

## **ZAFAR ALI KHAN (1873-1956): A CREATIVE GENIUS AMONG THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS**

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### **Abstract**

Zafar Ali Khan had an acumen and flair found in Muslim Punjabi literates. He was a politician, a parliamentarian, an orator, a writer, a poet and a journalist. Zafar Ali Khan's distinction in the history of urban Muslim leaders was his passionate discourse and equally revolutionary editorials in *Zamindar* against the Imperial policies of the British government. He was a staunch believer in politics of activism rather than politics of negotiation, therefore; he spent one-third of his life in prison. His stance regarding various people and groups changed rapidly throughout his life which indicates his mental development that surprises his followers as well as his opponents. An analysis of his life may help in understanding this enigmatic leader of the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent. The main objective of this paper is to highlight the contribution of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan as anti-feudal, and anti-imperialist. Besides, the paper analyses his personality and his influence causing constantly changing opinions and views about his contemporaries, groups, and the British government.

**Key Words:** Zafar Ali Khan, Khilafat Movement, Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam, Masjid Shaheed Ganj, Majlis-i-Ittehad-i-Millat

### **Introduction**

Pakistan's national discourse regarding the freedom movement in South Asia consists of grand narratives focusing on major events and processes such as Transfer of Power, Partition, and Freedom Movement etc. The first, second and third generation of scholars has worked on these

themes. In the twenty-first century, scholars and historians have started working on the theme of decolonization. This has generated interest in the local and native voices from below, the Subalterns as they are dubbed. Now the scholars are engaged in writing the contribution of specific events, groups and personalities in the freedom struggle. One such leading figure is Maulana Zafar Ali Khan “immensely talented, probably the biggest journalistic star of 20<sup>th</sup> century firmament.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Literature Review**

There are a number of secondary sources available on various dimensions of his personality, political activism and journalistic contribution. There are three biographies of the Maulana. One written by Ashraf Atta, who had worked with him for twenty years, is an account of his life meticulously narrating various dimensions of his personality and literary and journalistic contributions. The other biography is written by Shorish Kashmiri who had worked with Zafar Ali Khan and was deeply impressed by his personality. It was first published in 1957 and republished with an introduction by Anwar Saeed. The third biography was written by Nadim Sitapuri first published in 1970 that narrates the Maulana’s life and literary contribution with a selection of his poetry. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan Trust in collaboration with Ferozsons, Lahore published its second edition. Zahid Muneer Amir’s latest edited work, *Zafar Ali Khan: Khutoot-o-Khuyoot* is a collection of Zafar Ali Khan’s unpublished letters with annotations and rare photographs.

There are number of articles written on Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. Samina Awan’s article “Zafar Ali Khan: An Enigma or New Print Culture” is a valuable study on Zafar Ali Khan’s contribution in journalism leading the new print culture of representing the interests of urban classes. A Professor of Mass Communication in Allama Iqbal Open University, Saqib Riaz’s article “Maulana Zafar Ali Khan ki Siyasee Adabi aur Sahafati Khidmaat” summarizes the three dimensions of Maulana’s services for his nation. Kishwar Sultana’s article “Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Majlis-e-Ittihad-e-Millat and All India Muslim League” focuses on the evolving relationship of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan with Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League. It is a useful study in understanding the convergence and divergence between the two personalities and the parties both led.

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan was a leading figure of anti-imperial struggle so it is to evaluate his personality and contribution in the freedom struggle. The paper introduces his life and career, discusses his

ideological orientation and activism regarding religious matters, and analyses his political ideology and contribution in politics. It is concluded with an analysis of his personality with reference to contemporary environment.

### **Early Years**

Born in Kot Merath district of Sialkot in British Punjab on 27 January 1873, Zafar Ali Khan was of medium height, whitish complexion, slim body, bright eyes, loud and fluent, courageous, fond of exercise, Muslim Rajput, Aligarh graduate, heir of *Zamindar*, resident of Karamabad, expert in Arabic, Persian, English and Urdu, fluent in prose and poetry more than five rivers of the Punjab.... no trace of Punjabi in his speech or writing but his Urdu was embedded by Arabic and Persian. ... no one surpassed him in translation. If he would have been Qadiani, he would call his heart touching poetry as revelation. If he would have been a Hindu, no Hindu money lender would have been a miser. If he would have been British, he would have bankrupted the British nation. He will be forgiven because of his poems and *Naat* on the Day of Judgment and the next generations in the Indian subcontinent will remember him for his services through *Zamindar*.<sup>2</sup>

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan was first named as Khuda Dad Khan, soon after, renamed as Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. His father Maulvi Siraj-ud-din Ahmad and grandfather Karam Elahi Khan were known scholars. He learned Arabic and Persian from his grandfather, and received early education from Mission High School, Wazirabad and matriculated from Mahendra Singh College, Patiala in 1792. At this time his father was posted in Gulmerg, Kashmir as Postmaster. Zafar Ali Khan was just a sixteen years old boy yet very assertive and courageous. One day, a British captain came to the post office and asked him to hold the reins of the horse for a while. He responded that "I am not your servant".<sup>3</sup> The British captain complained to the British resident of the Kashmir state who called Maulvi Siraj-ud-din Ahmad who resolved the matter. His father advised him to visit Lahore and join government service but he opted to go to Aligarh University for higher education.<sup>4</sup>

