

A'lahazrat as an Economist

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Economics is the science of wealth, as says Adam Smith, who is called the Father of Economics. Adam Smith wrote a book entitled "Wealth of Nations" which was published in 1776. For centuries, this subject was taken as dry and no interest was shown in it. It was only around 1940 when this subject gained popularity. International depression was the main cause behind it. During the time of A'lahazrat (1856-1921) Economics was a subject, which was not given much importance. Nevertheless, A'lahazrat through his book published in 1912, presented four peerless points for the economic development of Muslim brethren. These are:

1. Barring the affairs wherein Government is involved, the Muslims should decide all their disputes mutually
so that millions of rupees, which are being spent over litigations, may be saved.
2. The affluent Muslims of Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Madras and Hyderabad should open banks for other
poor Muslims.
3. Muslims should not purchase anything from anybody except Muslims.
4. The sciences of Islam should be propagated and publicized.

At the instance Prof. Rafiullah Siddiqui Chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Hyderabad (Sindh), has written an article "Fazil-i-Bareillvi Kay Char Ma'ashi Nikaat", published from Maktaba-i-Chashm-i-Rahmat, Balrampur (UP), India. Prof. Siddiqui has beautifully explained all the four points at length; I have had all the appreciation for Prof. Siddiqui and his article.

Through his first point, A'lahazrat has propounded the theory of savings. He has realized the significance of savings and has made people to realize it. In most of the under-developed countries, the rate of saving varies from 5 to 8%. Now the economic experts have declared that for economic development of the country, saving to the tune of 15% of the national income is a must. The importance of savings over-shadowed the world in 1936 when Lord J.M. Keynes of England presented his "Theory of Savings & Investment", which proved successful in overcoming the international depression. In short, according to Keynes, saving is all. It is equal to investment according to his Equation. Thus, more saving, more investment; more investment, more development. For this theory of Saving & Investment, Prof. J. M. Keynes was honored by England and the most prestigious title of "Lord" was conferred on him. Prof. Rafiullah Siddiqui has so nicely and so rightly quipped that Prof. J. M. Keynes was honored in 1936 for what was already pointed out by A'lahazrat in 1912. Who deserved and who bagged the honor, is thus to be seen. Yet, it may be taken for granted that A'lahazrat would not accept such an honor from British even if he were presented one.

Secondly, A'lahazrat presented the theory of opening banks. Needless to mention that banks in the eyes of A'lahazrat were meant to be interest-free banks. History of banking is known to all of us. A'lahazrat suggested and talked of opening banks at a time when banks played no significant role in the country. In 1912, there were only a few banks in India, in big cities, and nobody could foresee then that after a lapse of three or four decades, the importance of banks would assume so much proportion. No doubt, it was A'lahazrat who was able to peep into future and suggest boosting up the banking industry before hand.

A bank is an institution through which the savings of the masses are deployed over productive investment. It is bank that collects pennies but provides pounds. Banks help the people create tendency of saving. Being a great economist, A'lahazrat well realized the hazards of hoarding and advocated for the development of the banking industry.

The third point of A'lahazrat is that Muslims should purchase each and every thing from Muslims only. Apparently, this point appears to be based on somewhat narrow-mindedness. But it is not so, if we go deep. What A'lahazrat says is that Muslims should purchase from Muslims only. It is not restricted to a particular place, locality or province. It means that Muslims countries should purchase from Muslim countries only. It means that A'lahazrat has opposed the free-trade theory as espoused by Adam Smith and suggested Trade Protection so as to withstand the competition in the international market. Fredrick List, a noted German economist has emphatically supported the Trade Protection Policy. Prof. Rafiullah Siddiqui has very much appreciated this point of A'lahazrat. According to him, A'lahazrat wanted to provide economic protection to Muslims but the Muslims neglected the economic acumen highlighted by their own savant, A'lahazrat.

To the misfortune of Muslims, what was pinpointed by A'lahazrat for the benefit of Muslims, was utilized by non-Muslims. Second World War had badly ruined Germany, France, Italy etc. The economy of these European countries was crippled. European Common Market (E.C.M) consisting of six European countries came into existence. It achieved marvelous success and the entire World witnessed that it changed the entire story. The staggering economy of these countries mustered a sudden boom and the German mark became the powerful currency of the world. After all, what was this E.C.M.? It was a practical shape of the guidelines given by A'lahazrat just on the lines that Muslims should make purchases from Muslims only. Even today, if the Muslim countries unite and follow such a policy, luck will smile upon them.

Now come to the fourth point. It is regarding the publicity of Islamic sciences. When theories of economics are going on, how far it is desirable to talk of Islamic sciences or religion. A Mawlawi always remains a Mawlawi-some people may think. Prof. Siddiqui has duly appreciated the importance of knowledge of Islamic sciences but meanwhile he has gone to say that this fourth point is not in regard to economics. With due respect to Prof. Siddiqui, I would like to say that he has hastened to observe like so, perhaps because of its appearance. Prof. Siddiqui has succeeded in realizing the importance of this point but has failed to link it with economic theories.

