

HIJRAT MOVEMENT: IMPACT ON THE INDIAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The Hijrat movement is one of the ephemeral and sudden movements in the history of India. During the peak point of Khilafat movement, in the month of June 1920, based on Maulana Abdul Bari's fatwa, a large part of the Muslim population in the Indus and North-West Frontier Provinces left their country and homeland, migrate to Afghanistan. They left the country in the hope that, with the help of foreign Muslim states, they would be able to defeat the mighty British government and liberate India from British rule. But after arriving in Afghanistan, their misconceptions were dispelled. The Afghan government welcomed the migrants in the beginning but later refused to accept them when the number increased. They realized that they had to go back to India. Some refugees went to the Soviet Union and Europe and most of them returned to the country after indescribable grief and misery but when they arrived they found themselves homeless and forever devastated. Although the sudden pre-planned and far-reaching thoughtless event has been termed as a movement in history, it was able to highlight the lack of political foresight of the Muslim population in that area.

Keywords: Hijrat Movement, Maulana Abdul Bari's Fatwa, Muslim Population of Indus and North-West Frontier Provinces, Migration to Afghanistan, Political Foresight of Muslim Community

Introduction

The outlines of the movement are drawn from different perspectives, sometimes based on the success of the movement that has taken place in the past. The *Hijrat* movement was framed around a historical event of the Islamic era in the seventh century, when the last prophet of Islam, Muhammad, left his homeland and migrates to *Madinah*, outraged by the tyranny of the ruling class in *Makkah*. Ambience of *Madinah* was more favourable to him than *Makkah* in terms of religious, political and socio-cultural. Staying in *Madinah*, he increased his followers and power. After that on January 11, 630 he conquered *Makkah* in a bloodless battle without contest. In the views of this incident and in the terms of religious point Maulana Abdul Bari issued a *fatwa* stating that Indian devout Muslims must migrate to a Muslim-ruled country and where they will be able to practice their religious rites and will be able to accumulate anti-British energy. As a result, a strange frenzy arose among the Muslims in some parts of India, and this frenzy without political theory was made more real by religious sentiments. At the time, Afghanistan was the only country near to India which was ruled by a Muslim ruler and its system of governance was conducive to Islam. As a consequence, a strange frenzy arose among Muslims in certain parts of India, and this frenzy without political theory was made more real by religious sentiments. Finally, migration took the form of a movement, known as the *Hijrat* movement.

Statement of the Problem

An analysis the movement from the point of view of influence, we can observe two Impacts, good and bad. In general, authors are more at ease in highlighting or discussing good impacts and trying to avoid the bad impact of the movement. However, if the worst impacts of the movement are contrary to the interests of the individual, the community or the nation, they try to limit the discussion further. Sometimes when a movement fails, the result will always be negative, it is not right. As we saw in the Great Rebellion of 1857, although this rebellion did not succeed, its effects were positive and far-reaching. In the context of the *Hijrat* movement, we see Indian Islamic scholars being divided into two groups. Notable among those who supported the migration were Maulana Muhammad Ali and Maulana Abdul Majeed Sindhi who complied with the *fatwa* of Abdul Bari and published the group *fatwa* by adding their views. On the other hand, among those who did not support the *hijrat* were Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi, Habib-ur-Rehman, Hakeem Ajmal khan, Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum

khan and Alama Inayatullah khan. But other than those two groups, there was no group of Islamic scholars who issued a *fatwa* in view of the adverse effects of migration, just as the support group jointly issued a *fatwa*. Because the outcomes of *hijrat* were clear to the intellectual group and those who strongly advocated this movement lacked contemporary political knowledge. Consequently, when a large segment of the Muslim population on the North-West Frontier is able to realize the consequences of migration, they become irrelevant in the Indian political and social context.

Objectives of the study

- To high light on the lack of political foresight of the Muslim community on the Indus and North-West Frontier.
- To analyse the effects of *fatwas* on the Muslim community
- To shed light on the negative side of Abdul Bari's *fatwa*.
- To throw light on effective role of the *Hijrat* movement in the history of India.

