

The British Imperialism in India and the “Ahl-i-Hadith” Response

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The present article is an attempt to analyse the point of view of the two front-rank Ahl-i-Hadith leaders viz Maulana Syed Mohammad Nazir Husain, Muhaddith-i-Dehlavi (1805-1902) and Moulvi Abu Syed Mohammad Husain Batalwi (d.1338/1919), pertaining to the most controversial and hotly debated issue of Jihad during British imperialism. While the former, an *ālim* of repute on whose teaching and preaching was founded in the second half of the nineteenth century a major reformatory movement on sound footing, the followers of which later on desired to be designated with their classic name of Ahl-i-Hadith instead of much poignant term of ‘Wahhabi’; the latter on the other hand, earned name in the religious and official circles for not only in deleting the ‘Wahhabi’ epithet or having the credit of being the editor of the first monthly Ahl-i-Hadith periodical of India “Ishātul-Sunnah” (established in 1876), or his tirade against the religious thought of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani but more than the skin deep was the publication of his work entitled “*Al Iqtisād fil Masāil-i-Jihād*”,¹ a treatise calling in question the validity and permissibility of Jihad.

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Having claimed to be the real inheritors of Jihad traditions of Syed Ahmad Barelvi (1786-1831) and Maulana Ismail Shahid (1778-1831), the Ahl-i-Hadith leaders by and large made all efforts to keep the embers of Jihad alive in the Frontier region for a long time.² Notwithstanding the steady decline in the strength of the mujahiddin, in arms and ammunition, in funds and recruitment, the mujahiddin nevertheless continued to earn flashes of success in the Frontier region against the combined forces of the British and the Sikhs but without any concrete achievements. The failure of the Indians especially the Muslims in their abortive attempt to overthrow the British rule during 1857 revolt and subsequent taking over of the control of India directly by the British Parliament, brought manifold changes of far reaching consequences particularly in the Muslim psyche. Seen in this perspective there came an imperceptible change in the once Jihad oriented programme of the 'Wahhabis' to that of the socio-religious reformation of the Muslims with an avowed objective of not only bringing Islam back to its pristine purity but also preserving and safeguarding the otherwise dying Muslim ethos under the dissolving effects of Western cultural imperialism. Thus like other broad-minded and far-sighted Muslims, the founding fathers of Deoband Madrasah like Maulana Mohammad Qasim Nanatwi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi also after catastrophic defeat of the Muslims during 1857, were fully convinced than before that Muslim rule under the prevailing conditions could not be established. Hence both these leaders desired to carve out a programme to preserve the Muslim cultural ethos and Islamic principles through the disseminating of Islamic learning at the newly founded madrasah at Deoband in Saharanpur which subsequently became one of the greatest Muslim Seminaries of India.

The paradigmatic shift in the Ahl-i-Hadith ideology from political to socio-religious reform-radicalizing from the conflagration of 1857 culminating in the pronouncement of the anti-jihad fatwa of Maulana Nazir Husain in mid 1880's - must be understood in a broader historical perspective than merely relying on the theoretical

explanations of political quietitude of this group. No attempt hitherto has been made by scholars to delve deep into such issues of historical significance. The present paper attempts to highlight this shift in the ideology of reformers. We have consciously chosen the two earliest Ahl-i-Hadith leaders to acquaint the readers with the situations under which had a change occurred in their Jihadi programme and the subsequent inevitability of coming closer to the officials of the imperialistic rule. We have also tried to underline, wherever necessary, the impact of the writings, conciliatory and compromising in certain respects vis-a-vis the British rule, of the Muslim modernist leader Syed Ahmad Khan over the activities of the Ahl-i-Hadith pertaining to Jihad.

Being one of the main pillars of Islam, Jihad has played a very significant role not only in the formative period of the history of Islam in the Arabian peninsula but also in the subsequent centuries when new societies with different religio-ethnic backgrounds came under its fold. Since there is no dearth of references about Jihad of various kinds included Jihad-bil-saif, the lesser Jihad, in the holy Quran and the Sunnah hence the Muslims of all ages had endeavoured to keep its spirit alive in one or the other form. During the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, the doctrine of Jihad assumed considerable significance in those Muslim states which had come under the suzerainty of colonial rule apart from those non-Muslim lands controlled by the Muslim rulers in India. The Muslims (roughly constituted 25% of the population of Indian Subcontinent), had experienced drastic changes not only in socio-political and economic spheres but at ideological level as well. Such changes were symptomatic of their social degeneration and political decadence. The Muslim leadership under such a state of crises had no other option but to seek refuge in the doctrine of Jihad in order to mobilize public opinion to do away with the British rule in India. The major chunk of ulama also believed that the application of Jihad would not only save Muslim ethos, values and identity from the onslaught of the western culture but it would also pave a way for the reestablishment of the Muslim rule on the tattered Mughal Empire.

