

UPSC

Q2. Mahatma Gandhi's support to Khilafat Movement diluted his secular character. Critically examine.

Ans. The history of the Indian National Movement can be studied in three important phases:

- (i) 1885-1905: Moderate nationalism
- (ii) 1906-1916: Swadeshi & Home rule Movement, Militant nationalism.
- (iii) 1917-1947: Gandhian era

SECOND PHASE (1906-1916)

Apparent use of Hindu revivalist symbols like celebration of Ganesh Chaturthi, etc. to evoke nationalism after the Surat split in 1907

Separate electorates under the Morley-Minto Reforms, 1909

With all these happenings in the second phase of the national struggle, Muslims grew apprehensive about INC & Gandhiji's national struggle. So, Gandhiji supported the Khilafat Movement to overcome these apprehensions & thus to win their support for his Non-Cooperation Movement as after all "Unity is strength". Thus, Gandhi looked upon the Khilafat agitation as "an opportunity of unity Hindus & Mohammedans as would not arise in a hundred years".

Critique's → allege that Gandhi's Support to Khilafat diluted his secular credentials:

- (i) For mixing religion with politics & thus strengthening the forces of communalism.
- (ii) Khilafat lost its relevance as Turkey was declared republic by Kamal Pasha & so, he fought for a lost cause.

However, the arguments don't dilute Gandhi's secular character because:

- (i) With the passing of Morley Minto Reforms of 1909, communalisation of politics had started with separate electorates.

Best answer
V. Good
Answer

- (ii) Gandhi was a pragmatic person & he knew when was the perfect time to act. If he wouldn't have taken this move, things would have taken a U-turn.
- (iii) Gandhiji was neither communal, nor pro-Muslim or pro-Hindu, but a person who could think of all the consequences before he act & made the use of available resources to the best of his ability.
- (iv) At the same time, with merging of Khilafat into the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920, it acted as a spark to the freedom struggle.
- (v) Moreover, with "violence", he called off the Non-Cooperation Movement post the Chauri-Chaura incident of 1922. which shows his idealistic nature.

Thus, in no means Gandhi's support to Khilafat movement diluted his secular character. Infact, he supported ~~the~~ Khilafat with the best of his intentions to gain Hindu-Muslim unity & this paved a lot for ~~the~~ India's independence!

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