

Jamiatal-Ulema-i-Hind: Its Formation and Organisation

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Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind was a religio-political religious party which was formed with the prime objective of liberating India from the British. Prior to the partition of the Subcontinent, the Jamiat not only influenced Muslim politics but had a remarkable impact on Indian politics as well. The Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind played no role in the creation of Pakistan. In fact it resisted the creation of Pakistan and stood for the independence of United India. In 1945 the party split into two sections — for and against the creation of Pakistan. Those who stood for Pakistan formed a separate party by the name of Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam, in late 1945. But before they could play any significant role for the creation of Pakistan, India was divided in 1947.

The first freedom movement in Subcontinent, known as the Jihad Movement, had been launched by two religious scholars, Syed Ahmed Barelvi and Shah Ismail Shaheed, who played the key role in the movement. Before the movement could have a significant impact it suffered an irreparable loss on May 6, 1931¹ (24 Zeqqad 1246 A.H.) when the two veterans were martyred. Thereafter, the *ulema* took an active part in the uprising of 1857. On their failure in the uprising, the *ulema* of Sadiqpur tried to continue the movement but their efforts ended with the Ambala case. Disheartened by the continued setbacks the *ulema* generally abandoned politics. A few of them, however, founded a Darul-uloom in Deoband in 1967² which became a centre of religious and educational activities. For quite some time as *ulema* not only refrained from active politics but also avoided any comments on political issues. It was not till 1905

that a new era dawned for Darul-uloom Deoband when Sheikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmood Hassan took over and played an active role in politics.³ He formulated a plan that aimed at achieving the freedom of India and in pursuance of this objective Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi was sent to Afghanistan. As a consequence, Maulana Mahmood Hassan was sent to Malta and kept under detention,⁴ and his colleagues underwent various punishments.

The accesses committed by the British imperialist forces against the Islamic World were very disturbing. The Turks sided against the Allies in the first world war and the security of the Ottoman caliphate became a matter of grave concern for the Muslims of India in general and the *ulema* in particular. They demanded that the British Government guarantee the security of the Caliphate and Muslim holy places. Subsequently to put its case the Muslims decided to take part in politics from the platform of All-India Muslim League.⁵

Following the war in 1918, the British Government failed to honour the assurances of the security of the caliphate and Turkey. This embittered the Muslims. They were equally worried about the security of their holy places in Hijaz. They apprehended that the holy places may pass under non-Muslim control. With these alarming apprehensions in mind they started organizing a Khilafat Movement, and extending its branches all over India. Instead of going into the details of the movement this article will concentrate on the establishment of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind.

The Khilafat Movement proved to be a uniting factor which brought the *ulema* of all schools of thought on one platform.⁶ It generated a feeling that the *ulema* should work together to provide leadership to the Muslim masses in their struggle for the attainment of their religious and political rights. At this juncture of Muslim politics in South Asian Subcontinent the *ulema* created a nucleus called the Khilafat Committee and the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind. The new leaders were prepared to undergo any hardships or give any sacrifices for the achievement of their goals.⁷ These leaders were no doubt of a different breed than those of a liberal bent of mind like Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr.

Ansari and the Ali brothers under whose control the Muslim League was working.

The first session of the Khilafat conference was held on November 22, 1919⁸ in New Delhi with the objective that the Allied powers and the British Government should be asked to honour their commitments made during the war. The first session of the Khilafat Conference was attended by a number of *ulema* belonging to all the provinces. Following the Khilafat Conference some 25 *ulema* held a separate meeting.⁹ These included: Maulana Abdul Bari of Frangi Mahal, Maulana Mohammad Anis, Pir Mohammad Imam Sindhi, Maulana Mohammad Ibrahim Sialkoti, Maulana Qadeer Bakhsh Badayuni, Maulana Khuda Bakhsh Muzaffarpuri, Maulana Mohammad Akram, Maulana Syed Mohammad Dawood, Maulana Salamullah, Maulana Asadullah Sindhi, Maulana Khawaja Ghulam Nizamuddin Badayuni, Maulana Hafiz Ahmed Saeed Delhvi, Maulana Taj Mohammad, Maulana Manal Bakhsh Amritsari, Maulana Muniruzzaman, Maulana Syed Muhammad Fakhar, (Allahabad), Maulana Mohammad Kafayatullah, Maulana Syed Kamaluddin, Maulana Mohammad Ibrahim (Dar Bhangah), Maulana Abdul Hakeem Giavi, Maulana Mohammad Sadiq (Karachi) and Maulana Mohammad Abdullah.

The advisability of forming a separate organization of the *ulema* was, however, questioned at the first meeting called for the purpose. Some participants, proposed that the *ulema* should join the Muslim League to voice their views effectively,¹⁰ but a majority favoured the idea of a separate party which would strive for unity of action along with the Muslim League. Maulana Abdul Bari Farangi Mohalli was appointed as the President of the meeting.¹¹ Thereafter, the meeting started debating the changing situation and the role of *ulema*. It was opined that various groups and nationalities either had formed or were in the process of forming their associations, but, the *ulema* had not formed the organization so far. After a lengthy debate most of the participants agreed that the *ulema* should form a *Jamiat* (Association) with the name of Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind¹² which should operate throughout India and have its members and branches in every corner of the country. It should lead the Muslims with the objectives of attaining their welfare

by using all available means and methods consistent with its interpretation of Islam.

