



# Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlavi And His Jihad Movement:

*The foundation of Indian freedom struggle*

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**Abstract:** This study has been undertaken to investigate the attitude of the Muslim scholars when the British wrested power from the Muslim hands and its after effects in the relation between Muslims and British authority. The great scholar of India, Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlavi emerged as a determined opponent of British rule, issued a landmark fatwa declaring India under British control as *Dar-ul-Harb* (abode of war). Motivated by him, Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi and his followers started an armed struggle and it continued until 1857.

**Index Terms** - Indian freedom struggle, Muslim freedom struggle, British occupation of India, Indian Wahhabis, Waliullah, Tariqah Muhammadiyah, Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlavi, Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the death of Tipu Sultan there was no ruler who could challenge the British power in India. And rightly so, later on history proved that the British occupied the whole of India in a short span of time after Tipu Sultan was martyred. The entire political structure of northern India crumbled during this period. The Mughal emperors became not only pensioners but prisoners in the hands of the East India Company, which soon passed from dividends to dominion, with a real government, pursuing an ambitious policy of annexation.

A section of the Muslim religious scholars that had been trained by Waliullahi School of orthodoxy had seen a rapid decline of Islamic values. They had seen the Islamic laws being replaced by un-Islamic laws (Mukerjee, H. 1946, pp. 51-52). They saw Persian being demoted from its position as the official language of the Court and of general administration. Then came removal of the *Qazi* who during Muslim rule, administered the Islamic law (Mukerjee, H. 1946, p. 52). The introduction of common penal laws and separate judicial courts greatly reduced the social authority of the *ulama*. Thus the establishment of the new order was a disaster to the Muslim ruling class. The religious leaders of Delhi were not blind to what was happening in the country.

After the British conquest of Delhi, Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824), the illustrious son of Shah Waliullah Dihlawi (1703-62), issued the famous *fatwa* in 1803 declaring that India had ceased to be a *dar-al-Islam* (Land of Peace). Now this *fatwa* has a significance of its own in the history of Muslim political thought of the 19th century. It was the first determined expression of Muslim attitude towards the establishment of British rule in India. That in 1857 people often referred to this *fatwa* shows the extent to which it had influenced the contemporary Muslim thought (Hunter W. W. 1871, p. 134).

This ruling was of great importance, because it prepared the way for an armed struggle or armed *jihad*. And, yet, it was obvious that mere rulings could not create a movement which had to be initiated and organized. Shah Abdul Aziz created a nucleus in Delhi, at first working in close cooperation with his

brothers, Shah Rafiuddin and Shah Abdul Qadir. After issuing the *fatwa*, Shah Abdul Aziz took up the work of establishing a network of centres in Rohilkhand, Doab, Oudh and Bihar for raising funds and volunteers for an armed *jihād*, at some future date, against the British (Karandikar, M. A. 1968, p. 131). He thus took the lead in the organization of the first resistance movement against alien rule. This movement, commonly known as the *Tahrik-e-Mujahidin* or the Movement of the Holy Warriors (Muztar, A. D. 1979, p. 195), marks the practical culmination of the religio-political thought of Shah Waliullah.

Ultimately, an armed struggle had to be organized, because no government could be dislodged merely by dreaming or widespread disaffection, unless that disaffection was channelled into active armed rebellion. For this purpose, it was first necessary to canvas support on a much wider scale and to find a good military leader. Indeed the discovery of a good fighter must have been considered to be an immediate necessity. The leader must not only be a good fighter, but a man of impeccable character and likely to command the loyalty of the people at large and in particular of those who were to be his comrades in arms. In those days when *Sufism* was so much in vogue, it was almost essential to fix upon a person of spiritual and mystic eminence. It must have been felt that Sayyid Ahmad was very well suited to be trained for this purpose.

## II. SHAH ABDUL AZIZ DEHLAWI AND HIS JIHAD MOVEMENT

Shah Waliullah had left behind a band of pupils and disciples, including his own sons, who were fully charged with the spirit of his movement. They tried to continue the work started by him. Shah Abdul Aziz was born on Tuesday, the eleventh of October 1746 from Shah Waliullah's second wife, named Bi Iradah. Ghulam Halim is his chronogrammatic name. He completed his education under his father in 1760 while still in his teens. Then he received his education from two eminent disciples of his father, Khwaja Muhammad Amin and Shaikh Muhammad Ashiq of Phulat and made a thorough study of the *Masabih*, the *Musawwah fi Sharh Muwatta* and the *Sihah Sitha*. He possessed a prodigious memory. He almost learnt the *Sihah Sitha* by heart. In 1763 he succeeded to the chair of his father at the *Madrasa Rahimiya* and began to instruct the students in religious sciences, particularly the *Quran* and the *Hadith*, and supervised its affairs till his death, which happened on Saturday, the 5th June 1824 (Muztar, A. D. 1979, p. 193). At the time of his death, Shah Abdul Aziz was admitted to be the most learned theologian in India.

