

Pakistan National Assembly Proceedings, August–September 1974: (2)

Speaker disallows discussion on the fact that the opposition Islamic parties regard the ruling People's Party as kafir

by Dr Zahid Aziz

When the Pakistan National Assembly was close to approving the amendment to the Pakistan Constitution that Ahmadis are non-Muslim, a member of the ruling Pakistan People's Party, by the name of Chaudhry Shafat Khan Chohan, raised the question of **his own party and its leader (the Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto) having been declared as kafir** by the Ulama of the opposition Islamic parties in 1970.

Speaking on 6th September 1974, in the general discussion by the members of the Assembly, Mr Chohan said towards the end of his statement as follows (translated below by us from Urdu):

“In this connection I must make this point. There is no doubt that Mirza was a false prophet, and this has been established in this chamber. I believe that we will be able to decide to declare his followers as a [non-Muslim] minority. But I would make the point in this connection that those few Ulama, in fact the 113 Ulama, who issued so-called *fatwas* in 1970 declaring the People's Party and its leader as *kafir*”

At this point, the Chairman of the session intervened and said in English: “Not allowed.”

But Mr Chohan continued as follows (in Urdu):

“They were also liars.”

The Chairman again intervened and said in English, and in Urdu:

“Not allowed. Not allowed. بالکل نہیں۔ ”

Then the following exchange took place:

Chohan: I would say at least one thing.

Chairman: Please be careful on at least one day. This politics will continue.

Chohan: Along with this, I would say that since there is unity today among Muslims, the Constitution should also at least make the prohibition about *fatwas* that no Muslim should declare any sect as *kafir*.

Chairman: If speeches like this are made, then the unity will not remain.

Chohan: As regards this issue before us

Intervention

Chairman: Thank you very much. That's all.”

The “unity” mentioned by the Chairman was the unity between the ruling Pakistan People’s Party and the opposition Islamic parties to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslim. Otherwise, these two factions were bitter enemies of one another, and the Islamic parties had previously declared the Pakistan People’s Party and its leader Z.A. Bhutto as *kafir*.

The point made by Chaudhry Shafat Khan Chohan was that since Ahmadis are now going to be excluded from Muslims by the Constitution, and the rest of us are Muslims according the Constitution, then the *fatwas* of the opposition Islamic parties declaring his party, the People’s

Party, and its leader as *kafir* also cannot stand and are wrong. But the Chairman of the session would not allow any discussion of this matter because it would set the ruling party and the opposition against each other. Hence his ruling, as quoted above:

“Please be careful on at least one day. This politics will continue.
... If speeches like this are made, then the unity will not remain.”

The ruling People’s Party was so desperate to maintain unity with the opposition Islamic parties, in the matter of declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslim, that it was prepared to tolerate their *fatwas* against itself. In effect, the ruling party said to the opposition: You can call us *kafir* if you wish, as long as you unite with us in declaring Ahmadis as *kafir*!

This unity lasted only during the National Assembly proceedings. The bitter enmity between the People’s Party and the Islamic parties resumed immediately afterwards. Less than three years had elapsed, when in July 1977 the Islamic parties, acting through General Zia-ul-Haq, brought down the government and had Mr Z.A. Bhutto arrested. Less than a further two years had elapsed when, through the efforts of the same elements, he was sentenced to death and hanged.

The Chairman also declined to hold a discussion on Chohan’s proposal that, while declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslims, “the Constitution should also at least make the prohibition about *fatwas* that no Muslim should declare any sect as *kafir*”. This means that the National Assembly allowed that **even those who are defined as “Muslim” in the Constitution may still be called *kafir* by other such Muslims!**

Below we display the image of the above-quoted exchange between Chaudhry Shafat Khan Chohan and the Chairman of the Assembly Session from pages 3002 and 3003 of the record.

اس سلسلہ میں میں ایک عرض کرنا یہاں ضروری سمجھتا ہوں۔ اس میں کوئی شک نہیں کہ مرزا جھوٹا نبی تھا اور اس ایوان میں یہ ثابت ہو گیا ہے۔ اس کے ماننے والوں کو اقلیت قرار دینے کے لیے میرا خیال ہے کہ ہم فیصلہ کر سکیں گے لیکن میں اس سلسلہ میں ایک بات عرض کروں گا کہ وہ چند بلکہ ۱۱۳ نام نہاد فتوے جاری کرنے والے علماء جنہوں نے پیپلز پارٹی اور اس کے قائد کو ۱۹۷۰ء میں کافر قرار دیا تھا.....

Mr. Chairman: Not allowed.

چوہدری شفاعت خان چوہان: وہ بھی جھوٹے ہیں۔

Mr. Chairman: Not allowed, not allowed۔ بالکل نہیں۔

چوہدری شفاعت خان چوہان: کم سے کم ایک بات میں عرض کروں گا۔

جناب چیئرمین: کم سے کم ایک دن ضرور خیال رکھیں۔ یہ سیاست چلتی رہے گی۔

چوہدری شفاعت خان چوہان: اس کے ساتھ ساتھ میں یہ عرض کروں گا کہ مسلمانوں میں جو آج اتحاد قائم ہے، کم سے کم فتووں کے سلسلے میں بھی آئین میں یہ پابندی لگا دی جائے کہ کوئی مسلمان کسی فرقے کو کافر قرار نہ دے۔

جناب چیئرمین: اگر ایسی تقریریں ہوئیں تو پھر اتحاد نہیں رہے گا۔

چوہدری شفاعت خان چوہان: جہاں تک اس موجودہ مسئلے کا تعلق ہے.....

(مداخلت)

جناب چیئرمین: بہت بہت شکریہ۔ That's all. حکیم محمد سردار خان!

(Not present)