

A PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH ON INDO-TURKISH RELATIONS

by

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Interchange between India and Turkish world is older than Islam and there is little doubt that Indians and Turks during the Hittite period¹ have several common religious concepts and even political contacts. It is generally believed that the first contact of the Turks took place with the campaigns of Mahmud Ghaznavi in India in the first decades of the 11th. century A. D. but in fact India came into direct contact with the Turks through Turkish states first established on Indian soil in the first century B. C. long before the advent of Muslims in India². This was the first phase of Indo-Turkish relations which ended with the fall of the Turk Shahi dynasty³. Later on in the second century of Christian era a famous Turk ruler emerged in India and made his way to the glory and renown. He is known as Kanishka (120-162 A. D.). Warahmehra, in his well-known Sanskrit work of *Raj-trangi*, describes the emperor Kanishka and his successors as belonging to Turushka family. The details of description of this emperor available to us, positively point to the fact that Kanishka belonged to Turkish race and not to Mongols. His coins bears the title of *Shāunānushāh* which is a Turkish word. The boundaries of the empire of Kanishka were extended to Patli Putra and Ujjain in the south while in the

¹ 1600 B. C. – 1200 B. C.

² N. Akmal Ayyubi, Turkish Language and Culture, *Radiance Viewsweekly* of Delhi, Vol. 10, No. 47 p. 12.

³ It was supplanted by Kallar, usually identified with Lalliya, and over it remains a new dynasty remembered as Hindu Shahiya was established which was terminated by the Turks associated with the Ghaznavids dynasty in the 11th. century A. D.

north included such states of Turkistan as Khutan, Yargand, Kashghar etc. It was during this period that Buddhism crossed the Himalayan boundries and penetrated into Turkistan. Turks took to the new religion in huge numbers. Sanskrit works like *Suvarnaprabhasha* and *Mahāparinirvānasūtra* were translated into Turkish and the language of the Turks began to receive the influences of Sanskrit. In few Turkish lands even Turkish language began to be written in that script in which Sanskrit was written. This script is still known as *Brahmī* or *Brahmanī*. Even today Sanskrit words are found in the Turkish language and the German Academy of Sciences of Berlin preserves numerous Turkish books written in that script.⁴ During this period Turkish migrations from Central Asia also took place and settled down in Rajasthan, Gujarat and other parts of north-western India, adopting Indian religious practices, costumes and traditions on the one hand, and Central Asia of Turks received and accommodated Indians in the same way as India had done for the Turks and many Indian tribes migrated to Central Asia and settled there on the other hand. It is a matter of deep interest and significance that while the Ghaznavid forces fighting in India were generally headed by Turk commanders, their armies fighting in Turkistan, in Khurasan and other countries were consisted of mainly by Indian soldiers and were under the command of a Hindu general whose name was Tilak. When the governor of Punjab, Ahmad Niyāltigin revolted against Mas'ud (1031-1040), the army sent to crush the rebellion was under the command of the same Tilak. These are all indications of the Turkish people's contacts with ancient India and they have to be worked out by deep research.

The second phase of Indo-Turkish relations begin with the invasion of India by Amir Subaktigin. It cuts right through the Ghurids (1186-1206), Slave dynasty (1206-1211), Iltutmish (1211-1266), Balban (1266-1290), Khaliis (1290-1312), Tughlugs (1320-1413), 'Adil Shahis, Qutab Shahis and ends with the dynasty of the Timurid⁵, the so called Mughul dynasty (1526-1857). This period of interrelations of Turks with India had tremendous effects on Indian

⁴ N. Akmal Ayyubi, Studies in Turkish, *The Hindistan Times* of New Delhi, dated 30.11.71, p. 9.

