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# Discriminative attitude of British Reign towards the Muslims of India

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## **Abstract:**

*"Islam is the religion of peace. It does not create any kind of discrimination among the people on the basis of race, color, geography or language. Islam gives the equal rights of the minorities even though they are Athens. Islam protects the economic, social and religious status of the local people. Muslims maintained their distinctive features in the subcontinent and lived in harmony with the narrow minded Hindus. When the British came in Power in India they used different tactics to destroy the people of the subcontinent financially, morally and educationally. They adopted the policies of divide and rule. Their educational scheme was only to create discrimination among the people of subcontinent. They created differences in Muslims to divide them into different sects. In short they left no stone unturned to disturb the unity of Muslims and exploit the people of subcontinent with cruel devices and schemes "*

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The Muslims is a nation which came into existence after accepting the Oneness of Allah. The racial, linguistic, nationalistic and geographical discriminations don't possess any significance in the eyes of the Muslims and Islam. The Muslims are purified from any image of pride and distinction of origin. According to them the whole earth is the table cloth of Allah the Almighty and all the creatures are the family of the Creator. Allah's behavior with all the mankind is equally kind and merciful. The Muslims are generous and kind hearted as far as their temperament and attitude is concerned. They have never displayed hatred or narrow-mindedness to anyone on the basis of being only a non-Muslim. Their soul and property, honor and esteem, and traditions were given protection during Muslim rule. The evil designs of merging the minorities into majority and wiping them out have never entered the minds of the Muslims. The situation of generosity of the Muslim rulers was to the extent that the religious and legal affairs of the non-Muslims had been entrusted to such strong and opinion-making persons from their own community. Besides, the governors and the judges were also appointed from among them. Even the modern civilized world does not intend to grant minorities' legal and cultural protection.

It is a historical fact that, when the life was miserable for the Jews in the Europe continent during the medieval ages, these were only the Islamic countries, in which they were living peaceful and prosperous life. They would run every type of business and even had been appointed on the high ranking posts as well.

The attitude of Muslim rulers in the Indo Pak sub-continent also remained the same and though they had to face a very narrow-minded nation, who considered the Muslims as inferior, humiliated and tainted nation, but in return during their period of rule the Muslims tolerated such a narrow-minded and intolerant nation for centuries and displayed great patience and tolerance. They would always ignore their lack of knowledge and inanity, instead adorned them with the wealth of knowledge and wisdom. They even appointed them on important posts of ministries and as military commanders which accorded their elevation. In fact the ideology on which the Muslims have perfect faith and the values of life imparted to this Ummah has resulted in retaining good and equitable treatment with all mankind. They are not convinced of caste system or any distinction. The belief of accountability on the Day of Judgment about the dealing with the public helps in keeping the rulers from crossing the barriers of law and ethics. Hence, in spite of being rulers and men of authority, the Islamic Shariah prevents their hands to commit oppression and brutality. It is a fact that the influence of the belief works more than the public pressure of any contemporary democratic era.

Undoubtedly, the instances of deviation and violation of law and ethics exist in the history. But these used to be exclusively personal and individual acts of some rulers but the public and the scholarly class always declared them as un-favored due to their

misdeeds and the concerned parsons. However, in general, the Muslims never adopted any policy to take non-Muslim communities to confusing straits or take any political revenge.

When the British took over the control of India, the Muslims were ruling the sub-continent and possessed the position of the heart and mind of the public. They also held a separate position regarding the physical power and force. Hence, the East India Company devised its strategy in such a way that in the initial phase the Muslims must be humiliated and pushed backward, otherwise they were sure that the British domain would not be given stability.

The British devised the principles and points of their policies by taking the psychology of the Muslims into consideration as follows: The golden principle of the British was 'Divide and Rule'. The Muslims and the Hindus were already two separate communities with different aspects of faith, culture, social norms and economy, hence, it was dire need of the time to erupt differences and disputes among the Muslims to tear this invincible nation into pieces as was perceived by the British. The tact of "Wahabiat" was applied by the British for creating division among the Muslims, as they would now be known as "Wahabi" and "non-Wahabi" Muslims due to the bifurcation. During the Mujahideen movement this allegation was inflated that Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi and Shah Ismail Shaheed were Wahabis. The followers of Wahabi sect are those who participated actively in the renaissance and revival of Islam movement of Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahab Najdi. There are found a number of misunderstandings about Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahab Najdi. The first reason is the biased research papers of the non-Muslim orientalist and second reason is the direct lack of proper knowledge about this movement. After reviewing the faith of Muhammad Bin Abdul Wahab, it is revealed that he was functionary of this movement in accordance with the faith of Imam Ahmed Bin Hambal.