His fame had spread far beyond Hindustan, and the Arabian writers gave him the title of 'The Sun of India'. He exercised, and even now exercises, vast influence. People came from far and near to learn at his feet. He carried the ideas of his father to a wider circle than the latter had been able to do. Amongst his pupils appear the names of Shah Rafiuddin Dihlawi, Shah Abdul Qadir Dihlawi, Shah Muhammad Ishaq, Shah Muhammad Yaqub, Shah Abdul Hayy, Shah Muhammad Ismail, Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi, Maulana Rashiduddin Dihlawi, Shah Ghulam Ali Dihlawi, Hasan Ali Lakhnawi, Shah Rauf Ahmad, Shah Fazl-ur-Rahman Ganj Moradabadi, Shah Abu Said, Shah Zahurul Hag, Awlad Husain (father of Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan) all well-known figures in the realm of Muslim religious learning (Nizami, T. A. 1969, p. 22).

Mufti Inayat Ahmad, an erudite scholar belonging to Kakori remarked about Shah Waliullah; "He is like the heavenly tree *Tuba* (A tree in the paradise) whose roots are in his family and the branches in every Muslim house" (Nadwi, A. H. A. 1983, p. 332). As for Shah Abdul Aziz, his scholarly attainments, depth of knowledge in *Hadith*, penmanship and anxiety for the well-being of Muslims give him an edge over the most prominent scholars of his time (Nadwi, A. H. A. 1983, p. 332). The religious influence of Shah Abdul Aziz transcended the geographical limits of the South Asian Subcontinent, and spread to Kabul and Bukhara in the North and to Istanbul and Hijaz in the West. His *fatwa*, or decree, was looked upon as an authentic law of *Sharia*, even outside India. The *ulama* of Turkey, it is reported, requested him to visit their country and honour them with his stay there (Muztar, A. D. 1979, p. 193). Of the works that Shah Abdul Aziz wrote on various aspects of religion, the *Fathwa-al-Aziz*, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*, *Ujala-i-Nafi'a*, *Tuhfa-i-ithna Asharia* and *Dhikr al Shahadatain*, deserve particular mention (Taher, M. 1998, P. 177).

Shah Abdul Aziz spent sixty his life in teaching, writing and training his disciples and pupils. Like his father he was not only an eminent scholar, but was also anxious to reform his people. Under Shah Waliullah's influence and at his instance the Muslim chiefs had organized a united front against Maratha aggression; his son Shah Abdul Aziz inspired one of his chief disciples Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi to launch *jihād* against the anti-Muslim forces.

During this period, Delhi passed through one of the most momentous periods of her history. From the third battle of Panipat (1761) to the entry of Lord Lakes's forces in Delhi (1803), he saw Delhi passing through many political vicissitudes (Nizami, T. A. 1969. p. 23). Shah Abdul Aziz lived in Delhi for nearly 78 years. This quick drama of political change conditioned his political thought. The descendants of Shah Waliullah continued his tradition of reform. Shah Abdul Aziz was the leader of that group of intellectuals

who had been greatly influenced by the Waliullahi thought. Due to the rather rapid disintegration of the Mughal Empire, the Waliullahi movement could not make much progress.

The Marathas, taking advantage of the weakness of the imperial government and disunity among the ranks of Muslim chiefs, recovered to a large extent their lost position within a period of less than two decades; besides them, the rise of the Sikhs now posed a new threat to peace in the north-western regions. In an atmosphere of political unrest, widespread lawlessness and social disequilibrium the efforts of a band of scholars and *shaykhs* to reform the entire structure of society could hardly be expected to meet with success. Nevertheless, they did their best to keep alive the idea that the system of *Sharia* law was and should be the main foundation of Muslim society. For long Shah Abdul Aziz continued to preach the religio-political philosophy of his father. He directed his message not only towards the upper classes and the elite but he tried to mobilise the conscience of the masses, make them aware of the changed political and economic conditions and to awaken their self-respect and faith in their own destiny. The task was difficult but well worth accomplishing.