All those present at the meeting became members of the Jamiat. Thus was founded the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind. The meeting also decided that a formal session of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind be held in late December 1919, when a number of *ulema* were expected to attend the Muslim League session at Amritsar to discuss the question of the Caliphate and Turkey. Maulana Abul Wafa Sanaullah was appointed the interim president and administrator (*Nazim*) of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind, so that urgent matters should be taken care of. Later the names of Maulana Mohammad Kafayatullah and Maulana Hafiz Ahmed Saeed were proposed as president and *Nazim* respectively. Maulana Kafayatullah expressed his inability to shoulder this responsibility but at the insistence of the *ulema* he had to accept the office. Maulana Hafiz Ahmed Saeed also accepted the office of *nizam*.¹³ Maulana Kafayatullah remained the permanent president of Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind for about twenty years.¹⁴ After the election of the president and the *Nazim* the task of preparing a draft of aims and objects of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind along with its rules and regulations was entrusted to Maulana Mohammad Akram Khan (Editor of the daily *Mohammadi*) and Maulana Kafayatullah. They were directed to place this draft before the meeting scheduled to be held at Amritsar.

The first general meeting of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind was held from December 28, 1919 to January 1, 1920 under the chairmanship of Maulana Abdul Bari of Farangi Mahal. At the meeting Maulana Kafayatullah presented the draft of the aims and objects of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind. The draft contained the following decisions about the organization and structure, aims and objects and rules of procedure of the Jamiat.¹⁵

The name of this Anjuman was to be the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind. Its headquarters were to be in Delhi and it was stated that no subordinate Jamiat would add the word Hind with its name, except of the central Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind. It was to have a seal inscribed with the words "Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind". The members of the Jamiat were to be of three types.¹⁶

- 1) Islamic scholars, i.e. those learned people who were educated in a formal way in a *madrissah* or by a graduated scholar in Arabic and religious subjects.
- 2) Preachers of Islam i.e. those learned persons who have not completed their education in Arabic and religious learning but have knowledge of religion on the basis of which they preach and deliver sermons.
- 3) Other notables and Muslims.

To acquire membership of the Jamiat a candidate had to apply on a prescribed form to the Jamiat's office. This application was presented to the Executive Council whose decision was final. A membership fee of rupees three per annum was taken from each members. The office-bearers included: the president, vice president, *nazim*, *naib nazim* and *moheen nazim* and *ameen* of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind.¹⁷

There were to be thirteen to twenty six vice presidents in various provinces and upto five *naib nazims*. These office-bearers were to be formally elected in a general meeting for a term of two years, but they could be elected continuously for three terms. It was mandatory to elect the president and vice-president from amongst the first category of members mentioned above. The executive council of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind was to be elected according to the following rules of procedure.¹⁸

- i) The executive body would consist of a maximum number of one hundred and thirty two members. Eighty-eight of them were to belong to the first category and forty four to the second and the third category. Their term of office was two years but they could be elected for three consecutive terms.
- ii) The members of the executive body were to be elected from the following provinces:
Province of Agra and Oudh, Assam, Bihar, Bombay, Berer, Sind, Punjab, Indian States & Frontier Province, Bengal, Burma, Madras and Delhi.
- iii) The members of each province were to be elected by the provincial body of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind but, if the Jamiat of the province had yet to be established then the general body of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind would elect the deputies of the province.

The powers of the Executive body were as under.¹⁹

- a) The election of the members of Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind.
- b) To arrange meetings of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind.
- c) To elect the president of the General Council of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind. But it would be necessary to consult the Jamiat-ul-Ulema of the province in connection with the election of president in which (province) the General Council proposes to hold its meeting.
- d) To provide information which is useful and necessary for the achievement of the goals of Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind.
- e) To take necessary measures for the implementation of the proposals which have been accepted.
- f) To institute special sub-committees for the fulfillment of duties and obligations.
- g) Associate the local provincial Jamiats and associations with the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind or cancel their association.
- h) To supervise the Jamiat funds and spend them according to the rules.

General meetings of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind were to be held every year. A general body meeting could also be held besides the annual general meeting, provided it was considered essential by the full executive council. The general body was entrusted with the tasks of holding elections to the executive council, framing rules and procedures, their amendment or cancellation. The presence of one-third members of the total number of members would be sufficient for the execution of business in the general body meeting of the Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind provided two-third of the members belonged to the first category from among the members present. Similarly, the meeting of the executive council required a quorum of six members in the first meeting. The presence of only two members was enough in the second meeting.

The Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind was organized with the exclusive purpose of safeguarding the *shariah* and giving the Muslim community religious and political guidance according to Islamic principles and commandments. Its aims and objects, as laid down in its constitution, were as follows.²⁰

- 1) To guide the followers of Islam in their political and non-political matters from a religious point of view.

