigate the Hindu involvement, “yet not one paper has been found to show that the Hindus, as a body, had been conspiring against us or that their Brahmans and priests had been preaching a crusade against Christians” (Kaye, J., Malleon, C. G. 1890, p. 340). The partiality towards Hindus and the prejudice against the Muslims was epitomized in the closing lines of the verdict of the Court Martial: “If we now take a retrospective view of the various circumstances which we have been able to elicit during our extended inquiries, we shall perceive how exclusively Muhammadan are all the prominent points that attach to it. A Muhammadan priest, with pretended visions and assumed miraculous powers a Muhammadan king, his dupe and his accomplice a Muhammadan clandestine embassy to the Muhammadan powers of Persia and Turkey resulting Muhammadan prophecies as to the downfall of our own the most coldblooded murders by Muhammadan assassins, a religious war for Muhammadan ascendancy, a Muhammadan press unscrupulously abetting

and Muhammadan Sipahis initiating the mutiny. Hinduism, I may say, is no where either reflected or represented, if it be brought forward at all, it is only in subservience to its ever-aggressive neighbour” (Malleon, K. J. C. G. 1890, p. 349).

The Indian Mujahids had built a well developed network among the Indian army and developed their own code language. Mr. Wakafield, Extra Assistant Commissioner at Peshawar, recovered from a Fakir a small bag containing the following notes: “My beloved Moolah! Salam! Salutation to you! After salutation and good wishes, this is the point that instantly on receiving this, on the 2nd day of the festival of Eid, you must, yes must, come here; and if it be easy bring a few pounds of fruit with you. Now is the time I Admit no fear into your heart; such an opportunity will not again occur. Set out I enjoin you! (Signed) Moolah Naeem”. Sir H. B. Edwardes commented on letter that the names of the writer and the addressee were probably false names adopted for secret correspondence...The festival of the Eid alluded to was to fall on the 25th and 26th instant, and already the rumour was abroad that on that religious occasion, the Muhammadans of the City and Valley were to rise and help the Sepoys (Khan, M. A. Dr. 1983, p. 24).

Secret nightly arson in military barracks was another mysterious feature which vexed the English officers. As we have noticed above, a statement from Ambala, dated the 4th May, 1857, had shown that on the 26th March, there was an attempt to fire the residence of a Subadar. From the 13th to 26th April, there were many such cases resulting in the destruction of many houses in the cantonment. The magistrate of Ambala felt confident that “an organised leagued conspiracy” existed and that even if every individual may not form part of the combination, “still I am of opinion that such a league in each corps is known to exist” (Khan, M. A. Dr. 1983, p. 45).

Indeed, nightly secret meetings of the Sepoys had become a constant phenomenon in the cantonments of Ambala, Barrackpore, Meerut and elsewhere from the latter part of January 1857, as brought to light by the military courts of inquiry set up there to inquire into disturbances just preceding the Mutiny. The Anglophile Hakim Ahsanullah of Delhi testifies that, the 38th Native Infantry of Delhi had leagued with the troops of Meerut: that the latter corresponded with the troops in all other places much before the Barrackpore incident (April, 1857) to the effect that, the troops from all cantonments should arrive at Delhi first (Khan, M. A. Dr. 1983, p. 24).

Another witness says, “the correspondence was going to an immense extent and letters were passing all over the country telling them not to begin yet, not to begin yet....There was not to have been any fighting whatever. It was all to have been done in the same night by surprise and every European was to have been at once extinguished...The Meerut and Delhi outbreak (10-11-May, 1857) was mistake. The day of the Delhi massacre was the first day fixed; but the Rawah Rajah was to help at Benares and he had not yet joined... (From Delhi)”

In the official biographies of the Chief Commander of the British Army during the Mutiny, namely Sir Collin Campbell (Lord Clyde) and Sir Hugh Rose (Lord Strathnairn), Maj. General Sir Owen Tudor Burne observes that the storm did not burst without warning. “Months before the actual outbreak” an idea had taken hold of a large number of Hindus and Muslims that “a crisis in the world history was near at hand, and great events were impending and written prophesies were spread and broadcast throughout the land foretelling the downfall of British power after the centenary of Plassey” (Khan, M. A. Dr. 1983, p. 41).

An English lady writes in her autobiography that, Fakirs and Sanyasis had spread over the country for propaganda who openly declared that the English would soon be cleared out of the highways of

Hindustan (Khan, M. A. Dr. 1983, p. 41). G. W. Forrest testifies, that, “for many weeks a prophecy had spread throughout the land that the English rule would expire with the hundredth year, and as Clive had laid the foundation of it in the mango groves of Plassey, it must end on the centenary of that victory. The 23rd June 1857 was also the first of the new moon, a day of good omen with the follower of the men of Makka, and the Jattrra, a solemn festival of the worshippers of Vishnu, and astrologers declared that the stars in their courses would fight for the mutineers,”

Dr. Majumdar cites Cracroft Wilson as saying, on the basis of oral information that, he was convinced that Sunday, 31st May, 1857, was the day fixed for Mutiny to commence throughout the Bengal army; that there were committees of about three members in each regiment which conducted the affairs of the mutiny; that the Sepoys, as a body, knew nothing of the plans arranged; and that the committee conducted the correspondence and arranged the plans of operation. But we have just quoted G. W. Forrest, a more reliable authority on the subject pointing to the 23rd June, 1857 as the date fixed for the rising. Sir F. Halliday, the Lt. Governor of Bengal, noted in his minutes of the Mutiny that, Pir Ali a Patna book-seller, “was a party to, and a prime mover in the conspiracy” (Patna conspiracy of July 3, 1857) (Khan, M. A. Dr. 1983, p. 44).

