

HAZRAT MOHANI- THE GOD-FEARING COMMUNIST

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HASRAT MOHANI

Sayyid Fazlul Hasan, commonly known as Hazrat Mohani, was a versatile genius of twentieth century India. He worked incessantly and played various roles as a social activist, politician, freedom fighter, journalist, critic, poet, and a God-fearing communist. He worked for the Indian National Congress Party holding important offices, remained active with Swadeshi Movement, moved the first-ever resolution for complete freedom, and chaired sessions at different platforms like Indian National Congress, Muslim League, Jamiat-ul Ulama-i-Hind, and the Communist Party of India which he also helped to found. As he gave the call of Inquilab Zindabad—Long Live Revolution—he always fought for complete independence of India from the British rule. He was imprisoned on several occasions for his rebellious attitude towards the British but he always kept his spirit high without succumbing to any under-hand policy or upper-hand pressure. After India's independence, he worked as a member of the Constituent Assembly that drafted the Indian Constitution but did not sign it as he had his own reservations in this matter. In all his positions and responsibilities, Hasrat worked in all humility, living a simple life like a dervish with absolutely no place for pomp or pretension in his life.

Hasrat was born in 1881 at Mohan, a qasba (town) in the Unnao district, near Lucknow, in Uttar Pradesh as the son of Sayyid Azhar hasan and Shahr Banu. After his primary studies at Mohan, he moved to near by town Fatehpur Sikri for his school education. Hailing from a traditional sufi family he was attached to Chishthi and Qadir Sufi orders and had deep attachment with Firangi Mahalis, the traditional Sunni scholars of North India.

His poem, dated 2 October 1923, praises his Sufi masters in the Qadiri order, beginning with Hazrat Abdul Qadir Jilani of Baghdad, the head of the order, and continuing on, as protocol demanded, to Shah Abdur Razzaq of Bansa, whom all the people of Firangi Mahal considered their immediate spiritual master, and Shah Abdul Wahhab of Firangi Mahal, with whom Hasrat had his own direct spiritual link

*Baghdādī dayālū khivayyā hamhuñ garīb han pār javayyā
birah kī mārī, nīpat dukhiyārī tākan kab-lag dūr se nayyā
pār utār piyā se mila'o Razzāk piyā Bāñse nagar basayyā
Bāñse nagar ke, Firangi Mahal ke ekai nām ke du'i-du'i khivayyā
Razzāk Wahāb piyā bin, Hasrat, hamrī bithā kā kaun sunayyā*

(Merciful Boatman of Baghdad, we poor ones too wish to get across. Separation-wounded, grief-accursed – how long must we watch your boat from afar? Our beloved Razzaq, residing in Bansa, please take us across; let us meet with the Beloved. One is from Bansa, the other from Firangi Mahal – Our two boatmen who share one name. Except for beloved Razzaq and Wahhab, there is no one, Hasrat, to hear our woes)

He joined Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College of Aligarh in 1903 for his further studies and took his residence at Aligarh. At Aligarh he started a journal *Urdu e Mualla* which expresses his political views. Though All India Muslim League was established in 1906 with the support of Aligarh people Hasrat never supported it. He became a delegate of the Congress session from 1906 onwards and that time he had completed his BA Degree. *Urdu e Mualla* became an organ of the Congress and Hazrat was inclined to the party thinking that the party can bring Self Government to India. In his time only few Muslims supported the Congress, but Mohani stood firmly for the party despite the criticism of the majority of Muslims and also the Aligarh party. In his articles he advocated freedom to the country and insisted that the independence is the birthright of every man. Earlier the college authorities had expelled him from the college for criticizing the Aligarh people for their loyalist stance. He advocated the use of Indian goods instead of foreign ones. He himself wore *khadi* clothes and put into fire all those foreign clothes which had inherited from his fore-fathers.

Secondly, he advocated Hindu Muslim Unity . He went a step further and collected verses from the Qur-an and sayings of Prophet Muhammad for the need of cooperation between the two communities. He published an article of *Mulla Abdul Qayyum*, named 'Anbiyaul Hind' (The Prophets of India) in which the writer said: In India Rama Chandraji, Laxmanji Krishnaji and other Hindu deities are personalities of such status that their teachings and guidance, their philosophy and devout living entitled them to be called prophets." When he wrote vigorously against the British, the authorities instituted a charge of sedition against the journal . He was arrested and a fine of five hundred rupees was imposed on the journal. His whole library was destroyed by the police.

He started a Swadeshi store at Russel Ganj, Aligarh and wanted to see the establishment of a network of this throughout the country. He visited places to encourage people to start Swadeshi stores and these shops became centres of patriotism and anti British feeling. After the authorities closed the *Urdu e Mualla* for the second time, he started another journal *Tazkirathu Shu'ara* in which also he began to write articles on independence and on British policy against Turkey and other Muslim allies.