Viewed against the backdrop of above discussion the earliest-Muslim resistance movements that riveted the attention of the British officials and made them to fill their print media with imperialistic tone and temper, were historically speaking, first initiated by the Muslims long before the Hindus followed suit as it was the former who found themselves in utter despair and bewilderment in as much as ideological conflict with the new white rulers. As the Muslim were reduced to beggary through the introduction of a number of measures of poignancy like the permanent settlement of Bengal (1793), Resumption of Law Act and inclusion of the Europeans for higher posts in the administration particularly in finance and judiciary departments. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, such resistance movements had ideological and psychological foundations as the Christian missionaries were hellbent to replace Islam and its cultural value by Christianity and Christian civilization. The wedge between the followers of the two universally accepted major faiths further accentuated when literature on Medieval Crusade was circulated among the disgruntled Muslims. Thus the relations between the Muslims and British must be viewed against the background of psychological and historical basis and in the light of inherent naturally antagonistic attitudes of the two.

What is significant to know that the wider scope of the term Jihad has often prompted the scholars to offer varying degrees of interpretation in the context of changed situations. Not surprising therefore that varying scholastic or sometimes unscholastic interpretations and explanations began to find room in the renderings of the Muslim scholars about India's status under the British colonial domination. As some of the scholars considered India under the British rule as *dār al-Islām* others however, with numerical strength not only showed a diametric opposition to such an interpretation but considered India under the British occupation as *dar al-harb*, in addition to those who regarded it *dar al-amān* or *dar al-salām*.

Having considered India as *dār al-harb*, this group of ulama made it obligatory upon the Muslims to wage Jihad against the alien domination. Not the first but indeed

the historic *fatwa* appeared in 1803³ (commensurating the entry into Delhi by Lord Lake) by the facile pen of Shah Abdul Aziz, a scion of Shah Wali Ullah family, declaring that India ceased to be *dār al-Islām* or it had become *dār al-ḥarb*. Considering its religio-political significance, the pronouncement incited the sensitive and religiously conscientious souls in addition to those disgruntled Muslims-(who had lost their power and prestigious position which they had held for centuries in the Medieval Indian history who were now in a state of frustration and depression) to rise in defiance of the foreign domination with an underlying objective of converting India to its erstwhile status of *dār al-Islām*. The fatwa was a landmark in the sense that it aimed at buttressing the freedom struggle of India through recourse to religion. The Government of British India became very much apprehensive with such sort of decrees on the part of Muslim intelligentsia. It knew that the idea of Jihad would create a climate at least among the Indian Muslims aimed at shaking the very foundations of the British rule. It was very much fresh in the Muslim mind that Delhi besides the capital city of the Muslims, had also for long time been the highest seat of learning and symbolic of Muslim culture.

Seen against the backdrop of such political uncertainties for the Muslims Syed Ahmad Bareli founded *Tarīq-a-Mohammaddiya*⁴ (mistakenly known as Wahhabi movement) with the sole purpose of translating the fatwa of his religious preceptor into reality. It is worthwhile to note that it was more due to peoples inveterate allegiance to the family of Shah Wali Allah that Syed Ahmad was able to muster the support of the large number of people especially in North-Eastern parts of India and Afghanistan. Fully equipped with men and material he began his Jihad campaign in North-Western Frontier region. It became as put by Smith, a mass movement as both funds and personal being supplied from popular sources not by rulers. It was inspired, organised and led by religious dignitaries or ulama of repute.⁵ But their dream of reestablishing the Muslim rule could not be accomplished as some of its leaders including the founder

of the movement Syed Ahmad together with his close associate Moulavi Ismail Dehlavi, were killed at Balakot (a place in the Frontier region) in 1831 while fighting gallantly against the Sikh.

