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Letters:

Allama Mashriqi: A Great Muslim Politician and Reformist

It is possible that the younger generation might not well acquainted with the name of Allam Inyatullah Khan Mashriqi, but older generation and history students, especially of the subcontinent, are well aware of him because of his achievements and services that he rendered to Muslims of Pakistan and the subcontinent. Allama Mashriqi was born in a wealthy and noble family on August 25, 1888 in Amritsar and expired on August 27, 1963 in Lahore. This article is written in a memory of a person who was an excellent scholar, a politician and reformer. He was a brilliant student and had set new academic records that stunned everybody in Britain and the subcontinent. He completed his Master degree in Mathematics in one year at the age of 19. Later, he joined the prestigious Cambridge University and completed 4 Tripose barely in 4 years. Although he passed all subjects with distinction, but his real fame was his abilities in mathematics. Therefore, many British newspapers including the Times of London, Daily Mirror, Daily Telegraph, Evening News, and Star London applauded his academic achievements. Due to his academic achievements, he earned the title of "Foundation Scholar" and "Wrangler" from The Cambridge University. Undoubtedly, Muslims of the subcontinent could be proud of on his academic achievement.

After completing his education at the age of 24, he came back to India. Upon his return, he served on different government positions under the British rule. However, his relationship with British government did not last very long because he was not a person who would tolerate injustice. Keeping in view his personality, it was not a surprise even for British officials when he slapped the then British Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, for using slanderous and abusive language. He even did not shut his mouth as a Government Official on the massacre of Pathans in the Kissa Khani Bazar, Peshawar, on April 23, 1930, and revealed the truth of mishandling the situation. In his opinion, Massacre of Pathans was completely unjustified. When people criticized him for his views on the issue, being a government official, Mashriqi replied that the British Government had hired his knowledge for the salary and not his heart or conscience. Allama Mashriqi was bold in his behavior because he was an honest person and had least lust for power. If he had a lust for power and authority, he would have not rejected prestigious positions such as State Premiership of Maharaja of Alver, Ambassadorship of the British Government and also the title of "Sir."

Keeping in view the conditions of Muslims in the subcontinent, Allama Mashriqi founded Khaksar Therk (Movement of Humbles) in 1931 and abandoned luxurious life that he used to lead. The ideology of his party based on egalitarianism; therefore, there was no status quo and no wall between the privileged and the unprivileged in Khaksar Therk. He discouraged those people who wanted to join the party for their vested interests. It is a remarkable fact that the party positions were never given to people considering their wealth or social status but according to their work that they had rendered to people and the party. He was very conscious that members should follow principle of the party in a strict manner irrespective of their position in the party. Though, he was a founder of the party, historians writes that he never considered himself above the party's constitution and received the same punishment as an ordinary member if he broke the rule of the party.

Allama Mashriqi had a great vision in politics; and if we had applied his vision in Pakistan, we would have a different story, today, to tell about Pakistan. Political vision does not mean to handle issues on short-term basis or curb opposition to hold the power, rather it means to predict national future on the basis of ground realities. He was, in fact, a real professional politician who recognized the ground realities at very early stage of independence and suggested remedies, accordingly. He was among those people who accepted the hard fact that Pakistan is not a homogenous nation, therefore, she would face racial and provincial prejudices if corrective measures were not taken. It is on the record that he publicly predicted in 1956 that racial and provincial prejudices would grip the country if the government did not take corrective political and social measures. The mathematician instinct told the nation that the East Pakistan would declare its independence in 1970 - since none of the government paid heed to his warning thus predication became reality in 1971. It was his understanding of political affairs that he also warned the government not to take Kashmir issue in the UNO because once it added in the agenda of UNO as an international issue we would never be able to liberate it from India. Now we observe that countries like USA and India follow the thought of Allama Mashriqi and very careful in involving UNO in international conflicting issues.

Until his death, he was very distressed that 95% of the population is in the grip of poverty but rulers had no plans and programs even after taking the independence; unfortunately they do not have till today. In his opinion, state building does not take place unless there is contact and trust between the rulers and the ruled, the privileged and the commoner, capitalist and the worker, the police and the general population, the judge and the aggrieved, and justice and law. It is unfortunate, till today, we have not appreciated his egalitarian approach that only those nations develop where everybody in authority is engaged in lending strength to the weak to ameliorate his/her lot and protect him/her from oppression. Allama Mashriqi political vision is evident from the fact that he was also very concerned for the economic distress of lower and middle class Government officials. He feared that if they could not maintain the decent general appearance, they would involve in corruption and the administrative machinery would not function properly. And, this we have been experiencing for decades in Pakistan. In relation to state building, his political vision was clear that the continued suppression of the masses weakens the foundation of a state.

Allama Mashriqi theory regarding leaders-followers relationship was that nations' patterns dependent on the character of their leaders and people adapt to the ways and values of their rulers. Therefore, he was very much concerned about improving ethics and values of political leadership. In one of the public speeches, he indicated that if the rulers ensured only their personal safety at the cost of national honor, ignore people's interest, remain busy in their own merry-making, make newsmen's as ineffective as dust by enslaving them to their lust, and destroy the character of an entire nation for their own self-interests, the nation would not progress. Pakistan history is a witness that this has been happening for the last 56 years, but our leadership and people have closed their eyes like pigeon. He was convinced that enactment of laws even in accordance with Shariah (as our religious-political parties demand) or merely passing the Objectives Resolution would not change the destiny of people until they are implemented with a true spirit. Unfortunately, our leadership hardly paid to his suggestion because they were always more concerned to strengthen their power and accumulating wealth. Keeping in view attitude and behavior of the then leadership, the great mathematician foresaw that a time would come when Pakistan would be devastating and leaders spend last merry-making days in London and America. As a matter of fact, Allama Mashriqi provided guidelines for progress of the nation and the state but it is very unfortunate that our political leadership as well as people did pay adequate attention to his views for their own selfish reasons. If our current rulers, politicians and people want to see Pakistan a powerful and a progressive country, they must take benefit of his egalitarian approach, which is the befitting solution of the current social, economic and political problems.

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