It was in August 1914 that the First World War broke out. The situation took an even more critical turn. Indian revolutionaries saw British difficulties as their opportunities and intensified their activities even more. Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi, a disciple of Mahamud al Hasan, the leader of Jamiyyat al Ulama Hind, went to Kabul and after making effort for few months with the help of other revolutionaries, succeeded in establishing Government of India in exile at Kabul in 1915. Raja Mahendra Pratap was appointed the President of India and the other great revolutionary Barkatullah Bhopali was elected the Prime Minister. Obaidullah Sindhi, Sardar Nasrullah Khan, and Amir Habibullah Khan were the members of the council of the ministers. Hasrat Mohani extended his full support to these revolutionaries. Likewise, some other Muslim extremists established another organization called Junaid-i Rabbania, as revolutionary Muslim army for the liberation of India. Hasrat was appointed as one of its Lieutenant General. It was because of all these activities that the Government of India regarded him a very dangerous man. Ultimately he was arrested again in 1916 while he was touring for the Aligarh University Foundation Committee.

Tilak and Aurobindo Gosh

In his second imprisonment he was transferred from one jail to another. There was a general stir for the release of Hasrat. Meetings were held at different parts of the country. But the authorities paid no heed to the voices of the people. First they put him in the jail of Jhansi, and after that in Allahabad jail. Later he was taken to Partab garh and Faizabad jails. At Aligarh and Allahabad jails, from the very first day, Hasrat had to face a rigorous punishment - grinding wheat at the hand mill. In Allahabad, he was kept for some time in the worst cell of the jail in which generally cut throats and dacoits were kept. It was in this jail that Hasrat first time met Swami Shivanand, who was a true follower of Balgangadhar Tilak and had been sentenced to seven years for sedition at Amrawati. In Hasrat Mohani's own words his meeting with the Swamiji in the prison was one of the major temporal as well as spiritual benefits. After coming out of prison, Hasrat again took up residence in Aligarh. The publication of *Urdu-i Mualla* was renewed and the first issue of the second period appeared in October 1909. In the next issue he openly favoured and supported the leaders of the extremists group in the Congress and declared that in politics he considered himself, and others like him, bound to follow in the foot-steps of Balgangadhar Tilak, the leader of patriots, and Babu Aurobindo Ghosh, the chief of freedom-lovers. In the same issue he vehemently criticized the leaders of the moderate wing of the Congress, the followers of the Muslim League and the founders of the Hindu Conference alike. In the issue of December 1909, he published a review on a booklet entitled *Aurobindo Ghosh Aur Un Ki Taleem* (Aurobindo

Ghosh and his Education) in which he paid his high tribute to the latter in these words : "In the circle of true patriots he holds, without any doubt, the highest position after Mr. Tilak". The issue of January 1910 carried an article entitled 'Apne Ahl-i Watan Ke Nam' (To Our Countrymen). It was in fact a translation of a short article of Aurobindo Ghosh - published in English in his journal *Karmayuga*, Calcutta, in which it had been emphasized that the further progress of the country was entirely in the hands of the extremists. In the mean time the famous Sufi and Urdu writer Khwaja Hasan Nizami, the custodian of the Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi, made defamatory remarks about Aurobindo Ghosh in an article entitled 'Khuni Danvesh' (The Bloody Saint). In this article Hasan Nizami had said that Sufis, saints and sanyasis should keep themselves aloof from politics. Hasrat Mohani severely criticised this stand in *Urdu-i Mualla* of February 1910. During the following year Hasrat wrote many articles in which he attempted to infuse a militant spirit into the Muslims and appealed them to join hands with the Hindus to work together for the freedom of their country. In 1911 and 1912 Hasrat published several articles on the worst political condition of the Muslims of different regions and attacked Britishers and their policies.

The Government believed that Hazrat was in league with the revolutionaries out side India and was preparing to go to Kabul and join them. Government had offered his release on certain condition but Hazrat refused. This period of imprisonment was worth that he composed many Ghazals including the famous chupke Chupke (1916):

