

Reasons for the Failure of the Khilafat Movement (1919–1924)

Background

The **Khilafat Movement (1919–1924)** was started by Indian Muslims to protect the **Caliph of Turkey**, the spiritual head of Islam, after World War I. The British and their allies had defeated Turkey and planned to divide its territory. Indian Muslims felt that their religion was being attacked, so they protested under the leadership of the **Ali Brothers**, with **Gandhi's support**. The movement became a symbol of both **religious unity and anti-British resistance**, but it soon failed due to several serious reasons.

Outbreaks of Violence

Although Gandhi and Muslim leaders wanted a **peaceful protest**, some areas saw **violence and rebellion**. The **Moplah Revolt in Malabar (1921)** turned violent — some Muslims attacked Hindus and British officers. The British crushed it brutally, killing thousands. This violence went against Gandhi's idea of **non-violence (Ahimsa)**. It also created **mistrust between Hindus and Muslims**. Gandhi then suspended support, believing that the movement had lost its peaceful purpose. Violence thus **weakened unity and moral strength**, leading to the movement's collapse.

Kemal Atatürk and the Abolition of the Caliphate

Meanwhile, in **Turkey**, a nationalist leader named **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk** came to power. He believed in **modernizing and secularizing** Turkey. In **1924**, he **abolished the Caliphate** and removed the religious power of the Caliph. This was shocking for Indian Muslims, as the **main aim of the Khilafat Movement**—to save the Caliph—was now meaningless. Without the Caliph, the movement **lost its central purpose**. The British took advantage of this situation to suppress the remaining leaders.

Lack of Common Aims Between Hindus and Muslims

Another major reason for failure was the **difference in goals** between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi's aim was to gain **Swaraj (self-rule)** through non-violence and national unity. Muslims, on the other hand, were mainly concerned with **protecting the Caliph and Islamic world**. These different purposes made it hard to maintain cooperation. When violence broke out and the Khilafat issue weakened, **Congress distanced itself**, and the **Hindu-Muslim alliance broke down**. The unity built during the movement collapsed quickly.

Final Decline and Significance

After Gandhi's **arrest** and the **end of the Non-Cooperation Movement**, the Khilafat struggle lost energy. Without leadership, unity, or a clear goal, it slowly disappeared. Though it failed, it

had **long-term significance**: it awakened political awareness among Muslims and taught them the importance of **independent organization**. It also showed that Hindu and Muslim political goals were not the same. This realization became a **foundation for the Two-Nation Theory**, which later led to the creation of **Pakistan**.