CHAPTER I
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
The conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, turned Muhmed II overnight into the most celebrated Sultan in the Muslim world. He began to see himself as an heir to a world empire. He believed in the absolute character of his power and wished Istanbul to become the centre of the world in all respects.\(^1\) Perhaps, this was the reason that some of the Muslim rulers of South India sought to establish diplomatic relations with him.

The first recorded diplomatic intercourse between the Muslim ruler of India and the Ottomans is dated 1481-82, between the Bahmani Kings Muhammad Shah III (1453-1481) and Mahmud Shah (1482-1518), and the Ottoman Sultans Mahmed the conqueror (1451-1482) and Bayazit II (1482-1512) through the exchange of embassies, gifts and letters.\(^2\) Khwaja Imaduddin Mahmud Gawan (1410-1481), the Bahmanid Wazir, played key role in these exchanges. It was through his tireless efforts that the Indian trade reached upto the Ottoman Empire.\(^3\) His Riazul-Insha, contained four letters with messages of felic-

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itations and good wishes to the victorious Ottoman Sultans. The correspondence was exclusively in the nature of courtesy exchanges between the Muslim Kings.  

A new relation developed between the Ottomans and the Indian Muslims, with Selim I's conquest of Egypt in 1517 and the Sultan's assumption of the universal caliphate.  

Since the end of the classical caliphate there had never been a Caliph whose authority was universally recognized by all Muslims. At times different monarchs assumed the caliphate title in their own territories. This was because of the emergence of independent Muslim states in different parts of the world. Accordingly, a theory was developed by Jurists, that if a Muslim ruler was righteous, governed with justice, and implemented the Sharia, he would be entitled to use the title of Caliph within his defacto sovereign territories. Perhaps the most rational adjustment was Ibn Khaldun's who saw the transformation of the cali-

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phate into the mulk, or temporal rule, as a sociological inevitability, but contended that even the mulk could preserve qualities of the former ideal (which was followed in twentieth century by persons like, Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. M.A. Ansari, Sir Mohammad Iqbal and many others) and accepted a plural caliphate.  

Even the Ottomans too were no exception to this theory and since the time of Murad I (1326-1389) the Sultans used the title as a general practice.  

Under Sultan Selim I, the Ottoman had become the largest Muslim Kingdom in the world extending its prestige and reputation beyond its borders. This was demonstrated by the letters from the Muslim rulers of South India who not only accorded the Sultan their usual congratulations, but also accepted his supremacy. For instance, the ruler of DIU, Malik Ayaz, referred in his correspondence to Sultan Selim as

"the shadow of God on earth, the pillar of Islam .... and the protector of the land of God and Supporter of Muslims, warrior in the path of  

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God, Sultan Ibn Sultan, perfection in Sultanate, and caliphate and Sultan al-Ghazi Selim Shah..."9

Sultan Selim after his crowning victory over Egypt and Hejaz, became interested in the affairs of Muslim World. The governor of Jeddah, Amir Quasim Sherwani, wrote to the ruler of Gujarat, Muzaffar Shah, at the Sultan's behest, stating that the Sultan was ready to help him with a navy of fifty ships in order to keep the Portuguese away from India.10 Muzaffar Shah in his reply, while expressing gratitude to the Sultan for his gesture, also congratulated him on his success. However, the desire for help could not materialise, owing to the death of Sultan Selim in 1520. In the following years, the rise of the Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean posed a serious threat to the Muslim states and their seaborne trade with the ports of the Mediterranean. The pilgrim route of India to the Holy places of Islam had also been endangered by the Portuguese inroads. Thus in the prevailing situation, the Indian Muslims were to turn for help to the


Ottomans as the strongest Muslim power.\textsuperscript{11} As a matter of fact, the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman was also aware of the Portuguese threat in the seas as he was anxious to extend his empire and control the Persian Gulf. He attempted to drive the Portuguese away.\textsuperscript{12} Thus, the first Ottoman fleet reached DIU in 1531 with a force of two thousand men. The Ottoman victory against the Portuguese raised the confidence of the Indian Muslims in the Ottomans. This was followed by the greater expedition of Khadim Suleyman Pasha in 1538.\textsuperscript{13} This was followed by another expedition by Sidi Ali Reis, who was sent to conquer Ormuz (Hurmuz) from the Portuguese. He has given very interesting account of his travel in India. Sidi Ali Reis in his book \textit{Miratul-Memalik}, has thrown light not only on political and cultural conditions of the sixteenth century India; but has also furnished details about the people he met, and the places he visited during his long and difficult journey from Surat to Turkey via Ahmedabad, Sindh, Multan, Lahore, Delhi, Afghanistan and Iran. In all places of India, he narrates, he was hailed by the Muslims

\textsuperscript{11} For the full text of the letter, See M.Y. Mughal, Quoted in Azmi Ozcan, \textit{Indian Muslims and the Ottomans, 1877-1914}).