Review of Literature

The researcher reviewed books relevant to the research topic and has referred to a number of books Published. Among such reviewed literatures, some are highlighted as follows:-

Hijrat: The Flight of the Faithful (A British File of the Exodus of Muslim Peasants from North India to Afghanistan in 1920) by Dietrich Reetz traces in detail of the *Hijrat* movement in the viewpoint of *Khilafat* Movement. It analyse the emergence of foresight of Muslim community in the various aspects of Indian subcontinent.

British Birodhi Swadhinata Sangrame Musalmander Bhumika by Satyandra Sen is account of movements lead by Muslim leaders against the British government since 1857.

The *Khilafat* Movement in India 1919-1924 by Muhammad Naeem Qureshi is an account of the details history of *Khilafat* movement. He discussed in details of *Hijrat* movement from various prospective aspects and issues lead by Islamic religious viewpoint.

Research Methodology

The methodologies adopted in this paper are empirical and analytical. In the process of historical enquiry of the research both primary and secondary sources has been used to a large extent, like journals, books, reports, newspapers, internets, and any other printed materials available related to the study.

Results and Discussion

Hijrat is derived from Arabic word '*Hajara*', which literally means "to depart". It is also used in Morden Standard Arabic for "to shift" or abandon. In Islam it usually means "to give up one's own land" or migrate from one place to another place" mostly for the sake of religious faith. A variety of interpretations of this term by different Islamic scholars have given the multiplicity of its meanings. The name *Hijrat* derived from its famous forerunner when the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his followers left *Makkah* to go to *Madinah* in 622 AD. The Islamic almanac starts from this remarkable event in the history. It counts years in "*Hijri*" as in Alexandrian CE/AD. It was introduced during the rule and supervision of Umar Ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph of the Islamic Empire. *Hijrat* is very significant in Islamic history. It marked the turning point in the life of Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him), ending his era of *Makkah* and inaugurating the era of *Madinah*. Not only the life of Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him), a new chapter in Islam begins. Humiliated and Neglected in *Makkah* Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) was honoured in *Madinah*. In time, he became the first president of the Islamic Republic. Muslims are a minority in *Makkah*, but most of the residents of *Madinah* have converted to Islam and the foundation of Islam has been established throughout the world. It is said that Islam could not have spread so widely throughout the world without migration. The basic features, principles, organized religion, state and Islamic state system of Islam were established in Medina. *Madinah* became the capital of the Islamic Republic.

Emulating the prototype, in early June of 1920, Indian Muslims Indus and North-West Frontier abandoned their hearth and home in the gruelling mid-summer heat, embarking on a journey to Afghanistan which they considered the abode of Islam. The eminent Islamic scholar and *imam* of the *Firangi Mahal* school, Maulana Abdul Bari was the supreme caller in inspiring a large part of the Muslim population to immigrate to Afghanistan. At the conference of Allahabad *Khilafat* from 1 to 2 June 1920, in which he took an active part, Bari felt compelled to clarify his position on the issue: “Whatever I did or said was in accordance with the command of God. I stick to this position and so shall I ever do. In reality I regard India as a *Dar-ul-Islam*, although I do not consider it a place where Islamic laws are enforced and which apparently makes it a *Dar-ul-harb*. As I declared at [the] Calcutta [*Khilafat* conference], in case of extreme necessity, I have firmly decided to leave India. In my opinion migration is neither obligatory nor is it meant for one's own advantage or good. It is only to attain the object of protecting Islam and hence no one has a right to stop those who want to migrate and in the same way no one has a right to compel those who do not want to go”. Also, in a letter to the *Safina* from Lucknow in May 1920, Maulana A. Bari gives details about the various forms of *Hijrat* sanctioned by Islamic law and say that, “if intellectual and diligent Musalmans from India migrate to Afghanistan, they will be rendering valuable service to their country and religion. This clearly represented a rather cautious and selective approach. This position made *hijrat* an elite exercise, a token political demonstration by a few hundred activists”. Interestingly, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad wrote a so-called *Hijrat Ka Fatwa*, in which he described *hijrat* as an alternative way. The Muslim paper *Hamdam* of 3 August reprinted Azad's fatwa together with the fatwa by Abdul Bari. Comparing the two, Azad is definitely more explicit in his demand for *hijrat*, He did not mention in his fatwa that migration was compulsory, but also accepts some practical qualifications.