During the times of Shah Abdul Aziz a great change had occurred in the political map of India. Delhi had been conquered by the British in 1803. The Mughal king, Shah Alam, had been reduced to a titular position. The East India Company had become the de-facto ruler of India. It was under these circumstances that Shah Abdul Aziz, reacted sharply. He took steps to keep the Muslims alive to the political loss from which they had suffered.

With his penetrating judgment and keen sense of observation, Shah Abdul Aziz could not have failed to notice the dark shadows of the coming events. The establishment of British authority was sure to kill the chances of the restoration of Muslim ascendancy, which his father had been trying to make effective, through an extensive programme of political and socio-religious reform. It was for this reason that he issued his famous *fatwa*, declaring the entire territory held by the British- to be a *dar-al-harb* (Esposito, J. L. 2001, p. 433). This was an effective step taken by him to prepare the Muslims for the battle of freedom which he must have realized was bound to be fought, sooner or later. Most of the modern writers on our struggle for freedom have failed to appreciate the significance of this *fatwa vis-a-vis* the later stages of the movement. The importance of it becomes considerably greater when we cast a glance over the list of those pupils and disciples of the family of Shah Abdul Aziz, who played an effective role in the struggle for freedom. Besides Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi who organized the *jihad* movement against Sikh tyranny in the north-western regions, Fadl-i-Haqq one of the distinguished pupils of his brother, Shah Abdul Qadir, was among the leading figures of the revolt of 1857.

The catastrophic changes in the political situation needed new planning. Now it was impossible to achieve anything through the intervention of a foreign power or the effort of any Muslim ruler of the Subcontinent. The throne of Delhi had been reduced to a mere legal myth. The reality was so glaring that the Muslims knew that their political authority was gone, but they were still confused about the Islamic legal position. Shah Abdul Aziz removed the cobwebs of legal myths by ruling that the subcontinent was no longer *dar-al-Islam*, a land where the Faith enjoyed sovereign authority and political power. The emperor was utterly helpless and the real power was in the hands of the British.

This ruling brought it to the notice of the Muslim population forcefully that it was living in bondage. A legal implication of the ruling was that it was the duty of every Muslim to make all effort to restore such an area to its former status of a *dar-al-Islam*. In no case should Muslims cooperate with the British in propagating false beliefs and un-Islamic practices and it was a mortal sin to help them to destroy Muslim lives or further subvert Muslim authority.

On their arrival in Delhi the British adopted a policy of appointing Muslims of aristocratic families to higher posts so as to win them over to their side (Ashraf, M. 1982, p. 141). But the followers of Shah Waliullah under Shah Abdul Aziz kept distance from the British traps and he gave *fatwa* on accepting the government jobs under the British. The school of Shah Abdul Aziz was engaged in teaching and propagating Islamic ideals, reforming society, and making preparations for a *jihad*, for establishing a purely Islamic State.

Shah Abdul Aziz gave the *fatwa* that it was lawful to learn their language (English), if its knowledge was to be used for lawful and beneficent purposes and not to seek their favour, when it would become unlawful and evil. Similarly Muslims could enter their service if they were to be employed for lawful and beneficial ends like suppression of crimes, the clarification of points of Islamic law and its application, on the construction and repairs of buildings of public utility, in short anything that would serve the interests of the people. In such instances the employee would be performing praiseworthy duties; but if such service resulted in the furtherance of injustice and iniquity or in the performance of unlawful acts or in their abetment, then it was forbidden. Besides, the employment should not be of a nature that humiliated the believer or compromised his dignity.



While Shah Abdul Aziz was exhorting his followers to resist the establishment of British rule in India, he was quick in realizing the great potentialities of Western science and learning. He permitted his pupils to acquire knowledge of English and praised the technical skill of the Englishmen. "This position was extremely realistic and enlightened. This position was not, however, maintained by the succeeding generations. Those who studied the English language and sciences willingly accepted British rule, and those who refused to accept British rule totally refused to learn the English language and literature" (Taher, Mohamed. 1998, p. 180). As was inevitable, two diametrically opposite tendencies developed in Muslim religious and social attitudes, one represented by the Aligarh movement under Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and the other by the Deobandi School of thought under Maulana Muhammad Qasim.

