

Contribution of Ulema in the Indian Subcontinent for Islam and Khilafah

The role of Ulema to defend Islam is crucial as they are the heirs of prophets to convey Islam after the Prophets. History has witnessed many Ulema who defended and protected Islam whenever it was attacked. The contribution of Ulema in the Indian Subcontinent to defend Islam was crucial, particularly under the situations whenever Islam was abolished in their life affairs. Their role was immense for the deep outrages faced by the British from the Muslims in Indian subcontinent when Khilafah was destroyed in 1900s and when the subcontinent lost its Islamic rulings in 1800s. There is a great lesson from such Ulema who stood up defending Islam whenever it was attacked. Some of the prominent Ulema who defended Islam were:

Sheik Ahmed Sirhindi:

Sheik Ahmed Sirhindi was a renowned Hanafi scholar. He belonged to Nakshabandi order of Sufi school which was contemporaneous to the Mughal ruling. When Mughal ruler Akbar introduced Deen Ilahi, a new form of religion combining both Islam and Hinduism, many so-called scholars including Sufis supported Akbar. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi vehemently rejected and opposed all the steps taken by Akbar and called it an innovation to the religion of Islam. He also condemned the so-called scholars and Sufis whose sole intention was to gain authority, dignity, and respect in the eyes of masses and the ruler. He wrote many letters, Makthubath, depicting the hidden intentions of Akbar and categorically exposing him to the Muslim world about the conspiracy of Akbar for harming Islam. In one of his letters, He says, (اعلم أن السلطان بالنسبة الى العالم بمثابة القلب بالنسبة الى البدن من بني آدم فكما أن القلب إذا كان صالحا يكون البدن صالحا وإذا كان فاسدا يكون البدن فاسدا كذلك صلاح السلطان صلاح العالم وفساده فساده ألا ترى أنه ماذا جرى على أهل الإسلام في القرن السابق وفي ابتداء الإسلام مع كمال غربته و عجز أهله وقتلهم وضعفهم لم يورث ذلك ولم يوجب شيئا سوى أن يكون المسلمون على دينهم والكفار على كفرهم يعني لم يقدر الكفار أن يغيروا من أمور المسلمين شيئا وأن يجرؤا عليهم أحكام الكفر مع قوتهم و شوكتهم... وأما في القرن الماضي فقد أجرى الكفار أحكامهم في دار الإسلام على الملأ بطريقة Know that the relation of sultan to the world is like the relation of heart to the body of children of Adam. As such when the heart is healthy, the body will also be healthy. And when the heart is corrupted, the body will also be corrupted. Similarly the correctness of sultan is correctness of the world and his corruption is the corruption of the world. Don't you see what has happened to the people of Islam in the previous century and in the advent of Islam? Despite the strangeness of Islam, the inability of its people, their low in numbers and weakness, Muslims were in their religion and disbelievers were in their religion i.e. the disbelievers could not change any of the affairs of Muslims, nor did they impose upon the Muslims the laws of kufr despite the strength and might of disbelievers... As for the last century, the disbelievers imposed their laws in Dar al Islam over elites through domination and siezure..." (Al-Makthubath Vol-1, letter No: 147).

Sheik Ahmed Sirhindi, in addition to other Ulema and rulers, played a significant role in diminishing the impact of new religion 'Deen Ilahi', until they succeeded in curbing Akbar's initiative completely after his reign. Otherwise, the new religion could have severely damaged the basic doctrine of Islam amongst Muslims.

Shah Wali Ullah Dehlavi:

Shah Waliullah was a renowned Islamic scholar and Muhaddith of 18th century. When the Islamic ruling of Indian subcontinent under Mughal rulers began to deteriorate after Aurangzeb, Shah Waliullah was at the forefront to save the ruling of Islam from fall. Marathas took control and acquired a major part of the Indian subcontinent. When they captured Delhi in 1757, Shah invited the Amir of Afghanistan, Ahmed shah Abdali to liberate the land from Marathas. Accordingly, Abdali liberated the land from Marathas in the battle of Panipat in 1761 and sanctioned the ruling back to Mughals. Shah Waliullah strongly exhorted the Muslims to fight against the disbelievers who controlled Islamic lands. Hundreds of Scholars who graduated, groomed and trained in his Madrasa-Rahimiya, took his work ahead even after his death (1762). When British took control of major parts of Indian subcontinent including Delhi in 1803, Shah Waliullah's son Shah Abdul Aziz issued a fatwa, declaring the subcontinent as Darul Harb. The entire Muslim society was stirred up with the fatwa, which later led to the great revolt of 1857 against the British. The rebellion of Ulema against British was so immense that Britain was forced to execute Ulema in masses. It is said that Britain hanged Ulema on every tree on both sides of the road of 180 kilometers connecting Delhi to Moradabad. Certainly Shah Waliullah inspired the Ulema of the subcontinent to rebel against the occupation of polytheists or colonialists. Shah Waliullah clearly urged the Muslim society the obligation of Khilafah to run their affairs and protect their religion as he says, (حجة الله، اعلم أنه يجب أن يكون في جماعة المسلمين خليفة لمصالح لا تتم إلا بوجوده، وهي كثيرة جدا يجمعها البالغة (2 / 229): أحدهما ما يرجع إلى سياسة المدينة من ذب الجنود التي تغزوهم وتقهروهم، وكف الظالم عن المظلوم، وفصل صنفان: وثانيهما ما يرجع إلى الأمة، وذلك أن تنويه دين الإسلام على سائر القضايا، وغير ذلك، وقد شرحنا هذه الحاجات من قبل. الأديان لا يتصور إلا بأن يكون في المسلمين خليفة ينكر على من خرج من الأمة، وارتكب ما نصت على تحريمه أو ترك Know that it is obligatory for the Muslim society to have Khalifah as their interests will only be fulfilled with the presence of Khalifah. The interests are many which can be broadly classified into two: First is related to running the affairs of the city by expelling the armies that invaded and subjugated them, preventing the oppressor from the oppressed, elucidating the issues and others... Second is related to the Millath and that is the citation of Islamic religion over the rest of religions. It is only conceivable that there is Khalifah amongst Muslims who strongly forbids (the evil of) those who left the religion, those who commit haram as dictated by divine texts or those who abandon the obligations as dictated by divine texts...."[Hujjat Al Baligah 2/229]

Mahmud Al Hasan:

Mahmud Al-Hasan, also known as Shaykh Ul Hind was a well-known scholar and principal of Deobandi Madrasa. After the 1857 uprising, Britain confiscated many Islamic endowments, defiled scores of Mosques and shut down many madrasas that were previously under the support of Mughal ruling. Consequently post uprising saw the foundations of many Madrasas with public support and contribution. Deoband Madrasa was one amongst those Madrasas established in 1866 whose primary aim was not just to teach but also to gain what Muslims had lost in the 1857 uprising. Shaykh Ul Hind once said about the aim of the foundation of Madrasa by saying, "As far as I know this institution was established after the failure of 1857 with the aim that a centre should be built to prepare people who would make good the failure of 1857".

When Uthmani Khilafah entered into the First World War against Britain, Mahmud Al-Hasan along with his disciples like Ubaidullah Sindhi worked to support the Khilafah and liberate the subcontinent. When Mahmud Al-Hasan met the wali of Mecca, the Wali gave documents to the Sheikh to help in the struggle of Muslims of India against the tyranny of the British. The foremost of these documents was an appeal from the Wali to the Muslims of India. The letter also exhorted all citizens and employees of the Uthmani Khilafah to have full confidence in Sheikh ul Hind and provide men and material support to his movement. The copies of the letter were smuggled to India to instill support against the British from within and outside the subcontinent. The activities were famously called the 'Silk Letter Movement'. Many Ulema joined the efforts such that it had a huge impact on British governance of India. Mahmud Al-Hasan was imprisoned by the British in Malta for 3 years due to his support to the Khilafah. In his later days, he supported the Khilafat movement to save Khilafah from fall.

Conclusion:

Many Ulema on the Indian subcontinent had sacrificed their lives, shed their blood for the sake of Islam. They stood up to defend Islam when the innovation was introduced in the religion to destroy the fundamental doctrine of Islam. They stood up against the aggression when the polytheists and colonialists captured the Islamic lands and implemented the Kufr laws. They stood up to defend the Khilafah when it fell, although they were not under the Islamic Khilafah. They left behind their madhabs and branches of doctrinal differences and had consensus of the obligation of existence of Khilafah. With the absence of Khilafah for more than hundred years, it is time for the contemporary scholars to reflect upon the sacrifices made by their predecessors for the sake of Islam and work for the establishment of Khilafah just as their predecessors did before.

References:

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- 2) 'The 1857' By Prof. Sheshrao B. More, p19-33.
- 3) <https://www.milligazette.com/news/4-national/13779-shaikhul-hind-mahmood-hasan-symbol-of-freedom-struggle/>

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