The movement initiated by Syed Ahmad did not die completely with his death but on political planes its effects were too enduring to be easily uprooted. The embers of Jihad at least in the Frontier region were overtly or covertly kept alive for several more decades by the renewed efforts of the Ahl-i-Hadith,⁶ an offshoot of the Wahhabi movement. This is the reason certain scholars feel no hesitation in describing the Ahl-i-Hadith a group which for all practical purposes became heir-apparent of the Jihad tradition of Syed Ahmad. Such a view however, raged a lot of controversy amongst the scholars about the actual role of the Ahl-i-Hadith during and aftermath of the revolt of 1857.

As mentioned earlier, the major chunk of ulama in India considered struggle against the British as lawful and exhorted the Muslims to take part in it. The Ahl-i-Hadith leaders like their other Muslim brethren also participated in the great uprising of 1857 within and outside the British Indian territories. But the view artistically framed and advocated by Syed Ahmad Khan did not corroborate the generally held opinion about the active participation of the Ahl-i-Hadith.⁷ To the former the majority of the ulama of Delhi designated the deposed and decrepit king of Delhi as *bidati* (heretic) therefore did not think it advisable to wage war under the guidance of a '*bidati*' king.⁸ He further argued that those ulama also did not enter into such mosques as were controlled directly or indirectly by king or his kith and kin who adhered to Hanafi thought. Long before revolt broke out they had published fatwa to this effect. "Can it be thought men holding such views would ever give a fatwa in favour of religious war and of placing the king at the head of it."⁹ Add to this is the fact that some of the reputed ulama whose seals and signatures were affixed on the fatwa, in reality saved the lives of Christians during the course of revolt.¹⁰ Such ulama as pointed out by him though in

ambiguous and guarded terms were none other than the Ahl-i-Hadith, as it were they who called the Muslims having blind faith in the shrines and in the efficacy of the powers of saints as *bidati*, an epithet still survives in the literature of the Ahl-i-Hadith against the 'Deobandis' and the 'Barelvis' though these groups not unoften claimed to be the true followers of the Ahl-i-Sunnah wa Jammat.

There seems to have been a desperate attempt on the part of the modernist leader to erase an impression from the British mind that Muslims by conscience was not a 'rebellious' or a 'belligerent' community and as such did not take part in the great uprising in the spirit of putting an end the British rule as its adversaries often blamed but with the sole desire of seeking participation and representation in the Legislature Councils. Such a conciliatory approach made Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (an eminent historian of Indian Subcontinent) to remark that Syed Ahmad Khan's pen at times on certain issues became a handicap of the policy of expediency.¹² But at the same time he did not fail in paying glowing tribute to Sir Syed for writing with his analytical mind the pioneering work on the causes of the great revolt.¹³ Such an analysis can not however, oversimplify the fact that not only individual but at collective level as well, the Muslims including the Ahl-i-Hadith participated more than their Hindu counterparts in all such attempts aimed at destroying the very foundations of the British rule. This can be gleaned from the fact that severe punishments to the extent of capital and life imprisonment were meted out to the Ahl-i-Hadith activists in various parts of India.¹¹ Maulana Nazir Husain was awarded two years imprisonment at Rawalpindi jail for his anti British activities.¹⁵

It is worthwhile to mention that in course of revolt came a decree from the Frontier region, declaring struggle against the British as lawful.¹⁶ The architect of this fatwa seems to have been Fazl Haq Khairabadi. General Bakth lost no time in giving a religious legitimacy to it by convening a meeting of religious heads of Delhi at Jama Masjid. Having threadbare discussed the niceties of the legal implications of such a

struggle the ulama arrived at a consensus that struggle against the alien rule was lawful within the purview of Islamic teaching.¹⁷ Being one of the important personages of Delhi it was quite probable to seek Maulana Nazir's opinion. The latter is reported to have declared India under British rule as *dar al-harb* and therefore signed the Jihad document, notwithstanding the fact that among the signatories also belonged the renowned Hanafī ulama of Delhi. All these developments led ulama to be in the vanguard of offering religious, political and military leadership and Delhi itself assumed its old symbolic character that it had in the erstwhile Muslim capital of India. The cry of Jihad had such a galvanic effect on the Muslims that they stirred into action against the British occupation of India on the plea that the British officials had begun interfering the religious affairs of the Muslims through a network of their aided and abetted agencies. It is not therefore to be wondered at seeing the Muslims of Bareilly rushing towards the English guns and bayonets with cries of "*dīn*" and "*Haidree*" fighting bravely on the last ramparts of Delhi.¹⁸