In 1869, William Wilson Hunter conducted a survey under the title of "Hamare Hindustani Musalman" (Our Indian Muslims) in which he has whole heartedly abused the Muslims associated with the Mujahideen movement and disclosed their rebellious activities. Hunter used the word "Wahabi" as an abuse for the Mujahideen. Later on, this word became very common and they also adopted it as their own title.

Syed Ahmed Shaheed Bareilvi and his companions went to Makkah-tul-Mukarrama for the purpose of performing the Hajj pilgrimage of Baitullah (the Holy Ka'aba) in 1237 A.H., at a time when there was no existence of the Wahabi sect. Anyhow, this tact worked effectively and religious differences and disorder erupted among the Muslims and complexion of disputation of insignificant religious issues was produced among the Muslims and the spirit of Jihad (holy war) was culminated among the Muslim nation.

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The second tact applied to finish the unity and integrity of the Muslim Ummah was the introduction of social classification. The people who benefitted the British were awarded extensive estates and their esteem declined among the fellow Muslims. Hence, the British produced a privileged class which instead of giving protection of the Muslim Ummah, looked after the vested interests of the British and left no moment spare by crushing the public.

The hatred with the craftsmen and artisan was also produced. On the back of this propaganda was hidden the promotion of self-based economy. There was a time when the Indian products used to be considered as sacred items for the Europeans. The Indian Malmal (fine cotton) possessed as the distinctive attire for the princesses of the Roman empire and through the latest research it has also been revealed that mummies of Egyptian pyramids have been wearing the Malmal (fine cotton) of Dhaka. It can be judged from this fact that how much perfection was possessed by the Indian artisans.

The British desired that the Muslim artisans might abandon that skill so the British cloth could be sold in Indian market. The cotton produced in India might also be exported to Britain so that the manufactured cotton cloth may be sold in the Indian market and collect wealth of the Indians would be plundered twice.

To achieve this objective the skilled cotton cloth makers the hands of these professional was amputated and they were warned to keep themselves away from this profession. But when those devoted artisans didn't leave their occupation, a printing front was opened against them. The cooked and supposed stories of stupidity and incapability of the cotton artisans were fabricated and were brought to the public in theatre, plays and the books. Hence, these stories became very popular and the artisans began to abandon this profession. Thus, these tactics of the British proved successful and they gained double benefit from this multifarious act. First abandoning of the obstacles in launching the British products in India and the second one was the creation of differences in the society.

The other skilled and professional persons were also targeted like the cloth makers for humiliation and disgrace. The wealth of any nation is the skilled workers who utilize the available resources to manufacture products. At the moment we have got myriad people but the number of the skilled workers and artisans lack immensely. The other reason of the industrial backwardness is that we have acute shortage of the skilled labour. The British popularized these workers as "Kammi" or low caste labour and consequently this class of the workers were forced to live a miserable life, and this included our religious teachers and scholars as well, who would have been the equivalent of Europeans' Father (religious cleric) in the west. In fact this was the conspiracy to reduce the status of the Muslim religious scholars.

The fourth tactic was introduction of modern education which contributed to eliminate, the passion of Jihad (holy struggle) from the minds of the Muslims and this resulted in mental slavery of our public. This sort of education is responsible for uniting or disintegrating a nation. They introduced such an educational system, which produced only the office clerks in a large number, but failed to generate some philosophers or men with progressive concepts in worthwhile number.

Lord Macaulay has mentioned in his official memorial:

“We should prepare such a group which would be a link and interpreter between us and our millions of public. This group should be as such that it should be Indians by blood but British by their temperament, opinion and mind.”<sup>1</sup>

Our national poet and great philosopher, Allama Muhammad Iqbal had very rightly said that:

Translation of the Urdu verse:

“By putting his selflessness in the acid of education,

When he gets soft then you can mould him at your will”

This educational system is making the slavery staunch and eliminating the spirit of freedom. They also finished the remaining passion of Jihad by abrogating Jihad yet producing a significant dispute among the Muslims.