To my mind, this point is all the more important. Everybody knows that there is lot of difference between theory and practice. Implementation is an upheaval task. The first three points of A'lahazrat provide a theoretical approach. The fourth one provides a pragmatic approach. It must be borne in mind that A'lahazrat has introduced what we may call Muslim Economics. He has talked of benefit and betterment of only Muslims. From this angle, all the four points are inter-connected. The first point of A'lahazrat is regarding mutual settlement of their disputes. The idea is so nice but its implementation is fairly difficult. As says Adam Smith, "man is the born servant of self interest". Everybody wants to gain. Nobody wants to lose. In quest of gain, man runs after the courts headlong. He runs and runs towards the courts till he gets a gain what he calls justice. Such a race towards the gain makes the litigation time-consuming as well as money-consuming. Now A'lahazrat speaks of preaching and teaching Islamic sciences to the people. He means to say that spirit of Islam must prevail upon the Muslims. A'lahazrat goes to say that such an abrupt race of litigation can be controlled only with the spirit of Islam. Under true spirit of Islam, Muslims shall prefer to get their disputes decided only by their Muftis whom they would consider as heirs of Holy Prophet and regarding Holy Prophet (Allah's Grace and Peace be upon him), the Holy Qur'an declares as under:-

"By Allah, they shall not be Muslims unless they make you H`akim in matter of their disputes and unless they accept your decision by heart and feel no hindrance whatsoever there from in their hearts."

Thus, a true Muslim shall be duly satisfied with the decision of a Mufti regardless of the fact whether he remains a gainer or loser. He would accept the decision by heart. Nor would he take it as point of prestige, as a true Muslim wants nothing but what Allah and His Holy Prophet (Allah's Grace and Peace be upon him) want for him. He would not knock at the doors of the court at all. A short meeting with a Mufti can solve a long dispute. Thus, it would be seen that the fourth point advanced by A'lahazrat is very much linked with the theory of mutual settlements Muslims by avoiding litigation with a view to ensuring large savings.

The second point is of opening Muslim banks. Muslims would like to help Muslims only when they are taught to help them in terms of Islamic sciences, that is, in light of Holy Qur'an and Hadith. Interest is a prize of exploitation. Muslims would refrain from accepting interest if they are told that usury is haram (strictly forbidden) according to Holy Qur'an and whosoever accepts interest, should be ready to fight with Allah on the Day of Judgment. Only through the injunction of Islamic spirit, which flows from the knowledge of Islamic sciences attained through the study of Islamic books or through the company of Islamic savants, Muslims can agree to opening of interest-free banks and usury can be put an end to. If the rich people open banks out of their riches, the poor people will get rid of their poverty to a great extent. First, the poor will be able to get employment in various projects financed by banks. Secondly, the poor section will be able to secure interest-free loans from the banks, which they would get otherwise at a heavy rate of interest. Thus, the second and fourth points of A'lahazrat are well linked together.

Muslims should make purchases from Muslims only — is the third point. It does not purport to say that Muslims should sell to Muslims only. A‘lahazrat is restricting outgoings only of Muslims. Unless the Muslims are taught of their religion, nothing can be achieved in this field. A person, who has no knowledge of Islamic studies, is western-minded, would hardly purchase anything from Muslims. He would be addicted to using foreign goods and would not hesitate to purchase them from any corner. Nowadays, it is seen that those who have craze for using foreign goods, may it be, cigarette, wine or anything like that, help the foreign companies earn a lot of foreign exchange. A Muslim would make purchases from Muslims only when it is impressed upon him that Holy Qur’an declares:

(Space for Arabic script) "Innam al-Mo’minoona Ikhwatun"

That is, "Muslim and a Muslim are brethren." Unless he treats the other Muslim as his brother, he would not extend him a brotherly-treatment. Moreover the teachings of Islam shall bear wide repercussions on the standard of trade. No trader would like to give short weight as it is forbidden in Islam. No trader would make any adulteration of any kind, as it is forbidden in Islam. No trader would try to conceal defect, if any, in his commodity as it is forbidden in Islam. No trader would resort to unnecessary hoarding of stock as it is forbidden in Islam. No trader would allow unnecessary bargaining in price as it is forbidden in Islam. In this manner, under the yoke of Islam, trade will wear a bloomy look. If Muslims undertake to make purchases from Muslims only and if Islamic spirit prevails, then a Muslim will not be able to get wine, because no Muslim would like to sell it as it is forbidden in Islam. In this way, not only the trade will flourish but it will also bring about a flawless society.

So, it is evident that all the four points of A‘lahazrat are coherent and co-related insofar as Muslim Economics is concerned. As I have been associated with Economics for the last twenty years, I had a right to study A‘lahazrat in this field and so I did. I have no hesitation to say that before the insight of A‘lahazrat in the field of Economics, I find myself no better than a big zero.