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Nationalist Muslims in British India: The Case of Hakim Ajmal Khan

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ISLAMIC political rhetoric has had a wide variety of meanings in twentieth-century South Asia. This variety has often been obscured by observers who assume Islamic political symbols to have a single set of meanings as well as by contemporary political figures who attribute to earlier figures their own particular views. In Pakistan today, for example, all national heroes of the past are assumed to have used Islamic symbols exactly as does the current regime. In a recent contest—in which so far no winner has emerged—prizes were offered for portraits depicting Muhammad 'Ali Jinnah, the urbane, westernized lawyer, in Islamic dress. Such re-interpretation can force resort to explanations of expedience to reconcile apparent inconsistencies, arguing, for example, that political figures spoke differently to different audiences. What else could one make of a Jinnah if he is clothed as a fundamentalist? But desire for legitimacy—here as everywhere—outweighs accurate history.

The purpose of this essay is to look at one label used to describe Muslim political figures and to try to understand its meaning in particular contexts. This term, 'Nationalist Muslim,' is among those subject to misconstrual, in this case by assuming the 'Muslim' element to be minimal and the 'Nationalist' element to be secularist and constitutionalist. Such an interpretation is understandable, given the desire of Western observers to link political behavior to patterns familiar to them from their own cultures; it is also understandable that contemporary Indian politicians would want to find precedents for positions valued today. The term was first used in the 1920s to identify Muslim political figures who supported the Indian National Congress and eschewed communal organizations. The term in fact reflects alliance more than the content of the participants' program. Recent research, for example, describes the support given by Maulana Azad—one of the best known Nationalist Muslims, Gandhi's ally, and India's first Education Minis-

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ter—to Muslim terrorist movements in Calcutta.[1] It clearly is inappropriate to equate the term 'nationalist' with liberal constitutionalism and secular abandonment of religious identities. Above all, it is necessary to see the extent to which the political action of both Muslim separatists and nationalists was stimulated by the interests of their religious community.

Hakim Ajmal Khan (1863–1928), the figure whose political views form the subject of this paper, is remembered as a 'nationalist' and a 'modernist.' His public life, extending over three decades, illumines three successive political strategies of the Muslim well-born in this period, drawing on different symbols of Muslim life and forging different alliances with non-Muslim groups. His political activities provide a contrast to a fourth strategy of Muslim political action, that of the religious leadership, which is also discussed below. These strategies together provide examples of the variety of implications carried by the term Muslim in differing political contexts. Throughout, the approach to politics was one defined by religious community.

Hakim Ajmal Khan was among the most influential of Muslim political leaders in the first decades of this century. He has been little studied, in part, perhaps, because his activities are not easy to categorize. Yet in the judgement of one historian '. . . he was the nearest the Muslims had to Gandhi in terms of breadth of political appeal: he was highly regarded by government, respected in the Congress, and amongst Hindus generally, and was one of the few Muslims who could feel equally at home among ulama, Nawabs and [Westernized] Aligarh graduates.'[2] Humane, intensely committed, and articulate, he is an arresting figure in himself and a representative of important themes in recent Muslim history.

Ajmal Khan was the scion of a family of physicians who had long served the Mughal court and, after their decline, the courts of regional princes. Like his father before him, Ajmal Khan was an influential figure in the city of Delhi, respected for his aristocratic standing and behavior and renowned for seemingly miraculous cures. The members of his family were men of refinement and cultivated tastes who participated in the cosmopolitan Persianate culture of the old capital. In the late nineteenth century they were drawn to the Aligarh Movement of Sir

[1] See 'Revolutionaries, Pan-Islamists and Bolsheviks: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the Political Underworld in Calcutta, 1905–1925,' in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India* (Delhi, 1981), pp. 85–108.

[2] Francis Robinson, *Separatism among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces Muslims, 1860–1923* (Cambridge, 1974), p. 377.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan in both its political and educational dimensions. Politically, the movement represented the attempt of the well-born of the Muslim community to create a special relationship with the British rulers on the basis of their history as previous rulers and of their shared monotheistic faith. Educationally, it represented the attempt to assimilate to European learning and styles of behavior. It was welcomed by the British whose whole idiom of rule was cast in terms of religious community.[3] Under the influence of the Aligarh movement, Hakim Ajmal Khan's elder brother, Hakim 'Abdu'l-Majid Khan, began the formal institutionalization of the indigenous medical teaching and the reform of its content that his brother was to bring to fruition. The revival of traditional medicine may seem alien to a movement often described as modernist, but in fact it fits logically into its over-all concerns.

The Aligarh Style and the Revival of Medicine

The Aligarh definition of politics had two prongs. Most basically, it focused on the protection of the interests of the Muslim well-born, including princes, courtiers, landlords, and professional men.[4] Its causes were those of adequate representation, education to make representation possible, and protection of Urdu as official language for both cultural and political reasons. Secondly, aside from the protection of these interests, participants in the Aligarh movement celebrated Muslim culture as a focus of self-esteem. In part they recalled the historical glories of the Muslim past; in part they cherished the hallmarks of elite Persianate urban culture as it had evolved in India. Urdu language and poetry and the customs of aristocratic gatherings were central in this latter focus; the revival of indigenous medicine belongs here too.

It is worth underlining one important characteristic of this program. Neither the focus on interests nor the concern for Muslim culture are in a narrow sense 'religious' except in so far as they ensure the status and self-confidence of the old Muslim elite. The cultural symbols to whose elaboration Ajmal Khan and his family made their contribution are what might be called cosmopolitan or Islamicate symbols, that is symbols derived from those aspects of civilization associated with Islam

[3] P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge, 1972), esp. ch. V.

[4] See David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton, 1978).

in which non-Muslims played significant roles.[5] They are, quite literally, worldly symbols in that they are linked to historical romanticism and look to restoration of worldly glory. They contrast with the very different kind of religious symbols that became prominent later on.

Hakim Ajmal Khan's most original contribution was in almost single-handedly making traditional Muslim medicine, *yūnānī ṭibb*, part of the repertoire of Muslim (and later nationalist) political symbols. Like the poet Hali and others associated with Aligarh, Ajmal Khan was convinced of the greatness of the Muslim cultural past, of the vicissitudes in the fortunes of all cultures, and of the possibility of the restoration of Muslim greatness in the present. He assimilated, as did many colonialized intellectuals, the orientalist dichotomy of East and West in assessing the cultural and political context of his times.[6] In 1891 he expressed this view in the introduction he had prepared to a catalogue of Arabic and Persian manuscripts:

> Although the sun of Eastern arts and sciences kept rising in its own time, and many nations drew benefits from its light, now that sun has declined and the age, as is its habit, has given birth to a new sun that fulfills the needs of the people of the age. . . . The results of this reversal, which previous nations have already endured, will happen to us: we will see our former greatness and glory in the hand of oblivion if we do not take thought to preserve it.[7]

Ajmal Khan's first efforts were devoted to reversing the tide of cultural decline in medicine; his political activities were an inevitable outgrowth of them.

The strategies for reform of medicine were like those employed in the reform of other branches of indigenous knowledge, particularly religious education.[8] There was the same attempt to gain institutional equivalence to the British schools by creating formal schools with paid staff and fixed requirements to replace the personalistic informal settings of family homes and apprenticeship. There was also the same shift to the use of the vernacular language of Urdu in order to make knowledge more widely available. In 1897, for example, Ajmal Khan wrote a booklet on plague, prefaced by a defense of his writing in the *mulkī zabān* (territorial language) instead of in Arabic; he expected, he said, that this use of Urdu would be regarded as a *bid'a* (the terminology used in the

[5] The term Islamicate is from Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago, 1974), I: 57–60.