This same Peer Ali was asked to save his life by disclosing the names of the leaders: and he replied: “There are some occasions in life when it is desirable to save one’s life-but there are some others when it is more desirable to sacrifice it! This moment is one of the latter kinds, when to embrace death at once is the means of eternal life! You might hang me, you might hang other men like me, but you cannot hang our ideal. If I die, thousands of heroes will rise out of my blood and will destroy your kingdom.” Taylor wrote of him: “He is the type of the class of men whose unconquerable fanaticism renders them dangerous enemies and whose stern resolution entitles them in some respects to admiration and respect!” (Much, M. A. 1940, p. 12)

Charles Ball mentions that the circulation of chapattis was first noticed at Cawnpore in March 1857. “One of the chowkeydars of Cawnpore ran to another village in Fatteghur... and placing in his hands two chapattis, directed him to make of the same kind, and give two of them to each of the five nearest chowkeydars, with instructions to perform the same service. He was obeyed; and in a few hours the whole country was in a state of excitement, through these (village) policemen running from village to village with their cakes. The wave spread over the provinces with a velocity of speed never yet equalled by the bearers of government despatches” (Ball, C. 2005, p. 53). The English officers were bewildered by this mysterious operation, arrested some of the messengers, cross-examined them, touched and tasted the unshaven breads, but were unable to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. Even the begum of Bhopal was considered to be one of the prominent collectors of fund for the Mujahid crusade (Khan, M. A. 1961, p. 308).

The leading role of the *Ulama* and the Muslims were obvious by their usual utterance of *jihad* and *fatwa*. The indirect influence of the Mujahid Movement on some other aspects is also very significant. The Mujahids with their compact organisation covering the whole of northern India, their secret cells in the Indian army units and their contacts with various princely states such as Tonk, Hyderabad, etc. had provided a solid organisational base which was utilised directly by some of the non-Mujahid leaders of the great uprising of 1857-58. It also enabled the Mujahids themselves at some places to capture the leadership of mutiny, for instance in Delhi. (Ray, S. 1976, P. 16)

Out of Delhi the Hindus were as much hostile to the British Government, as the Muslims at first, and the same was the case within the city itself. But when Bakht Khan came in and assembled the Muslims, and

Compelled the Maulavis to give in *fatwa* enjoining upon the Muslims the duty of making religious war upon the British, their fanaticism was aroused, and they rose up in a body against Government. A large number of Mujahids joined after the arrival of Bakth Khan. (Husain, S. M. 2006, p. 230). These Mujahids printed and published a proclamation inviting all Muslims to arm and fight for their religion. A *fatwa* was also published, declaring that it was the duty of all Muslims to make religious war, and that otherwise their families and children would be destroyed and ruined. Mujahids came from several parts of the country; from Jaipur, Bhupal, Hansi, Hissar and some Wilayatis.

Maulana Fazlul Haq Khairabadi (1798-1861), another leading Mujahid, was the son of the famous *Sadr-i-Sudur* of Delhi Maulavi Fazlul Imam. His father was a close associate and disciple of the Delhi scholar, Shah Abdul Aziz; and it was in his madrasa Rahimiya that Fazlul Haq had his initial training in both maqulat (rational sciences) and manqulat (traditional knowledge). Maulana Fazlul Haq signs on the *fatwa* of *jihad* in 1857 in the Juma Masjid after many deliberations with the *alims* of Delhi like Maulavi Ismail Dehlawi and Nasiruddun Dehlawi closely associated with Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi of Rae Bareilly. Maulana Fazlul Haq Khairabadi was one of the ulama who drafted the *fatwa* declaring the revolt of 1857 to be a *jihad*. Military leaders like Bakht Khan considered it imperative to give a religious and legal basis to the struggle against the British (Abbasi M. Y. 1981, p. 6). Consequently, a meeting of the prominent ulama was convened in Delhi, and they issued a *fatwa* calling upon every Muslim to stand up in arms against the British. Henceforth, religious, political and military leadership was centred in Delhi, which assumed its old symbolic character in the Muslim national sentiment.