Zafar Ali Khan graduated from M.A.O. College Aligarh in 1894.<sup>5</sup> The intellectual environment of the college groomed his innate skills. Maulana Shaukat Ali Khan was his senior and Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar was his junior.<sup>6</sup> Maulvi Abdul Haq and Mehfooz Ali Badayuni were his classmates.<sup>7</sup> He was an active member of Anjuman Ikhwan ul Safa established by Professor T.W Arnold (1864-1930) for the promotion of English language, where each member was required to write and

present a paper in English language. He joined *Lujanatul Adab* under Shibli No'mani for guidance in Arabic language. He also sought knowledge and guidance from Altaf Hussain Hali (1837-1914), Shibli No'mani (1857-1914), Professor Arnold and above all, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817-1898). Once in a function under the chair of Sir Syed Ahmad, eighteen years old Zafar Ali Khan recited a Persian poem in the honour of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, which was appreciated by everyone present there.<sup>8</sup> Few verses of the poem are cited below for its eloquence:

مسخر کرد نطقم کشور جادو بیانی را  
 یدام آورد طبعم، صید و حشی معانی را  
 ہمیں آں سیدے آمد کمر از ہمتش محکم  
 کہ ماہر ہست یکسر چارہ در دہنہانی را  
 ریاض قوم آب از اشک ہائے چشم او گیرد  
 فلک چشم تو گاہے دیدہ است این باغبانی را

Participation in functions and speeches in college seminars and conferences enhanced his confidence and eloquence transforming him into a compelling orator and polemicist in the ensuing years. He enjoyed the company of many Indian stalwarts like Maulvi Abdul Haq, Khawaja Ghulam us Saqlain, Mir Mahfooz Ali Badayuni, Muhammad Ameen Zubairi and Sir Ziauddin, Maulana Hasrat Mohani and Aziz Mirza etc. during college years.<sup>9</sup>

After graduation, Zafar Ali Khan resided in Bombay and started writing columns for the *Times of India* and *Bombay Gazette*.<sup>10</sup> He was introduced to Nawab Mohsin-ul- Mulk (1837-1907) and served as his Private Secretary.<sup>11</sup> On his persuasion, Zafar Ali Khan translated philosophical essays and books from English to vernacular language including Arthur Balfour's *Essays* and John William Draper's *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* published in 1910 from Lahore on which the University of the Punjab awarded him five hundred rupees. Subsequently, he joined *Dar-ul-Tarjama* (Translation Bureau) in Hyderabad as the editor of the *Deccan Review*.<sup>12</sup> He translated Governor-General Lord Curzon's book as *Khyaban-i-Faras* who rewarded him with a stick of gold.<sup>13</sup> During this period, he wrote another book *Ghalba-i-Rome*.<sup>14</sup> Afterwards, he joined the Home Department of Hyderabad Deccan<sup>15</sup> as Assistant Home Secretary and Registrar. Besides, he was the tutor of the heir Nawab Mir Usman Ali Khan,<sup>16</sup> but he was dismissed and expelled along with Maulvi Aziz Mirza, Abdul Haleem Sharer, and

Saifuddin from the state in October 1909 due to an alleged intrigue of the British resident Michael O' Dwyer<sup>17</sup> to dethrone Mir Mahboob Ali Khan Nizam VII<sup>18</sup> without suspending his stipend of one hundred and twenty-five rupees (125).<sup>19</sup> On his father's death in 1908, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan left Hyderabad for Lahore and shouldered the responsibility as the editor of the *Zamindar* launched by his father Maulvi Siraj-ud-Din Ahmad as an Urdu Weekly in 1903.

Before analyzing his religious and political struggle, it is important to examine salient features of Zafar Ali Khan's personality which directed and affected his whole life. He was an acrimonious and unpredictable man, yet had certain consistent habits which he followed throughout his life. He regularly used to go for morning walk. He used to take *huqqa*. He was nobody's friend, and no one was his. He was so simple that people often deceived him. Most of his followers often left him midway. Such was the case with the editors of the *Zamindar* newspaper with Chiragh Hassan Hasrat the only exception.<sup>20</sup>

Though aggressive in his poetry, he was very tender in nature. Shorish Kashmiri says that "he never heard any abuse from him."<sup>21</sup> He was generous, kindhearted, and easily trusted others. He was a contented man. He used to help other prisoners with money.<sup>22</sup> He was a brave man. Once in the Montgomery Jail, a British prisoner was beating and abusing his servant prisoner. Maulana tried to persuade him, when he did not stop, then he slapped the Englishman. He was not fond of saving. He was cautious in eating and preferred small meals. Consequently, he lived a healthy life till seventy years.<sup>23</sup> He never required solitude to write poetry. He was comfortable in writing poetry or prose everywhere and any time, among people or in solitude. He had no library either at home or at the office of the *Zamindar*. He was not fond of writing letters nor did anybody write to him. He was expert in grammar and Allama Iqbal often used to consult him on grammar.