### III. THE MOVEMENT OF HOLY WARRIORS

In Muslim constitutional law, the world is divided into *dar-al-harb* and *dar-al-Islam*. *Dar-al-Islam* or an 'abode of Islam' is a country where the ordinances of Islam are established and which is under the rule of a Muslim Sovereign. Its inhabitants are Muslims and also non-Muslims who have submitted to the Muslims' control and who, under certain restrictions and without the possibility of full citizenship, are guaranteed their lives and property by the Muslim State. The *dar-al-harb* is, actually or potentially, a seat of war for Muslims until by conquest it is turned into *dar-al-Islam*. Thus to turn *dar-al-harb* into *dar-al-Islam* is the object of armed *jihad*, and theoretically, the Muslim State is in a constant state of warfare with the non-Muslim world.

It was a religious duty of every Muslim to resist the foreign subjugation. Since India had been declared as the land of the enemy, it became obligatory either to organize *jihad* or to migrate permanently from it. Shah Abdul Aziz did not appreciate the idea of withdrawing permanently but advanced the idea of *jihad* and refuted all those arguments, which prevented him from this course of action. He never thought of shedding Muslim blood in order to gain power again for the corrupt Muslim rulers but had an Islamic State in his mind as an ideal to strive for. He was not in favour of kingship and its history had convinced him not to have faith in it.

### IV. WHY NOT DECLARED JIHAD AGAINST THE MARATHAS?

It is significant to note that during the period (1782-1803) when the Maratha chiefs wielded suzerainty over Delhi and the Mughal Emperor, a mere figurehead, was under their protection. The Marathas were completely in control of Delhi, but for twenty years the Shah and his party did not declare their homeland a *dar-al-harb*, although the Shah in his Arabic and Persian writings sharply criticised the Maratha excesses. Shah Abdul Aziz was in Delhi and before his very eyes the non-Muslim Maratha soldiers, were perpetrating all acts of highhandedness on the peaceful citizens of Delhi and its suburbs; yet he did not come out with a declaration that India had ceased to be a '*dar-al-Islam*' for the Muslims. During those twenty years the Shah neither issued any *fatwa* of independence nor urged Indian Muslims to emigrate. The Rohilla Pathans (the Muslim martial race) were deeply devoted to the Shah and were very friendly to the Marathas. It should also not be forgotten that, according to the literature, it was during the regime of Najaf Ali Khan, a British pensioner and protege, that Shah Abdul Aziz endured great hardships.

One possible interpretation that can be put forward is that in spite of Shah Abdul Aziz's bitter criticism of Marathas' ruthless behaviour and the general spread of chaos and confusion due to their tyrannical exaction of *chawth* (The Maratha ruler Shivaji used to extract one-fourth of the land revenue from his subjects- known as *Chawth*, literally means one-fourth). From all who fell a victim to their greed and lust he did not consider that Muslim supremacy had come to an end. He might have interpreted the rise of the Maratha power as a rebellion and have thought that it was a temporary phase; perhaps he believed that some Ahmad Shah Abdali would again appear and drive the unruly Maharashtrians out of Delhi. In his *fatwa* he used the term *dhimmi*, not Hindu or non-Muslim, which indicates that he did not interpret the situation as tantamount to the final collapse of the Muslim administration in India. To him it still existed. It needed rejuvenation, the Marathas had, no doubt weakened it, but they had not replaced or shown any desire to replace it by any new set-up. On the other hand, in the ascendancy of the East India Company he certainly saw the seed of the total disintegration of the Muslim society and the final decline of Muslim authority beyond any hope of recovery. He was a man of keen insight. He was also fully aware of the British doings in Mysore, Bengal, Oudh and the land of the Rohillas. He fully realized the danger that lay in the new situation.

Shah Abdul Aziz was not satisfied merely with the pronouncement of the *fatwa*. He went further and gave a lead in organizing the resistance movement. As he was too old to participate in the armed struggle actively, he made some preparations to organise an active front to re-establish *dar-al-Islam* in the subcontinent. He sent Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi to the camp of Amir Ali Khan in Rajputana who was fighting against the British in collaboration with Jaswant Rao Holkar.

Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly, the central figure of the Mujahid Movement, was selected by Shah Abdul Aziz to organise a *jihad*, struggle against the British power and give a practical shape to his and his father's teachings for political regeneration. As a token of his own participation in the struggle, Shah Abdul Aziz put his family members, Shah Muhammad Ismail (nephew) and Maulavi Abdul Hayy (son-in-law), under him (Nizmi, K. A. 1971, p 103). The movement had a twofold programme: resurgence of political power through active struggle and all-out effort to improve the moral tone of Muslim society and revive true religious spirit. The latter was considered a necessary adjunct to achieve the first.

In 1807 Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly had been accepted as a pupil by Shah Abdul Aziz and initiated into the Naqshbandi, Qadiri and Chishti orders (Hardy, P. 1972, p. 51). He was a man of remarkable personal qualities, deeply religious, and personally affected by the social dislocations of the time, was well suited to leadership of such a revivalist movement. Actually the *jihad* movement of Sayyid Ahmad was the practical facet of Shah Abdul Aziz's *fatwa*.

When Sayyid Ahmad reached Delhi, Shah Abdul Aziz welcomed him warmly as he had very well known his uncle Sayyid Noman and his maternal grandfather Sayyid Abu Saeed, great scholars of their times and close associates of his revered father Shah Waliullah Dehlawi (Ebadur Rahman, S. Dr. nd, p. 19). Shah Abdul Aziz was pleased to hear that Sayyid Ahmad had come that long distance in the hope of attaining Allah-cognizance under his spiritual guidance. He entrusted him for the time being to the spiritual care of his brother, Shah Abdul Qadir, the famous scholar and first translator of the *Quran* into Urdu. At his instructions, he started living in the Akbarabadi Mosque in one of the rooms constructed for students and engaged himself in the remembrance of Allah. He also started taking lessons in Arabic and Persian from Shah Abdul Qadir.

## V. MILITARY TRAINING

The British had taken into complete control the affairs of the Mughal Sultanate in Delhi and with it their interference in the religious affairs of the Muslims had started increasing every day. If there existed any independent and free Muslim leader on the Indian scene at that time that could have helped in safeguarding the interest of the Muslims in India, it was Amir Khan, son of a chief of the Afghans of Rohilkhand Mohammad Hayat Khan (Rajasthan district Gazetteers: Tonk, 1962, p. 23). At the age of twenty, he left home in search of fortune. Soon he gathered a strong army around him and became a powerful independent military leader. The Marathas and the Rajput rulers used to take military help from him against each other. He sided with the party that paid him money. At one point, his army consisted of fifty thousand horsemen, twelve thousand soldiers and one hundred and fifteen cannons. He was well-known for his love for Islam and was a practicing Muslim (Ebadur Rahman, S. Dr. nd. p. 24).

The armed struggle against the British occupation started in 1808, when Maharaja Jaswant Rao and Nawab Amir Khan jointly planned to fight against the British forces. Shah Abdul Aziz ordered his disciple Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly to merge his army with that of Amir Khan. He needed actual fighting experience to perfect the art of *jihad* for which he was destined and which was his main object in life (Nadwi, A. H. A. 1974, p. 7). The thought of joining Amir Khan's camp first came to Shah Abdul Aziz after Sayyid Ahmad's spiritual training had come to a satisfactory level under him. He found the burning desire for *jihad* in the future leader of the movement. After completion of his spiritual training and education, Shah Abdul Aziz asked his spiritual disciple, Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly to go to the camp of Amir Khan in Rajputana who, in collaboration with Jaswant Rao Holkar, a Maratha chieftain. Amir Khan was engaged in armed struggle in Malwa and Rajasthan. He tried to divert his struggle and contain the ascending English power. Syed Nesar Ahmad wrote, "Thus even Shah Abdul Aziz, perhaps the greatest religious leader of his time, was tolerant of the Pindaris and was privy to the reasons which had prompted Sayyid Ahmad to seek employment with Amir Khan.... perhaps first planted the idea in Sayyid Ahmad's mind that it might be useful to join Amir Khan's camp" (Ahmad, S. N. 2004, p. 64). Then, at about age twenty-five; he left Delhi for Malwa to spend some seven years as a cavalryman of Amir Khan Pindari's (1768-1834) army in central India for armed training.