⁵ N. Akmal Ayyubi, *A versified Treatise on Mysticism*, Aligarh, 1968, p. 9.

society and deep influences on Indian culture. During this period, a new indigenous language grew in the army camp through an interaction of Turkish, Persian and Indian languages and this came to be known as Urdu. It is a fact that a large number of Turkish words are used freely in Urdu whose grammar is basically Indian. Similarly, in many other aspects of Indian culture, Turkish influences are apparent. They may be traced in dress, food habits, customs and traditions. In architecture and fine arts Turk's influences are wide and deep. In paper-making, book-binding, glass, leather and several chemical industries and other arts and crafts, Turkish knowledge and skill is apparent even to-day. It will not be improper to say that the lotus dome in the architecture of Asia has been claimed by different people, but it is quite certain that it travelled from the early mosques of the Muslim to Central Asia and then came with the Turks to India. The same applies to the mosaic. These are also fascinating subjects for research in connection with Indo-Turkish relations.

The political and diplomatic relations between India and Turkey were also very friendly. The Bahmanis were the first Indian rulers to establish diplomatic contacts with Constantinople⁶. They were followed by Muzaffer Shahis of Gujarat⁷ and later by the Timurids. After the fall of the Timurids these relations were continued by the Nizams of Hyderabad, Tipu Sultan of Mysore, and Nawabs of Arcot (Madras) and even during the British occupation of India, there were bi-lateral exchanges of diplomatic missions between India and Turkey⁸. Some of these diplomatic contacts have been worked out by some Turkish and Indian scholars but can be studied further and are important subjects of deep research and extensive investigations.

The establishment of the British rule in India closed nearly all avenues of normal relations with the Turks. India and Turkey were virtually under imperialism and we can hardly expect to find more than mutual sympathy and support in the struggle for emancipation and freedom. Pan-Islamism and the Young Turks movement had

⁶ G. M. Nizamuddin Maghrabi, *The Ottoman Gujarat Relations Published in Studies in the Foreign Relations of India – Prof. H. K. Sherwani Felicitation Volume*, Hyderabad, p. 185.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

influenced India's freedom. The Khilafet movement of India was a direct product of the India's affection for the Turkish people and represented the aspiration of Indians with regards to this institution, but it, at the same time, characterized the nationalist Muslims' struggle for India's independence especially under the leadership of Muhammed Ali and Shaukat Ali. This movement played a significant role in fostering closer relations between India and Turkey. The dynamic personality of Kemal Atatürk had also fired the imagination of Indians. He had either directly or indirectly influenced India's freedom and more so the political, social and religious outlook of Indians. The impact of his revolution in India has been very deep and widely felt. His victories over the Greeks were hailed by Indian leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others who were in jail at that time, and all over India people welcomed the emergence of a new Turkey. Mustafa Kemal's was a household name in India as a great fighter for liberation and a man of great courage and insight. This was a period in India when the Indian National Congress party was gaining roots in the villages and was becoming a truly representative of the people. During this period when the Sultanate had been abolished in Turkey and the Khilafet was at stake, the Muslims of India were doubtful if the spiritual leadership of the Khalife of the Islamic world would also vanish. Hence, sentiments were expressed by the late Agha Khan and justice Ameer Ali against the abolition of the Khilafet.⁹ The Muslims of India formed a Khilafet Committee which established its headquarter in Bombay and Khilafet agitation was started. It was a direct product of the India's affection for Turkish people. They even endorsed the idea of a British protectorate over the Ottoman Caliphate¹⁰ which represented their aspirations for the retention of the spiritual leadership of the Turks. Its abolition created a certain initial dismay in India where the Turkish Revolution had been seen as a fight by a Muslim state for its freedom with Kemal as the Sword of Islam¹¹. But soon Khilafet in India came to mean Anti-British struggle and thousands of Muslims were arrested and

⁹ See A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, 1925, p. 571.

¹⁰ See Maulana Mohammad Ali, *My life*, Edited by Afzal Iqbal, London, 1944.