Lord Allen Barrow, in his letter dated 18th January 1843 addressed to Lord Wellington, had mentioned that:

“I can’t close my eyes from the fact that this race (Muslims) is our basic enemy. Hence, our rightful policy should be to greet the Hindus.”<sup>2</sup>

There were two important parts of the plan to humiliate Muslims and make them worthless.

1. To make the Muslims destitute so that they might spend their potential and time only for earning their livelihood and the supreme concepts of religion, politics and nation might also get out of their mind.
2. The second tactic was to delink them from their glorious past at every cost, so that this ship of Muslim Ummah might become without any anchor and should be on the will of the hurricanes, then it will be easy to tow it to our desired destination.

It was also a part of the unscarred plan of making the Muslim Ummah destitute and poor to confiscate the trustee established by the Muslims. During the Islamic period rule, it had been a general practice that the rulers, male and female philanthropists and the knights used to donate lands and properties to the Ulema and Fuqahah to promote education, training and public welfare activities, so that they might not worry about their economic needs and establish themselves at one place to fulfill their duty of education and training of the mankind in their own style. Then through their elevated personalities the candle of the knowledge would illuminate the area. The Muslim rulers had not set up any education department separately in presence of this automatic system of education that functioned very effectively. This system would be free of influence of interference of the governments and the change in governments. Due to the presence of the trustee there was a large number of Maddaris and the seeking of education was an easy task.

The British politicians used to consider this educational system a great obstacle in their path. They were also well aware about the status of the Ulema in the Islamic society and knew well that this dignity of the Ulema was due to the free economy. Hence the British government intended to eliminate this spring of knowledge and the source of earning of the Ulema. Hence this task was accomplished by Lord Wolsey and in 1818 he imposed a Resumption Act and began to confiscate the trustees, rent free grants, and lands by the government. It was further completed by Lord William Benetic who promulgated a more strict law in 1828. It was a very strict law and was imposed with great cruelty. A person like William Hunter had to confess that:

“The principality of Bengal at that time had extended from Burma to Eastern Punjab. In this principality a new department of Resumption was established. Its separate collectors, deputy collectors and other office bearers were appointed. The special courts were also set up under this act which would announce immediate decisions and the military would mobilize in great number by the department, so that it may explore the trustees. The bogus witnesses would be ready everywhere. The hard liner officers of resumption department had molested the whole province of Bengal and as a result thousands of ancient families were crushed and mauled. The government imposed death blow on the rent free grants which were the only source of the Muslims’ educational system. During these eighteen years from 1826 to 1844, the Muslim community was completely destroyed.”<sup>3</sup>

This fact was obvious on the British that the confiscation of the rent free grants would make indelible impact of the Indian society. Lord Munroe and Duke of Wellington had very rightly said that the confiscation of rent free grants is like buying the enmity of the Indians and to make them deprived.<sup>4</sup>

The benefit gained by the British government after confiscation of the trustees is explained in the witness account of William Hunter:

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“The government generated annual revenue of three lakh Pounds from these abstractions.”<sup>5</sup>

Hence, the government killed two preys with one arrow through this procedure.

The British crushed the centuries old educational system of the Muslims. And the earnings of millions of the families of Ulema and Shaikhs were snatched and they were forced to beg and suffer losses.

Justice Ameer Ali mentions in his article:

“The back to back striking of the calamities, which were born by the Muslims, destructed and ruined the majority of their noble families. The segment which would impart education was totally smashed. The Resumption Act on one side made some people wealthy while on the other side it totally shattered the elite and middle class of the Muslim community and left them deprived and destitute.”<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Colebrook mentions the decline of educational system of the Muslims:

“There is no doubt that the Indian knowledge and literature is facing decline day by day and the group of the Ulema is also decreasing. Moreover, the group in which the high quality potential would be produced had been getting confined. The people are leaving the habit of studying knowledge. If the government didn’t patronize the scholars then it is feared that not only books but the Ulema teaching them will fade away. The place where there was popularity of the knowledge and the people from far and wide would come to seek knowledge is experiencing a frozen bazaar of knowledge.”<sup>7</sup>

A very prominent portion of the Muslim society was manufacturer. The Muslim cloth makers of Bengal and Bihar possessed an exclusive fame regarding the cloth industry. The company’s workers knocked down such atrocities on the artisans that on one side that great and magnificent industry was demolished and afterwards the cloth industry of Manchester was promoted.