[6] For a discussion of the orientalist mentality see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

[7] Excerpted in Ḥakīm Jamīl Khāṅ, *Sīrat-i Ajmal* (Delhi, n.d.), p. 11.

[8] For a discussion of changes in religious education in the late nineteenth century see my *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900* (Princeton, 1982).

religious law to define a reprehensible innovation).[9] In terms of content, the medical reformers made the same attempt as the religious scholars to find systematic, generalizable principles, in this case scientific principles that were analogous to the systems available in the West. These were to replace popular practices that were seen as outside the scientific system. In some ways the technique for creating this intellectual equivalence was the same in all subjects, namely the return to texts of the literate culture at the expense of customary or local practice. Thus the adversaries of the reformers were practitioners of unsystematic folk medicine, often midwives and other women, and poorly-trained *yūnānī* practitioners. As in the case of religious education, this is scripturalist reform, but here reform by the cosmopolitan, not the shari'a-minded.[10] An important difference from other areas of reform, however, was that at no point did the reformers attempt to identify Indic or Hindu elements in medicine as distinct from a fundamentally Islamic core.

The modern revival of Islamic medicine was thus more communal, even secular, than religious in the sense that it was linked not to Islamic practice but to pride in Muslim culture and to Muslim social identity. The medical system is inherently plural in its origin and continuing openness. It is called *yūnānī tibb*, Greek medicine, and came into Muslim culture in the period of 'Abbasid rule in Baghdad when a common culture was being forged out of the disparate elements embraced in a great empire. Islamic medicine is the medicine of Galen and Hippocrates translated into Arabic, enriched even in its early centuries by contact with Indian specialists in Ayurveda who shared the humoral theories common to the whole of the old world.[11] The period of the Mughal empire saw a second important occasion of interaction between medical traditions when both pharmacopoeia and therapeutics were modified on both sides.[12] In principle such adaptations could not be

[9] Muḥammad Ajmal Dihlawī [Ḥakīm Ajmal Khān], *al-Ṭā'ūn* (Delhi, 1897), pp. 2–3. One assumes that a legal term like this is used because the legal paradigm informs every approach to knowledge. Examples are many. More serious than the imputation of *bid'a*, opponents to Ajmal Khan's medical conference in 1892 are said to have called those who attended non-Muslim—*kāfir* and *murtad* (Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 24). In contrast, a supporter spoke of Ajmal Khan as a *mujtahid* (one able to exercise legal judgement) in an era of *taqlīd* (legal conformity) (Muḥammad Ḥasan Qarshī, Zubdatu'l-Ḥukma (ed.), *Mashīru'l-aṭṭiba: Masīḥu'l-mulk nambar* (Nov.–Dec. [1928], p. 12). Dr Zakir Husain after Ajmal Khan's death spoke of him as a *mujtahid* and a *muqallid* as well (Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 529).

[10] The terms are again from Hodgson, cited above, note 5.

[11] See Manfred Ullman, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh, 1978), esp. ch. II.

[12] Thus Hakim Sharif Khan, Ajmal Khan's early eighteenth-century ancestor, had, for example, made changes in the mixtures known as *kushta* under the influence of the

seen as accretions because the theory of Islamic medicine is holistic and demands adjustments in accordance with the local context. In the same way Ajmal Khan argued that there were new diseases in the modern world and that for them one ought to learn from the West. Although in some cases he recommended learning techniques from Western medicine, notably in surgery, he insisted that this was necessary only because of neglect of *yūnānī*'s own texts. Other techniques, like the uses of hot and cold baths he observed in Germany, fit well into *yūnānī* theory. Influence from Western medicine was thus limited and did not extend to basic principles. *Yūnānī* was seen as a scientific system of its own, deduced from a coherent set of principles, confirmed by empirical evidence, and able—in theory—to encounter the Western system as an equal.

Central to the movement for medical reform was what one might call the biomedical paradigm of illness argued on the basis of empiricism and rational therapeutics in contrast to a metaphysical, psychological, or social paradigm whose adepts would be less technicians than holy men.[13] Thus the famous blind hakim of Nizamu'd-Din in Delhi today scoffs at those who talk of possession by demons: 'Some people's imagination becomes overheated and operates beyond all rational bounds. What has happened in these cases is that certain nerves in their brains have become stretched, and I can generally treat these patients successfully with medicines.'[14] He is in the tradition of Ajmal Khan in being personally pious but scientific. Modern Indians and Westerners who dismiss all indigenous systems as 'faith healing' thus miss an important distinction. As science, medicine became a political symbol of Muslim cultural pride and, linked with Ayurvedic medicine and its revival, a national symbol as well. This has been called the 'resecularization' of medicine to suggest that the system was originally developed as a scientific system; it was later made part of religious systems; and now in the recent period it has been re-formulated as scientific.[15]

Some continued to understand *yūnānī* medicine in an Islamic religious framework, and the reformist ulama in particular took part in its revival. Practitioners ran the gamut from those who focused primarily on scientific principles to those who stressed divine intervention. At

Indic system. See Muḥammad Kamālu'd-Dīn Ḥusain Hamadānī, *Maṭab-i Masīḥ* (Aligarh, 1976), p. 12, and Muḥammad Ḥasan Qarshī (ed.), *Mashīru'l-aṭṭiba* (Nov.–Dec. [1928], p. 11).

[13] This distinction is paraphrased from Sudhir Kakar, *Shamans, Mystics, and Doctors: A Psychological Inquiry into India and its Healing Traditions* (New York, 1982), p. 31.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 30.

[15] See Charles Leslie, 'The Ambiguities of Medical Revivalism in Modern India,' in Charles Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical Systems: A Comparative Study* (Berkeley, 1977), p. 360.

Deoband, the center of scripturalist religious reform, many of the ulama were also hakims. There was some opposition to including *ṭibb* in the curriculum, in part because it was a distraction from the more important studies of the fundamental texts, in part because some felt the pious ought only trust in God and see illness as a visitation offering an opportunity for spiritual growth. But *ṭibb* was ultimately included in the curriculum and many of the ulama, always recognizing God as the ultimate healer, disseminated scientific medicine. Hakim Mansur Ahmad Khan, a Deoband graduate and chief physician at the court of Hyderabad early in this century, wrote a compendium of proofs of the existence of God, many of them drawn from the beneficial principles enshrined in scientific Greek medicine.[16] The most important Deobandi text for women included a basic primer on *ṭibb* as part of the attempt to include women in the general movement for reform.[17] But as far as the over-all revival of *ṭibb* went and the creation of separate schools for its instruction, the emphasis was wholly secular.

In the revival of medicine, both institutional changes in teaching and intellectual changes in content were inextricably linked to the political context in which they were made. The professionalization of medicine thrust its authors into a public arena, as issues taken up, for example, by the reformist ulama did not. The scholars could quietly create formally organized seminaries, publish and write on religious responsibilities in Urdu, and generally instruct Muslims in individual responsibility for the fulfillment of the religious law. Public debates aside, they could pursue their interests without encounters with the government. Hakims by contrast needed official recognition, both for psychological reasons and for their very survival. This was particularly true as Western and Western-trained doctors (in India called allopaths), moved to make the same claims to a monopoly of legitimacy in India as had their counterparts in Europe. At mid-nineteenth century, the British had been inclined to use hakims for programs of medical relief and to establish courses for their training, but that had given way under pressure just a few decades later. The major assault, as it was seen, on the indigenous systems came with the attempt by British and Indian allopathic physicians to secure Registration Acts in each province so that no doctor of indigenous medicine could be legally recognized to give testimony in legal disputes, to certify illness for workers, or to perform any other legally required function. Between 1912 and 1916 medical registration acts were passed in Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the

[16] Ḥakīm Manṣūr Aḥmad Khāṅ, *Mazhab-i Manṣūr* (Hyderabad, 1907/08).
[17] Maulānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānawī, *Bihishtī Zēwar*, Book IX (Muradabad, 1906).

