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**BOOK REVIEW**

"THE TURKISH REVOLUTION : A PERSPECTIVE ON IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE IN TURKEY" by MOHAMMED SADIQ, New Delhi: Macmillan, 1997

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Mohammed Sadiq, professor of Turkish studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), is one of the leading scholars of Turkish history and currents of thought. His proficiency in Urdu, Hindi, English and Turkish, his working knowledge of Arabic and Persian, and his formal education, which includes graduate studies in Turkey, have contributed to his present standing as an outstanding academic with profound comprehension of and insight into the Turkish past.

Educated at Aligarh Muslim University, where he received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees, his Doctorate in Modern Turkish History was conferred by the Ankara University in 1964. After having stayed two extensive periods (1960-64, 1971-72) in Turkey, he became a lecturer at Aligarh (1964-1973) and then, professor at JNU (1973-present). His books are: *Türkiye'de İkinci Meşrutiyet Devrinde Fikir Cereyanları* (Ph.D. dissertation in Turkish), *The Turkish Revolution and the Indian Freedom Movement* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1983), and *The Turkish Revolution: A Perspective on Ideological Change in Turkey* (1997).

The last-mentioned book, *The Turkish Revolution*, which is the subject of this review, deals, in the words of its preface, "with a historical phenomenon that valued the role of tradition yet came to symbolise change." As author Mohammed Sadiq substantiates with the use of first-hand information, convincingly argued and eloquently expressed, the unique historical phenomenon in question began by defending a heritage but swept it away, turning a revolt into a revolution. The revolution was the first of its kind in the Muslim world to oppose traditionalism, yet seeking its rationale within it.

But there is a difference between inspiring and stimulating tradition and an inert and dispirited one. It is true that the "splendour of the past" never turned its back on the Turkish Revolution, the reforming élite renounced the way of well-ingrained but obsolete thinking in the Muslim world. Secularism, which Sadiq correctly describes as "the ideological mainstay" of the Turkish Revolution, was a singular phenomenon in the Muslim world.

It is apparent that the Turkish Revolution broke the dogmatic shackles. But the revolution itself evolved in phases, the Young Turk legacy providing the intellectual setting. This legacy forms the philosophical framework for the subject of Sadiq's book. A life-sketch of the revolutionary leader, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, is followed by an assessment of the abolition of the Caliphate, which facilitated the development of Turkish secularism. The Caliphate which had served the Turks was also dear to the Muslim world. Secularism, on the other hand, though an ideological pillar of modern Turkey, was not intended to be the anti-thesis of religion. Religious outlook and secularism, each complementary to the other, form a significant part of the book. The Turkish Revolution, which originated in a liberation movement, did not spring from a well-defined ideology. The author reserves a chapter for the Kadro (Cadre) movement, which tried, even though going to extremes sometimes, to formulate such an ideology.

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A revolution signifies a change, not tradition. It is, above all, a break, an overthrow and a transformation. Nevertheless, time gives tradition a chance to reassert itself. There was “a subtle, delicate harmony of tradition and change” in the complexion of the Turkish Revolution. It differed, in this regard, from the French and Russian Revolutions. The former ended negating the ideas that had inspired it, and the latter eventually failed. The Turkish Revolution did not envisage a new man totally ignoring the older one. Not looking beyond its borders, unlike Napoleonic or Bolshevik ambitions, it had no irredentist aspirations. But it went far enough to symbolise the struggle of the oppressed under colonial rule, and inevitably kindled in them the hopes of a new destiny. It is no surprise that, for the peoples of the East, the Turks were “championing anti-colonialism”.

But while the Muslim world expected the downfall of colonialism, the Turkish Revolution began a search for a new home order harmonising innovations with the best in the past. The Muslim world, which generally failed to understand this stage of the Turkish pursuit, felt betrayed especially when the Caliphate was abolished (1924) on the heels of the abrogation of the Sultanate (1922).