*Chupke chupke raat din aañsū bahānā yaad hai
 Ham ko ab tak āshiqī kā vo zamānā yaad hai
 Bā-hazārāñ iztirāb o sad-hazārāñ ishtiyāq
 Tujh se vo pahle-pahal dil kā lagānā yaad hai
 Baar baar uThnā usī jānib nigāh-e-shauq kā
 Aur tirā ghurfe se vo āñkheñ laḌānā yaad hai
 Tujh se kuchh milte hī vo bebāk ho jaanā mirā
 Aur tirā dāñtoñ meñ vo uñglī dabānā yaad hai
 Khīñch lenā vo mirā parde kā konā daf.atan
 Aur dupaTTe se tirā vo muñh chhupānā yaad hai
 Jaan kar sotā tujhe vo qasd-e-pā-bosī mirā
 Aur tirā Thukrā ke sar vo muskurānā yaad hai
 Tujh ko jab tanhā kabhī paanā to az-rāh-e-lihāz
 Hāl-e-dil bātoñ hī bātoñ meñ jatānā yaad hai
 Jab sivā mere tumhārā koī dīvāna na thā
 Sach kaho kuchh tum ko bhī vo kār-ḳhānā yaad hai
 Ghair kī nazroñ se bach kar sab kī marzī ke ḳhilāf
 Vo tirā chorī-chhupe rātoñ ko aanā yaad hai*

(I remember those silent sessions of weeping day and night, I haven't yet forgotten those romantic days of love. With restlessness unbounded, eagerness unconfined, I remember the first time I fell in love with you. I remember my bold advances as soon as I met you, while you stood tongue tied, fiddling with your finger in your mouth. I

remember how I twitched the corner of your cloak, suddenly and you hiding your face behind the veil, I do remember. How I tried to kiss you, deeming you asleep, and how you spurned me with a little smile, I still remember. Finding you alone sometimes, now with caution due, by and by I'd tell my tale, I well remember. Do you remember that time, Oh love, when suitors you had none but me? Avoiding all eyes, defying all injunctions, I remember you visiting me stealthily at night.)

After his release from jail for the second time in May 1918 he actively engaged in politics. In the Khilafat conference held at Delhi in 1919, he stressed for the boycott of foreign goods, Non Cooperation with the British government and Hindu Muslim Unity. Mahatma Gandhi, who presided over the meeting, however, would not countenance the boycott and Non Co operation as it implied the hatred of the British people. The leaders were waiting for the government to get the reform bill passed. Hasrat convinced Gandhi of the need of non cooperation with the government and coined the name Non Cooperation movement and Gandhi accepted Hasrat's opinion. Under the leadership of Hasrat and Mahatma Gandhi a unity conference of Hindus and Muslims were convened. In the meeting Hindu orthodox leaders put forward a suggestion of stopping Cow slaughter for which Moulana Abdul Bari, the spiritual preceptor of Hasrat replied : "No matter whether the Hindus help us or not , the Musalmans ought, as the countrymen of Hindus out of regard for the latter's susceptibilities, to give up cow slaughter."¹

Now the words of Subash Chandra Bose: In the Congress session of Ahmadabad in 1921 the Congress adopted a resolution regarding Civil disobedience and appointed Mr. Gandhi as its sole dictator. In the same session Hasrat Mohani propped a change in the aims and objectives of the Congress as defined in the constitution by deleting all the use of non-violence. But he was defeated. Hasrat also introduced a resolution declaring the aim of complete independence.² So impassioned was his eloquence and so responsive was the audience, that one felt as if the resolution would be carried by a large majority. But the Mahatma rose to oppose the resolution and with great sobriety argued against the proposition, with result that it was thrown out by the house. Hasrat who was also the member of Mulsim League, adopted the same resolution in the session of Mulsim League held at the same place. In his speech he said that India should be declared as independent from 1 January 1922 onwards and it should be named United States of India. If martial law be imposed then guerilla warfare should be started. He further said that If the British didn't adopt the right path, then the Muslims should act up on the injunction of the Quran which said, "Kill them wherever you get hold of them." His address was confiscated and Hasrat was imprisoned again. Muslim League also rejected his proposals.

On Lord Krishna

After his rigorous imprisonment for two years Hazrat was released in April 1924 and he indulged in writing ghazals and preached love and devotion. Though a devout Muslim he was an admirer of Lord Krishna on whom he composed many lines.

Kuch Ham ko bhi 'atha ho he Hasrat Krishnan

Iqleem 'Ishq aap ke zer qadam he khass

(Bestow Oh, Lord Krishna something up on me too. For the lands of love are above all beneath thy feet)

Hasrat ki bhi qabul ho Mathura mei hadri

Sunthe he ashiqom pe thumara karam he khass

(Let Hasrat's presence at Mathura be acceptable too. For it is said that thy special kindness is shown to lovers)

*Man to-se prīt lagā'i kanhā'ī kahu or kī surati ab kāhe ko ā'ī
Gokula dhūndh Brindaban dhūndho Barsāne lag ghūm ke ā'ī
Tan man dhan sab vār-ke Hasrat Mathurā nagar cali dhūnī ramā'ī*

(My heart has fallen in love with Kanhaiya; Why should it think of anyone else? We searched for him in Gokul and Brindaban. Let's now go to Barsana and check that too. Sacrifice for him, Hasrat, all that is yours. Go to Mathura and become a jogi)