In a letter written by him about this time he refers to his joining the army of Amir Khan, and says that it was ordained by God. According to Mehr (Ahmad, Q. 1966, p. 26.), it was in keeping with Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly's plan. He joined the service of the Nawab of Tonk because he was the only Muslim ruler who was independent of the British influence. Nawab Amir Khan's army was at that time engaged in a conflict with the English, in besieging Dhamkola fort between Bundi and Karoli. Sayyid Ahmad took keen interest in the organisation of his force. He displayed his qualities of bravery in several battles and was soon promoted to the rank of Amir Khan's bodyguard. As he was always a source of inspiration, Amir Khan made him his chief adviser on all-important political and military matters. He was also assigned by Amir Khan the duty of leading the Muslim troops in prayers (Karandikar, M. A. 1968, p. 131).

According to the Sayyid's contemporaries and his modern biographers, his decision was divinely inspired to prepare him for a future *jihad*. In fact the Sayyid thought that he could obtain more success in his puritanical revivalist mission with illiterate Pathans in Amir Khan's army in which his elder brother had already served, and with Amir Khan's Pindari associates, than amongst the corrupt and cynical Muslim population of Delhi or Awadh. Amir Khan welcomed the Sayyid's presence in his army and consulted him frequently, but the Sayyid's main concern was to infuse the soldiers with honesty, integrity and the simple puritanical life of the *Sharia*.

These years were also years of training and preparation for the ultimate fight for the faith which he was destined to lead. The Sayyid gave a good account of himself in the battles fought by Amir Khan. As a Sayyid among Pathans-Amir Khan's forces consisted almost wholly of Pathans-he occupied a position of prominence. Because of his exemplary life, his character and his spiritual gifts he became a centre of attraction for Amir Khan's men (Husain, M. 1957. p. 560).

Sayyid Ahmad lived in Rajputana for seven years, preaching to the soldiers of Amir Khan, giving advice in organizational and strategical matters and even fighting with sword in hand against the British forces. W W Hunter (1871, p. 4), partly because of his ignorance and partly due to his prejudices, refers to his activities in Rajputana in the following words: "He began life as a horse soldier in the service of a celebrated free-booter (Amir Khan), and for many a year harried the rich opium-growing villages of Malwa".

## VI. ANTI BRITISH ATTITUDE

Sayyid Ahmad was opposed to any treaty with the English, and advised Amir Khan to send a strong force to Madhorajpur and continue the fight until the English were finally defeated (Balkhi, F. 1983, p. 7). The Sayyid's efforts to prevent Amir Khan from signing the treaty with the British failed. Before Sayyid Ahmad could make Amir Khan realize his Islamic responsibilities, a major change in the political situation compelled Amir Khan to sign a peace treaty with the British. The Peshwa entered into a peace treaty with the British. After sometime Sindhiya followed suit. Then Holkar, a trustworthy ally and friend of Amir Khan, also signed a treaty with the British on January 6, 1818. Thus, Amir Khan was left alone in face of the intrigue and might of the British. By that time the states of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Kota, Bondi, Kishun Garh, Karauli, and some other states had already entered into treaty with the British. After thus isolating Amir Khan, the British sent an army against him while he was engaged in a battle with the ruler of Madhupuri and surrounded him from three sides. Amir Khan could get help neither from Pindaris, nor from Sindhiya, nor from Holkar. In his army itself, there was an apprehension of a British-sponsored dissension against him - the same poison that the British had used against Tipu Sultan. As soon as the British army advanced against him, Faizullah Bangash, an ex-lieutenant of Amir Khan, joined British with his battalion (Nadwi, A. H. A. 1980, p. 139).

During Amir Khan's talk for the peace pact with the British, Sayyid Ahmad voiced his strong protest against it at several stages and tried to encourage him to fight against the British, but Amir Khan had lost confidence in his own men. Sayyid Ahmad then decided to part ways with him. Under such pressure, Amir Khan decided to accept the offer of peace. Sayyid Ahmad wrote to Shah Abdul Aziz: "This humble fellow is shortly to meet your holiness. The troops here are pell-mell. All has been ruined here; the Nawab has gone over to the British. Now I cannot live here" (Ahmad, M. 1975, P. 58). As soon as Amir Khan made an alliance with the British, Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi resigned his post there. This is clear evidence that he was outwardly and inwardly hostile to British rule in India. He had even fought a battle against the British while in the army of Amir Khan and had compelled the British to accept his terms (Ahmad, Q. 1969, p. 26). When he met Amir Khan the last time to bid him good-bye, the Khan's eyes splashed with tears and he said in an emotion-stricken voice, "Whatever was destined has taken place. There is no escape from the decree of God. Now, that you are going to Delhi, travel with my son Muhammad Wazeer Khan" (Ebadur Rahman, S. Dr. nd. p. 27).