Not only Turkey felt that it could stand on its own, but it gradually came closer and closer to the world of Islam. But secularism was there to stay—on the basis of harmony, however, between change and heritage. In the opinion of the author, here lies the explanation for why the Turkish Revolution has not exhausted itself like the others.

Secularism evolved into an ideological pillar of the Turkish Revolution. Yet, the new order had other bases, even if some were less important. Populism (*halkçılık*) became another pillar; for instance, abolishing all undeserved hereditary titles and reversing the customary relationship between the ruler and the ruled. The peasant, who symbolised the common man, was to be the master of the country.

This was a movement for new horizons, a search for a new identity, a clean sweep of the past, but throwing away “just the dead wood”. The people were still faithful to their roots. Under the circumstances, the revolutionaries continued with a secular definition of national identity while trying to harmonise it with religion. This was an assimilation of new elements to make a culture grow, a probing from the point where the Young Turks had left off.

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The Young Turk ideology signifies the beliefs set in motion with the Revolution of 1908. The consequences of the First World War, which included the Ottoman defeat and the escape of the top Young Turk leaders, revealed the futility of that ideology. Mustafa Kemal, thus denied liaison with the past, especially with the Committee of Union and Progress.

But even then, the Young Turk ideals were not without influence. Sadiq differs from modern history’s customary perception that the change emerged under Western stimulus, asserting that the Turkish élite’s familiarity with Western philosophies does not prove European inspiration. He holds that the inspiration for the Young Turk intellectuals came from the native soil. They delved into their own past, not the West, for creative impulse.

The Balkan Wars (1912, 1913), which demonstrated, in the words of the Young Turk sociologist Ziya Gökalp (1876-1924), that “the conscience of Europe was a Christian conscience,” aroused religious feeling among the Turks. They also discovered their Turkishness, an identity other than Ottoman or Islamic. Consequently, they tried to fuse together the traditional-religious and the national-secular forms of loyalty. The Young Turks came to grips with this contradiction when the army had to crush the mutiny of 31 March 1909, which was strongly opposed to the secularism of the government and the influence of foreign representatives. The mutineers intended to establish a régime that would fulfil the basic duties of Islamic government. Sadiq considers this uprising another “product of the soil”. And so was the army’s guardianship of the political order. The author’s evaluations may also explain the recurrence of attempts to return to Islam and military interventions in Turkish politics.

But the Young Turk rule was marked by changing emphasis from one policy to another—Ottomanism

and national consciousness, secular-ism and pan-Islamism, economic liberalism and étatist policies. Granted that the Young Turk intellectuals were brought together around the ideal of restoring the Constitution of 1876, they eventually committed themselves to a conciliatory tone in respect to various ideas in order not to alienate any ethnic or religious group in the empire. The author contends that “even today ideological formulations in Turkey reflect the Young Turk spirit.” Contradictions of the later period may derive more from the Young Turk legacy than from any other source.

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This legacy cannot under-mine the fact that Mustafa Kemal was a unique revolutionary, lighting the way to liberation and transformation, his message going beyond the limits of his country. Different from Enver Pa\_a, “the glamorous romantic”, Mustafa Kemal’s dreams “bore the touch of reality.” But inspir-ing also those under colonial rule, “he became the harbinger of a great awakening in Asia and Africa.” Sadiq states: “The liberation movement of Turkey sounded the death-knell of colonialism.”

Mustafa Kemal, a master strategist and the hero of many battles, emerged at the right time for his people, and perhaps too early for the colonial peoples. But the Turkish revolt under his leadership marked the beginning of the decline of Western colonialism. The Lausanne Convention (1923) was the admission of defeat by the colonial powers and the recognition of the sovereign Turkish state.

For the Muslims of India, Kemal was fighting for the cause of the Caliphate and Islam. The abolition of the Caliphate influenced the course of history in the entire Islamic world. For the Islamic world, its abolition meant the formal ending of the Muslim identity. When the Turks took the even more radical step of abolishing Islam as the state religion (1928), the message was that there was now another identity, one based on nationalism.