*'Irfān-i- 'ishq nām hai mere maqām kā hāmīl huñ kis ke
Naghma-i-nai ke payām kā Mathurā se ahl-i-dil ko vo ātī hai
Bū-i-uns duniyā-i-jāñ meñ shor hai jis ke davām kā makhlūq
Ik nigāh-i-karam kī umīdvār mastāna kar rahī hai
Bhajan rādhe-shyām kā mahbūb ki talāsh hu'ī rahbar-i-muhib
Barsāne se jo qasd kiyā Nandgām kā Gokul kī sarzamīñ bhī
'Azīz-i-jahāñ banī kalma parhā jo unkī muhabbat ke nām kā
Brindā kā ban bhī rū-kash-i-jannat banā ki thā pāmāl-i-nāz
Unhīñ kī bahār-i-khīrām kā labrez-i-nūr hai dil-i-Hasrat,
Zahe-nasīb ik husn-i-mushkfām ke shauq-i-tamām kā*

(I stand where Love's perfect knowledge is found. Who plays the flute whose melody fills me? "People of heart" get from Mathura the fragrance whose eternal presence permeates life. All creatures, hoping for one kind glance, dance intoxicated, singing: "Radhe Shyam." Beloved's quest guides this lover in his journey from Barsana to Nandgam. Gokul's ground became dear to him when anyone sang out "his" name with love. And Brinda's forest turned into paradise, when he gamboled there like the spring breeze. How fortunate, Hasrat, that your heart brims over with a glowing love for that musk-hued beauty!)

*Mathurā ki nagar hai 'āshiqī kā dam bhartī hai
Aazū usī kā har zarra-i-sarzamīn-i-Gokul dārā hai
Jamāl-i-dilbarī kā Barsāna Nandgāon meñ bhī dekh āe haiñ
Jalva ham kisī kā paighām-i-hayāt-i-jāvidañ thā har naghma
Kirishn bansurī kā vo nūr-i-siyāh thā ki
Hasrat sarcashma farogh-i-āgahī kā*

(Mathura, that city of passionate love, even desire longs for that place and each grain of Gokul's dust bears the beauty of the "Heart-Stealer." To Barsana we went, and Nandgam too, and witnessed there someone's beauty. The melody emerging from Krishna's flute was a message beckoning to eternal life. Was it some "Dark Effulgence," Hasrat, or the fount of ever-increasing Knowledge?)

*āñkhoñ meñ nūr-i-jalva-i-be-kaif-o-kam hai khās
jab se nazar pe unkī nigāh-i-karam hai khās
kuch ham ko bhī 'atā ho ki ai hazrat-i-Kirishn*

iq̄līm-i-‘ishq āp ke zer-i-qadam hai khās
Hasrat kī bhī qubūl ho mathurā meñ hāzirī
sunte haiñ ‘āshiqōñ pe tumhārā karam hai khās
(When he cast at me a special, benevolent glance, my eyes lit up with a boundless, unending vision. Revered Krishna, bestow something on me too, for under your feet lies the entire realm of love. May you accept Hasrat’s attendance at Mathura – I hear you are specially kind to all lovers).

Mathura ki nagar he aashiqi ka
Dam bhadthee he aarzu isee ka
(My longing singing the praise of Mathura, for that is the city of lovers).

Har zara sar zameen gokul
Daara he jamal dīl baree ka
(Every particle of the earth of Gokul reflects the beauty of his attraction)

Peghame hayate javidaan tha
Har naghme krishn baansaree ka
(Every melody of Krishna’s flute carried the message of eternal life)

Hasrat Mohani regarded Lord Krishna as a prophet of Islam as did his spiritual mentor Sayyid Abdu Razaq Bansawi. He refers Krishna as Hazrat Sri Krishna alai Rahma (Hazrat Sri Krishna, On him the blessings of God). He also believed that his fundamental belief had two solid foundations- one: Love is Allah; Beauty is truth (*Al Ishq huwallhu and al Husn huwal haq*) and two: Engage your heart with beloved; and your hands with worldly tasks (*Dil ba yar wa Dast wa kar*). Abdu Shakur, who published the comprehensive life sketch of Hasrat Mohani gives interesting aspects of his Sufi thought: “I talked to him about *tasawwuf* (Sufism), and he made a most interesting point: “there was no difference between Truth and Beauty”. He then continues: “Because the Hindu devtā Sri Krishna is regarded as an avatār of beauty.” Hasrat too was truly devoted to him, and used to visit Mathura and Brindaban like any true devotee. He believed, he gained spiritual benefit from those visits. Hasrat said that Gita did not stress virāg and tyāg, and that Sri Krishna taught karma yoga or the philosophy of Action.³ According to Hasrat, there were similarities between Islam and what the Gita taught. In his view, Sri Krishna was an incarnation of both beauty and love, and that was why several eminent Sufis and men of profound insight (*ahl-i-bātin*) regarded Sri Krishna to be a walī (friend of god; saint). Hasrat believed that Sri Krishna’s spirituality was still alive and active throughout India. Hasrat, a pantheist to the core, viewed Krishna as an embodiment of both the divine love and of divine beauty, though not as the divinity itself. He, though gave Krishna the epithet of Rasul but never mentioned *Alahi salam* (On him the peace) added as a mark of respect to every prophet other than Prophet Muhammad to whom the respect was shown as *Sallallahu Alaihi Vasallam* (Peace be up on him); instead he used *alahi rahma* (On him the blessings) as the mark of respect. He

