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THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT IN TAMIL NADU AND IT'S IMPACT ON THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

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Tamil Nadu played a role in the formation of the All - India Khilafat Committee that Abdul Majid Sharar, an extremist Muslim and the editor of Quami Report attended the meeting at Lucknow for the formation of All-India Khilafat Committee[1]

On the lines laid down by the All - Indian Khilafat Committee the First Khilafat Day was observed in Madras on 17 October 1919 in a grand scale to make the British Government to know and realise the depth of the anti- British feelings of the Muslims in Tamil Nadu. As well Tamil Nadu respnded extremely well to the call of the Central Khilafat Committee and organised the Second Khilafat Day on 19 March 1920 in an impressive way. On that day meetings were held in all the large towns. Both Muhammadan and Hindu shops were closed and thereby "the Khilafatists undermined the prestige of the Government by demonstrating its helplessness to counter act the general uneasiness caused by the suspension of natural activities"[2].

The Central Khilafat Committee met at Bombay on 11 April 1920 and resolved to withdraw cooperation to the Government step by step[3]. Tamil Nadu respnded well to the call of the Central Khilafat Committee. Yakub Hassan and Abdul Majid Sharar organised the Khilafat Conference in Madras in April 1920 and invited Shaukat Ali to address the Conference.

The terms of the Turkish peace treaty were published in May 1920. The terms were so harsh and so injurious to Turkey that they hardened the stand of the Muslims. The reaction of the Muslims of Tamil nadu to the Turkish peace terms was very much vigorous. Yakub Hassan resigned his membership in the Legislative council, Madras Corporation and from other bodies[4].

1 August 1920 marked an important turning point in the Khilafat Movement. It was the day on which the Non-Cooperation Movement was launched for the Khilafat cause. Tamil Nadu launched the Non-cooperation Movement

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in a fitting manner. The Third Khilafat Day was observed on that day and the hartal organised on that day was complete and successful. There was a very general closing of the shops in Madras and in Many towns. There were resignations of honourary offices. In Vaniyambadi a 'Khilafat Publicity Board' was started., Yakub Hassan invited Shaukat Ali and Gandhi to madras to enthuse more enthusiasm into the volunteers.

The Khilafatists indulged in including the boycott of the educational institutions too. The students of the Muhammadan College at Madras were induced to follow the lead of Aligarh Students[5]. Similar movement was on foot at Vaniyambadi where efforts were made to boycott both the Islamiah College and the Muhammadan Girls' School[6]. A 'Students' Non-Cooperation Association' was formed to pursuade students to abondon schools and colleges[7]. Even Muslim ladies active part in this aspect. Yakub Hassan's wife and another lady started a 'Ladies Khilafat Society' with the object of persuading mothers to take their children away from the Government Schools[8]. Though leaders like Kasturi Ranga Iyengar regarded the boycott of the educational institutions as "positively suicidal",[9] the boycott of the educational institutions was quite successful as school boys absented themselves despite the dissuation by the Masters[10] and as the number of pupil had fallen from 393 to 179 at the Muhammadan College at Vaniyambadi[11].

The Khilafastists carried on the boycott of the visit of the Prince of Connaught to a more extreme level (than the Hindus)[12] that it served as an eye opener to the officialdom which had misreckoned Madras a docile and meek[13].

The Khilafatists highlighted the idea of Swaraj. Yakub Hassan proclaimed a 'War' on the British Government in his address to the students and wanted the 'War' to be continued till the Swaraj was obtained, whatever happened with regard to the Punjab disturbances and the Khilafat question[14].

Though Gandhi called of the Non-Cooperation Movement after the Chauri - Chaura incident, the Khilafatists decided to continue the Movement vigorously. There were very strong volunteer activities in North Arcot, especially in the Muhammaden centre of Vaniyambadi, and in Trichinopoly.

The Government went all out to suppress the Movement in Tamil Nadu. It indulged in all kinds of activities - suppressive, repressive, deceitful and forceful - to put an end to the Movement. The suppressive and repressive activities of the Government were many and cruelly severe. The Government not only used all the resources at their disposal to suppress the 'organised outrage and rioting' but also used all the preventive measures available to check 'the disorder'. The Government let loose press was brought under much surveillance, much repressive acts against the press. The stress, hardship and censorship using the draconian Press Act of 1910. The Government used the Criminal Investigation Department to watch the activities of the Khilafat 'agitators' and the Goivernment officers to oppose tthe Movement. The Government stoped down to the level of ordering its servants to sever social relations with their non-cooperator relatives and friends[15]. Also the government used its Muslim officials to suppress the Movement. Government indulged in and encouraged the Counter Propaganda against the preachings of the Khilafatists. The force behind the Khilafat Movement subsided only after the signing of the Lausanne Peace Treaty as it gave very favourable terms to the Turks.

An analysis of the Movement, thus, reveals the mass participation in the Movement and the endurance of the agitators against all odds and the leading role of the Muslims of Tamil Nadu in the Movement. Had it not been for this Movement the rise of Gandhi as a political leader and the growth of Congress as a mass movement would have been delayed and the Indian National Movement would have lost a factor that helped its furtherance in this part of India.

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Notes & References

1. Fortnightly Report, 02.10.1919.
2. Fortnightly Report, 03.04.1920.
3. Bomfield, *Histories of the Khilafat and Noncooperation Movements*, Govt. of India, p.152.
4. Fortnightly Report, 02.11.1920.
5. Fortnightly Report, 18.04.1921.
6. Fortnightly Report, 02.02.1921.
7. Fortnightly Report, 04.10.1920.
8. Fortnightly Report, 04.10.1920.
9. Saroja Sundararajan, *op.cit.*, p.240.
10. Fortnightly Report, 03.12.1920.
11. Fortnightly Report, 17.03.1921.
12. Government of Tamil Nadu, History of Freedom Movement, Bundle No.84, Tamil Nadu Archives, Chennai.
13. Saroja Sundararajan, *op.cit.*, p.258
14. Fortnightly Report, 17.12.1920. Hence forward the Khilafatists highlighted the issue of Swaraj.
15. *The Hindu*, 29 April 1922.