Zafar Ali Khan started his political career supporting the resolution of formation of All- India Muslim League (AIML) at Dhaka in 1906.<sup>24</sup> The British government's Press Act 1910 imposed restrictions on publication to curb growing Indian nationalism which affected newspapers such as *Al-Hilal* and *Zamindar*. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan during his stay in London for few days on his way to Istanbul, delivered speeches and published a monograph of a hundred pages in English against this Act.<sup>25</sup>

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan was a true Muslim and a devotee of Hazrat Muhammad (*The Final Prophet of Allah, Peace be Upon him, his Progeny and Companions*). He wrote many "Hamd" to show his relationship with Allah the Almighty. His *Naat* expresses his love for his Prophet (*Peace be Upon him*). Most of his *Naats* were written behind the bars.<sup>26</sup> He translated some *Hadith* in Urdu verses.<sup>27</sup> He observed punctuality in prayers since childhood. Two incidents of his life prove his devotion to *Namaz*. When in Patiala College, the Principal refused to allow leave for *Jumu'ah* (Friday) prayer; he organized the Muslim students and protested. Consequently, leave for *Jumu'ah* prayer was granted. The second incident took place during the proceedings of the All-India Congress Committee in Karachi, where he requested to defer the proceedings for a while to offer the prayer, but Congress leaders Gandhi, Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad opposed him. He left Congress and organized the Muslims to preserve their identity till his last breath.<sup>28</sup> He used to pray regularly and recited Holy Qur'an daily during Montgomery jail days. He was always the first to give *Azan* (call for congregational prayer) and then offer prayer.<sup>29</sup> He memorized six *parahs* (parts) of the Holy Qur'an. The solitude in prison provided him an opportunity for regular study of the Holy Qur'an which inspired him to write *Ghalba-i-Rome* (Domination of Rome).<sup>30</sup>

### **Zafar Ali Khan and Khilafat Movement**

Zafar Ali Khan was committed to the movement of Pan-Islamism.<sup>31</sup> He actively participated in the Khilafat Movement. He was first elected as Secretary and later as President of Punjab Khilafat Committee. He presided over the second Khilafat Conference in March 1920 at Bhurhanpur. He toured throughout the country to deliver the Khilafat message to millions of people through his speeches and press.<sup>32</sup>

He collected funds for the Turks during Tripoli and Balkan Wars. *Zamindar* regularly updated the public on these wars. He organized protests in Lahore in which Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Khawaja Ghulam-us-Saqlain and Allama Iqbal participated. In these meetings, Allama Iqbal recited his famous poem "Fatimah bint-i-Abdullah" and "Khun-i-Shuhuda".<sup>33</sup>

He visited Turkey and met the Sultan to offer donation for the people of Balkan. He recited a poem in the honour of Sultan. Following is a sample of its two verses.<sup>34</sup>

پیام الفت از دہلی بہ استنبول آوردم  
 مثالِ بوئے گلِ ہستم کہ بردوش صبا باشد  
 حذر اے دشمنانِ ملتِ بیضا ازاں ساعت  
 کہ در دستِ امیر مالو ائے مصطفیٰ باشد

Maulana also met with Enver Pasha, Tal'at Pasha and Djemal Pasha. They agreed to launch a movement on the pattern of Turkish Anjuman for Unity and development in the Indian subcontinent. Maulana Mahmud-al-Hassan played an important role in its implementation when he sent Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi to Afghanistan. When Zafar Ali Khan returned to India, the Muslims of Delhi and Lahore welcomed him with unprecedented enthusiasm. Maulana Altaf Hussain Hali paid him tribute in the following poem;<sup>35</sup>

اے نصرتِ حق میں تیغِ غریباں	اے دین کے امتحاں میں جانباں
اے شیرِ دل اے ظفرِ علی خان	اے صدق و صفائی زندہ تصویر
تعلیم پہ تُو ہے جس کی نازاں	نازاں ہے وہ درس گاہِ تجھ پر
ہے اُس کو یہ فخر و نازِ شایاں	پنجاب کو تجھ پہ ہو اگر فخر
ہوں زندہ دل ایسے جس میں انساں	زندہ ہے وہ ملک اور ملت

Maulana Shibli No'mani commented that "Aligarh is proud of the ability of Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar and the courage and bravery of Zafar Ali Khan".<sup>36</sup> During Khilafat Movement days, *Zamindar* vigorously led the movement against British imperialism. Consequently, Michael O' Dwyer, the Governor of the Punjab forfeited two thousand rupees guarantee of the newspaper on 18 September 1913 and demanded new guarantee of ten thousand rupees. Four months later 13 January 1914, this guarantee along with press was seized again. He applied for a Muslim Printing Press along with two thousand rupees guarantee that was also seized on 24 December 1914 and *Zamindar* was banned. Zafar Ali Khan launched a new newspaper *Lam'aat* that was also seized and led to his confinement to his village Karambad for five years<sup>37</sup> till the end of War.<sup>38</sup> During these years, he applied for declarations of purely literary journals several times, but the Governor of the Punjab dismissed the request. At last, he was allowed to launch a literary newspaper *Sitarah-i-Subh*.<sup>39</sup> Michael O' Dwyer has referred to Zafar Ali Khan and his revolutionary activities in his book *India As I Knew It* that:

The neutral attitude of Great Britain in Turco-Italian and Balkan Wars of 1911-13 ... caused resentment and a speech of the Prime Minister (Mr. Asquith) in November 1912 was interpreted as showing British hostility to Turkey and Islam. The views of this section were expressed in a very fiery newspaper (the *Zamindar*) edited by a notorious firebrand, Zafar Ali Khan. He had in 1912 started subscriptions for Turkish Red Crescent and himself gone to Constantinople to present to the Grand Wazir some of the money collected. On his return the tone of his paper became more and more anti-British, and after many writings I was compelled in 1913 to forfeit the security under the Press Act. Higher security was demanded and furnished, the paper reappeared and again indulged in disloyal and inflammatory articles, which led to the confiscation not only of the security but of the press. This order was upheld by the chief court. .... there were intrigues going on between Turkey and a small but bitter and scrupulous Pan-Islamist section in Northern India. The leaders of this anti-British section in the Press were Zafar Ali Khan, of the *Zamindar* at Lahore, Muhammad Ali Khan of the *Comrade* and his brother Shaukat Ali at Delhi; and they made no secret of their sympathy with Turkey, both before and after the outbreak of the War.<sup>40</sup>