had declared that he viewed Krishna as a rasūl or prophet sent to India centuries ago, referring, in that regard, to the line of thinking propounded by Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-Janan, the eminent Mujaddidi Naqshbandi Sufi and poet of the 18th century Delhi, for whom both Rama and Krishna were prophets of Allah born in India centuries before the advent of Islam. Jan-i-Janan's thinking was anchored in such Quranic statements as, "To every community we have sent a prophet (rasūl)...." (16:36), and "For every people there is a prophet (rasūl)...." (10:47). When Aurobindo Ghosh wrote about his own experience of a vision of Krishna and was ridiculed for it, Hasrat published a note in his journal *Urdū-i-Mu'allā*, in which he stated: Babu Aurobindo Ghosh, after coming out of the jail, disclosed that he had the darshan of Sri Krishna Maharaj. Some internally blind people (*kor-bātin*) say it was a made-up story. We, however, have absolutely no doubt about the truth of his statement, for we have ourselves experienced that rare and amazing bliss (*ānand*) which the heart receives the moment one takes the name of Sri Krishna.⁴

Towards Communism

In the early twenties Hasrat inclined towards socialism and his poems in this period reflected his new thoughts. On 25 of February 1923 he wrote:

Na Sarmaye daron ki nakhut rahege
Na hukkam ka joribe ja rahega
Zamane wo jaldi anewala he jis men
Kisi ka na mukht pe da'wa rahega
(Neither the insolence of capitalists will remain; nor the tyranny of rulers. That time is fast approaching when no one have claims up on labour)

In the same month he wrote:

Dastor ke usul musallam ter chuke
Shahi bhi ram ghalbaye jamhur ho chuke
Saramaya dar khouf se lirzan men kyon hun
Ma'lum sabko quwwat mazdur ho chuki
(Constitutional principles have been accepted; imperialism has been tamped by the firm hands of the people. The capitalists are trembling with fear. Every one now knows the power of the workers)

Khalqe khuda ko manke sharikath ka mustahaq
Darbabe fikr munkare tamleek ham rahe
(Accepting the right of God's creation to co ownership, we remained opposed to private property)

He wrote on 26 July 1923

Mulki hoi jaidade shaksi
Jaiz na raha mafade shaksi
Qaumi ke muqabile men Hasrat
Tha hech bhi ithihade shakhsi

(Personal property has become national property and personal profiteering has ceased to be lawful. Hasrat, against national unity , individual unity has proved to be nothing)

After two years of third imprisonment Hazrat Mohani came out of jail in 1926. This time the Hindu Muslim Unity forged by the national leaders had come to an end and both the communities fought against each other completely turning the plates. Riots took place at many places killing the members of both the communities. Even the leaders, who had hitherto stood for unity, now began to take sides, completely supporting their community against the others. Swami Shradhanand, a Hindu leader who was respected by Muslims so much so that he was once taken to Jama Masjid in a procession, now turned on Muslims. The Hindu leaders started Suddhi and Sangthan movements to empower Hindu strength and on the other hand, Muslim came with their Tabligh and Tanzim movements. Hazrat was painful of the developments and took his residence at Kanpur and re started his *Urdu Mualla*, hoping to bring back the national unity. In 1926 under his leadership, the first All India Communist Conference was held at Kanpur. Hazrat presided over the conference and his presidential address has been published in *Urdu i Mualla* of April, May and June 1926. After thanking the delegates, Hasrat asked them to join his prayer that the regular movement of real brotherhood and equality that is being inaugurated today in India be crowned with success and very soon spread over the entire country to become India's only political and economic movement. He goes on to stress that the Communist movement is essentially a peasant and working class movement, but that because of misunderstandings deliberately spread by capitalists and the enemies of the movement, some people fear it. He elaborates this point and says, "For instance some people think that communism and bloodshed are two inseparable phenomena. But the truth is only that we consider non violence applicable only for reasons of necessity and expediency and unlike Mahatma Gandhi we do not consider it obligatory on principle, under all circumstances."