Hijrat committees were formed in different provinces of the country to give effective form to *hijrat*, like Peshawar *Hijrat* committee, Panjab *Hijrat* committee, Lucknow *Hijrat* committee etc. All of these committees had direct contact with Amanullah, the Amir of Afghanistan regarding emigration. As a result of fresh efforts, from early July 1920 the enrolment of the migrants increased and more and more began to proceed on the *hijrat*. In many cases whole families, and in some, whole villages had set out for the *hijrat*. The majority of the migrants being poor, they set out either on foot or in bullock carts and *tongas* all the way to Kabul, a distance of nearly 200 miles from Peshawar. To their economic misery were added the hazards of the journey. The migrants had to pass through barren mountainous country in the heat of Indian summer. Food and water were scarce. Once they left the Indian Territory their trek turned into a nightmare. Jalalabad was the first major Afghan town on way to Kabul, where the tired migrants could stop for some time. But Jalalabad was a small town and had no facilities to offer. In spite of the Amir's promises to furnish the migrants with the necessities of life and to recompense them with concessions in land and in revenue, very little was done. General Nadir Khan (1880-1933), the Afghan Commander-in-Chief, had appointed officials at *Kanur*, *Dakka* and *Jalalabad* to look after the migrants, but he did not have enough resources to cope with the increasing numbers. Initially, the Afghan government welcomed the migrants and tried to take appropriate measures for their rehabilitation. At the behest of the emir, *Jabal- us- Siraj* set up temporary shelters for the migrants and later ordered the built a permanent residence there. The Afghan government actively sought to address the plights of migrants through government and non-government organizations. But in early August 1920, the number of migrants in Afghanistan increased to more than 40,000, according to figures released by the *hijrat* Committee, but the actual number is much higher. In addition, large numbers of migrants were migrating without the assistance of the *hijrat* committee, had not even bothered to notify the Afghan authorities. On top of this, the *hijrat* was still increasing at a rapid rate and the migrants were pouring in at the rate of seven to eight thousand a week, quite justifiably, the Afghan authorities panicked and decided to stop further emigration. On August 9, 1920, the Amir issued a *farman*, promulgating that only after the previous migrants had been absorbed, would any fresh emigrants be allowed into Afghanistan. In future the migrants were to be admitted piecemeal on a fixed quota. Those who first obtained passports from Afghan officials in Peshawar will be able to enter Afghan territory and upon entry they will become Afghan subjects. If they ever want to go outside Afghanistan, they can only go with an Afghan passport. A new colony will be set up to house migrants in *Katghan*, Afghan