After his release, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan reached the session of the All -India Congress in Amritsar where the leaders were protesting against the massacre of hundreds of people in Jallianwala Bagh. He denied the allegations of an undertaking with the British government for his release and proclaimed that the objective of his life was freedom of his country and resistance to British imperialism.<sup>41</sup> Michael O' Dwyer wrote that "Zafar Ali Khan after release resorted to his former methods, and in 1920 was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for the most flagrant incitements to rebellion."<sup>42</sup> On 14 August 1920, in his speech in Hazro (District Attock), he declared that if government wanted us to welcome Prince of Wales then the government should refrain from interfering in the Khilafat Movement; vacate the Holy Places of Makkah and Madinah and do justice with Turks; never again impose Martial Law; cancel Rowlatt Act, and fulfill promises to the Muslims.<sup>43</sup> The government arrested him on instigating rebellion against the government.<sup>44</sup> He was alleged to have said that:

British forces after capturing Baghdad, raped women and committed cruelties; we consider the Turkey Pact as a piece of paper and are determined to destroy it; Hijrat is obligatory for the Muslims; government schools should be boycotted; nobody



should join the Army; all the Muslims should resign from government service and those who do not obey must be socially boycotted as they are *kafir* now; India is Darul Harb as there is no religious freedom; India was fighting on the side of British forces with Turks. He was killed and when his son went there to collect his father's dead body then his son's face turned into a pig's face; British government has reached the point of collapse; we will not enter in compulsory service in army.<sup>45</sup>

Among fourteen witnesses in this case, Hazrat Pir Mehr Ali Shah and two Hindu witnesses Lal Bal Makand and Swami Parkasha Nanad refused to give evidence, Malik Muhammad Amin Shamshabadi, Sardar Dost Muhammad Khan Fateh Jung and three syeds deposed against him.<sup>46</sup> Maulana said in his defense before special magistrate Mr. Michael that "what he said against the British government was a protest against his slavery and against British government's policy regarding Khilafat, therefore we consider it a crime to cooperate with the government."<sup>47</sup>

Consequently, Maulana was sent to prison for five years and two years under rigorous punishment with rupees one thousand fine in case of non-payment six months more rigorous punishment for two different punishments under 124A, 122A and 153A on 27 October 1920 starting simultaneously. During this trial, on 19 October 1920, Khilafat Committee held a protest meeting in front of Delhi Darwaza. Its leaders Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Muhammad Ali Jauhar, Maulana Shaukat Ali, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad appreciated the sacrifice of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan and congratulated his relatives. After the protest, these leaders met with his wife in the office of *Zamindar* and assured their support.<sup>48</sup> Maulana spent these years in solitary confinement in Montgomery (now Sahiwal) till he was released on 6 November 1924.<sup>49</sup> Dwyer reported in his book that

both ... (Muhammad Ali Jauhar) and Zafar Ali Khan were born journalists and brilliant masters of that frothy oratory that appeals to an Indian audience. *Young India*, unfortunately, cannot escape being drawn into the vortex of politics and lacking balance and self-restraint, his eager ambition to make his mark leads him in journalism into reckless attacks on the Government and often into seditious incitements.<sup>50</sup>

Khilafat Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement collapsed due to the indifference of Hindu leaders. Partially, Gandhi was responsible but primarily Hindu leaders Madan Mohan Malwalia and Dr.

Moonje were responsible who feared that the movement might strengthen the Muslims, British officers tried to create cleavages among the Hindu-Muslim ranks.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, both leaders along with Delhi's Swami Sadananda and Pandit Ram Chander started Shudhi and Sanghtan movements to counter the growing influence of the Muslims in Indian politics in the states of Alwar, Bharatpur, and Aligarh to *shudhi* the converted Muslims. Nationalist leaders Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew and Maulvi Abdul Hameed Qureshi countered these movements with the organization of Tanzeem.<sup>52</sup> Maulana Zafar Ali Khan countered these Hindu movements with his prose and poetry through the *Zamindar*. When the political parties of the subcontinent boycotted the Simon Commission in 1928, Zafar Ali Khan along with other Indian leaders was arrested again.<sup>53</sup>

### **Zafar Ali Khan and Majlis-Ahrar-i-Islam**

During Congress civil disobedience movement in 1930, he was arrested and sent to Central jail Lahore for three years. After a brief period, he was transferred to Montgomery Jail where he remained for five years. Later, he was sent to Gujrat Special Jail in 1931<sup>54</sup> where he had the company of Dr. Mukhtar Ansari, Mr. Asif Ali, Dr. Alam, Dr. Satya Pal, Mr. Sahani editor *National Call*, Mufti Kafiattullah, Maulana Habibur Rehman Ludhianvi, Dr. Bhargwa, Sardol Singh, Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan, Abul Rahim Popalzai, Arif Hasvi, Seikh Hussamuddin, Gandhi, Chitaranjan Das (Desh Bandhu) Gupta, Gyani Kartar Singh and Master Tara Singh, Attaullah Shah Bokhari.<sup>55</sup> Gandhi -Irwin Pact facilitated his release after fifteen months.<sup>56</sup>