He continues: " Some stupid and mischievous people are going about saying that communism and the doctrine 'everything that is thine is mine ' are one and the same thing. The truth is that in our theory there are two types of property and ownership. One is zati which in English is called personal property-like a watch, an umbrella, a lota, bedding, clothing, a house etc. The other is shakhsi, in English is called private property, like land, factories etc. And communist principles are only applied to private property and not to personal property." Then after briefly summarising the communist principles he describes the aims and objectives of the movement: "The detailed constitution of our party which resembles the Soviet Constitution, will be presented and passed out by this first Conference, Our aims and objectives are these:

1. To establish Swaraj, that is complete independence, by all permissible means.
2. After the establishment of Swaraj to make sure that its structure resembles that of Soviet Republic where all the principles of Communism are acted up on.
3. Till the establishment of Swaraj, to strive by all possible means for the welfare and emancipation of the peasants and workers, and in this connection to permit cooperation

with every political party of India to the extent to which this political party supports our aforesaid aims.

4. To arrange for publicity to popularize the principals of Communism and win over the masses so that after the establishment of Swaraj these principles may be put into practice at once.”⁵

Hasrat had a sense of history and he knew what the repercussions of launching such a movement would be. So he hastened to say: “It is important to state at this point, that at least for the time being the activities of our party will be limited to India only. Our relationship with the parties of other countries is only that of sympathy and like-mindedness. And by that token we are only their contemporary, not subordinate to them in general, nor to the Third International in particular. We do not help them practically, nor do they support us financially.”⁶ He never wanted to connect the party with International communism for the time being, but was aware of the developments of Communism taking place in other countries.

Regarding the criticism that communism is against religion he said: “Some contemptible people put this undeserved blame on Communism, that it is essentially an enemy of religion. The case is simply this: in matters of religion we consider it appropriate to show extreme tolerance. Whoever agrees with our principles is one of us whether he be Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Buddhist, whether he be a religious man or an atheist. In other words, we recognize the existence of every religion, and we regard atheism too as a form of religion.”⁷ He went some steps further and declared: “Some Muslim leaders, without rhyme or reason, label communism as opposed to Islam. In fact the truth is just the opposite. In fact, Islam’s injunctions against capitalism are more severe than those of communist theory. The main purpose of the obligation of Zakat is that, as long as a single man is hungry, monied people had no right to enjoy luxuries. In the Quran, it is Zakat that is most stressed, second only to Namaz. And the first Caliph ordered war to be waged against those who refused to pay Zakat.”⁸ He elaborated on the point of Zakat and stressed that Zakat is a tax levied up on the capital: “Taxing capital instead of profit is still a matter under discussion in Europe. But in Islam this has been practiced right from the earliest time; because the amount of Zakat is not determined by annual profit but is declared to be one fortieth of the entire capital.”⁹ He declared: “In short, judged from any stand point, communism is the final and the best form of politics. So if we want to adopt some new line of action, discarding our obsolete programme, why should we not adopt that which is the final and the best.”¹⁰ Hasrat even maintained that the word soviet is derived from the Arabic word Saviyyat meaning equality. Islam’s fundamental principle is equality and communism also stands for equality.¹¹

In 1925 when Indian National Congress held its session at Kanpur, Hasrat and his wife Nishatun Nisa Begum came to Cogress Pandal with a procession of workers and peasants and wanted to enter into the pandal, but were stopped by Seva Dal Volunteers led by Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru asked Seva Dal volunteers to lathi charge them. Beegum Hasrat was furious and slapped Nehru and scolded for such dictatorial order.¹² For the rest of his life Hasrat remained attached to

communism and his articles continued to be so. In 1928 Motilal Nehru, under the pressure of Hindu Maha Sabha came with the so called Nehru Report, the Communist party including Hasrat Mohani came strongly against it, because the report recommended only Dominion Status instead of Complete Freedom. On 28 August 1928 he gave a detailed statement to a press reporter, in which he said: “ I support complete independence; so I cannot recommend acceptance of the proposals in which dominion status is recommended. I think that to form a constitution would be a victory for the cunning move Lord Birkehead. He is insisting up on it, for he wants the Indian leaders to announce that they wish to maintain connections with Britain. I also want a federation of fully autonomous provinces to be established in India. The Central Government should control only those portfolios which would not come under the provinces, for instance, the communications, the armed forces, foreign affairs etc. The Indian states would send their representatives to a Federal Government easily and quickly, as they would [not] fear interference in their internal affairs. Unless political parties are formed in the country and grew strong separate electorates and proportional representation should not be dispensed with.”¹³

Hasrat was arrested during Civil Disobedience Movement from Lucknow and later released. However, Hasrat didn't follow the objective of dominion status and he cleared his position in the Presidential address of Jamiyyat al Ulama of Lucknow province on 9 August 1931: “My political aim for India is known for everybody: I cannot accept anything short of complete independence in any circumstances whatever; and that too a complete independence in which the constitution must be similar to that of America or Russia- 1. Democratic, 2. Federal, 3. Decentralized- and in which provisions for the full safeguarding of the Muslim minority should fully and explicitly stated.”¹⁴