United Provinces, Punjab, Burma, Bihar and Orissa.[18] The reformers, moreover, fought to claim a monopoly of legitimacy for those indigenous practitioners who were educated in their new institutions, and periodically called on government to help them, for example, in hiring only their graduates for government positions.[19] Given such concerns, political organization and activity were inevitable. *Yūnānī* medicine, both scientific and Muslim, could not easily be dismissed.

Even before the decade of intensive activity stimulated by the attempts to pass registration acts, Ajmal Khan had sought a constituency for his program of medical reform. In the initial period of his public activities, he directed his attention primarily to the princely elite, the theoretically autonomous rulers of one-third of the sub-continent. They were in fact the creatures of the British who nurtured them in return for loyalty and whatever sanction for imperial rule they could provide. In this situation there were many among the princes who chose to use their resources to patronize indigenous culture as a source of their own and their people's self-esteem. The flourishing of indigenous art, music and learning in general in the colonial period derives in part from the structure of British rule that supported the princes and others of the old elites. Of the groups whom Ajmal Khan found to support his schemes, the princes more than any other group valued medicine intrinsically as well as for its symbolic value. The Muslim nawwab of Rampur cherished Ajmal Khan personally and supported the medical and political institutions he espoused. The ruler of Bhopal had a state-wide organization of medical care staffed by *yūnānī*-trained doctors. The rulers of the princely states almost single-handedly provided the capital for the college that Ajmal Khan founded for indigenous medicine following the first world war.

From the very beginning of his career, Ajmal Khan also attempted to gain the respect of the British for his endeavors. In this his concerns were like those of the Aligarh modernists and other apologists who required validation of their efforts by the British. In his newspaper published in the '80s and '90s, or at meetings held at the Delhi town hall with British officials present, he presented himself to officials as someone who shared their values and was open to change. In a speech in 1889, for example, he implied—without ever saying so—that Western medicine was

[18] Officiating Deputy Secretary, Government of India, to Chief Commissioner Delhi, 25.11.19, in B File #70 of Home, 1920, in Delhi Archives Research Room.

[19] See, for example, K. B. Pirzada Mohamad Husain, M.A., to E. R. Abbott, Chief Commissioner, Delhi, 14.2.25, in B File #5 of Education 1925, Delhi Archives Research Room.

superior by stressing the need for training indigenous practitioners when Western-trained doctors were so few. He ventured that indigenous medicine was more suited to the local temperament but at the same time acknowledged the superiority of Western doctors in a limited range of anatomical and surgical skills, pointing out that these were now taught in his school. In this way he conveyed an impression of openness and rationality. Later he was to add a note of threat by alluding to the possibility of Muslim disaffection if British authorities denied them respect.

The British were ambivalent about Ajmal Khan's efforts on behalf of indigenous medicine. What support they gave was politically inspired, given to secure the loyalty of a person understood to be at the center of an influential network based on family and education. British officials graced almost every important occasion associated with the reforms his family initiated: the opening of their school in 1889, the opening of the women's branch of the school in 1909, the laying of the cornerstone of the college in 1916, and the opening of the research institute in 1930. Given his reservations about indigenous medicine, however, it was with great reluctance that the viceroy, Lord Hardinge, laid the foundation stone of the college in 1916; it was only his personal respect for Ajmal Khan and a promise that instruction in some aspects of Western medicine would be included that persuaded him to attend.[20] Ajmal Khan's hope of serious official respect, even preference, for the *yūnānī* system was never even a possibility. Respect for him and for his associates was more readily granted on the basis of their political influence.

Ajmal Khan and The Muslim League Style of Politics

Shortly after the turn of the century, Muslims in North India moved from the darbar model of Sayyid Ahmad—seeking roles as trusted and loyal advisors to their ruler patrons—to a more assertive political position. Disappointments in the special relationship, above all over the issue of giving Hindi equal place with Urdu as the official language, coupled with the prospect of constitutional reform, stimulated efforts to organize that culminated in the first delegation of the Muslim League to the viceroy in 1906. Ajmal Khan was part of that delegation to press Muslim interests, and he continued active in the League until the non-cooperation movement following the war. The League became the

[20] B File #5 of 1930, Education, Delhi Archives Reading Room.

chief actor in the arena created for political activity by the Indian Councils Act of 1909 that provided, however narrowly, for some popular influence on the workings of government. It made the relationship to the British more adversarial, but the basic program of the Muslim elite remained the same. They continued to define the community as that of the landed and professional elites and their program as one of securing the political interests and the cultural respect owed that elite. Ajmal Khan's own relation to individual Englishmen and his political position convey the ambivalence and contradictions of seeking a special relationship with the rulers.

Ajmal Khan's relation to the British was predicated on a quest for respect, for *'izzat* and *wiqār*, a problematic goal in a relationship between colonial ruler and colonized subject. He sought this respect for himself, for his family, and—as in the registration act controversy—for his art. He accepted the family title of *ḥaẕiqu'l-mulk* ('the skilled one of the kingdom') from the British in 1908 and he was honored by being consulted as a respected source of native opinion. Hailey, the chief commissioner, wrote to the viceroy in 1913: 'He is a man whose opinion . . . is of great value as he comes across all classes of men and has a very sound judgement in all such matters.'[21] When Ajmal Khan found individual Englishmen who accorded him respect, he was capable of forming with them the intense and passionate friendships cherished by his culture, friendships which were typically reserved for fellow Muslims. Among his English friends were C. F. Andrews, the Anglican missionary who identified himself personally with Tagore and Gandhi and politically with the interests of nationalists and of Indians overseas. Andrews spoke of 'an ever deepening friendship' with Ajmal Khan and revered him for his integrity and dedication.[22] Ajmal Khan deeply respected the viceroy, Lord Hardinge (1910–16), and valued his relationship with him and with his wife beyond any question of mere expediency. Theodore Morison, on the staff at Aligarh, facilitated Ajmal Khan's trip to Europe. But even in these friendships and even when most singlemindedly asserting his loyalty to the British crown and his conviction of British beneficence, Ajmal Khan, like all Indians, knew himself at perpetual risk of insult in any encounter. His friend C. F. Andrews sensed an important element in his attitude to the rulers.

[21] W. M. Hailey to Private Secretary to H.E. the Viceroy, 12.6.13, in B File #168 of Education 1913, in Delhi Archives Research Room.

[22] C. F. Andrews, 'Hakim Ajmal Khan,' in *Eminent Musalmans* (Madras: Natesan, 1926), p. 287.

Andrews often saw the hakim at parties of the deputy commissioner that both were expected to attend. 'It was easy to find the Hakim Sahib on such occasions, for he would sit apart and would do nothing to court favour or to gain recognition.'[23] The whole situation, Andrews explained, must have irked a person who had once been honored by the Mughals.

Ajmal Khan, too, had his share of railroad experiences, the single most telling locus of class encounters. To give only one example, faithfully recalled by a disciple, he once 'during the period when he was particularly close to the rulers' entered a first-class carriage and spread out his bedding. An Englishman came in and ordered him to move to the other side of the compartment. Ajmal Khan's servant pointed out to the Englishman who this was, whereupon the Englishman apologized, withdrew his order, and gave an elaborate explanation of why he had acted as he had. Ajmal Khan refused to accept his apology or accommodate his wishes on the grounds that the Englishman had acted as he had out of racism.[24] Later, when political events had begun to alienate Ajmal Khan from loyalty to the British, a second personal experience effectively moved him to break with his previous stance. This was the internment and accusation of subversion laid against his nephew, Hakim Muhammad Ahmad Khan, in 1918 when he had traveled to the frontier. 'It is against my expectations of the government,' Ajmal Khan wired to the chief commissioner of Delhi, '[and] I need hardly say that the order not only casts a slur on Mohamed Khan but also on all the members of the family.'[25] Once again this was a matter of *'izzat* and *wiqār*. One recalls Sayyid Ahmad Khan's bitterness in his later years when the living embodiment of his belief in cultural assimilation, his Cambridge-returned son, was still only treated as a native.