### **Zafar Ali Khan and Masjid Shaheed Ganj Movement**

Zafar Ali Khan's activism in Masjid Shaheed Gunj movement established him as a leader of an All- India stature. It was "the most politicized and highly mobilized issue in the history of the twentieth century colonial Punjab".<sup>57</sup> The dispute surfaced on the conflicting claims of possession of the place by both the Muslims and the Sikhs during 1934-36.<sup>58</sup> Abdullah Khan, an officer in the court of Dara Shikoh built this mosque at the periphery of old Lahore later converted into a Gurdawara and remained under the control of Sikhs till the British captured the Punjab. With the implementation of the Gurdawara Act of 1925, Shaheedganj was handed over to the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandhak Committee (SGPC). The Anjuman-i-Islamia claimed its possession but the Lahore High Court upheld the decision in favour of SGPC and it was handed over to its Lahore branch in March 1935.<sup>59</sup>

The Muslim demonstrations against the decision turned into violent clashes between the demonstrators and police leading to a dozen deaths. The agitation became a 'symbol of unity and commitment of an Islamic community' for the Indian Muslims<sup>60</sup> generating a new class of leaders organized at the platform of *Majlis-e-Ittehad-e-Millat* which organized *Neeli Posh* (blue shirts) volunteers to mobilize the Muslim masses. Zafar Ali Khan vigorously fought for the cause of the Mosque through his enthusiastic poetry and *Zamindar* kept the issue alive in the newspaper.<sup>61</sup> During this movement, he was confined to Karamabad for fifteen months. The people and literary circles supported him, and Daily newspaper *Ahsan* recognized his contribution through publishing a Zafar Ali Khan Number.<sup>62</sup>

Pir Jama'at Ali Shah, a rural Sufi of Alipur Sayyidan, Sialkot was designated the leader (Ameer-i -Millat) of the agitation in a conference at Rawalpindi in September 1935 who organized large gatherings in Sialkot, Lahore and other cities during July-December 1935. The 'Shaheedganj days' were celebrated usually on Fridays in big cities urging the Muslims to wear black mourning badges at prayers. He avoided anti-government agitation and preferred a legal course to achieve the desired goal. The Muslims of Lahore observed a Shaheedganj day on 20 September 1935 with complete strike, over one lakh people gathered for Friday prayers at the Badshahi Mosque.<sup>63</sup> After prayer, he presided over a meeting of about sixty thousand people mainly comprising *neeliposh*. However, the movement collapsed by the end of 1935.

Zafar Ali Khan was critical of Majlis-i-Ahrar-i-Islam and Ulama for not supporting the cause of Muslim community. He extensively spoke and wrote on this issue. He was detained for instigating the public on this issue along with Syed Habib, editor of daily, *Siasat*.<sup>64</sup> He declared that 'mosque was more sacred than *jhatka*, if Sikhs wanted the freedom of religious rights, they should first return the mosque to the Muslims. This movement enhanced Zafar Ali Khan's stature among Muslim masses. Consequently, he was elected unopposed to the Legislative Assembly in the elections of 1937.<sup>65</sup> His poems on Masjid Shaheed Gunj like "*Masjid Shaheed Gunj ki Pukar*", "*Masjid Shaheed Gunj kee Shahadat*", "*Shaheed Gunj ka Muqaam*", "*Masjid Shaheed Gunj Par Jan Nichawar Karney waley*", "*Ahrar Aur Mashjid Shaheed Gunj*" mobilized the Muslims on this issue.

### **The Majlis-i-Ittehad-i-Millat**

Zafar Ali Khan established the Majlis-i-Ittehad-i-Millat on 27-28 July 1935 to protect Masjid Shaheed Ganj and provide a common

platform to the various Muslim organizations.<sup>66</sup> On his invitation, Jinnah visited Lahore on 21 February 1936. Consequently, Shaheed Ganj civil disobedience movement was called off on Jinnah's request who appointed a Conciliation Committee of eight persons including three Muslims, two Hindus and three Sikhs with Allama Iqbal as its head. On 29 April 1936, Conciliation Committee informed Jinnah that Master Tara Singh refused to cooperate with the Committee. Jinnah called upon the Muslims to remain calm and to resolve the issue amicably.<sup>67</sup>

During Jinnah's visit to Lahore on 29 April 1936, he wanted to unite the Muslim groups therefore; he reorganized the Punjab Muslim League under Allama Iqbal as Patron and Mian Abdul Aziz as President on 30 May 1936. He formed the Central Parliamentary Board of the AIML from various provinces and nominated eleven members from the Punjab. Zafar Ali Khan negotiated with the Jami'at-i-Ulema-i-Hind, Majlis-i-Ahrar and Khaksars to accept Jinnah's invitation. On his failure, he refrained from joining Central Parliamentary Board for the time being. Jinnah offered him a AIML ticket. Though, he declined he attended Muslim League meetings. When he was elected unopposed to the Central Legislative Assembly, Jinnah approached him again. This time he merged his party in AIML in the Lucknow session of AIML during 15-17 October 1937 and proposed including "Complete Independence" in its objectives. The Muslim League agreed to put this proposal in the next session of AIML. Zafar Ali Khan led the radical group including Malik Barkat Ali, Mian Nurullah. The opposition group was consisted mainly of feudal lords.<sup>68</sup>

### **Response on the working of Congress Ministries**

Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, unlike Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind and the Ahrars vehemently opposed the policies of the Congress Ministries. In a meeting of the Muslim League, flag-hosting ceremony by Jinnah at Shimla on 28 August 1938 attended by approximately 2000 people, he vehemently supported the Muslim League policies. In a meeting on 10 October 1944 at Ludhiana, he explained that the Muslim demand for Pakistan was a logical consequence of the oppression on Muslims in Muslim minority provinces under Congress Ministries. He asserted that the Muslims wanted to establish their own government in Pakistan.<sup>69</sup> In a meeting of the Muslim League held at Jullundur on 23 August 1942, Zafar Ali Khan condemned the "Quit India" movement of Indian National Congress because its real target was the destruction of AIML.<sup>70</sup> In another meeting of Lahore City Muslim League on 25 December 1942 for the celebration of Jinnah's birthday, he criticized Lord Wavell's statement that British India was indivisible.<sup>71</sup> In a meeting in the office of

