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Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi's Participation in The Freedom Movement of India

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Abstract

Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi was a prominent religious personality, eminent intellectual and a great spiritual guide and social reformer. He had uprooted the religious blindness, unlawful customs and *bida'h* (heterodoxy) from the Muslim community and promoted the true creed and faith of Islam, as well as propagated the real and pure *sunnah* among his lakhs of devotees purifying the wrong method of *tasauuf* and worship, promoting awareness against the falsehood of fake spiritual guides, and pulling up the polytheism (*shirk*), heterodoxy (Bida'h) and apostatize (irtidad) by the roots through his demonstrated and proven speeches.

In addition to that, he always urged his lakhs of devotees and disciples to be united against the British colonial power. To materialize this aim of unity against British, and to spread the cinder and flame of revolution in the hearts of common people he established several important organizations and newspapers for the Muslims of Bengal and Assam. These organizations of Ulema and scholars as well as its mouthpiece magazines and newspapers played vital unforgettable roles in Khilafat Movement, Quit India Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement and Complete Freedom Movement as well as worked for communal harmony and peace, what should be written by golden letter in the history.

He presided over the regional branch of the historical freedom fighting organization Jamiat e Ulama e Hind in West Bengal until his death on 17th March of 1939 C.E, and organized several large public conferences against the British rule in various places of undivided Bengal and Assam, being accompanied by other Deobandi Ulema like Shaikhul Islam Hussain Ahmad Madani, Maulana Hafij Ahmad Saeed, Mufti Kifayatullah and many others, and had created an anti-British common phenomenon among the common people.

Keywords: Deobandi Ulema, Khilafat Movement, Quit India Movement, Complete Freedom Movement, Jamiat e Ulama e Hind, Non-Cooperation Movement

Introduction: In this era of extreme nationalism, religious fanatism and the continual systemized propaganda against the true patriots of India, and the real heroes and pioneers of

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the freedom movement; this research article is a little endeavor to commemorate the lives and contributions of those real patriots and to propagate the honest meaning of patriotism in the new generation. Therefore, I would like to cast light on a prominent Deobandi scholar Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi, who had sacrificed his entire life into social activities and freedom struggles, who served the nation regardless of the religion, castes and sects, who never uttered a word of communalism in his life and always promoted the traditions of love and harmony.

So, following the descriptive method, I would gather the authentic data and would collect reliable information from primary and secondary sources to cast a glance on his life and his participation in the freedom struggle.

Childhood and Education: Abu Bakr Abdullah Al-Maruf Siddiqi was a far descendant of the first caliph Abu Bakr Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with him) and was born in 1846 A.D at Furfura of Hooghly District of West Bengal. His father Abdul Muqtadir was a pious and religious man, and passed away in 1847 A.D when his son Abu Bakr Abdullah was only nine months old, therefore he grew up under the nurturance and supervision of his mother Mahabbatun Nisa. His primary education began in Sitapur madrasa (presently known as Sitapur Endowment Senior Madrasa, located in Kotalpur XI of Jangipara) and later pursued the further education up to Jamat e Ula in Muhsinia Madrasa (nowadays it is known as Hooghly Madrasa) located in Chinchura town of Hooghly. Afterwards he received higher education of *tafseer* and hadith from Hafij Maulana Jamal Uddin, a prominent disciple and caliph of Sayed Ahmad bin Irfan Berelvi (a pioneer freedom fighter and disciple of Shah Abdul Aziz bin Shah Wali Ullah Dehlavi) in Sinduria Patti masjid or Sundarya Patti masjid (currently known as Hafij Jamal Masjid, located in 149/B Rabindra Sarani, Kolutolla, Kolkata- 700073), Kolkata. Hafij Jamal Uddin belonged to Sheikhpura of Munger district in Bihar, when his teacher and *murshid* (spiritual guide) Sayed Ahmad Bin Irfan Berelvi was martyred in the battle of Balakot, he had shifted to Kolkata to preach Islamic knowledge like other disciples of Sayed Ahmad bin Irfan Berelvi. Here Jamal Uddin received knowledge of hadith from prominent Muhaddis Ahmad Ali Saharanpuri – teacher of Qasim Nanautavi- in Kolkata, when Muhaddis Ahmad Ali used to live in Calcutta for 10 years after few years of the revolution of 1857 A.D and returned to Saharanpur in 1291 A.H / 1874 A.D. [1]

In 1892 C.E, he left for Saudi Arabia to perform Haj pilgrimage, during that time he earned knowledge of several branches of Islamic sciences from the eminent Ulema and scholars of Mecca and Medina. Among them, a notable teacher is Sayed Ameen Rizwan a renowned teacher of mosque of the Prophet (*Masjid al- Nabi)*. The full name of Sayed Ameen Rizwan is Sayed Muhammad Ameen ibn Ahmad ibn Rizwan al- Madani (1836 A.D – 1911 A.D). There he received *Izajat* of forty holy books of hadith from him. Again in 1912 C.E he performed the Haj along with his 1300 devotees, during this journey he exchanged interactions with Arab Ulema, and some of them enjoyed his fellowship.