It is a travesty of truth that Ahl-i-Hadith as a group had ceased its political activities and adopted quietistic approach and diverted its attention towards the socio-religious reformation of the Muslims of India immediately after 1857. Thus that Ahl-i-Hadith of India abandoned the physical Jihad and concentrated upon Jihad bil-qalam but not immediately after their failure in 1857 as some scholars opine but of course in mid 1880's which witnessed besides other developments of historical nature, the birth of Indian National Congress (1885) and consequent upon the secularisation of politics as the priorities with most of the Indian political stalwarts. The fact can not be lost sight of that Ahl-i-Hadith leaders continued to undergo through trials, tribulations and traumas mainly for their acts of 'rebellion' and 'treason' until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Thus in a series of trials held at Ambala, Amritsar, Patna, Malda, Rajmahal etc., some of its activists were ruthlessly beaten whereas others sought the custody of police, in addition to those who were sent to Andaman and Nicobar Islands for

transportation of their lives. Under the conspiracy case of 1864, Maulana Nazir's house was thoroughly searched and many documents of incriminate nature were recovered from him.¹⁹

Imbued with the spirit of Jihad and re-establishment of Muslim rule Maulana Nazir immediately after his release kept himself informed about the political developments of the Frontier region through a number of his closely associated 'Wahhabi' activists like Abdullah of Arrah, Tabarak Ali, Mohammad Husain of Lahore, Jaffar of Thanesar etc.²⁰ Maulana not only extended all possible help to those engaged in the collection of funds (a job which he had himself successfully accomplished during Shah Mohammad Ishaq's time at Delhi) but also induced his disciples to go to the Frontier for sustaining the mujahiddin movement there. The deep-rooted connections with other 'wahhabi' activists could be gleaned from the statement obtained from Abdullah by Reily D.I.G. at Rawalpindi in 1869, to the effect that chief of the 'Wahhabi' of Delhi was Maulana Nazir.²¹ Another witness from Rajmahal stated that he had been induced to go to the Frontier by Maulana.

Needless to mention that the madrasa network²² of the Ahl-i-Hadith played an important role in raising funds as well as in aiding and abetting the mujahiddin movement in Frontier. With only a meagre source of income to the people living in the Northwest Frontier provinces, the mujahiddin therefore mainly depended on funds from their sympathizers and well-wishers spreading in various parts of India particularly Punjab, Delhi, UP, Bihar and Bengal.²³ These madrasas not only served as main agencies for recruitment but also centres for imparting religious instructions with special reference to the significance of the doctrine of Jihad. These madrasas included *madrasa Āiliya* Fatehpuri Mosque Delhi; *madrasa Islāh-ul-Muslimeen* Patna, Bihar; *madrasa Dār-ul-Taqmīl* Muzaffarpur Bihar, *Iflah-ul-Muslimīn* Duari; P.S. Pabna Rajshahi Bengal; *madrasa Islāmīa Madhupur* Bihar; *madrasa Shams-ul-Huda* Dilalpur Santhal Bihar; *madrasa Salafia*, Kuchay Gunj Nabi Amritsar city, *madrasa Qāzi*

Lakhoki Ferozpur Punjab so on and so forth.²⁴ These madrasas were founded either by the disciples of Maulana Nazir or by those who remained in his literary company at Delhi.

Viewed in the context of above discussion it becomes abundantly clear that Maulana Nazir was through and through a 'Wahhabi' and as such was a staunch enemy of the British rule in India at least upto the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Again it belied the notion that Maulana rendered the loyalist services to the British during the mutiny. The offering of asylum to a wounded English lady and taking care of her health for almost three and a half months at his residence during the turbulent days of mutiny was not something unexpected from a reputed alim of Delhi whose every act was guided by the injunctions of the Quran and the Sunnah. Thus having saved the life of Miss Licensus Maulana upheld the sayings of the Prophet of Islam (صلى الله عليه وسلم) which reveal no children, women, old or sick person should be killed in the course of Jihad unless otherwise involved.