Islam was limited to the personal life of the believers. The Caliphate was a worldly institution, and therefore, did not form part of the essentials of Islam. The Qur’an did not refer to the Caliphate, which signified government. The Prophet himself did not appoint a successor, and the formal Caliphate, an invention of a later period, hung on the oppression and tyranny of the Umayyads and the Abbasids. Islam does not recognise any intermediary. The philosophy behind the abolition of the Caliphate gave substance to secularism. The Caliphate could turn into an instrument in the hands of counter-revolutionary groups.

When the Turks did away with the Caliphate, it was a shock for the Indian Muslims. And when the Turks abolished Islam as the state religion, poet Mohammad Iqbal viewed the Turkish decision as a creative interpretation of the laws of Islam and that a republican form of government was consistent with them. Dr. M. A. Ansari supported these movements as sound decisions. Nehru felt that Mustafa Kemal’s reforms, secularism in particular, reflected his greatest achievement.

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Sadiq analyses the ideals and human values on which the new destiny of the Turks are visualised. The idea of national will was born among the people even before Mustafa Kemal appeared on the scene. It evolved into a coherent doctrine of national sovereignty. The Erzurum and Sivas Congresses articulated the goals and the horizons of the process of liberation. Sovereignty, which belonged without reservation or condition to the nation, went hand in hand with the idea of rights. The Western colonial powers, which had professed the ideals of freedom, imposed colonial rule on some non-Turkish former Ottoman citizens to whom they had promised independence. US President Woodrow Wilson, who stated in the Twelfth Point of his “Fourteen Points” that the Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire would be assured a secure sovereignty, supported the Greek occupation of Turkish territory. In contrast, the final article of the (Turkish) National Pact declared that the fate of the Arab majority areas of the Ottoman Empire should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the native peoples through free expression.

The author defines the millet system as permitting each minority to preserve its own identity as “a first lesson in human coexistence and religious tolerance in a world tormented by religious bigotry and intolerance.” Free from the practices of anti-Semitism and the Inquisition of the West, the Ottomans enriched the cultures of the minorities, and they assimilated elements from them. The European governments, on the other hand, described their own meddling in Ottoman affairs as ‘the Eastern Question’.

No historic phenomenon grows in a vacuum. The Turkish Republic tried to keep the best of the past. The Republican élite struck not at tradition, but the outdated approach of the conservative group. In search of a new historical consciousness, the Republican élite presented a new outlook on history and introduced language reform. Sadiq calls the stretching of the memory to the pre-Islamic or prehistoric past of the Turks an identification of history with man and considers it evidence for the human values that went into the making of the cultural perspective of the Turkish Republic. The Republican intellectuals also sought to do away with the gap between the language of the élite and the tongue of the masses. Although there were flashes of purely inventive imagination, the language reform, not only brought the various segments of society closer to each other, but the enrichment of language hoped to bring civilisation to the doorsteps of the common man.

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The Turks introduced the words lâik or lâiklik for secular or secularism, a term of Greek origin, and did not use lâdinî or dehrî, meaning irreligion or agnosticism, because they merely distinguished between the religious and non-religious aspects of life. The orthodox people whose panorama was limited to faith and faith alone perceived secularism as an assault on religion itself. While striking at moribund institutions generally identified with religion, secularism had not replaced Islam. The author rightly states that Turkish secularism sought to establish primacy of the individual in religious experience and free him or her from the tutelage of intermediaries. This expression of individual freedom might have offended the traditional religious consciousness of some Turks, but the emphasis on the personal rather than collective experience of religion was, in the words of the author, “the logical corollary of the ideas of human freedom, will and dignity.”

There began a process of reappraisal of the real constituents of Islam. The author observes that religious dogma tends to inspire obscurantist tendencies if seen in isolation from the idea of change. Part of the political élite, later, took charge of religious feeling, activated mass consciousness and diverted it to its own wishes. The conservative forces find in religion a ready means to safeguard their interests. It is no surprise that some of the ulema (supposedly learned religious leaders) were mere ignorant hypocrites. Mustafa Kemal categorically stated that the Turkish Republic was not going to be a country of *eyhs* and *dervi\_es* or their disciples and protégés. In the eyes of some writers, Atatürk, who had rescued religion from the assaults of such people, was, in a sense, the greatest Muslim of many epochs.