Through the first world war, however, Ajmal Khan and people like him adhered to the policy of loyalty as the best guarantee of their interests. In 1910 Ajmal Khan delivered a welcome address to the third annual session of the Muslim League. The speech is virtually a text book example of the salient points of this period of Muslim politics. Ajmal Khan denounced terrorism, recalled Sayyid Ahmad Khan's aloofness from the Indian National Congress, and reiterated the special relation-

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 293.
[24] Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, pp. 477–8.
[25] Telegram posted 14.8.16 at Mussoorie in Home Confidential File #48 of 1916, Delhi Archives Research Room.

ship possible between Muslims and their rulers—and the motive for fostering it:

> Loyalty to his rulers is engrained in the Muslim's nature and is inculcated by his religion. The Quran expressly lays down that the Musalman and the Christian are nearer each other than the followers of any other two faiths. We also realize that the presence of the British in India is the best guarantee for the preservation of peace and order in the country and the equitable protection of Muslim interests.[26]

He also lauded the political relation of the British to their subjects: '. . . British statesmanship, ever characterized by generosity and beneficence, is exerting itself to lead the peoples of this Eastern land, step by step, along the path of political progress on Western lines.'[27] These attitudes would not outlive the decade.

More long-lived was Ajmal Khan's conviction that political activity had to be understood in terms of community membership and mediated through communal organization. At this point he emphasized the theme of Muslim backwardness: 'Our share in the public service of the land is yet absolutely inadequate. In education we are still very backward. We have only lately entered political life.'[28] He reviewed the particular arenas in which Muslim interests needed to be safeguarded and pointed to the importance of representation in universities, on municipal and district boards, on legislative councils, and on the viceroy's council, citing the principle 'of having a Musalman . . . to represent the Muslim point of view.' He concurred with League policy of favoring separate electorates (in which each community elected its own representatives) rather than general electorates. On all this, he would later modify his position, either in principle or in emphasis, but most enduring was his insistence on the legitimacy of separate organizations to press for communal interests:

> Those, however, who take exception to the existence of bodies established for safeguarding communal interests, forget that in advancing the cause of one section of the population you advance, indirectly, the cause of the whole, and that a network of Hindu associations and *sabhas* is already striving for the promotion of sectional interests. So long as such sectional interests, whether of the Hindus or the Mohammedans, do not jeopardize the larger interests of the country or community, we should welcome them. . . .[29]

In all this, Ajmal Khan was one with the early leadership of the League.

[26] Welcome Address at the Third Session of the Muslim League, Delhi, January 29–30, 1910, in A. M. Zaidi, *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India, I: The Emergence of Jinnah* (New Delhi, 1975), p. 188.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 181. [28] *Ibid.*, p. 188. [29] *Ibid.*, p. 185.

Unlike them, however, his commitment to the preservation and development of indigenous medicine had required him to ally with non-Muslims for political action in their area of common interest. These were defenders of the other major indigenous system, the Ayurvedic. In terms of reform of content of *yūnānī*, there is no evidence that Ajmal Khan had ever hoped for collaboration. He believed that both systems, the Ayurvedic and the *yūnānī*, had entered a period of decline: indeed that of the former was far the greater and he ventured that it had seen no development for eighteen hundred years whereas *ṭibb* had only stagnated for four to five hundred![30] For reform of content, he turned to Western medicine to learn some techniques and some approaches to new illness, but primarily to recover areas like surgery and an underlying belief in progress that had been forgotten. It was to Western medicine that Ajmal Khan wanted a reformed *ṭibb* to answer. Only the threat of the registration acts forced cooperation with the other indigenous system; and in 1910 Ajmal Khan organized the All-India Ayurvedic and Tibbia Conference. Thereafter it met annually and virtually all petitions and representations to the government were couched in terms of the two traditions. When Ajmal Khan moved on to raise funds and plan for the foundation of a college, it was to be a college that taught both *yūnānī* and Ayurvedic. When Ajmal Khan moved away from his position of loyalism during the war, this experience of communal collaboration was influential in shaping his political stance.

Ajmal Khan and Religious Reform

Ajmal Khan, in his espousal of the interests of the Muslim well-born and his commitment to Muslim cultural symbols, stood apart from and indeed opposed an alternative definition of Muslim community and politics held by some of his Muslim contemporaries. The reformist ulama had, particularly after the Mutiny of 1857 and the evident display of British superiority, turned inward in their teachings and focused on creating a community defined not by Muslim political structure and symbols, but by individual adherence to Islamic norms of conduct and belief. Their definition of community extended beyond elites to ordinary Muslims, men and women, of every background. To train religious scholars, they had organized new schools with formal, bureaucratic characteristics that had been learned from British examples. They created a vernacular religious literature meant for ordinary

[30] Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 64.

Muslims. They undertook public preaching and debates. The content of their teaching was primarily personal legal obligations and the techniques of personal spiritual development. Underlying all their efforts was a belief that Muslims had strayed in their understanding of Islam and in their commitment to religious obedience. It was necessary to return to the basic texts and to eliminate from current practice all false accretions and deviations that the passage of time and the local environment had produced. They offered a perfunctory loyalty to the British (while regarding them as unclean and their rule as illegitimate) until after the world war.

There were two main groups of reformers in this period in north India who shared similar institutional and methodological orientations. They differed over their attitude to the historic schools of law: the Deobandis continued to follow the Hanafi school which was widespread among Sunni Muslims (and hence they were known as *muqallid* or conformers); and the Ahl-i Hadith discounted the historic schools in favor of direct use of Qur'an and hadith (and hence they were known as *ghair-muqallid*. Dispute between these two groups was particularly intense. Both, moreover, challenged and were challenged by those who objected to any change at all, a group known as the Barelwis. In the course of their debates, the Barelwis became ever more like their opponents in organization and in a concern with codification of legal norms. The reformers chose as their particular targets, as had Sunni Muslims from the time of Ibn Taymiyya, the accretions they attributed to false Sufism and to the Shi'a, both of whom they felt compromised the unique position of God by the powers they ascribed to saints and imams. They rejected what they understood to represent a more dependent religion in which the believer looked to intermediaries for mediation instead of to his own responsibility for fulfilling the Law and developing his own personal qualities. Reform religion was well suited to a period of alien rule since the locus of authority was not the state; and it was also suited to a period of greater geographic mobility since the believer was no longer tied to local customary practices on fixed occasions.

From his earliest public statements, Ajmal Khan deplored the reformist orientation of the ulama. Indeed there was a family tradition of opposition to reform since Ajmal Khan's grandfather, Hakim Muhammad Sadiq 'Ali (d. 1264/1847–48), had written the *Taqwiyatu'l-aqā'id* as a refutation of the first great reformist tract of the nineteenth century, Maulana Isma'il Shahid's *Taqwiyatu'l-īmān*.[31] Above all else,

[31] Muḥammad Kamālu'd-Din Ḥusain Hamadānī, *Maṭab-i Masīḥ* (Aligarh, 1976), p. 12.

Ajmal Khan abhorred the divisiveness and public controversy that seemed intrinsic to the efforts at reform. He used the columns of the family newspaper to denounce the rivalries of the *muqallid* and *ghair muqallid* in Delhi in the 1890s.[32] At a meeting in 1909 he declared that there had been more mutual denunciations of infidelity (*fatāwa-yi takfīr*) in India since 1857 than there had been previously in the whole history of Islam. Moreover, he regarded the a-political efforts of the reformers as inconsequential. For him community long continued to be defined as the community of the well-born landed and professional classes and the goal of political action to be a place for them and their culture in the courts and councils of the rulers.