The policy of readjustment and reconciliation with the British rule instead of conflict and confrontation initiated by Syed Ahmad Khan in the midst of hostile environment after the Muoluin debacle seems to have been based on his broad vision and farsightedness. Such a policy in the long run paved a way for other Muslim groups including Ahl-i-Hadith to follow suit in order to safeguard the interests of the Muslims in the fast changing scenario of India. One can not deny the fact that Syed Ahmad's sensitive soul could not remain immune to the sufferings and travails of his community and thus was destined to play a yeamons job for ameliorating the pitiable conditions of his community. He made all efforts through speech and writing to erase from the Muslim mind the obsession of fighting in the name of Jihad against the British imperialism. In his *Loyal Muhammadans of India*, he pinpointed the services rendered by the Muslims during the revolt of 1857. Even in the field of religion he endeavoured to show the basic similarity of Islam and Christianity and advocated reconciliation of

their followers. He also ruled out the possibility of Jihad in the given conditions as it would bring devastation and destruction for the whole community. This kind of political sagacity on the part of modernist leader began to be appreciated by the Ahl-i-Hadith leaders including Mohammad Husain Batalwi notwithstanding the fact that both these leaders remained at poles apart on issues of theological nature. As one among the prerequisite conditions for waging Jihad against the foreign rule was the availability of charismatic religious leadership, which according to them Indian Muslims lacked; and Muslims also did not have faith in the leadership of deposed and decrepit rulers of Delhi whose greatness and grandeur had already fallen in the eyes of the masses owing to their mean and wicked activities.²⁵ Moreover, they could not find Muslim traditional way of fighting and out dated arms in any way compatible with the modern sophisticated weaponry of the western world.

It is pertinent to highlight here that the industrial revolution and scientific developments in the west had brought about a total change in the method of war fare, means of communication and the sources of economic viability. In their battles fought in the past the Muslims demonstrated and displayed extraordinary valour and matchless spirit of sacrifice. But now times had changed and the changing times besides others also forced Maulana Nazir Husain to remark that individual acrobatic art of warfare could not withstand new tests of military organisation and political manoeuvres of the British. The Muslims in the given circumstances were not in a position to defeat foreigners. All battles fought by the Muslims from Balakote (1831) to 1857 revolt were lost mainly on account of outmoded methods of warfare.²⁶ The Muslim leadership were now convinced especially after 1885 that Jihad-oriented programme needed to be shunned as not only would it prove futile but moreso loss of life and property without carrying the armed struggle for an inch forward. Pragmatic considerations under the present uncongenial and unfavourable conditions demanded entirely different types of mobilization and preparation to achieve tangible results.

Thus the Ahl-i-Hadith leaders devoted all their efforts towards creating a group of Indian Muslims equipped with Islamic sciences in particular the Quran and the Hadith for transmitting it to those ignorant Muslims who otherwise could easily become a pray to the missionaries of the Christianity. With this new strategy the idea of physical Jihad against the British lost much of its moorings in the Indian environment. Maulana Nazir no longer considered India under the British rule as *dār al-harb*. Thus in one of his fatawas he made it explicitly clear that scholars and ulama of Islam were in complete accord that Jihad could not be waged without fulfilling certain prerequisite conditions. Among these the two obligatory conditions to be taken into cognizance were:

First of all to witness non-existence of peace and order and transgression of pledges and assurances between the Muslims and their opponents who were non-Muslims.

Secondly to see that the Muslims possessed arms and ammunition and strong, superior and sufficient armed forces to the extent that they could be in a position to fight a war against their rivals.²⁷

However, if Muslims failed to fulfil these fundamental and obligatory conditions, to think of waging a war would only tantamount to suicide. He Maulana Nazir was of the firm belief that there was complete peace and order under the benign rule of the British. One who earlier was forthright in declaring India as *dar al-harb*, now completely changed such an interpretation yet in a guarded and cryptic statements. For example, India to him could not be placed under *dār al-harb* in the light of the sayings of Abu Hanifa. We should not lose sight of the fact that Ahl-i-Hadith of India were *ghair-muqallid* (nonconformist) and as such did not explicitly adhere to either of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Here Maulana Nazir's purpose seems to have been to silence the voice of the majority of Sunni Muslims who followed Hanafī madhab and also to exonerate himself from indulging into further controversy on such issues. This change in Maulana's attitude vis-a-vis the British rule in India could be attributed

mainly to two reasons. On one hand he found Hindu political elite gaining ground in various spheres of life particularly in the body politic of India and on the other, he witnessed the influence of the secular literature all pervasive- an antithesis of Jihad literature.