*Zamindar* in January 1942, he expressed his dissatisfaction over the working of the Punjab Muslim League, and wanted to revive Majlis-i-Ittehad-i-Millat, but abstained on his companions' advice.<sup>72</sup>

In the Muslim League Conference at the Islamia High School on 17-18 June 1944 in Rawalpindi presided over by Liaquat Ali Khan, Honorary Secretary of AIML with more than 200 participants; Zafar Ali Khan's speech was highly appreciated. For Pakistan campaign, he presided over meetings at Jullundur on 30 June 1944 and at Khanewal 7-8 October 1944, in which he criticized western civilization and explained that Pakistan means the establishment of a rule in Muslim majority provinces according to the directives of the Holy Qur'an. Besides, he apprised the people about the Unionist Party's efforts to deter people from joining AIML.<sup>73</sup> On All India Muslim League's ticket, he was elected with a wide margin to the Central Legislative Assembly in November 1945.<sup>74</sup>

### **Inspiring Muslims through Literature and Press**

Zafar Ali Khan produced enormous writings during his service in Hyderabad state. During his first tenure from 1896-1909, his literary works included translations publications and launching of research journals. One masterpiece was *Khayaban-e-Faras*. It was an Urdu translation of *Persia and the Persian Question* by (Lord) George Nathaniel Curzon (1859-1925). His other translations include *Mysteries of the Court of London* (1844) by George William MacArthur Reynold (1814-1879) as *Asrar e London* and *The Jungle Book* (1894) by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) as '*Jungle may Mungal*', and a novel *The People of Mist* by Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925) as *Sair e Zulmat*.<sup>75</sup> In 1902, an Urdu journal *Afsana* from Hyderabad published *Asrar -i- London* in weekly episodes for one year. In 1904, he launched *Deccan Review* a scholarly journal highly regarded in intellectual circles. Maulvi Abdul Haq, Abdul Haleem Sharar, Shibli No'mani and other contemporary writers contributed to it.<sup>76</sup>

Zafar Ali Khan's poetic works include *Nigaristan*, *Chamanistan*, *Baharistan* and *Armagahan-i-Qadian*. His poetic masterpiece *Habsiyat* reflects various dimensions of his life. This is a story of freedom struggle.<sup>77</sup> These poems were written during five-year prison in Montgomery Jail. His other literary masterpieces are *Ma'rka-i-Mazhab-o-Science*, *Ghalba-i-Rum* and *Shehr-i-Zulmet*. He translated Shibli Noman's *Al-Farooq* into English. He also translated Jinnah's speech of 22 March 1940 into Urdu. His poetry presents a vivid depiction of

contemporary events. There is a kind of bitterness in his poetry.<sup>78</sup> As a journalist, he had served his nation at a critical juncture of history.<sup>79</sup>

Zafar Ali initiated a new print culture by his career in journalism during first two decades of 20th Century Punjab. He mobilized public opinion through his pen and speech and became a living legend true to the words of Francis Robinson that ‘writing is a vehicle which can carry words and ideas across time and space. It is fairly mechanical process which can make an absent author present’.<sup>80</sup> Speaking in a Seminar on Zafar Ali Khan, Sajjad Mir a prominent journalist asserted that “there was a definite purpose behind Maulana’s journalism. It was not for commercial purpose like these days. He used his profession to create awakening among the people to free themselves from the yoke of the British and the Hindus.”<sup>81</sup> He initiated a new consciousness of religious identity among the Muslim masses of Lahore through the method of violent discourse against Christians and Hindus. The common slogan like *Hinduoan ka bera gharq karnay wala Zamindar* (*Zamindar*, the destroyer of the Hindus) echoed in the streets of Lahore during first two decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. He abused *Farangis* (Europeans) for their hypocrisy towards the Muslim countries in general, and towards Turkey in particular. These slogans created a new public sphere and space for electoral politics after 1919. As David Gilmartin referred to that trend:

Historians of Indian nationalism for decades have pointed to the emergence of 'public opinion' and an emerging 'public voice' among the English-educated middle class in India as a critical element in the emergence of Indian nationalism... Central to these efforts has been a concern to define the ways that the distinctive structure of the colonial state in India shaped distinctive forms of 'public' opinion and activity —including 'democratic' and 'nationalist' activity — in ways that distinguish Indian experience from any model shaped by the experience in Europe.<sup>82</sup>

Zafar Ali Khan is generally acknowledged as the father of Urdu Journalism. Under his guidance, *Zamindar* became “the most influential Urdu daily newspaper of Northern India” which had thirty thousand issues till 1947. He recalled Muslim history, opposed religious orthodoxy and popularized the Pakistan cause through his writings.<sup>83</sup>

Zafar Ali Khan launched a weekly newspaper *Punjab Review* from Karmabad.<sup>84</sup> He successfully published *Zamindar* highlighting the issues of agricultural community and promoting social and political awareness among the Muslims. It propagated agitation against Canal