Ajmal Khan's whole style of behavior and belief was unlike that of the ulama and was indeed characteristic of many of those who were to go on to play a role in nationalist politics. His was an aristocratic style. He was a patron and a host, invariably in the company of poets and literati, landlords and government servants; one anecdote has him in the company of two women singers.[33] Under the nom de plume of Shaida Dihlawi he wrote his own Urdu and Persian poems.[34] As he grew older his sporting activities shifted from the traditional *akhāra* (wrestling pit) to billiards and shikar.[35] During most of his adult life he wore the sherwani and fez of Aligarh, the former an adaptation of the Western coat and the latter a symbol of admiration for Ottoman social change; both garments were regarded as unacceptable by most of the ulama.

Ajmal Khan's own religious style was not that of the reformist ulama. Although a Sunni, in direct contrast to the reformers he cherished precisely the two orientations they opposed, an inclination toward Shi'i beliefs and reverence for the shrine-based Sufis. After his first heart attack in 1905, he chose to make his trip abroad for recuperation to the Shi'i shrines of Iraq. There he set out from Kufa to the shrine of Hazrat 'Ali and finding himself alone at one point continued on foot. At the shrine, he later wrote, he experienced an emotion of deep happiness that was to last his entire life.[36] The Shi'i nawwab of Rampur, his patron, said after Ajmal Khan's death that had he had a Sufi master, it would have been he.[37]

[32] Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 38.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 496.
[34] Published after his death by Dr Zakir Husain at Jami'a Millia.
[35] He went along on the hunt but never actually shot anything, arguing that a hakim ought not take but give life. Ḥakīm Rashīd Aḥmad Khāṅ Amrohawī, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal* (Delhi, 1938), p. 32.
[36] Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 55.
[37] *Ibid.*, pp. 51–2.

Ajmal Khan is said to have loved to be in the company of Sufis, and he and other members of his family were buried at the shrine of the seventeenth-century saint, Hazrat Khwaja Sayyid Hasan Rasul Numa.[38] Ajmal Khan probably had initiation at the hand of Miyan Munawwar 'Ali Shah of the Ghishti Nizami order whom he admired—in a conventional form of praise for holy men—for being learned without having studied. Through Nawwab Mushtaq Hussain, Wiqaru'l-Mulk, a leading administrator at Aligarh and his close associate in Muslim League politics, he was put in touch with a second influential *pīr*, Maulana Sayyid Sikandar Shah. He is known to have held him to be a great 'source of peace and comfort'; and is alleged to have been able to practice the Sufi discipline of holding the picture of the master in his memory, remarkable in this case because the master and disciple had never met. As a mark of respect, Ajmal Khan taught *ṭibb* personally to Sikandar Shah's chief disciple. Ajmal Khan contrasted the Sufis with the ulama, arguing that they did not raise disorder (*fasād*), but 'with one glance could bring a message of healing to the ills of the heart.'[39]

Unlike the reformist ulama who made ritual practice central to their lives, Ajmal Khan is said to have been careless of keeping the prayers and the fast.[40] Yet he was personally pious. His peshkar (deputy) of many years recalled Ajmal Khan's dismissal of his hesitation to begin a *yūnānī* education because of lack of resources. 'A student must begin his education by trusting in God. The Lord is the Provider.'[41] Moreover, as a boy and young man he had himself pursued the classical learning tradition seriously and was teased for being a 'mulla' in his youth. Opposition to the reformist ulama did not mean that one was worldly and irreligious, but rather, perhaps, that one was religious in a different way.

Yet Ajmal Khan, for all his marked differences with the ulama, shared certain of their orientations that were increasingly common among all shades of Muslim opinion, whether reformist or not. Like the reformers, he disapproved of excessive spending on rituals and life-cycle ceremonies. Like them, too, he urged study of the fundamental

[38] The graveyard is now inhabited by squatters and most of the gravestones broken (April 1982).

[39] Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 82.

[40] Ḥakīm Rashīd Aḥmad Khāṅ Amrohawī, Shifā'ul-Mulk, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal* (Delhi, 1938), pp. 34–5. This last comment is staunchly denied by Mufti Kifayatu'llah's son, Hafiz Rahman Wasif, who knew Ajmal Khan in his later years. (In private conversations in Delhi, July 1982.) His biographer explained the failure to keep the fast as a concession to his heart condition.

[41] Ḥakīm Rashīd Aḥmad Khāṅ Amrohawī, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 17.

scriptural sources of the faith, even for those associated with the shrines. In 1916 he presided over the annual meeting of the Madrasa Mu'iniyya 'Usmaniyya at the great Chishti shrine of Shaikh Mu'inu'd-Din in Ajmer. The school had been founded shortly before at the instigation of the head of religious affairs for the princely state of Hyderabad who continued as its patron. Meant to educate the sons of the descendants of the shaikh who controlled the shrine, at its height it had some 150–200 students and 25 teachers.[42] On the occasion of his visit, Ajmal Khan declared that this was the first school to teach Sufism properly. He diffidently urged that each branch of knowledge be taught by a specialist and that those more learned than he revise the curriculum in such a way that the books of the great thinkers of the past be once more studied.[43] The school was also visited during the Khilafat movement by such figures as the 'Ali Brothers and Maulana 'Abdu'l-Bari, a relationship suggestive of the political utility of an open attitude toward the influential shrines, parallel in fact to the utility of an open attitude to the often influential Shi'a.

Ajmal Khan's opposition to the reformers coupled with his desire for unity and learning was reflected in his support of two religious institutions that were founded in these years. The first was the Nadwatu'l-'Ulama in Lucknow, an institution meant to unite the ulama of all schools on the basis of serious scholarship and to offer them a political platform. Ajmal Khan was a member of their Board of Management for many years, presided over their annual meeting in 1909, and was part of a committee to reconcile conflicts at the school in 1914. He was sympathetic to the school's emphasis on Arabic and to its inclusion of literature and history in its teaching. He also supported the Nazaratu'l-Ma'arif founded by a graduate of Deoband, Maulana 'Ubaidullah Sindhi, in the hopes of uniting those with traditional learning and those with Western learning in an institution that focused on study of the Qur'an.

Again like the reformist ulama, he placed enormous value on a disciplined and controlled life. He exemplified 'control of the lower self', as it was called; and the testimonials about him collected from his associates after his death are largely couched in the technical termino-

[42] The school is now very modest and mostly teaches Qur'an to local boys. The teacher, fittingly, doubles as hakim at the shrine's clinic in the afternoon. (Interview with Hakim Muhyi'd-Din, the teacher, Dec. 22, 1981, Ajmer.) Information about the school's history is from Maulana Aijaz 'Ali, former accountant for the school, Feb. 17, 1982, Ajmer.

[43] Ḥakīm Jamīl Khāṅ, *Sīrat-i Ajmal*, pp. 100–1.

logy, mostly from the Sufi tradition, that is used to discuss a disciplined and well-formed life characterized by complete self-control, unselfishness and truthfulness.[44] His deputy identified his most singular characteristic quality as *quwwat-i taskhīr*, the power of subduing, and said it resulted in each person's feeling uniquely loved by him.[45] In every educational institution with which he was involved, Ajmal Khan insisted on the necessity of teachers who personally embodied the lessons they attempted to teach. Ajmal Khan thus shared the commitment of the reformers to certain personal values, to abandonment of elaborate ceremonials, and to education in the Islamic classics. But he stood decisively apart from their passionate concern with establishing correct belief and practice among all Muslims, defined in part by opposition to shrines and Shi'is, as well as from their attempt to operate outside the political structure.