¹¹ Lord Kinross, Atatürk, London, 1964, p. 386.

sent to jails. However, the Khilafet movement continued in India and finally by the late thirties its leaders worked for the Muslim League which emerged as a party in 1935.

The sentiments of the Indian Muslims for the retention of Khilafet in Turkey were short lived but these have to be appreciated in the light of their desire for the existence of a central spiritual leadership from Turkey. To say that the Muslims' demand for retention of the Khilafet touched off the abolition of the Khilafet in Turkey would be a far-fetched idea, for Kemal Atatürk and others were probably already adamant about its abolition long before the Muslims expressed their desire. Soon their sentiments were subsided as the truth became clear. The Caliphate, deprived of its temporal, hence its political power, no longer had any reality¹². It is also interesting to note that the government of Atatürk was declared un-Islamic by many religious organizations of the world for modernising Turkey. The case was, later, referred to Qari Muhammad Tayyab, the then Rector of the most revered Indian institution of Islamic learning, Darul-Uloom of Deoband¹³, who had declared his government as Islamic. All these aspects require further investigation and research.

A new chapter in Indo-Turkish relations has began since 1947 when India also became master of his land. The dawn of freedom witnessed speedy demolition of the artificial barriers that separated the peoples of India and Turkey and the scope of India's relations has now widened considerably and embraces all aspects of life of both the peoples. The Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Turkey, desirous of strengthening the friendly relations signed a cultural agreement in 1951. In pursuance of the Article 10 of this Agreement, official delegations of the both countries held joint consultations again at Ankara in March 1976 and a programme for cultural cooperation for 1976 and 1977 was agreed upon and signed. In 1978 two pacts were again signed at New Delhi. One of them was signed by the Turkish Foreign Minister and Indian External Affairs Minister for economic and technical co-operation involving exchange of experts and provision of training facilities. The other

¹² Ibid. p. 386-387.

¹³ See my article "*Laik Hint Cumhuriyetinde İslami Eğitim yerleri*" published in *Ulus* of Ankara dated 31.5.1965.

Agreement on Indo-Turkish Cultural Exchange Programme, covering three years from 1978, was signed by Indian Education Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkey for cooperation between the two countries in the fields of education, art and culture, sports and youth activities and mass media. These agreements also require critical study of further improvement of Indo-Turkish cultural relations.

Indo-Turkish relations are not moulded by emotional factors. It has roots in history and the Turks and Indians are bound together by historical and cultural bonds. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight these facts. Only for this purpose I have written few articles and research papers. One of them is entitled "*Hint Kültürü üzerinde Müslüman Türk Tesirleri*" which was published in *İslam Tetkikleri Enstitüsü Dergisi* of Istanbul University¹⁴. The second published in *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* of Ankara University¹⁵ is entitled "*Hindistan Türklere Neler Borçludur*". The third article which is entitled "*Türk-Hint İlişkileri*" was published in *Akşam*, of Istanbul¹⁶. The fourth paper on "Turkish words in Urdu" was published in *Ma'arif* of Azamgarh.¹⁷ And the fifth on "Turkish influences on Urdu" was published in *Tahreer* of Delhi¹⁸, and which was reproduced in *Zabān ve adab* of Delhi¹⁹. But this is not adequate for the purpose. It will be useful to make deep research and extensive investigation and then write a comprehensive book on "Indo-Turkish Relations". For doing this job it is also essential to examine and collect all the materials preserved in various libraries, museums and archives of Turkey²⁰, India and other places. I, therefore, request young scholars of Turkey and India to do needful.

¹⁴ Vol. III, No. 3-4.

¹⁵ Vol. II, No. 2-3.

¹⁶ dated 2.6.1965.

¹⁷ Vol. 104, No. 6.

¹⁸ Vol. 5, No. 1.

¹⁹ October 1972.

²⁰ See my paper on "Archives of Turkey as a source of Indian History" which was published in the *Proceedings of the Forteenth session of Indian History Congress*, 1979, pp. 973-978.