Colony Act acquiring substantial circulation and widespread following.<sup>85</sup> Initially, he continued the policy and venue as a weekly from Karamabad but in May 1911, he launched both from Lahore. He introduced far reaching changes in policy and management. *Zamindar's* editorials were written in the form of verses usually addressing common people instead of intelligentsia. His literary style popularized the themes of Muslim identity and Muslim brotherhood within Indian nationalism. Consequently, its circulation increased from 750 in 1808 to 1890 in 1913.<sup>86</sup> An intelligence report referred to its popularity that “as soon as the copies of this newspaper are brought into the bazar, large crowds of people surround the news shops and buy the copies”.<sup>87</sup>

*Zamindar* served the AIML in its freedom movement. In a meeting of the Punjab Muslim League Workers Board held in Lahore on 1 February 1943 at the house of Zafar Ali Khan to start a membership campaign for AIML for which the party would donate Rs. 125/- to the management of *Zamindar*. Through print media and poetry, Zafar Ali Khan became an important stalwart of journalism which accelerated agitation among the urban areas of colonial Punjab. Being a staunch opponent of rural landlords collaborating with the British government, he wrote in *Zamindar* that:

Muhammadan community is now awake and knows what sort of leaders it wants. Such leaders as play it should have their graves dug, for the time of their interment is now at hand. Mohammadans will now be led by those who observe fasts and prayers, understand the real spirit of Muslim brotherhood, and leave their bungalows to mix with their poor brethren and find out how it fares with them.<sup>88</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The obvious impression after going through the life and struggle of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan is his ambivalence toward individuals and groups surprises the readers. As Maulana Abul Kalam Azad referred to this aspect that “if anybody wants to start movement in weeks instead of months then appoint Zafar Ali Khan, he will erect the building speedily but when the building is ready, get him out quickly because after construction, he begins to demolish it”.<sup>89</sup> He launched many parties but when disillusioned, uprooted them. He inspired many newspapers. He produced many leaders, workers and journalists. When he used to be happy with the leaders, he dedicated poems in their honour. On any difference of opinion or ideological conflict, he satirized them through his poetry. Neither any leader nor any party escaped his criticism.<sup>90</sup>

Ghulam Hussain Zulfiqar has credited him with taking politics out of drawing rooms, clubs and halls to the streets.<sup>91</sup> Ashraf Atta writes that Zafar Ali Khan was the leading spirit behind the political awakening among the Muslims. He inspired the Muslims through his emotional appeal and converted them into an agitating nation against the British and the Hindus, but failed to nurture them ideologically. Instead of educating them on political and legal grounds, he made them an emotional nation. On the other hand, Hindu Congress leaders trained their nation on sound political grounds. Despite such criticism, he was a true freedom fighter and brave soldier in the struggle against British Imperialism.

The enigmatic personality of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan should be evaluated in the context of contemporary environment as “man is the product of his environment”;<sup>92</sup> the rural-urban tussle of Punjab Muslim leadership, reconciling the interests of Indian Muslims with international Muslim community, integrating national issues with local issues, and accommodating modernism with Quranic guidelines. In a nutshell, he was a prey of multiple identities and interests. Zafar Ali Khan either judged by his close friends passionately or by his critics with sarcasm. Literary critics judged him as an individual of exceptional qualities. The task of a historian is to evaluate the personality of an individual as part of a society and analyze his contribution with reference to his environment, therefore, his personality and contribution is a reflection of social phenomena of nineteenth and twentieth century Punjab, India, and the Muslim world. It is essential to study individuals a product and an agent of historical process; a representative and the creator of social forces which influenced the men and the world to depict real contribution of individuals.<sup>93</sup>

Zafar Ali Khan addressed the ordinary sections of society as he believed in quick response rather than political negotiation and compromise. He was a political leader who gained power by appealing to people’s emotions, instincts, and prejudices in a way that was generally considered manipulative and dangerous, but it made him a popular leader. He used common diction and poetry to touch the hearts of the people and mobilized them for the cause he stood for. Allama Iqbal paid him tribute in the following words: “he had a unique heart and mind. His indomitable courage and his pen was fluent than the sword of great mujahidin. He impressed the whole Indian subcontinent particularly the Muslims of the Punjab are indebted to his religious, literary and political services.”<sup>94</sup>

Zafar Ali Khan was a man of action as well as man of words. He skillfully manipulated his command over language that he inherited from his father and his institution Aligarh College. He used this legacy with



deep insight of the problems of Muslim community in India. He had vast experience at the intellectual centers Deccan and Aligarh and used it whole-heartedly in favour of Indian Muslims. He candidly spoke what he believed. Next day, he reiterates what he said through his editorials, and finally mobilizes the people for the cause. Punjabi Literate in the thirties had the capacity and the opportunities to use these tools for mobilization against the imperial government and succeeded in achieving a separate homeland for the Muslim in South Asia.