In addition to that, he spent few years with the famous spiritual guide Sayed Fateh Ali Waisi and did *Baiyat* on his hand according to several traditions of Sufism like Qadiriyya, Naqshbandia, Chishtiya, Muhammadya etc. afterwards he became a prominent caliph of Sayed Fateh Ali Waisi, who left for the world of eternity on 8th Rabi al- Auwal, 1304 A.H,

[1] A'ajami, Nur Muhammad. *Hadiser Tatto o Itihas*, Imdadia Pustakaloy, Dhaka, March-2008, p. 206 See also Saharanpuri, Muhammad Shahid. *Ulama E Majahirul Uloom Saharanpur Aur Un Ki Ilmi O Tasnifee Khidmaat*, Makatab e Yaadgar e Shaikh, Saharanpur, 2005, p.83

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corresponding to 4th December of 1886 A.D. [2]

Social Reforms and Activities: After the demise of his *murshid* (spiritual guide), since the last decade of nineteenth century he actively involved himself in the preaching and social reforming works, so he used to travel all over Bengal and Assam to preach the true creed and faith of Islam, to promote the real and pure *sunnah* among his lakhs of devotees purifying the wrong method of *tasauuf* and worship, promoting awareness against the falsehood of fake spiritual guides, and pulling up the polytheism (*shirk*), heterodoxy (Bida'h) and apostatize (irtidad) by the roots through his demonstrated and proven speeches.

In the same way, he along with his disciples and devotees established numerous madrasas, *maktabs*, *khanqahs* and mosques to propagate the true Islamic education, culture and method of worshiping among the present and coming generations; and he would organize religious congregations and religious debates against the stray men in the villages, towns and remote regions of Assam and Bengal where he himself or his caliphs or *day'ee* (preacher) delivered speeches to guide the true path of Islam and promote piousness, *taqwa*, true Islamic creed, Islamic ethics and morals, patriotism, composite nationalism, harmony among the Muslims, regardless of sects and school of thoughts and he taught them the ethics of coexistences with followers of other religions with peace and harmony. His most notable contribution to the Muslim society of Bengal and Assam is to write, publish and spread Islamic literatures, books, leaflets, magazine, newspapers etc. in Bengali language. He urged his educated devotees, disciples, caliphs and Ulema to issue books and magazines in Islamic Fiqh, faith, *tasauuf*, Islamic law, freedom awareness and contemporary issues; therefore, he is considered a Renaissance man of Islamic literature in Bengali language, because there was a common phenomenon in his time, that writing the Islamic religious books in mother tongue is prohibited. Nowadays we can find that more than two thousand books were published under his supervision, guidance, finance or inspiration by several authors of Bengal and Assam, besides around twenty newspapers, magazines and pamphlets were published.[3]

Participation in The Freedom Movement of India: Being an eminent religious personality, he always urged his lakhs of devotees and disciples to be united against the British colonial power. To materialize this aim of unity against British and to spread the cinder and flame of revolution in the hearts of common people he established several important organizations and newspapers for the Muslims of Bengal and Assam. These organizations of Ulema and scholars as well as its mouthpiece magazines and newspapers played vital unforgettable roles in Khilafat Movement, Quit India Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement and Complete Freedom Movement, as well as worked for communal harmony and peace, what should be written by golden ink in the history. The Ulema and scholars of these organizations fought against Two Nation Policy of Hindu Mahasava and Muslim League and created common awareness in the people. Among those organizations *Anjuman e Wai'zeen* (Organization of Sermonizers), *Islam Procharak Samiti* (Association of Preachers of Islam), and *Anjuman e Ulama e Bangal* (Organization of Ulema of Bengal) or *Jamiat e Ulama e Bangla o Assam* (Association of Ulema of Bengal and Assam) are most notable.