The British arrested Maulana Fazlul Haq, along with thousands of other ulama and Mujahids, in the months following the May outburst of 1857. In 1858, at Lucknow the well-known trial of Allamah Fazlul Haq Khairabadi in connection with this *fatwa*, suggests the magnitude of influence a *fatwa* could wield on the minds of the discontented Muslims. He was looked up in a tiny cell in the Andaman island jail for his anti-British activities during the mutiny-rebellion. The huge numbers of Muslim scholars locked in Andaman itself indicates the sheer extent of their political activism that has gone completely unnoticed in our accounts of the anti-colonial freedom struggle. Indeed in the years that followed 1857 the Andaman jail because of the intellectual labour of its scholarly inmates became the *Dar-al-Uloom* of Eastern learning. Fazlul Haq penned his memoir on the mutiny-rebellion while locked in the Andaman jail. This 50 page memoir was written in Arabic and titled *Al-Saurah-tul-Hindiah wa Qasaaidu Fitnatil Hind*. This text has two poetic verses appended to it. These are titled *Qasidah-i-Hamziyyah* and *Qasidah-i-Daaliyah*. Both area passionate plea for freedom from British rule.

The founders of the *Dar-al-Uloom* Deoband actively participated in the rebellion, organized the masses outside Delhi and for a while were successful in ousting the British authority from the area they were working in. The centre of their activity was Shamli; a small town in the present district of Musaffarnagar (U. P.), not far from Delhi (Haq, M. U. 1970, p. 4). Haji Imdadullah (1817-99), who after the collapse of the uprising migrated to Makka, was the *Imam* or the *Amir* of the *jihad* in Shamli and Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanutawi (1832-80) and Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1828-1905) acted respectively as the Commander of the forces and the Qadi.

The Mujahids were one of the chief headaches of the British authorities, and from the published reports it can be found that, the numerous conspirators that have been tried and hanged, they were all, with one or two exceptions, of the Mujahid sect "They are gaining ground in southern India, and if enquiry be made they will be found in considerable force in Vellore, Arcot, Wallajahabad Vaniembaddy and Bangalore" (Khan, M. A. 1961, p. 99). The role of the Muslims in the freedom movement of India was

of unprecedented sacrifices in 1857, when they fought against the Britishers with their Hindu countrymen with a rare example of patriotism and martyrdom. About seventy seven thousand Muslims were hanged and killed within seven days. As the Muslims were considered more aggressive and militant the heavy hands of the Britishers fell upon them more heavily and harshly than on the Hindus. The Britishers followed a deliberate policy of crushing the Muslims in India. So the Muslims were adversely affected by anti-Muslim reactionary policy. It was really a very tragic event in the history of Indian Muslims, that where everyone of them was called rebel or ‘Suspect Wahabi’, a conspirator and an enemy of the Britishers (Imam H. 1999, p. 4).

Conclusion

The Mujahid Movement which was launched to restore peace and to regain political power ended in the catastrophe of 1857. In fact it was in 1857 and not 1831 that the Mujahid Movement came to an end. All hopes in future were now lost. Many Muslim leaders, like Haji Imdadullah who had actively participated in the struggle of 1857, migrated to Makka (Akhter, S. 2009, p. 4). Some of the remaining leaders like Mufti Karim of Delhi and Munshi Inayat Ahmad of Lucknow were sent after the Ambala and Patna trials of 1865 and 1869 to Andamans (Engineer, A. 1985, p. 18).

The revolt was thus not Islamic in origin, in the sense that the Mujahid Movement was although there was a simultaneous appeal to the religious sentiments of the Hindus and Muslims to exhort them to rise against the British power. The best proof of the above evaluation may be furnished by the fact that the revolt of 1857 served as a source of inspiration to the Indian patriots of the succeeding generations in their struggle for the country’s freedom. The heroic exploits of its leaders formed the theme of vernacular literature. But in striking contrast the Mujahid and the affiliate movements in a collective sense, and the examples set by such eminent leaders as Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi, Shah Ismail Shahid, Titu Mir, Wilayat Ali, Inayat Ali and others, many of whom had actually staked their lives for the country’s freedom remained in oblivion in the heyday of the Indian national movement.

The Indian Mujahids played a vital role in the revolt of 1857. In a way the revolt of 1857 was the culmination of Indian Mujahid ideas and methods. Even after the revolt, as Hunter said, the Mujahids were considered to be “a persistently belligerent class” and a “source of permanent danger to the empire.” According to Hirendranath Mukerjee (1948, p. 41-45), the most strident challenge that the British administrators had to encounter in those days was the Mujahid Movement which was “not....anti-Hindu... Indeed, Indian Islam in the nineteenth century had proclaimed a sort of war against Britain’ and though they were defeated, but in the history of Indian National Movement, the spectacle of Muslims in those early days courageously trying to break the British fetters needs to be gratefully recorded”

The Muslim freedom movement was one of the earliest, the most consistent, protracted, and the most relentlessly anti-British movement in the political history of India in the nineteenth century. The people who were regarded as the backbone of the *jihad* were all men of scholarship and learning and had definite political aims. They had a burning love for India and earnestly believed in the freedom of the country. It was under the shadow of the catastrophe of 1857 that an entirely different colour was given to this movement.

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