The doctrine of Jihad in the last quarter of the nineteenth century received further setback among the Muslims in general and the Ahl-i-Hadith in particular through the publication of *Al Iqtisād fī Masil-i-Jihād*, a treatise calling in question the validity and permissibility of Jihad. Having sought the opinion of the eminent ulama of India on this issue, Husain Batalwi (one time a 'wahhabi' activist and a sympathizer of its ideology) gave due coverage to it in his self-edited monthly periodical *Ishātu Sunnah*. Thus to acquaint the Indian audience with the doctrine of Jihad and its philosophy, the sub and substance of the book had already appeared in a number of issues of his periodical. In order to ascertain the point of view of the Islamic scholars including the Hanafi ulama he visited various Northwestern and Central parts of India. The opinion sought from ulama according to him, were in complete agreement with his understanding and point of view. Having offered citations from the Quran as well as the sayings of the Prophet of Islam, he had a firm belief that conditions in India did not warrant raising the slogan of Jihad against the British who were peace loving and granted freedom of religion to all.²⁸

The following quotations from Husain Batalwi's much vaunted and applauded treatise especially in the English circles would offer reader a clear impression about the shift of loyalty in the programmes, policies and attitudes of the Ahl-i-Hadith scholars in relation to their one time British rivals and usurpers of the Muslim rule in India- the British. To Husain Batalwi the treatise under discussion would serve two purposes:

Firstly, it would seek awareness among the less knowledgeable Muslims with regard to questions and preconditions of Jihad so that they could not wage it against non-Muslim communities and nations under the consideration of a religious duty. The

thorough understanding about the conditions laid down by Shariah indeed could save Muslims from participation in mere riot, disturbances and unnecessary loss of lives and bloodshed. Secondly, it was aimed to disabuse the minds of others particularly the Government- under whose patronage and benign rule the Muslims of India lived-of the misunderstanding that to wage war against non-Muslims and to interfere with their life and property or to coerce them at the point of sword to accept Islam was in accord with the teaching of Islam. The fulfilment of both these objectives would lead to unity among the different sections of society, harmony between the rulers and the ruled and general peace and prosperity.²⁹

Syed Husain made a brief description of the various kinds of Jihad but broadly divided it into two i.e. Jihad for land and religious Jihad. The former was meant to occupy other lands whether of Muslims or non-Muslims whereas, the latter was meant to protect the religion of Islam against those who tried to interfere with the religious affairs of the Muslims and cause harm to them. Elaborating on Jihad for land, he further argued it was the same whether waged by the Muslims or non-Muslims and strictly speaking religion did not have any importance in this kind of Jihad. History is replete with the fact that such a Jihad was even fought against Muslim rebels. The principles on which such a Jihad was fought, were the same amongst the Muslims and non-Muslims with only a difference that latter considered it as a secular affair while the former often considered it a part of the religious duty.³⁰

What is important to know that for both kinds of Jihad Islam has laid certain conditions whose slightest violation would convert it into mere rioting and disturbances. But there seems to be complete dichotomy in Syed Musain's interpretations of Jihad as in certain places he considered India under the British rule as dar al-aman while in other places he did not hesitate in placing it dar al-Islam and not dar al-harb, a perception that had for long sustained the Ahl-i-Hadith ideology in India. He also lashed out at those Muslims who did not take cognizance of conditions laid

down for waging Jihad rather deviated from Islamic doctrines. As a natural corollary of such deviations the Westerners misconstrued and misrepresented the religion of Islam.