- 2) To defend on the basis of the *shariah*, Islam, centres of Islam (the *Jazirat-ul-Arab* and the seat of the *khilafat*), Islamic rituals, customs and Islamic nationalism against all odds injurious to them.
- 3) To achieve and protect the general religious and national rights of the Muslims.
- 4) To organize the *ulema* on a common platform.
- 5) To organize the Muslim community and launch a programme for its moral and social reform.
- 6) To establish good and friendly relations with the non-Muslims of the country to the extent permitted by the *shariah*.
- 7) To fight for the freedom of the country.
- 8) To establish *maha kim-i-shar'iyah* (religious courts) to meet the religious needs of the community.
- 9) To propagate Islam, by way of missionary activities, in India and foreign lands.
- 10) To maintain and strengthen the bond of unity and fraternal relations (as ordained by Islam) with the Muslims of other countries.

These aims and objects of the Jamiat when analysed, reveal its loyalty to Islam and Islamic countries in general and to India in particular. They also indicate its utmost emphasis on the *Shari'ah*, its preservation and promulgation in the Indian Subcontinent. The country was to be freed from the foreign yoke not only because of democratic rights of India but also because of the religious duty of the Muslims to fight for the freedom of their homeland.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ghulam Rasool Mehr, *Syed Ahmed Shaheed*, Lahore, 1954, p.414, Abu-al-Hassan Ali Nadvi, *Seerat Syed Ahmed Shaheed*, Karachi, 1974, Vol. II, p.424.
2. Manazir Ahsan Gilani, *Sawanih-i-Qasimi*, Deoband, 1373 A.H., Vol. II, pp.319-20.

3. Muhammad Mian, *Ulema-i-Haq Aur Unka Mujahidana Kaarnama*, Muradabad, 1946, Vol. I, p.129.
4. *Ibid.*, p.170. Hussain Ahmed Madani, *Safar Nama-i-Aseer-i-Malta Aur Sawanih-i-Sheikhul Hind*. Delhi, n.d., pp.68-70, Ziaul Hassan Faruqi, *the Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan*, Bombay, 1962, pp.55-60.
5. Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan: All India Muslim League Documents, (1906-1947)*, Dacca, 1969, Vol. I, pp.592-93.
6. *Mukhtasar Halat-i-Iniqad Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind 1920*, Delhi, 1920, p.2; Muhammad Mian, *Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind Ka ta'aruf Aur Khidmat-i-Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind Ki Mukhtsar Fahrlist*, Delhi, n.d., pp.2-11; Muhammad Mian, *Jamiatal-Ulema Kia Hay?* Delhi, 1946, Vol. II, pp.5-7.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Mukhtasar Halat-i-Iniqad Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind*, *op.cit.*, p.2; *Mohammad Mian Jamiatal Ulema Kia Hay*, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p.2; Tufail Ahmed Manglori, *Musalmano Ka Roshan Mustaqbil*, Delhi, 1945, p.526.
9. Muhammad Mian, *Jamiatal Ulema Kia Hay*, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p.8.
10. *Ibid.*, p.10.
11. *Ibid.*, p.5-6.
12. *Ibid.*, p.7.
13. *Ibid.*, p.8.
14. The manifesto of the Jamiat did not require the annual sessions to be presided by the permanent President only. Various annual sessions of the Jamiat were presided over by such dignitaries of the Jamiat as Sheikh-ul-Hind Maulana Mahmood Hassan, Maulana Anwar Shah and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Ahmad Saeed, *Asassi Asool wa Aghraz wa Maqqsid wa Zawabit Jamiatal Ulema-i-Hind ka Zair-i-tajweez Masawwada*, January 1920, Delhi, 1920, p.10.
15. *Ibid.*, p.8.
16. *Ibid.*, p.3.
17. *Ibid.*, p.4.
18. *Ibid.*, p.5.
19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, p.8, Muhammad Mian *Jamiatul Ulema Kia Hay?* 1946, Vol. I, n.d., p.10. In 1939 the provision 2, 7, 8 & 9 were amended in view of the changed situation at home and abroad and were phrased as follows:

2. To protect Islam, Centre of Islam (Hijaz and Jazirat-ul-Arab) and Islamic rites usages, and defend Islamic nationalism against all odds injurious to it.
7. Complete independence for the nation and the country according to Sha'ri objectives.
8. To organize the Millat-i-Islamiyah' into a Shar'i body and establish 'Mahakim-i-Shariyah'.
9. To work for the religious, educational, moral, social and economic reforms of the Muslims, and to propagate Islam, by way of missionary activities, in India to their best ability.

21. By the emphasis on the preservation of the Shari'ah it should not be understood that the Jamiat aspired to build up an Islamic state. What it meant was to work for the application of that part of the Islamic law which concerns the personal life of the Muslims, e.g., marriage, divorce and inheritance, etc. In the objective provisions of the Jamiat constitution two words 'mazhabi' and Shar'i have been used vaguely. In most cases, however their implied meaning is "religious". And by "religious (Shar'i)" they meant (Hanafi) Law primarily.