[2] Jahangir, Khandaker Abdullah. *Furfurar Pir Allama Abu Jafar Siddiqir 'Al-Mazuat' (Al-Mauzuat: Written By Allama Abu Jafar Siddiqi, Pir of Furfura): An Explanatory Analysis*, As-Sunnah Pablications, Jhenidah, December-2009, pp. 10-11

[3] Ibid, pp. 15-16

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***Anjuman e Wai'zeen* (Organization of Sermonizers):** This organization was established in 1911 C.E, Maulana Abubakar Siddiqi was president and Maulana Sheikh Abdur Rahim was appointed as the secretary of this organization. This organization performed great participations in the freedom movement of India, the scholars of this organization created common awareness among the people and strengthened the Khilafat Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, freedom struggles; and were able to make the people's opinion united against the colonial power. Its policy was to participate in politics, freedom movements, social reforms, preaching the message of communal harmony and ultimately preaching the true path of Islam according the light of The Holy Quran and holy hadith among the Muslims, therefore the preachers of *Anjuman e Wai'zeen* (Organization of Sermonizers) travelled village to village and taught the people *namaz, roza*, true Islamic faith, resolved their civil issues according to *shariah* law, urged them to rise fund for necessity of community and society, as well as asked them to stay away from heterodoxy (Bida'h) and false customs and rituals. So, we can say that the aforesaid organization simultaneously made social reforms according to *shariah* and provided the Muslim community guidance in the era of contemporary politics, national and local political issues, social and educational movements.[4]

***Anjuman e Ulama e Bangal* (Organization of Ulema of Bengal):**

It was established in Baniapara conference held on 15th, 16th, 17th March of 1913 A.D in the district of Bogura of Bangladesh. Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi was appointed as the president, Maulana Sayed Muhammad Musa of Bardhaman district was made assistant president. Other prominent founder members were Maulana Wahid Hossain, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Abdur Rahman, Maulana Akram Khan, Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Maulana Maniruzzaman Islamabadi, Abdul Hamid Saudagar and others.[5]

Most noteworthy, this organization *Anjuman e Ulama e Bangal* merged with Jamiat e Ulama e Hind, when it was established in the month of November, 1919 A.D in Delhi, and its first general conference was held in the city of Amritsar in Punjab on 28th December of 1919 A.D.[6] Afterwards this organization began to serve the community and the nation as a state branch of Jamiat e Ulama e Hind with the name of *Jamiat e Ulama e Bangla o Assam* (Association of Ulema of Bengal and Assam). Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi remained the president of the state Jamiat e Ulama of Bengal and Assam until his death and fought against the British from the platform of Jamiat e Ulama e Hind along with other Deobandi Ulema like Shaikhul Islam Hussain Ahmad Madani, Maulana Hafij Ahmad Saeed, Mufti Kifayatullah and many others. Since that time, Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi participated in the freedom movements more actively, therefore *Jamiat e Ulama e Bangla o Assam* (Association of Ulema of Bengal and Assam) protested against the Two Nation Policy of Hindu Mahasava and Muslim League, strengthened the Khilafat Movement, Quit India movement, Non-Cooperation Movement, and raised voice for complete freedom before the National Congress Party and Muslim League. In the 7th convention of Jamiat e Ulama e Hind presided by Maulana Sulaiman Nadvi held in Kolkata on 11-14th March of 1926 A.D, Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi was selected as the president of welcome committee, and delivered his precious speech. In this convention

[4] Ibid, p.16, see also Amin, Muhammad Ruhul. *Fufura Sharifer Itihas o Abu Bakr Siddiqi er Bistarito Jiboni*, Naba Noor Press, Basirhat, 1404 (Bengali Year), pp. 53-54,

[5] Ibid, pp.16-17

[6] Adrawi, Aseer. *Tareekh- e Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind*, vol-1, Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind, Delhi, 1403 A.H, p.54

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Jamiat e Ulama e Hind appealed for Complete Freedom.[7]

The Bengal and Assam state president of Jamiat e Ulama e Hind Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi organized several conferences and convocations in Tripura, Noakhali, Chandpur, Haji Ganj, Chowmahani and Furfura and other regions and invited prominent Deobandi Ulema.

All India general secretary of Jamiat e Ulama e Hind Maulana Hafij Ahmad Saeed participated in the conference of state Jamiat e Ulama in Haji Ganj, and in the conference of Chowmahani, Shaikhul Islam Hussain Ahmad Madani and other Deobandi Ulema were present. During Non-Cooperation Movement when foreign products, government's school and colleges were boycotted, Salt March movement was promoted by local newspapers, and then Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi explained the point of view of conditional support of Jamiat e Ulama expressing the necessity of our own Islamic seminaries and school and colleges. That time some Muslim Congress Leaders like Maulana Shaukat Ali, Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Saifuddin Kitchlew and others approached him to support Indian National Congress Party, and then he explained the conditions that if Congress failed to satisfy the Muslims and could promise to secure their religious security he and Jamiat e Ulama will put back the support, what was described by Maulana Hifzur Rahman, the all India general secretary of Jamiat e Ulama e Hind. In the wake of Indian Act 1935, Jamiat e Ulama e Hind supported Muslim League in the election to form Regional Council with several conditions beneficial for common Muslims,[8] therefore the president of Bengal and Assam state Jamiat e Ulama supported and campaigned for Muslim League in Bengal and Assam, what caused to a great victory of League's candidates.[9]

When he made his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1330 A.H corresponding to 1912 A.D, observed severe difficulties of Bengali pilgrims and their worst conditions at Bombay (Mumbai) port, after coming back from Haj pilgrimage, he sent the governor several telegrams and passed a resolution from Jamiat e Ulama and sent it again to the governor. At last his endeavors yielded and a direct ship service for pilgrims of Mecca from Kolkata port was allocated.[10] This is a glimpse of his struggles to achieve the freedom of India from the platform of Jamiat e Ulama e Hind.

