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Book Reviews

Role of Muslims in the Freedom Movement of India (ed) Abdul Ali and Zafarul Islam, Institute of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 2007, Contents, Preface, List of papers, Bibliography, pages 235, Hard cover, Price not mentioned.

The book under review is the outcome of proceedings of a national level seminar on the role of Muslims in the Freedom movement of India held at Aligarh Muslim University on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the country's First War of Independence under the aegis of Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh during 18-19th March, 2005. The significant feature of the seminar was participation of prominent members representing Islamic clergy and teaching faculty. There were fifty five papers that were presented and discussed during seven academic sessions. Out of these 55 papers twelve papers have been incorporated in the book under review since these covered almost all the vital aspects of focal theme of the seminar. Besides, the contributions were not only from the researchers and teaching faculty of the universities and research institutions but also from the enlightened scholars of Islam associated with teachings of Islam in various Madaras. Hence on one side we have views of different shades of ideologies pursued by scholars of history and on the other the roles played by ulema of Islam in Freedom movement.

The Freedom Movement, as popularly conceived of, was not the sole agenda of a particular political party but it had moved the masses to revolt against the British Raj and even *aam aadmi* in his or her own capacity contributed in this movement. It may be borne in mind that even litterateurs like Sir Sayyad Ahmad and poets like Hasrat Mohani with their creative writings spread the message of this movement far and wide. The papers that were presented provide scholarly treatments to the genesis of the movement. Naseem Ahmad, former Vice Chanecellor , Aligarh Muslim University in his inaugural address justified the timing of the seminar since the attempts to underplay the role of leaders of minorities in freedom movement is playing havoc with the social fabric of our country. Though there is no denial of the fact that the country has a majority of Hindus, nevertheless the Muslims and other minorities never conceived India as an adopted land. Instead they consider themselves as an integral part of constituents of population aggregates of this country. Naseem Ahmad spoke that Muslims have not come from outside but are the converts to Islam and hence have a deep sense of belonging to this country and therefore contributed in country's economic, cultural, intellectual and spiritual progress through the ages. Those who happened to visit the Cellular Jail in Port Blair and moved along with local residents would hear names like Pir Ali, Ali Karim, Mahdi Ali, Sher Ali etc. who are legends and icons in the freedom movement. Naseem Ahmad gave example of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan who dared to publish a book under the tile of *Asbab Baghawat-e-Hind* wherein he squarely blamed the British rulers for the outbreak of 1857 revolt. The objectives with which Aligarh Muslim University was established envisaged that students from various

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communities would not only pursue higher education, develop scientific temper but also imbibe the secular traditions of India and thus would be impediment in growing gulf between the Hindu and the Muslims engineered by the British Raj officials to continue their subjugation through pursuing the policy of “divide and rule”.

Mujeeb Asharf in his paper entitled “The role and significance of Uprisings and Muslim revolutionaries in the Freedom struggle of India” traced Muslim resistance to British rule from Tipu Sultan’s struggle against British imperialists who awakened the Indian rulers and gave a clarion call to form a united front against the British. This is followed by Syed Ahmed Bareilvi during the First half of the 19th century when his Wahabi movement swept through entire length and breadth of the country. His appeal to all Muslims and Hindus to overthrow the foreign rulers gave impetus to a large number of graduates who declined to serve the British masters. He along with his disciple Maulana Shah Ismail was killed in Balakot in 1831. Mujeeb concluded that it would fallacious to consider one party solely responsible for achieving independence and deny the contributions made by revolutionary heroes like Asrafuddin Ahmad Choudhary of Comilla, General Shanawaz Habibur Rahman and other associates of Subhash Chandra Bose. Professor Mahmudul Haq’s paper on influence of ‘neo-Hanbalism on the freedom movement’ highlights the role of Haji Mohsinuldin Ahmad (d.1862) popularly known as Dudu/Dudhu Miyan who spearheaded the resistance movement of the poor Muslim peasants of East Bengal against the European Indigo planters and neo zamindars in areas like Dhaka, Faridpur, Pabna etc. Besides this the author also throws light on role of Titu Mir (d. 1831) who was the leader of the movement of Bengal peasants opposing the neo feudalism created by the British through the instrument of ‘Permanent Settlement of 1793’. Zafarul Islam in his paper on the role of *Fatawa* in the freedom movement focus upon the fact that many important programs of the freedom movement were supported by the *ulama* through their *fatawa* and this was an important part of multidimensional role of former. Gulfishan Khan’s paper on some Early Colonial experiences of Ulema and Delhi Madarasa wherein the researcher indicates that the onslaught of consolidation of the British political authority in north India was to undermine the basic foundations of the traditional /non formal education the *ulama* did not deter them to perform their multifaceted roles with renewed consciousness and perhaps even with more vigor by teaching, preaching and debating , writing books and pamphlets on issues of importance. Ali Ahmad’s paper on impact of 1857 revolt on the emergence of Muslim educational movements concluded that that the 1857 Indian revolt led to the emergence of the Aligarh Movement and Deoband Movement which respectively played significant role in advancement of modern and Islamic education on one hand and in the struggle of Freedom movement on the other. Muhammad Ismail’s paper on the role of Bengali Muslims in the Freedom movement of India in the 19th century highlighted the role of Titu Mir and his lieutenant Ghulam Masum Khan . Abdul Ali’s paper on the role of Maulana Barakatullah Bhopali in the freedom struggle brought forth the fact that his idea of forming a secular government in exile in Kabul, though did not materialize during his life time nevertheless the “Provisional Indian Government” formed by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was formed

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on the model envisaged by Maulana Barakatullah Bhopali. Abdul Qadir Jafari's paper on role of Moulavi Liaqat Ali Allahabadi (1817-1892) who was expelled from the army on account of alleged anti-government activities. The author elaborated upon his 'jihad' against the British and later his confinement in the infamous Cellular jail of Port Blair where he breathed his last. Muhammad Javed Ansari's paper on the role of Maulana Mahmudul Hasan in the freedom struggle who founded 'Jamiyat-al-Ansar' in 1878- an organization of his students and disciples with the aim to (i) propagate the teaching of Islam,(ii) to keep alive the spirit of Jihad against the British rule and (iii) to prepare youth from India and abroad for Jihad against the British rule. Masud Ahmad's paper on contributions of Hasrat Mohani in the freedom movement emphasized that Maulana Hasrat Mohani with his poetry and essays infused zeal for freedom in the young hearts. His Urdu magazine "Urdu-i-Moalla" though was a literary periodical but its editorial and incisive analysis of British policies invited wrath of the British establishment that considered Maulana Hasrat Mohani a "dangerous enemy". They suspected his involvement in anti government activities including the 'silk conspiracy' and 'kakori case'. Shakil A. Samdani's essay on Tipu Sultan's lone battle to save foreign domination and his sacrifice to this cause of independence remains a milestone in Indian history of Independence. Journalist Syed Naseer Ahamed presented an overview of the role of Muslims in India's struggle for freedom. Mr. Kabir Ahmad Khan contributed a select bibliography on the role of Muslims in the freedom struggle.

The book is a useful reference for the scholars who are seeking knowledge to understand the role of Muslims in the struggle of India's Independence. It would wrong to ignore the role of Muslims in the freedom struggle. Prejudice against other communities is a common feature of large societies that contain a plurality of communities. This book would bridge the gap of knowledge on role of Muslim minority in achieving country's Independence. The absence of ISBN number would be a hindrance in cataloguing the book.

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