Nationalist Muslims: Communal Symbols and Non-Communal Cooperation

In the decade that began in 1912 both Ajmal Khan and a segment of the reformist ulama were to move to a political paradigm that represented neither the interest-oriented community-focused program associated with Aligarh nor the politically aloof program that defined community by individual adherence to religious norms associated with the reformist ulama. In that period Muslim political leaders felt betrayed by the British by a series of policies that were carried out both inside and outside India. Within India there was anger over the revocation of the partition of Bengal that had given the Muslim majority of that province the eastern section under its own control. There was acute disappointment over the government's unwillingness to encourage the development of Aligarh as a Muslim university. There was concern that the constitutional reforms would not offer enough to Muslims and a feeling that Muslims had to organize to bring continuous political pressure. Outside India there seemed to be unending pressure on the Muslim world and in particular an undermining of the Ottomans in their central and symbolically significant area of authority. The Balkan Wars particularly focused Muslim opinion on the Middle East and the larger

[44] These comments are collected in Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, pp. 467–532. See also Ḥakīm Rashīd Aḥmad Khāṅ Amrohawī, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, pp. 27–9, the sections headed *kasr-i nafsī* and *ẓabṭ-i nafs aur matānat*.

[45] Ḥakīm Rashīd Aḥmad Amrohawī, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 30.

Muslim world; and the subsequent years were to see Muslim causes outside India as the central focus of Indian Muslim political organization and mobilization. Many of these discontents were focused on the Kanpur Mosque incident of 1913, the first occasion when influential political figures and religious leaders from outside took up an essentially local issue. By 1913 the Muslim League was calling for self-government. In the same year, Ajmal Khan emerged as a major figure in the organization of a medical delegation to the Balkans.

In these years the rhetoric of Muslim political language moved from an emphasis on the preservation of elite interests and cosmopolitan cultural symbols to more emotive, populist, public symbols of Muslim corporate identity. Politicians did not take up the program of the ulama directed toward individual education and moral reform; the symbols were not religious in that sense. Rather they focused on Muslims as a special community, the best community, a community to be reckoned with seriously. This was a community to be defended by all Muslims as a sacred duty. At the same time as developing this religious rhetoric, Muslim political leaders moved to cooperate with non-Muslims in their common cause of opposition to the British. The landmark of this cooperation was the Lucknow Pact of the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress in 1916 in which a common platform of political demands was obtained. Sections of the ulama, drawn by the religious issues and by the opportunity to oppose the British, organized as a political group to cooperate with the others. Leadership increasingly passed to Gandhi who took up the cause of preservation of the Ottoman Khilafat; and in 1921 both Hindus and Muslims followed him into non-cooperation. Ajmal Khan was centrally involved in the development of these organizations and programs. It was Ajmal Khan (and Dr Ansari) who first invited religious leaders to the Muslim League; and Ajmal Khan was perhaps the Muslim closest to Gandhi.

At the same time he continued to be deeply involved in his defence of the indigenous medical system and to see the cooperation of hakims and *vaids* as essential to its success. The All India Unani and Ayurvedic Tibbia Conference continued to hold annual meetings and to lobby for protection against discriminatory laws. In 1916 Ajmal Khan succeeded in having the issue of the protection of the indigenous systems raised in the legislative council and a resolution was successfully passed that attempts would be made to place 'the ancient and indigenous systems of medicine on a scientific basis.'[46] At a meeting with Madan Mohan

[46] Quoted in B File #179 of 1919, Home, Delhi Administration Research Room.

Malaviya present, Ajmal Khan argued the necessity of founding tibbia colleges throughout the country, all under the control of a central tibbi university.[47] Writing in the annual report of the Tibbia College in 1920, Ajmal Khan insisted on the identity between indigenous medicine and self government, using the swadeshi argument (although not the term) associated with Gandhi: 'If we want to take the administration of government into our own hands, we must right all national things, including the indigenous method of healing. Our real progress depends on these things. We fail in serving our country if we are dependent on outside things.'[48] National leaders regularly presided over the annual functions of the conference and the college. In 1921, Gandhi himself dedicated the newly completed buildings of the college. With the passing of the Montagu–Chelmsford constitutional reforms of 1919, health was made a provincial subject under the control of elected officials. From that time on, fear of discrimination largely ended and the policy of governments, continuing to the present, has been, in varying degrees, the patronage of the indigenous systems.

For Ajmal Khan the support of non-Muslim political leaders was essential both to provide a united front against government discrimination or neglect and, as the nationalist movement grew, to gain the support of those who were increasingly powerful. The support that was given to medicine by these leaders was in part based on genuine commitment to the value of the old systems but in part it was based on political motivation, just as British support had been. The most dramatic example of this ambivalence was in Gandhi's address at the laying of the foundation stone of the Tibbia College in 1921. At the height of the non-cooperation movement with all the hopes and anxieties that the attempt at Hindu–Muslim cooperation entailed, Hakim Ajmal Khan and his college represented a symbol of genuine open-mindedness and cooperation that Gandhi felt had to be recognized. On the other hand, he opposed all systems of medicine and regarded, he frankly said, all hospitals as a sign of failure. *Ṭibb* in its current form, he continued, was nothing more than black magic and one ought in any case to concentrate on nourishing the soul rather than on wrongly ministering to the body.[49] His rather astonishing remarks aside, it was nonetheless significant that Gandhi had chosen—and been chosen—to preside over this occasion since only a few months earlier it

[47] Ḥakīm Jamīl Khāṅ, *Sīrat-i Ajmal*, p. 119.

[48] *Ibid.*, pp. '132–3'. This edition is defective; quotation marks indicate the second set of pages.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. '134'.

had been expected that the viceroy would play this role.[50] On the left side of the main entrance to the college is the stone laid by the viceroy in 1916, on the right hand side is the stone commemorating the inauguration of the building by Gandhi—a dramatic picture of the rapidity with which Muslim political orientations had changed in those years.

Three aspects of Muslim cosmopolitan culture became associated with nationalist symbols in these years and continue so to the present; these are Sufism, music and medicine, all regarded as part of a shared culture that can be valued by both Muslims and non-Muslims. In Delhi today the Muslims most likely to appear on public political and cultural platforms are the city's leading hakim and a distinguished descendant of the family of the Sufi, Hazrat Nizamu'd-Din.[51] Thus medicine, early in Ajmal Khan's life, was a symbol of the cultural pride of the Muslim cosmopolitan elite; more enduringly it became a symbol of cultural integration.

Ajmal Khan's complete commitment to Hindu–Muslim cooperation was shaped by this long and deep experience of the value of cooperation in the field of medicine. This is not to say that others without such experience were not also committed, only that in his case the experience in medicine, and indeed his whole predisposition toward the more cosmopolitan aspects of his culture, was of formative importance. Although active in the Muslim League from the beginning, he, unlike many in the tradition of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, had not seen the Indian National Congress as necessarily antagonistic to Muslim interests. He, moreover, was convinced that one could further Muslim interests and at the same time move increasingly toward a common national culture; few of the Muslim leaders at this period shared his commitment to this latter goal.

For many of the Muslims, cooperation with non-Muslims was merely expedient as, indeed, was the acceptance of Gandhi's policies; they joined him out of desire to present a common platform of opposition to

[50] Government of India, Legislative Department, Proceedings of the Indian Legislative Council, Delhi 10.3.20, Delhi Administration Research Room.