Against Gandhi

Hasrat went to lash Gandhi for his vacillation between complete independence and dominion status, because Gandhi had insisted on Dominion Status in the Empire or outside the Empire if necessary. Hasrat couldn't tolerate this half hearted attitude, and very clearly said in his address that Gandhi's slogan of complete independence was only a bargaining stunt, based on calculation that the British government, scared by the demand for complete independence, would at last dominion status, which was Gandhi's object. He said: “There is only one way out; that in India, as in United States decentralized democratic government of independent provinces and states of India should be established at once. But the “Mahasabhite government” and “Britain's faithful servant Gandhi” would never agree to it. During his busy activities he found time to indulge in meditation and visit Ajmir and also visited Saudi Arabia for Hajj pilgrimage. After his first pilgrimage he was so overwhelmed by his feelings that during the next eighteen years he performed Hajj thirteen times.

In the elections after 1935 Government of India Act Hasrat Mohani was elected from United province with the support of Muslim League. But he couldn't reconcile himself with the party because of his attachment with Communism and Soviet Union. He wrote:

Hidayat ka zamana tushand tha ahle soviet ne
Digati sabko rahe khariyat be khuf den hokar
(The world was thirst for guidance. The people of the Soviet showed to all the road to independence, fearless of religion)

Lazim he yaham ghalabaye ayen soviet
Do ek bars men hoki das bees bars men
(The predominance of Soviet law is certain here (in India). Whether it take a year or two or ten to twenty years)

Hasrat was a regular member of the Muslim League Working Committee of UP and took a prominent part in the Muslim League session in 1937. He was responsible for changing the aim of the party as complete independence. He also said that if the Hindu majority provinces are satisfied with Dominion Status let the Muslim majority provinces form an independent government and if deemed necessary, then form an affiliation with the Russian Republic of the Soviet Union.

In 1938 Hasrat attended the Palestine Conference at Cairo as a representative of Indian Muslims. In the next year he toured the western countries and presented the issues of Palestine and India. He visited Beirut, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Paris and England. It is also interesting to note that in a ghazal composed in Italy on 18 September 1939 he said:

Huriyat kamil ki qum kaha ke ude hei
Ab saye British ka taraf jayenge kya ham
Gandhi ki tarah bhaith ke kyom katenge charkha
Lenin ki tarah denge na duniya ko hala hem
(We have risen up swearing to win complete freedom. Why now should we incline to rest in the shadow of the British. Why should we be like Gandhi sitting at the spinning wheel? Like Lenin, why should we not shake the world).

He also opposed the doctrine of Ahimsa:

Jise Kahte hei Ahimsa ek usul khudkashi tha
Amal is ye koi kahta na kabhi awaam karthe
(What is called Ahimsa in principle is suicide; no matter who had told them to, the people would never had acted upon it)

Hasrat had been familiar with the Swadeshi idea in his boyhood, long before Gandhi appeared on the Indian political scene and he continued to adhere strictly to the Swadeshi principle in his own life. But for him Indian mill made cloth was not less swadeshi than homespun, while hand spinning was impracticable on a large scale and did little good to anybody. In the same way ahimsa, for him, was meaning less in the mass struggle for a nation's independence. "No country

in the annals of history ever achieved independence without sacrifice and without some degree of violence of some kind.”

Though from an orthodox back ground, Hasrat was with a progressive outlook. He criticized the attitude of Muslim scholars (*Ulama*) in the following Persian verses :

Qaul ulama' chon qaul Englees

Na ma'tabar as to jan nidado

(The words of the ulama , like the words of the English, are untrustworthy and without substance)

In Englan he met with a number of important politicians, for example, Lord Zetland and Colonel Wedgewood, and he also addressed a gathering of Members of the House of Commons and spoke three hours on the political situation in India and the two nation theory.¹⁵ Lord Zetland, then Secretary of State for India had recorded the meeting with Hasrat and his views on the status of India elaborately.¹⁶ Regarding a free India Hasrat had always favoured a loose federal structure with the main powers vested not with the centre but with autonomous provinces. He stated that India should be composed of autonomous provinces grouped into five and it would be a confederation of India. He also laid down a general outline of the constitution of the Confederation. He tried to persuade both the Congress and Muslim League leaders to support his scheme. Regarding his meet with Gandhi, hasrat writes: Glory to God! the man who was dedicated to Dominion Status and an enemy of complete independence is now in complete harmony with me. Thanks to God”¹⁸