It should be noted that a disciple of Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi, Maulana Ruhul Ameen belonged to Bashirhat mentioned that when Delhi Jamiat, means Jamiat e Ulama e Hind (established in Delhi) strayed from right path because of Indian National Congress, Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi detached his Jamiat e Ulama Bangala and Assam from Jamiat e Ulama e Hind and separated.[11] But this claim seems not be based on fact; because Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi had been holding the position of president of Jamiat e Ulama up to 1939 until his demise, afterwards his eldest son Abdul Hai Siddiqi was elected president for several months, thereafter the famous disciple Maulana Ruhul Ameen was appointed as the president up to

[7] Chowdhury, Siddiqullah. *Savyatar Nirmane Muslim Manishi*, West Bengal State Jamiat Ulama Bhaban, Bankra, Kolkata, 2019, pp.32-34 See also Adrawi, Aseer. *Tareekh- e Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind,* vol-1, Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind, Delhi, 1403 A.H, p. 66

[8] Adrawi, Aseer, *Tareekh- e Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind*, vol-1, Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind, Delhi, 1403 A.H, pp.82-85

[9] Amin, Muhammad Ruhul. *Fufura Sharifer Itihas o Abu Bakr Siddiqi er Bistarito Jiboni*, Naba Noor Press, Basirhat, 1404 (Bengali Year), pp. 55-57 See also Adrawi, Aseer, Tareekh- e Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind, vol-1, Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Hind, Delhi, 1403 A.H, pp.73-74

[10] Ibid, pp. 57-58,

[11] Ibid, p. 328

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1945 until his death, later another disciple of Pir Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi, named Bazlur Rahman Dargahpuri was selected as the president of Jamiat e Ulama up to 1964 A.D, and these last two personalities accompanied Shaikhul Islam Hussain Ahmad Madani in social and political works, even they did *Baia't* (pledge of allegiance) on his hand. As well as the name of Shaikhul Islam Hussain Ahmad Madani is mentioned in the book 'Bashirhat *Iesal e Sawab o* Aminia Madrasa' as the founding member and important organizer of Aminia Madrasa following the name of Maulana Ruhul Ameen, and Ruhul Ameen himself called Shaikhul Islam Hussain Ahmad Madani as his teacher in a book of amulet.[12] Besides that, Maulana Bazlur Rahman Dargahpuri had delivered a speech in 1949 C.E at the religious conference called 'Basirhat Isal e Sawab' in front of government officials and politicians, in which he stated in details the participations and roles of 'Jamiat e Ulama e Hind' in Indian freedom movement.[13] So, it could be said that Jamiat e Ulama Bangala and Assam (Bengal and Assam state Jamiat e Ulama) had been merged into Jamiat e Ulama e Hind and never been separated from it.

Conclusion: From the last few years of 19th century, India's freedom struggles had begun to witness a moderate phase of freedom movement against the British, after the World War- I this policy of moderate struggles applied more effectively by the Indian leaders of freedom struggles. That is why, most of the Indian leaders had left the way of armed conflicts with the British colonial power and applied the way of creating public opinion against British's ruling policy and raised the call for complete freedom by the common people. Following that policy of demonstration and struggles, Maulana Abu Bakr Siddiqi and other Deobandi ulema worked for the Complete Freedom (instead of Dominion Status) through various movements like Khilafat Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement etc. and they sowed the seed the patriotism in the heart of every Indian especially in the Muslims of undivided Bengal and Assam.

So, in the present article, the present generation could find out a way of true patriotism and could make themselves inspired by his social activities and freedom struggles for our beloved nation and country.

[12] Chowdhury, Siddiqullah. *Savyatar Nirmane Muslim Manishi,* West Bengal State Jamiat Ulama Bhaban, Bankra, Kolkata, 2019 A.D, pp.40-41 See also Rahman, Habibor; Bashirhat *Iesal e Sawab o* AminiaMadrasa, 1957 C.E, p.16

[13] Rahman, Habibor. *Bashirhat Iesal e Sawab o Aminia Madrasa*, 1957 C.E, p.9

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Rahman, Habibor. *Bashirhat Iesal e Sawab o Aminia Madrasa*, 1957