[51] Medicine, music, and Sufism cluster in the programs of the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, an institution supported by the Hamdard Foundation (which markets *yūnānī* medicines). On one recent occasion, they offered ghazals sung by Muslim members of the Rampur gharana and by a Hindu woman who had studied at Shantiniketan, each presenting, among other numbers, works by Ghalib; this was for an audience of archivists from the whole sub-continent (Oct. 15, 1981). On the occasion of an international conference on the great philosopher and contributor to *yūnānī* medicine, Ibn Sina, they presented the devotional singers (*qawwāl*) of the shrine of Hazrat Nizamu'd-Din, thus combining medicine, music and Sufism (Nov. 4, 1981).

the rulers. This was largely true of the charismatic journalist and politician Muhammad 'Ali. The ulama, moreover, cherished a plan for a wholly autonomous social and political life, linked to non-Muslims in the loosest of federations once independence was attained.[52] Although in 1919 Ajmal Khan had been instrumental in organizing the association of the ulama, the Jami'atu'l-'ulama-yi Hind, joining with the leading Deobandi of Delhi, Mufti Kifayatu'llah,[53] he strongly opposed the Jami'at scheme to create a separate system of law courts under an organization of the ulama as the beginning of what might be called the 'mental partition of India' that they envisaged.[54] Ajmal Khan believed fully in communal cooperation and at the same time shared in the increasing focus on emotive, public, religious symbols of Muslim corporate identity. In significant ways these symbols derived more from the cosmopolitan complex of values cherished by those associated, however loosely, with Aligarh, than from the complex of symbols articulated by the reformist ulama. It had been those who wrote in English or had interacted with the British and their views of Muslim culture who created the romantic and apologetic writings of the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries—writers like Ameer Ali, Chiragh Ali, Shibli No'mani, the novelist Sharar and the poet Hali. They had responded to Orientalist criticisms of their religion and culture and had directed attention to the larger historic and geographic world of Islam. Among the ulama, it was Nadwa, most the product of those interacting with the British, that focused most on the larger Muslim world. As Muslim countries seemed increasingly threatened, journalists and polemicists like Muhammad 'Ali and Maulana Azad created an ideology of Indian Muslim identity with the fate of Muslims elsewhere. The reformist ulama to be sure were also conscious of Muslim interests outside India; indeed, they had been involved in collecting money on such occasions as the Russo-Turkish war of 1878. As others took the lead, some among them entered active political life for the first time, most notably some leading figures from Deoband and from Farangi Mahal who thus, it has recently been shown, were able simultaneously to enhance their own positions within their institu-

[52] Peter Hardy, *Partner in Freedom—and True Muslims: The Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India 1912–1947* (Lund, 1971).

[53] Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York, 1982), p. 82. He also apparently encouraged the formation of a parallel association among Hindu religious leaders, a Jami'at-i Panditan. Noted in Bipan Chandra, 'Communalism and the National Movement,' in Mushirul Hasan, *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends*, p. 196n.

[54] The phrase is Peter Hardy's in *The Muslims of British India*, p. 195.

tions.[55] Once involved, the ulama were a determining force in the shape of the national movement, pushing for extreme action and often succeeding.

Ajmal Khan's own views in these years are evident in many of the speeches he delivered at the numerous organizations of which he was a part. In 1918, for example, he was part of a group of Muslim barristers, wakils, and traders, along with his beloved associate, Dr Ansari, the publisher Maulana 'Abdu'l-Ahad, and the imam of the Jami Masjid, in attempting to establish an Islamiyya College in Delhi. In his statement he talked much as he had in earlier years of the decline of Muslim culture, blaming the sorry state of education for the under-representation of Muslims in what he called the *sharīf* professions: barristers, doctors, engineers, wakils and teachers. But he now broadened his earlier focus and looked also at the low numbers of Muslims in industry, crafts and trade, and lamented the condition of ordinary education. He spoke overall of the decline of Muslim dignity and honor (*quamī wiqār aur 'izzat*), and of the decline in Delhi especially. He recalled the great scholars and Sufis of the city 'whose messianic breath breathed new souls into the dead body of the nation. . . .' 'Now look,' he added, 'at the autumn of the city whose spring was this.' He continued to enjoin Muslims to act on the basis of their religious obligation and drew heavily on words charged with meaning in Muslim religious life.

> Our children who were once educated in madrasas and households now play in the streets. Who can go into any Muslim neighborhood and return dry-eyed? Our children are not responsible for this. God has given us the power of discrimination [*tamīz*] and we are responsible for their education, nurture, and Islamic culture and deportment. What answer will we give in the afterlife [*ākhirat*]? Shall we answer that we took loans for ceremonies for them, ceremonies that were against the *sharī'a*, and left them free in the streets to add to their hearts and minds the accretions that darken the skirt of Islam and humanity? . . . They are the victims of their poverty and our forgetfulness [*ghaflat*]. Every delay in creating a school increases the sin [*gunāh*] which is on the neck of every Muslim of Delhi. It is the duty [*farz*] of every Muslim of Delhi to lay the foundation of an Islamic college. And when a Muslim undertakes a work, he does it with the enthusiasm of Islam and the emotions of the faith [*islāmī jōsh aur īmānī jazbāt*]. . . . We must put our trust in that God whose kind glance falls on every lowly servant and rescues every faltering work, then place our hope in our Islamic brothers, confident that all will unite in putting this on their weak shoulders with dependence [*tawakkul*] on God. . . .[56]

The speech reflects both the more inclusive corporate identity and the

[55] This argument has been developed by Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement.*

[56] Ḥakīm Jamīl Khān, *Sīrat-i Ajmal*, pp. 108–9.

use of religious symbols characteristic of Muslim political life in this period.

These themes reappear in speech after speech. As chairman of the Khilafat Committee in 1921, Ajmal Khan called on Muslims to sacrifice, for example in such matters as using homespun. 'You must say *labaik* ['I am present,' as one says most dramatically at the Meccan pilgrimage] to a voice inviting you to protect Islam and stop injustice. . . . If we are not ready for this, we have no right to mouth Islamic injunctions or to hope for God's mercy.'[57] In appealing for contributions to the Angora Fund he said, 'If you fall short in any way in helping . . . now, consider this to be an unforgiveable sin. . . . Prove that in your veins, by the grace and generosity of God, even now Islamic blood flows. This is a sacred duty [*muqaddas farz*].'[58] Emboldened by the knowledge that they were part of a larger world and not merely a minority in a single country, political leaders asserted a picture of Islam as a special community, unique by virtue of its revelation. Instead of distinguishing certain Muslims as the well-born—*sharīf*—Ajmal Khan would enjoin all Muslims to certain actions because as a whole they were well-born—a *sharīf qaum*.[59]

In his speech as president of the Muslim League at Amritsar in 1919, Ajmal Khan, speaking as well to the Congress leaders who were present, made clear how far he had come from his position of a decade earlier. Over half of his speech was given to a precise analysis and denunciation of government repression.[60] He then continued on the theme of Hindu–Muslim relations:

> The secret of the success, not merely of the Reform Scheme, but of all the work which is being done by Indians in India and abroad, lies in Hindu–Muslim unity. Hindu–Muslim relations . . . appear to be infinitely more satisfactory than they have been in past years. The question of Government appointments is no longer capable of engaging our attention to any appreciable degree. . . .[61]

He called on Muslims to give up sacrifice of cows as a response to the generosity of Hindu support for their cause of the preservation of the Khilafat. To encourage this, he argued in fundamentalist, legal terms by citing precedents of the Prophet to show that sacrifice of other animals was preferred. Such an argument, of course, had little impact on a

[57] *Ibid.*, pp. 161–2.
[58] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[59] In his speech as president of the Muslim League, Amritsar, 1919, *ibid.*, p. '137'.
[60] The proportion is based on the 35 page extract given in A. M. Zaidi, *Evolution of Muslim Political Thought in India, II: Sectarian Nationalism and Khilafat*, pp. 173–214.
[61] *Ibid.*, p. 192.

practice that now often had less to do with religion than with communal self-assertion. Two years later he made the same argument to the Hindu communal organization, the Hindu Mahasabha, whose annual meeting he chaired in keeping with the view of the complementarity of religiously-defined and territorially-defined institutions.[62]

A second major theme, directed more to the British than to other Indians, was his insistence on the power of Muslims and the extent to which their loyalty depended on the nature of British activity in the Muslim world. His underlining of the importance of a pan-Islamic identity was not meant, he explained, to raise questions in anyone's mind of Muslim loyalty to their own homeland.