But the Europeans painted it in another way, Olaf Caroe, who had been the Governor of North West Frontier Province during the last two years before the transfer of power in 1947, recorded in his scholarly book entitled *The Pathans* (1957, p. 301), "Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi had been the follower of the notorious Amir Khan, a leader of the mercenaries in the campaigns waged by the British against the freebooters of Central India known as Pindaris. He lost his employment when Amir Khan's force was broken up at the end of the campaign, and Amir Khan was recognised as Chief of Tonk in Rajputana".

Earlier writers have obviously painted the Sayyid as pro-British because they wrote at a time when the British were still persecuting the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi, and, consequently, their well-wishers tried as best they could to remove British misgivings regarding the founder of the movement. Later works were published in a totally different atmosphere and it was unnecessary for their writers to paint the Sayyid as pro-British. Whatever views the Sayyid might have held about the British, it is unlikely that these vitally affected the negotiations between Amir Khan and the British. In support of this, the best evidence is pro-



vided by the significant silence on the subject of all direct contemporary writings, English and Persian, on the life of Amir Khan. The Sayyid does not picture in these works at all.

Some historians, who lost the link between Sayyid Ahmad and Shah Abdul Aziz, raised the question as to what prompted Sayyid Ahmad to seek service under Amir Khan. They argued the reason that an elder brother of his had served Amir Khan, and after the initial disappointment at Lucknow, Sayyid Ahmad's thoughts would naturally turn to Amir Khan in search of employment. Actually, this interpretation is totally against the reality, the fact that when Amir Khan made peace with the British, Sayyid Ahmad did not attach any importance to the need of earning a livelihood and returned to Delhi militates against this assumption. Moreover, at the time of his departure from Amir Khan's camp he informed Shah Abdul Aziz that no useful purpose would be served by his further attachment to Amir Khan. It can, therefore, be assumed safely that Sayyid Ahmad's motive in seeking service under Amir Khan was not gainful employment in the pecuniary sense and simply disclosed the role Shah Abdul Aziz.

It is believed that his purpose was *jihad*, war against the forces arrayed against the political authority of Islam. Others simply hold that the main motive was to ward off the importunate requests of those who, believing in his spiritual eminence had plagued him with demands for intercession. Yet others hold that his motive was to acquire military training and knowledge. There is a natural desire among his admirers to prove his absolutely independent role in the movement of *jihad* against the anti-Islamic forces and that even the initiative to organize the campaign was entirely his in response to divine direction. This is at par with the contention that his formal education was less than meagre and the later theory of his physical disappearance for appearing later at the opportune moment to fulfil his mission. It is true that there is no direct contemporary recorded evidence to prove the theory to the effect that the initiative and planning were of someone else.

His childhood game of fighting battles or his attachment to sport should not be taken as a desire for *jihad*. If there had been no connection between Shah Abdul Aziz and the Sayyid's joining Amir Khan, there would have been no need for Sayyid Ahmad to inform Shah Abdul Aziz about his decision to leave Amir Khan's service and Sayyid Ahmad would not have made a bee line to Delhi after his resignation. It has been argued that Sayyid Ahmad was interested only in fighting against the British and when peace was made despite his efforts, that purpose could no longer be served. There is no improbability in that suggestion, but there is a tradition to the contrary that Sayyid Ahmad prophesied that he would soon lead an army for *jihad* and pass through Amir Khan's state of which he was yet to become the ruler (Qureshi, I. H. 1972, p. 143). Whatever might have been the source of this knowledge, whether mystic intuition or more concrete information of the maturity of the plans in Delhi, Sayyid Ahmad had by now come to know that he had to play a bigger role in a different theatre. Subsequent events show more positively that Shah Abdul Aziz had carefully drawn up the plans which Sayyid Ahmad was to execute.

## VII. CONCLUSION

A new phenomenon made its appearance in the Indian history. The political leadership of men of sword and crowned heads, ceased with the occupation of Delhi by the British and the men of pen and priests began to play the role. Politics tend to be dominated again by religious dogma with this change. Muslims played a very significant role in the national struggle for freedom. Moreover, undoubtedly they were the forerunners of the freedom struggle of India. They have been the vanguards of freedom struggles of India. It was, after all, from their hands that the British had wrested power in India.

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