While in Mulsim League, Hasrat never accepted the single man authority of Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Though he wanted to put his resolution for complete freedom in the subject committee of Mulsim League in April 1942, Jinnah opposed it. In the open session he brought an amendment to the resolution giving complete authority to Jinnah to make decisions. He was the only man to object to the decision. However he raised his objection, but no one in the committee supported him. He slowly disappeared from the plat form of the league, when it stressed for the partition of the country. At the same time his attachment towards Communism was growing, and even in a ghazal composed for and recited in an All India Musha'ira organized and broadcast over All India Radio, Hasrat recited the following couplet on the 7 February 1944:

Soviet aap ka maqsad baghavat aap ka maslak

Har is par bhi Hasrat ki ghazal khwani nahim jatee

(Your object is Soviet, and your creed is revolt; Yet, Hasrat, even so your chanting of lyrics does not cease)

In the Mushaira held in Bombay on 28 February 1945 he recited thus:

Darveshi wo Inquilab maslak he mera

Sufi Mu'min ho Ishtiraki Muslim

Sa anro ki be nahje baithul maal islam

Fil jumal he ayen Soviet qaim

(My creed is darvesh and revolution, I am a Mu'min Sufi and a Communist Muslim. In view of the Islamic System of baithul Maal, in fact, the Soviet system is in existence)

Hazrat lamented on the horrors of Hiroshima after dropping of the atom bomb by America in his poem:

Bulbul bekinse kya puche nasheeman tha kahan

Baghiyan bi jab ye kahtaho ki gulshan tha kahan

Johari ham ki yahi garkar farmani rahe

Hasrat ek din khalq puchege London tha kahan

(How one can ask the helpless nightingale where its nest was, when even the gardener is asking "Where was the garden?" If the achievement of the atom bomb go at this rate, then, Hasrat, one day people will ask "Where was London?")

After the partition when most of the Muslim League leaders and many others opted for Pakistan Hasrat Mohani decided to stay in India as a staunch Indian and worked for the political advancement and uplift of the nation as a whole and in particular, the Muslims. During the horrible days of partition, despite the mass killing of Muslims, Hasrat came to Delhi. He saw the Muslims gathered in the old fort under military protection, and it was thought to be quite impossible for a Muslim to move about freely in the city. But Hasrat ignoring all warning roamed about all over the city.

He opposed tooth and nail the advice of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad to disband all the Muslim organizations and merge in Congress. He asserted that the identity of Muslims in no way could be enslaved to the Congress. He was elected as a member of the Indian Parliament. In the Parliament, in most cases he was a minority of one, but always raised his voice in opposition. When the constitution was complete and put in the Parliament for voting, Hasrat refused to put his signature because he was not satisfied with the type of independence that had come to India.

Criticizing the very nature of Constitution framed by Ambedkar, Mohani in one of the constituent assembly debates said "Look at our new constitution drafted by Dr. Ambedkar. There is nothing new in it. He has mostly copied out either the Government of India Act of 1935 or as admitted by him, has drawn from the constitutions of other countries. A bit from here and a bit from there - it is a Pandora's Box. This is what has been produced by our friend Dr. Ambedkar!" In his constituent assembly debates, he repeatedly mentioned the Soviet Constitution and how it was worth consulting.

Hasrat Mohani was active till his death indulging in politics, visiting different places, writing poems and looking after his family. He read profusely and wrote extensively. His voluminous work *Kulliyat-e Hasrat Mohani* is a collection of his poems. His other important works are

Sharh e Kalam e Ghalib, Nukaat e Sukhan, and Mushahidaat e Zindan. He coined the name Non Cooperation (Tark e Muwaalat) to the Non Cooperation Movement and the slogan Inquilab Zindabad to the freedom struggle.

Hasrat never accepted Government allowances or stayed at official residences. Instead he stayed in the mosque and used to go to the Parliament in a shared horse cart (Tonga). He was a religious man performing Hajj several times. He used to travel in the third class of train and when asked why he was travelling in the third class he quipped by saying , “There is no fourth class” Hasrat breathed his last on 13 May 1951 at Lucknow.

R.H Qadiri writes: “Hasrat’s move from nationalism towards Communism in the twenties was, for him a logical development from his fundamental principles. He saw the type of nationalism- that was gaining currency in the camp of the Congress. Up to that time he had never been a whole hearted supporter of the Muslim League, though he had attended and continued to attend, all the sessions of main political nor quasi -political parties. Once the Muslim League had adopted the the aim of self- government he had felt more attracted towards it. But was now witnessing the spectacle of the Congress and Muslim League both gradually becoming the strong holds of communalists- organizations not of Indians, but of Hindus and Muslims respectively. The irrelevance of such considerations to Communism made him feel its intellectual pull. Moreover, he saw some points of similarity between Islam and Communism., and in the end these led him to declare that he was a Muslim Communist.”¹⁸

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