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p.331.
as an envoy of the Padshah of Islam.14

As Akbar consolidated his power, he refused to accept the Ottomans his Caliph, he claimed the title of Caliph for himself.15 He was even styled Hazrat Sultan al-Islam, Khilafat-e-Alam and Amiral Muminin. Sheykh Mubarak, father of Abul Fazl has thrown some light on this. He writes:

"should therefore in future a religious question come up regarding which the opinion of Mujtahids are at variance and His Majesty be inclined to adopt, for the benefit of the nation and as a political expedient, any of the conflicting opinion, he is free".16

But all his pretensions fell flat on Muslims. The Mughal emperors regarded the Ottoman Sultans as their inferior because of the fact that Timur subdued the Ottoman empire in 1402 A.D. in the battle of Ankara.17

After the disintegration of the Mughal empire, a number of independent states emerged. Mysore and Malabar were the two Independent Muslim Kingdoms in South-West India among them. As the pressure of the British advanced, these rulers

14. For a detailed account see, Sidi Reis's, Miratul-Memalik, Eng. trans. Vambery, p.47.
thereafter turned to the Ottoman Empire. Thus in 1777, Sultan Ali Reza of Malabar sent an envoy to Istanbul to obtain financial help from the "Caliph of Muslims" which he needed in his fight against the British. In his letter, Sultan Ali mentioned that he had been fighting the infidels (British) for the last forty years as a result of which his treasury was in short supply. Since the Porte was still under the heavy burden of war with Russia, it was unable to help. 18

Bibi Sultan, the sister of Sultan Ali, who succeeded him, made another appeal to the Ottomans for help against the Portuguese and the British encroachments, but to no avail. The Porte regretted that it could not help due to long distance separating their lands. 19

Tipu Sultan made Mysore a powerful small kingdom in the second half of the eighteenth century. In his trial of strength with English, Tipu Sultan had, very early, realised the fact that in order to prevent a really strong front against the English, whose resources were far flung and wide, it was necessary for him to have a system of alliance with some foreign powers. In this respect Tipu was the first

19. Ibid.
Indian ruler who sought, international assistance to attain his goal of expelling the British from India. It is said that Tipu first approached the French for his assistance but they had not responded very encouragingly then he turned to Turkey. Thus, from 1784 onwards he sent several missions to Istanbul to secure military assistance and establish commercial relations. His first mission consisted of Ghulam Ali Khan, Shah Nurullah, Lutuf Ali Beg and Mohammad Hanif. In 1786, he sent the second mission of seven-hundred men with extraordinarily rich and abundant gifts. The significant part of this mission, in addition to the request for military and commercial alliances, was his desire to receive a caliphate's investiture from the Ottoman Sultan. This was the first instance of its kind on the part of an Indian ruler seeking recognition from the Ottoman Caliph, though the practice was very old, as earlier Muslim ruler had sought recognition from the Abbasid Caliphs. It is said that when Tipu failed to get recognition from the Nawab of Arcot (Madras) and the Mughal Court then he turned his attention


21. Ibid.

towards the Ottoman Sultan. A Muslim ruler's position was considered legitimate and lawful only after his title of kingship was confirmed by the Sultan-Caliph of the time. 23

Unfortunately, Tipu Sultan's mission to Istanbul coincided with the war between the Ottomans and the Russians over the Crimea in 1787. In these circumstances the Porte could not afford to antagonize Britain by responding favourably to Tipu Sultan's proposal of an alliance. 24 Soon after, Tipu Sultan suffered a heavy defeat against the British forces and lost large territories in 1792. In order to avenge himself and recover his lost territories, Tipu Sultan sought new allies. In the meantime hostilities broke out between France and Britain which were followed by the British attack on the French colonies in India in 1793. This brought about rapprochement between Tipu Sultan and the French against the common enemy. 25 The French occupation of Egypt in 1798, on the way to India alarmed the British government, who then appealed to the Ottoman Sultan, Selim III, as the "acknowledged Head of the Mohammedan Church" to send a letter to Tipu to advise him not to fight the Brit-

23. For a detailed study see, Khawaja Abdul Qadir, Waga-i-Manazil-e-Rum, ed. Mohibul Hasan, Delhi, 1968.


25. Ibid.
ish. 26 It was addressed to the Indian sovereign Tipu dated on 20th September 1798 from Constantinople which was forwarded in January 1799 by Lord Wellesley, the Governor General of India with a letter of his own in which he refers to French intrigues and expected that the domination of the head of the faith would dispose Tipu Sultan's mind favourably towards the British, but it was not accepted by Tipu Sultan. 27 Lord Wellesley ordered a campaign against Tipu Sultan in alliance with the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Marathas. Tipu Sultan was once defeated, and died on the battlefield in 1799. The fact that the British had requested Selim III, to advise Tipu Sultan, clearly shows that the Ottoman Sultans had considerable influence in India in their capacity as Caliphs. In the following years, the shrewd British were to use, repeatedly, the Sultan's influence over the Indian Muslims to their advantage as in the case of the revolt of 1857.