Turkestan. The Afghan Government took immediate steps to publicise the postponement of *hijrat*. Copies of the *farman* were sent to the Afghan Agent in Peshawar for transmission to Muslim leaders in India. On August 12, 1920, the Amir's decision was officially communicated to the British authorities. Gradually, the Afghan people and the Afghan government became indifferent to the migrants. In the end, The Amir sent a message to the migrants that they had liberty to proceed onward or return to India, implying that they were not wanted any longer in Afghanistan. Moreover, economically it was impossible for a poor country like Afghanistan to stand the influx of such a multitude of unskilled and destitute people; especially when she had not been able to settle and develop her own people. After arriving in Afghanistan, the Indian emigrants themselves became politically and ideologically isolated. Ideologically, the numbers are divided into two groups: pan-Islamists and Bolshevik sympathizers. Obaidullah Sindhi and his pan-Islamic associates, supported by the Afghan Government, encouraged the migrants to move on to *Jabal-us-Siraj* and take up residence there. On the other hand, Abdur Rab Peshwari, an Indian revolutionary who came from Russia, encouraged young emigrants to go to Bolshevik Russia. But due to the clear instructions of the Amir, a large number of emigrants had to move towards *Jabal-us-Siraj*, where they went through another round of hardships. Many die from disease or severe climate. As a result, there was a rush among the emigrants to return to their homeland India. The flow of the returning migrants increased and reached approximately to four hundred per day. Among the notable migrants who returned were Ahmad Ali, President of the Lahore *Khilafat* Committee and a nephew of Obaidullah Sindhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Jan Muhammad Junejo of Sind. About seventy-five per cent, of the migrants had returned to India. Others had either chosen to stay in Afghanistan or moved on to Baku and Tashkent or had perished through exhaustion or disease. Others were driven by the Afghan government towards Panjshir, *Katghan*, Badakhshan and Afghan Turkistan, and were reportedly living in dire straits with no means of subsistence. The immigrants, who had gone to fight for the Turkish nationalists in Baku, Azerbaijan, returned to India slowly, frustrated at seeing themselves unwanted. Amongst those who had gone to Tashkent, a large number found Bolshevism unpalatable and returned to India at the first opportunity, Because Bolsheviks were not really interested in 'liberating India' by armed action.

In retrospect the *hijrat* of 1920 remains a curious phenomenon. It reflects the depth of the political, social and economic frustration of Muslims and illustrates the short-sightedness of the political and religious leaders of the then Muslim community. The manner in which Maulana Abdul Bari compared the events of the Holy Prophet's migration in the early period of Islam's history in the seventh century to the Indian political context in the twentieth century, and then issued a *fatwa* in favour of *hijrah* based on the analysis' positive and successful results, is truly perplexing. The political situation in Mecca in 622 differed significantly from that of India in 1920. Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) migration was fully motivated by religious orders and emotions. But the migration movement of 1920 was not based entirely on religious beliefs. On the other hand, the *ulama* who made the *hijrat* mandatory and the leaders who encouraged it, in a moment of extreme anti-British temper, closed their eyes to its consequences. Ambivalent thoughts can be observed between the leadership of the *Hijrat* movement. Maulana Abdul Bari, while being a major proponent of migration, did not leave his homeland India and migrate to Afghanistan. Also, all the leaders who left India for Afghanistan, after staying there for some time, returned to India without finding a satisfactory environment. It was not easy for the emigrants, who had left their homeland to rely on their leadership and migrated to Afghanistan, to return to their homeland. But in spite of the fact that the object of the campaign was clearly anti-British and the excitement ran high, the migrants remained completely nonviolent. The whole campaign looked artificial. No doubt the *hijrat*, in the context of classical Islamic juristic interpretations and Indian political developments, was neither illogical nor an isolated event, but it was ill-conceived, miscalculated and ill-organised. It ignored all economic and political realities.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the migration's impacts were asymmetrical. Although the aristocracy were able to return to India and re-establish themselves in society, the poor, working class, and peasants were

unable to do so. Peasants abandoned their agricultural occupations and their lands in anticipation for joining the *hijrat*. Crafty Landlords and speculators, mostly Hindus, exploited the ignorant and encouraged them to emigrate so that they could buy up the property and crops of the aspiring migrants at a low price. As a result, many peasants were obliged to sell their possessions at extremely low rates. On the contrary, despite the fact that the *hijrat's* appeal was primarily based on religious injunctions, it was successful due to a combination of reasons. The desperate economic condition of the Indian peasantry was one of them. There were some people also who were attracted by the prospects of improving their lot in Afghanistan. The *hijrat* was thus most popularly accepted in areas where the peasantry's economic condition was extremely severe, like as Uttar Pradesh (in its early phases), Sind, and the Frontier. There were also some radical Muslims who wished to go to Turkey via Afghanistan in order to fight for the Caliph and find some way of striking at the British rule in India with the support of a friendly foreign power. However pious the organisers' intentions may have been, they unconsciously pushed the Indian Muslims into a disastrous adventure.

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