### Notes and References

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- <sup>3</sup> Ashraf Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan* (Lahore: Zafar Ali Khan Trust, 2011), 18.
- <sup>4</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 19.
- <sup>5</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 22.
- <sup>6</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 22.
- <sup>7</sup> Tahir Kamran, "History through Letters".
- <sup>8</sup> Gulam Hussain Zulfiqar, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan: Adab-o-Shayeri*, (Lahore: Maktab-i-Khyaban-i-Adab), 64-65.
- <sup>9</sup> Samina Awan, "Maulana Zafar Ali Khan: An Enigma or New Print Culture?" *Journal of Research Society of Pakistan*, 50, no. 1(2013): 46.
- <sup>10</sup> Zulfiqar, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 71.
- <sup>11</sup> Zulfiqar, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 65-66.
- <sup>12</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 29; Ghulam Hussein Zulfiqar, *Jaddu Jahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar* (Lahore: Institute of Research Society of Pakistan, 1996), 119.
- <sup>13</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 23-24.
- <sup>14</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 24.
- <sup>15</sup> Zulfiqar, *Hayat-o-Khidmat*, 37 cited in Syed Dawood Ashraf, *Bairooni Mashahir -i-Adab aur Hyderabad* (Deccan, 1990), 50.
- <sup>16</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 24.
- <sup>17</sup> Sir Michael O' Dwyer was an Irish Indian Civil Servant who became Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab in British India during 1913-1919.
- <sup>18</sup> *Zamindar*, Lahore, 14 July 1924.
- <sup>19</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 27; Zulfiqar, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 79.
- <sup>20</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 18.
- <sup>21</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 64.
- <sup>22</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 64.
- <sup>23</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 20.
- <sup>24</sup> Zulfiqar, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 78.
- <sup>25</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 37; Zulfiqar, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 85.
- <sup>26</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 16.
- <sup>27</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 16.
- <sup>28</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 22-23.
- <sup>29</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 58.
- <sup>30</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 43.
- <sup>31</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 33.

- <sup>32</sup> Zulfiqar, *Jaddu Jahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar*, 202.
- <sup>33</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 31.
- <sup>34</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 32.
- <sup>35</sup> Zulfiqar, *Jadu Jahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar*, 141; Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 39.
- <sup>36</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 40.
- <sup>37</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 47; Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 39-40.
- <sup>38</sup> Dwyer, *India As I Knew It*, 174. Michael O' Dwyer has also mentioned in his book that he confined Zafar Ali Khan to his native village.
- <sup>39</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 48.
- <sup>40</sup> Michael O' Dwyer, *India As I Knew It (1885-1925)* (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1925), 172-173.
- <sup>41</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 49-50.
- <sup>42</sup> Dwyer, *India As I Knew It*, 175.
- <sup>43</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 39-40.
- <sup>44</sup> Zulfiqar, *Jaddujahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar*, 231.
- <sup>45</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 55-56.
- <sup>46</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 39.
- <sup>47</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 41; Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 58.
- <sup>48</sup> Zulfiqar, *Jaddujahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar*, 230-231.
- <sup>49</sup> Zulfiqar, *Jaddujahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar*, 232.
- <sup>50</sup> Dwyer, *India As I Knew It*, 175.
- <sup>51</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 77.
- <sup>52</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 78.
- <sup>53</sup> Zulfiqar, *Jaddujahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar*, 273.
- <sup>54</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 70.
- <sup>55</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 72.
- <sup>56</sup> Kashmiri, *Qaid-i-Farang*, 47.
- <sup>57</sup> David Gilmartin, "The Shahidganj Mosque Incident: A Prelude to Pakistan" in Edmund Burke and Ira Lapidus (eds.) *Islam, Politics and Social Movements* (California: University of California Press, 1988), 147.
- <sup>58</sup> Gilmartin, "The Shahidganj Mosque Incident", 147.
- <sup>59</sup> Gilmartin, "The Shahidganj Mosque Incident" 148.
- <sup>60</sup> Gilmartin, "The Shahidganj Mosque Incident", 148.
- <sup>61</sup> Gilmartin, "The Shaheedganj Mosque Incident", 148.
- <sup>62</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 6.
- <sup>63</sup> Awan, "Maulana Zafar Ali Khan: An Enigma or New Print Culture?", 52-53.
- <sup>64</sup> Muhammad Khurshid, and Akbar Malik, "Shaheedganj Mosque Issue and the Muslim Response: 1935-1936," *Pakistan Vision*, 12, no. 1 (2011):128.
- <sup>65</sup> Awan, "Maulana Zafar Ali Khan: An Enigma or New Print Culture?", 53.
- <sup>66</sup> Samina Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab: Majlis-i-Ahrar, 1929-1949* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 117.
- <sup>67</sup> Iftikhar Haider Malik, "The Ahrar-Unionist Conflict and the Punjab Politics during the Thirties", *Pakistan Journal of History and Culture*, vol. 1 (Jan-June 1984), 50.
- <sup>68</sup> Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*, 119-120.
- <sup>69</sup> Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*, 121.
- <sup>70</sup> Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*, 119.
- <sup>71</sup> Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*, 119-120.
- <sup>72</sup> Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*, 120.
- <sup>73</sup> Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*, 120-121.
- <sup>74</sup> Awan, *Political Islam in Colonial Punjab*, 121.
- <sup>75</sup> Awan, "Maulana Zafar Ali Khan: An Enigma or New Print Culture?", 47.

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- <sup>80</sup> Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print," *Modern Asian Studies*, 27, issue 1 (1993): 236.
- <sup>81</sup> <https://pu.edu.pk/home/section/press/983>
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- <sup>83</sup> Samina Awan, "Maulana Zafar Ali Khan: An Enigma or New Print Culture?", 43.
- <sup>84</sup> Zulfiqar, *Jadujahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar*, 119.
- <sup>85</sup> *Zamindar*, Karamabad, 1 January 1910, 1.
- <sup>86</sup> IOR, /L/K/5/190, vol. xxii, no.1 and IOR, L/K5/194, vol. xxvi, no.5
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- <sup>88</sup> *Zamindar*, Lahore, 11 November 1911.
- <sup>89</sup> Atta, *Maulana Zafar Ali Khan*, 10.
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- <sup>91</sup> Zulfiqar, *Jadujahd-i- Azadi mein Punjab ka Kirdar*, 139.
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