A mighty popular revolt broke out in India in 1857 which nearly swept away British rule. During this, the British took full advantage of the help they had given to the Ottomans during the Crimean war (1853-56). It was re-


ported that the revolutionaries sought international help in their war against the British. Naturally the Ottoman Empire was one of the powers from which the Indians expected that they could get support. Their efforts, however failed to produce any result and they had to come back empty handed. 28

Whereas the British not only obtained permission from the Porte for passage of their troops to India through Egypt and Suez 29 but also secured a proclamation from Sultan Abdulme- cit as Caliph advising the Indian Muslims not to fight against them. 30 According to Redcliffe, the British ambassador in Istanbul, the Sultan "condemned and abhorred the atrocities committed by the Mutineers" and told:

"I judge ... Muslims unfairly, if I did not consider them as entertaining his own sentiments towards England. They would not forget the assistance afforded them (the Ottomans) by the Majesty's forces in the late war". 31

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28. It was reported that an agent of Nana Sahib, Azimullah Khan went to Crimea and Istanbul to get in touch with Ottomans and most probably to seek help. I.H. Qureshi, "Two native papers of pre-Mutiny India", Indian Historical Record Commission, Proceedings of meetings, XVIII (held in Mysore, Jan. 1942), Delhi, 1944, p.205.


31. Extract of a Dispatch from Lord Stanford de Redcliffe", 2 Dec. 1858, F.D. See, 2 Jan 1858. no.1910, NAI.
It is said the success of the British troops and capture of Delhi were met with pleasure and an expression of satisfaction by the Ottomans. Ali Pasha, the Wazir, sent a message of congratulation to the British government.32 The Porte also donated a thousand pounds to the "Mutiny relief Fund" for the orphans, widows and wounded soldiers.33

As a matter of fact, the Sultan was highly mistaken in assuming that Indian Muslims were entertaining his own sentiments towards England. At the same time one gets the impression that the sultan was not aware of the reality in India or he was grossly misguided by the British. Nevertheless his influence over the Indian Muslims could not be denied.

Thus the 'first war of Independence' entailed the loss of the last vestiges of Muslim power in the sub-continent, it was a great blow to the Indian Muslims. They were mainly accused of the uprising which served to justify deeply entrenched British suspicion that the Muslims were aggressive, dangerous and militant. Whereas the Hindus were con


sidered as less hostile for they had "no king to set up and no religion to be propagated by the sword".  

This has even epitomized in the verdict of the court Martial:

"If we now take a retrospective view of the various circumstances which we have been able to elicit during our extended inquiries, we shall perceive how exclusively Muhammadan are all the prominent points that attack to it. A Muhammadan priest, with pretended visions and assumed miraculous powers - a Muhammadan king, his dupe and accomplice - a Muhammadan clandestine embassy to the Muhammadan powers of Persia and Turkey resulting - Muhammadan prophesies as to the downfall of our power - Muhammadan rule as the successor of our own - the most cold-blooded murders by Muhammadan assassins - a religious war for Muhammadan ascendancy - a Muhammadan press unscrupulously abetting - and Muhammadan Sipahis initiating the mutiny. Hinduism, I may say, is nowhere reflected or represented; if it be brought forward at all, it is only in subservience to its ever-aggressive neighbours".  

Hence Muslims were singled out by the British as real enemies. "The heavy hand of the British" wrote Nehru, "fell more upon the Muslims than on the Hindus".

In short, the Muslims after 1857, were to find themself left far behind in almost every field. They were backward,

35. Ibid., p.349.
illiterate and ignorant. Besides they were "too sullen to adjust themselves to the new circumstances, too embittered to think objectively, too involved emotionally with the past to plan for the future". They had no confidence and faith in themselves nor in the Hindus and the British. The community as a whole presented a picture of desolation, dejection, decay and despondency.37

This colossal trauma forced the Indian Muslims to become more intimate with the Ottomans. Since there was no Muslim sovereign left in India, the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph appeared to be the only choice. Thus followed the inclusion of the Ottoman Sultan's name in the Khutba. In this way Sultan Abdul Aziz was generally accepted as Caliph by the Indian Muslim.