Having offered the third interpretation of dar al-aman Syed Husain largely shared the view point of Syed Ahmad Khan, who had earlier put-forth the identical views. Without going into the niceties of theological and philosophical aspect of this interpretation, it may however be noted here that a city or a country formerly under Islamic rule now had come under the control of non-Muslims like the country of India, so long as the Muslims enjoyed the performance of religious duties with perfect freedom, it would not be called dar al-harb; and if it had been under the control of non-Muslims for a long time, so long as the Muslims enjoyed peace and freedom of religion it deserved to be called dar al-Islam or more aptly dar al-salam or dar al-aman. Under such conditions Muslims should not wage war considering it a religious Jihad, as it would amount to rebellion. Similarly the Muslim migration to other lands- it is more in the context of enthusiast Muslims migrating to Afghanistan-from India was unwarranted and uncalled for.³¹ But it is an irony that his views did not always have identity with the views of some of his Ahl-i-Hadith followers hence came under sharp criticism. Unmindful of the criticism of his fellow followers, Husain Batalwi nonetheless exhorted the Muslims of other lands to come to India and enjoy perfect peace and freedom of religion under the British rule. He for all practical purposes was against placing India under the British tutelage as dar al-harb.

The publication of anti-Jihad literature especially on the part of Ahl-i-Hadith leaders together with the British crafty manoeuvres succeeded in undermining the influence of Jihad movement among the Muslims of India in general and those of the Ahl-i-Hadith in particular. Not only had the British performed a policy of persecution but also made malicious propaganda against the mujahiddin. Seen in this perspective most of the leader and maulavis of Patna followed by Malda and Rajmahal in Bengal, were given life sentences and other harsh punishments. For completely eradicating this

movement of its spirit of Jihad on ideological level too, the British officials obtained religious decrees from Muslim religious personalities within and outside India included the Mufti of Makkah, to the effect that an armed struggle against the British was unlawful. Some of the leading ulama of Calcutta and Lucknow also did not favour raising the Jihad against the British. Thus having discussed threadbare the members of the Mohammadan Literary Society of Culcutta held that a holy war against the British Government was unlawful. Such a view also found its supporters inter-alia two eminent theologians viz, Maulana Karamat Ali of Jaunpur and Maulavi Abdul Latif of Calcutta.

All such developments in the final analysis led to quelling the spirit of Jihad among the Muslims who were now convinced that no amount of religious fervour, or exalted convictions, of austere resolution, of dare devilry sacrifices were adequate to overthrow a powerful Empire founded upon the agencies of modernization. Like other Muslim ideologues, the Ahl-i-Hadith leaders also in the given circumstances, dropped the idea of physical Jihad and diverted their whole-hearted attention for reviving and reforming the Muslim society so as to make it viable to the changing times. Like other progressive traditionalist and secularists Muslims, the alumni of *madrassa Miyān Sāhib* also took a leading role in the reformation, regeneration and revitalization of the Muslim society and to save it from total collapse. The Muslim reformist leaders now sought to restore the purity of the Muslim faith by eradicating unIslamic beliefs and practices, of accretions and customs, of heresy and polytheism and above all Hindu and Buddhist influence.

End Notes

1. Maulavi Mohammad Husain Batalwi, *Al Iqtisād fi Masā'iki-Jihād*, Victoria Press Lahore, 1888. Written originally in Persian this treatise in view of its significance in the given conditions, has been translated into several languages included Arabic, English and Urdu in order to suit and serve the British strategic interests in the Indian Subcontinent at a time when a group of Muslims continued their hopes for the reestablishment of the Muslim rule on the application of Jihad-bil-saif against the British. The conciliatory approach on the part of Ahl-i-Hadith leaders could well be gauged by the fact that the treatise under discussion was dedicated to no less a dreaded enemy of the 'wahhabis' than Sir Charles and Sir James Lyall, Governor of Punjab respectively.
2. For details see Ghulam Rasul Mehr, *Sarguzasht Mujahiddin*, Kitab Manzil, Lahore, 1956.
3. Shah Abdul Aziz, *Fatwa-i-Azizi*, Matbai-Mujtabai, Delhi, 1311, A.H., p.17. The fatwa is of great significance in the history of Muslim political thought of the Nineteenth century. It made it clear the attitude of Muslim mind vis-a-vis the British rule in India in almost all political activities cum armed resistance from 1803 on the part of the Muslims. The fatwa had often been referred and used as a tool so as to mobilize public opinion against the British rule. What merits emphasize here that Shah Abdul Aziz did not declare India as dar al-harb when in 1784 Mahadji Sindhia was regent at Delhi. Thus the opposition to British rule was not on religious grounds when Muslims performed Islamic rituals but in the field of administration and justice, in matters of law and order, in the domain of trade, finance and collection of revenues remarked by K.A. Nizami. See Nizami, *Muslim Political Thought and Activity in India During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, Aligarh, 1969, 1125-26.