On the other side the cloth maker artisans began to expire due to starvation. The company would order them to manufacture cloth on its desired rates and in the event of refusal the company would award them severe punishments and the manufactured material would be purchased on much cheaper rates which would not even fulfill the labour charges of the task and in addition they had to face the oppression.

So some of the cloth maker artisans amputated their thumbs in a bid to get rid of the torture of the British and after getting fed up with the cruelty and had made themselves disabled. In this way the British, before the end of 18th century, strangulated the unique

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industry of India established since past many centuries. Afterward the demand of manufactured cloth on machine enhanced.

After this political revolution, the decline which appeared in the economic and cultural life of the Muslims was very significant and the actual picture of this factor has been drawn by W. W. Hunter and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan:

“The superior civil services were specified for the British only. The posts which were reserved for the local population were of the lowest category.”<sup>8</sup>

The British would be the ruler of the district in the civil department. Mostly, the second class ruler would also be from the same community. In the low category employments the dealing was lie the Hindu caste system.”<sup>9</sup>

The most lethal strike was the decreasing of the job opportunities in the armed forces. One of the causes of the War of Freedom 1857 was the rebellion of the soldiers who didn't like this system. Under this policy the Indians might not get promotion beyond the ranks of Risaldar and Subedar. The ranks which were confined for the Indians were as such that even after reaching the ceiling of the pay scale their salaries were much below the soldier of British origin. East India Company had adopted a strange way to pay the reward of the good services rendered to them. They would observe any Indian with high capability and expertise and would possess eminent position than others, would be relinquished of his job with full pay.”<sup>10</sup>

The Muslims would consider soldier-ship as profession of gentlemen. In the earlier period they would consider any kind of job better than the military service among the top ranks of the government. In spite of this fact that the Muslims would be the best soldiers, they were not given preference for political reasons.”<sup>11</sup>

Muslim craftsmen would manufacture various products which were in great demand in the royal courts. All the finest qualities of the Malmal (cotton) of Dhaka and shawls of Kashmir were woven by the Muslim cloth makers. In the carpet industry the Muslims were the leaders. With the disappearance of the royal courts, their demand also declined as the courtiers were the exclusive buyers of these items. In this rising factor of unemployment the economic condition of the Muslims also faced a slump.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan writes:

“The jobs of the skilled workers suffered greatly due to the launching and marketing of the commodities of the British traders. It was so that no one could ever ask about the welfare of a needle selling person or even a match stick manufacturer. The thread of the cloth manufacturers was broken into pieces. Due to this reason in this turmoil the enthusiasm of the people was worth seeing”<sup>12</sup>

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James Taylor has said about the consequences of as under:

“The result of the fall of the trade and industry was that the population of Dhaka almost was demolished. In 1800m its population was two lakh which was reduced to 70,000 in 1838. The rapid fall in population was not less than the element of poverty.”<sup>13</sup>

After imposing Lord Macaulay on the educational system, the Christian missionaries didn't conceal their hopes behind the covers. They openly proclaimed that for the promotion of the modern education the old monuments of the local religions will have to be demolished.

If for sowing of these doubts in the minds of the Muslims, there would have been no Christian missionaries then there were some other solid reasons for adopting the new educational system. When the new educational system was launched in the sub-continent, it was greatly overwhelmed by the Christian religious education. Hence, undoubtedly the result of this factor was produced in this way that the Hindus who were inclined towards this factor earlier converted to Christianity and changed their faith. After the uproar of 1857 the British adopted the strategy of religious impartiality and designed the education of schools and colleges as totally secular. Hence, any relation with every type of moral education was delinked. In the reply of this question that how much the Muslims got the benefit from government educational institutions? The attitude of the Muslims was not negative. When in a seminary of Calcutta the education of English language and the modern knowledge, then the Muslim students moved ahead to study and some of them got admitted in general schools but when discrimination was dealt with for jobs then their hearts were broken.<sup>14</sup>

All these circumstances were critically reviewed by Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi:

“The Muslims had lost their dominion. They would consider the British's such a nation which was responsible for all the miseries, after the fall of the empire, they had to face lot of perplexities. The government would have sensed the difficulties of the Muslims and would have addressed the humiliation and social issues. But instead prejudiced treatment was meted out to them.”<sup>15</sup>

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