

Jamaat Islami and Abul A'la Maududi

(A brief)

JAMAAT ISLAMI (JI) is important to Pakistan for its past and present role in country's politics. As an Islamist party its ideological position(s) and activities in the past 70 years have been significant and partly responsible for making Pakistan what it is now in 2018. It is a long and painful story and can be told here only very briefly.

Jamaat Islami was formed during the British Raj, in 1941 by Maududi (1905-1979). He was scion of a scholarly and religious family. On growing up, he did not initially grow a beard and would wear a tie. He developed fast as a journalist and at a young age became editor of a periodical *Al-Jamiah* an organ of Jamiat ul Ulama Hind that was largely funded by Indian National Congress. Maududi thereafter turned to religion; his writing style was very persuasive for an average literate Muslim, although recognized Islamic scholars were not impressed by his rather shallow *connaissance* of Islamic theology. This remained unchanged for the rest of his career, even though his message was taken seriously by a sizeable number of fair-to-middling literate Muslims in the sub-continent.

In pre-WWII years Maududi was impressed by success of fascist and communist leaders of Europe. So he approved them and declared their governing style fit for his own idea of an Islamic state. He did not think much of democracy. He adopted 'Islam' and 'Shariah' as the battle cry for his political scheme.

The idea of Pakistan and life-style of its leaders like Jinnah went against his religious and political grain and he condemned them in no uncertain terms. He was opposed to the modern concept of nation-state. However, his Islamic concepts were swept away by the tsunami of Muslim League/Congress politics, and Pakistan came into being. Maududi had to leave India and seek refuge in Lahore.

Once in Pakistan, a country teeming with majority of Muslims, he found here plenty of space for promoting his politics of implementation of Sharia law (*Nifaz Shariat*), Imposition of Faith (*Iqamat Deen*) and Islamic State (*Hakumat Ilahiya*). It is interesting that four decades later ISIS nearly succeeded in the fertile crescent of Middle East to implement Maududi's ideas.

Use of force, violence and Jihad were important and essential to Maududi's scheme of things, so he propagated these powerfully in the name of Islam. He even quoted, though wrongfully, the Holy Prophet in his support. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, later Khalifa-tul-

Masih IV, could not bear up with this enormity and wrote an effective rebuttal to Maududi in a book “Murder in the name of Allah”.

In many ways JI is Pakistani version of Egyptian Ikhwanul Muslimeen. Maududi and Sayyid Qutb were twins in thought if not in action. For Taliban and Al-Quaeda both were ideological masters. Some are of the opinion that Maududi aspired to be a Sunni Khomeini.

Maududi was less religious and more pragmatic. He went to the extent of edifying sanction of untruth and falsehood if circumstances demanded. This was a great disservice to Islam, as thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of his followers took to lying at first opportunity.

In formative years of Pakistan, Maududi felt free to put forward his ideas of an Islamic state, society and polity. He condemned the practice that Muslim women work in hospitals and be nurses, etc. He insisted that penalty of apostasy was death in Islam. He even postulated that quitting Jamaat Islami was a sort of apostasy (*Irtidad*). Ironically, when he died years later in the US, one such apostate (*Murtad*) Dr Asrar Ahmad led his funeral prayer.

Jamaat Islami vigilantes in its student wing Islami Jamiat Talabah love fascist techniques and tactics. Violence was and is their first preference in dealing with others. To impose their will on press they attacked the office of the daily Frontier Post and destroyed it.

The intensity of anti-Ahmadi riots in Punjab in 1953 by Ahrar and their accomplices made Maududi apprehensive that he might be left behind from the victory parade, so he hurriedly authored a booklet ‘*Qadiani Mas’alah*’ and dropped it like a bomb in the fray. As a result, the then provincial government broke down, and martial law had to be imposed in Lahore. Maududi was arrested. A military court sentenced him to death. However, when peace returned, Maududi was released.

Maududi was notorious for coming up with bizarre ideas, assertions and edicts. In the high level judicial inquiry in 1953 riots, he replied to a question from the judges, with: “I should have no objection even if the Muslims in India are treated in that form of Government as Shudras and Malishes and Mannu’s laws are applied to them, depriving them of all share in the Government and the rights of a citizen...” A more sinister, harmful and idiotic statement to the detriment of Muslims (or any religious minority) by a prominent theologian is still to be discovered.

There was internal reaction to Maududi’s administration and his ideas, and a large number of his prominent disciples left him and quit the Jamaat after a conclave at Machhi Goth in 1957.

Holding regular party elections goes to JI's credit. After Maududi's death, various elected leaders headed the party. It was Jamaat's consistent policy to support military regimes. General Yahya was supported by Jamaat's vigilantes in East Pakistan where they committed a host of atrocities against people, for which some of those in leadership positions have been hanged decades later. Similarly Jamaat Islami enthusiastically became B team of general Zia's regime. Zia ordered his administration to treat JI with special consideration. However, when Jamaat leaders eventually realized that they were being used as tools by the military regime and Zia had no intention of passing on the power to them, they decided to distance themselves from him.

In 1980s a great and promising opportunity arose for the Jamaat when Americans decided to confront the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The US, Saudi Arabia and Zia's Pakistan decided to undertake a Jihad in that country to throw out the Soviet troops. The former two agreed to pour in money and weapons, and Pakistan offered itself as the base and the facilitator for *Mojahideen*. This dollars-loaded jihad suited JI's thinking entirely. Its leadership and workers acted as proxies of the Zia regime. This arrangement was a great success and the Jamaat Islami was so happy and loaded that it protested strongly against cessation of hostilities between the major powers in Afghanistan, negotiated in 1989.

During the so-called Jihad in post-Soviet Afghanistan, JI was close to warlords like Gulbadin Hikmatyar who played havoc against other Afghans, killed more countrymen and destroyed more property than any other party had done before. Hazaras of Mazar Sharif were told to either 'accept Islam' or 'leave Afghanistan'; also, "We'll chase you wherever you'll go". Gulbadin was deeply involved in the drug trade also. This was the era of extensive rape, murder and extortion in that unfortunate land. As a result of this 'Jihad' Taliban took over Kabul in 1996, and ruled for five years as an 'Islamic Emirate'.

Jamaat Islami has never succeeded in forming a government. It shared political power with generals when the Army usurped the rule and occasionally in coalition governments, for instance in KPK with Imran Khan's PTI. It still has some appeal for a section of urban middle and lower middle class people who get motivated in the name of Islam and are impressed by the persuasive style of Maududi's writings. Scholarly and academics tend to quit the Jamaat sooner or later. They are the ones who subsequently expose the faults and failings of this Jamaat. Their list is long.

It is a very interesting fact that none of Maududi's six sons is a member of Jamaat Islami. Maududi himself discouraged them in their youth to participate in the activities of Islami Jamiat Talabah. Once a staffer of the daily Nation interviewed Dr. Haidar Maududi,

the founder's son, on this issue and he replied, **"I think my father was aware of the dangers of the drug he was distributing for free. Indeed his attitude was that of a heroine peddler. He would never allow his wife or any of his nine children to read any of his books."** *The Nation*; January 26, 1999

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