4. It seems certain that like other religious dignitaries Syed Ahmad could not go against the continued influence of the sufis on Muslim ideology as is evidenced from the very name of his religio-political movement which indeed smacked the imprint of sufi tariqat. He did not seem to have been overwhelmed by the the parochial intetests but aimed at giving different orientation and dimensions not necessarily confined it to religion alone in the conditions when Muslim faced immense challenges on various other fronts.
5. Welfred Contwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam*, reprint Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delhi, 1985, pp 208-209.
6. For details see G.R.Mehr, op. cit., pp. 621.
7. The fact of the matter is that not only Ahl-i-Hadith but other ulama belonging to different shades of opinion and other groups of Muslim community also participated whole heartedly except as remarked by Mujeeb Ashraf a microscopic group of nobles and elite who even extended help to the British during great peril of conflagration. In the similar vein another historian observed that the movement initiated by Syed Ahmad shahid was like smouldering fire for a number of years and contributed to the outburst, which unexpectedly took the form of upheavel in 1857. See Mujeeb Ashraf, *Muslim Attitude Towards British Rule and Western Culture in India*, Delhi, 1982, p.161; M. Mujib, *Indian Muslims*, Lahore, 1967, p. 425.
8. Syed Ahmad Khan, *Asbāb-i-Bagāwat-i-Hind*, Mufid Am Agra, 1903, p9.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p.11.
12. K.A. Nizami, *Contribution of Muslims to Indian Freedom Movement*, Islamic Culture, No. 4, Vol. LXIV, October 1990.
13. Ibid

14. For more details see Qeyammuddin Ahmad, *The Wahhābi Movement in India*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1994.
15. Foreign Political Proceedings, No 531-46, Feb., 1871 vide Sangat Singh, *Freedom Movement in India*, Delhi, 1972, p31.
16. Mohd. Yusuf Abbasi, *The Genesis of Muslim Fundamentalism in British India*, Delhi, 1987, p.6.
17. *Sadiq ul-Akhber*, Delhi, dated 19 July, 1857 vide Imdad Sabri, *Atharanso Satavan (1857) Kai Mujahid Shura*, Delhi, 1959. pp 148-149. The author has reproduced the fatwa in full with the signatures of all those who subscribed views in favour of Jihad against the British.
18. L.J. Trotter, *History of British Empire in India*, Vol. II., London, 1866, p. 335.
19. Foreign Political Proceedings No. 531-46, Feb. 1871, vide Sangat Singh, op., cit. p.31.
20. Besides them, Moulana Nazir also created a group of ulama who infused a spirit of Jihad among the people through their preaching and teaching in their self controlled madrasas. Among them mention may be made of Moulana Mohammad Ibrahim Arvi (d.1901), Abdul Aziz Rahimabadi (d. 1336 A.H.), Maulana Abdullah Ghazipuri (d. 1337 A.H.) so on. These Ulama left no stone unturned in shouldering the responsibility of sending men and material help to the mujahiddin in the Frontier. See for details G.R. Mehr, op., cit. pp 643-644.
21. Letter from Secretary Govt. of Bengal to Secretary Govt. of Punjab no 87, 7th January, 1870 vide Qeyammuddin Ahmad, *The Wahhābi Movement in India*, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1994, p. 164.
22. Ibid.
23. It is on record that at times the mujahiddin utilized the services of Hindus for sending material help to mujahideen in the Frontier. Thus money received from Patna and other centres was passed on the Rawalpindi by

special messengers from Delhi. From there it was taken beyond the Frontiers by Hindu merchants. See Sangat Singh, op., cit, p. 23.

24. Home Political Secret File No. 101 of 1986 (NAI)
25. *Syed Ahma Khan, op., cit., p.7.
26. Maulana Nazir Husain, *Fatāwa-i-Naziriya*, vol II. pp 472-473.
27. Ibid
28. Abu Syed Husain Batalwi, op., cit. pp. 3-5.
29. Ibid., 4,5
30. Ibid., pp 3-5
31. Ibid.