> I am aware that the exceptional nature of events now happening in the Muslim world has led me to dwell at length on topics of exclusively Muslim interest, but I have done so advisedly and in the confident hope that it cannot, at this time of day, lead any one to doubt the Musalmans' vivid consciousness of the solemn duty they owe to their motherland. As children of the soil, they know and fervently desire to fulfil their duty to the country of which they, in common with Hindus, Christians, Parsis and other communities are the proud inheritors. . . . For India the unseen future holds a magnificence and splendour compared with which the most glorious grandeur of her past will be but small. Let all hands of men as well as of women join to unveil that vision.[63]

Ajmal Khan's final comment was more than a stirring conclusion, for he worked ceaselessly for that kind of unity.

He had a vision of Hindus and Muslims not only living side by side but of knowing each other's cultures and interacting with each other in common institutions. During the final years of his life, he worked tirelessly for the foundation of a nationalist Muslim university, the Jami'a Millia Islamia, a school founded for Aligarh students who wanted to join the non-cooperation movement; it was later established in Delhi. As first *amīr* of the institution, he expected the students to know each other's culture: 'the firm foundation of a united Indian nationhood depends on this mutual understanding'.[64] Along with Maulana Azad, Dr Ansari and Muhammad Kichlu, he was one of the prominent Muslims who continued Congress membership during the 1920s. He supported C. R. Das in the proposal to participate in the government's councils in order to work for further change from within. As perhaps his final political effort before his death, he was one with the nationalist

[62] Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 251.
[63] *Ibid.*, p. 214.
[64] In his speech at the first graduation ceremony of the school, held in 1922. 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār Madhūlī, *Jāmi'a kī kahānī* (New Delhi, 1965), p. 38.

Muslims who accepted the Nehru Report of 1928, a proposal meant to reconcile Muslim and Hindu constitutional demands; it included, among other proposals, the acceptance of joint electorates in the hope that candidates would then be forced to a moderation acceptable to members of the other community.

Against the background of these educational and political efforts, India, in the final years of Ajmal Khan's life, witnessed intensified communal bitterness and experienced many violent communal incidents. A series of riots began after the calling off of the non-cooperation movement when it appeared to Gandhi that control could not be maintained. In Delhi Ajmal Khan had been able, in 1919 for example, almost singlehandedly to maintain control and organize a shadow government to police disorder. In the Multan riot of 1923, by contrast, he met complete failure and could only tell the Punjab Congress Committee in his parting words that their communalism would undo everything: 'You will always be slaves.'[65] In 1924, as the list of troubled cities grew, a peace conference met in Delhi, working mostly at his house. The calling off of non-cooperation, the bursting of the pan-Islamic bubble with the Turkish abolition of the Khilafat in 1924, the intensification of communal rivalry with the implementation of the provincial reforms, the deteriorating economic situation—all this contributed to an ever-worsening situation. As the situation deteriorated, so too did the hakim's health and in 1925 he left for Europe.

Ajmal Khan died a relatively young man, utterly exhausted and utterly defeated in the vision of 'glorious grandeur' he had expected Hindus and Muslims jointly to unveil. He left behind him two institutions of considerable promise: the Tibbia College and Jami'a Millia—one the child of his youth, the other of his old age, as Muhammad 'Ali said.[66] His hopes for a common nationalism were belied by events on every side. His expectation of the possibilities of a plural nationalism in which emotive religious identities existed concurrently with a national culture ended in disappointment. His experience hauntingly echoes that of Sayyid Ahmad Khan a generation earlier whose vision similarly faltered, in his case in his expectation that the

[65] Muḥammad 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār, *Ḥayāt-i Ajmal*, p. 287.

[66] 'Abdu'l-Ghaffār Madhūlī, *Jami'a kī kahānī*, p. 73. The Tibbia College was torn with dissensions, many surrounding Ajmal Khan's son and successor, from the beginning. After Partition it was closed for five years. Currently administered by the Delhi Municipality, few are hopeful of its future as it struggles on in the buildings and with the equipment it had at its inception. Jami'a Millia has had many distinguished faculty and distinctive achievements but has recently been troubled by student strikes.

special relationship of the Muslim elite with the rulers meant that they could relate to each other with dignity and respect.

The Khilafat leaders and nationalist Muslims generally believed that a religious-based identity focused on public symbols of the faith could exist as a complement to a composite nationalism. Ajmal Khan justified religiously-defined associations and identities throughout his entire life. A position like his was evidently sincere; it was also theoretically possible that the kind of society he envisaged based on religious community could have worked out in India as it had elsewhere.[67] In the situation of British India, however, the encouragement of separate organizations and identities only served to exacerbate competition and communal tension—however little that may have been intended.

Ajmal Khan had no experience to understand the local tensions and rivalries that lay at the base of communal riots; he stood before them dumbfounded. His own career in both medicine and politics had been built on forging alliances among the elite—with the princes, with the British, with professional allies, and with political leaders—and not with building up local constituencies where such tensions were a reality. He created in indigenous medicine an area of accomplishment and a symbol of both communal and national pride. He expected in vain the same kinds of accomplishments in forging a unified political life, but this goal failed in a context where other demands and priorities outweighed his.

Ajmal Khan is remembered as a nationalist Muslim. The many meanings of that term must be peeled away to do justice to the content of his career. Two broadly separate stages must be identified, first that of an Aligarh (and later a Muslim League) orientation in the defence of the interests of the well-born and the preservation of cosmopolitan Muslim cultured symbols; and second, that of identification with emotive, public symbols of Muslim social identity and collaboration with non-Muslims against British rule. Both stages focus on Muslim corporate identity defined in the first case by a cluster of aristocratic, cosmopolitan symbols, in the second by emotionally-charged symbols associated with being part of a larger Muslim world and by the very fact of being Muslim. They contrast with the symbols of the reformist ulama, weighted toward personal fulfillment of the religious law. In each stage, Ajmal Khan, again in contrast to the early reformists, sought collabo-

[67] N. C. Saxena has reviewed the historiography of writing on India to argue the extent to which religiously-defined community action has always been regarded as wrong; the word 'communal' is invariably pejorative whereas culturally plural societies have and can exist on such a basis. 'Historiography of Communalism in India.' in Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Communal and Pan-Islamic Trends in Colonial India*, pp. 302–25.

ration with non-Muslims, first with the British and then with the largely Hindu Congress; and he insisted on an active political life. The initial stance of Muslims like Ajmal Khan was predicated on many of the same assumptions that had characterized princely political life, but the vision of well-born Muslims as privileged participants in rule was doomed both by the colonial situation and the reality of a plural society. The subsequent expectation of intense communal identity in harmony with a unified nationalist program was similarly to give way after Ajmal Khan's lifetime toward the ideal of a more secular nationalism on the one hand and the demand for a separate Muslim state on the other.

Throughout, religious identity remained the fundamental building block of most political positions for Muslims; and the language of political discourse in shifting contexts drew on the repertoire provided by Islam. Islam offered a wide range of orientations, not one single stance, a range whose symbols shifted from the cosmopolitan; to those of personal religious responsibility; to symbols of a charismatic community; to those of a shared national culture. Ajmal Khan in his life knew this entire range. This variety, as well as the evident crisis in social and political life that the riots displayed, suggest the anguish of trying to find a satisfactory definition of Muslim political identity in the long period of colonial rule in India.