By such steps, Turkey did not introduce a new faith within Islam. It was not Protestantism in the Christian sense. Mustafa Kemal, a realist with a sound sense of means and ends, knew the objective limits of the revolution. The new administration conveniently shelved even the suggestions for extreme changes in religious rites. The *tekkes* (derviş lodges), whose historical role Mustafa Kemal had appreciated during the initial phase of the liberation movement, but later condemned as a hearth of decadence, were closed down.

The substitution of Turkish for Arabic in the *ezan* (call to prayer) was a notable change. The Turkish version resounded, for the first time (1932) from the minarets of the Fatih Mosque in İstanbul. Martin Luther had written his objections in Latin, but proposed the substitution of German for Latin in church services. The rendering of the *ezan* in Turkish continued until the Republican People’s Party lost power in 1950. As Sadiq observes, the next phase calls for a separate study.

The Turkish Revolution perceived no contradiction between secularism and religion as it saw their spheres entirely distinct. But even this approach marked a radical departure from the view that

Islam was a complete way of living which could not be split into compartments. The masses almost never go along, at least not entirely willingly, with sudden and radical deviations. They prefer slow and gradual evolution, giving them a chance to assimilate. The failure of the Progressive Republican Party (Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası) and the Free Republican Party (Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası), two separate experiments in multi-party politics, may be explained in terms of the religious upsurge that both seem to have stimulated. The author feels that their continuance would have nourished the democratic process. He adds that the Democratic Party, which came to power through free elections (1950), had later envisioned a kind of secularism more acceptable to the masses.

There is no doubt that nationalism broadened the base of the new Turkish identity. A few generations ago, Namık Kemal (1840-88), the great Turkish poet and revolutionary thinker, had chosen a saying attributed to the Prophet Mohammed as the title of his essay on patriotism: 'Hubb-al Watan min-al iman' ('Love of one's country is part of the Faith'). National force was certainly a driving force with the Republican generation and national sovereignty reflected the will of the people, which in turn hastened the process of secularisation. Secularism armed the Turkish Revolution with an ideological rationale: it was the very soul of the Revolution, sparing neither ideologies, nor institutions to promote it.

According to the author, the assignment of a positive role to private initiative in economic development, in spite of the strong inclination to étatism, was an affirmation of "trust, though implicitly, in human creativity." He also notes that the Republic took development as a collective responsibility to be discharged under state leadership. The freedom of the individual could thrive as part of the freedom of the masses as understood by the state.

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The Kadro movement proposed (1932) to develop the ideology of the Turkish Revolution. The Revolution needed, in the opinion of the intellectuals who united around the journal by the same name, cadres to organise itself. Although the journal appeared when the régime had taken root, it was the first systematic attempt to theorise the change. The revolutionary cadre was to nourish the idea of continuous revolution.

The economic crash of 1929 having disclosed the inner contradictions of laissez-faire, the Kadro movement placed much faith in the capabilities of the state. According to the author, the Kadro group tried to synthesize the native with the exotic, and "declined as soon as the alien tone began to overwhelm the native refrain." Although the arguments of the movement flowed from a materialistic view of history, it believed in a distinct destiny for the national liberation struggles. But it tended to draw the Turkish Revolution from its ideological heritage.

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The Turkish Revolution stands in a class by itself, having started as a struggle for national liberation but soon broadened to cover other aspects of life, and also having chosen to be a national revolution, which spilt to other countries as well. The overwhelming idea was of contemporary civilisation, and not Eastern or Western but universal values—blended with the best in inheritance.

Among those values, secularism was a contribution of the Turkish Revolution, not only to the history of that country, but also to Islam. In this sense, it may even be considered as part of religious revival. The author concludes that now both religion and secularism present the reality of Turkish society. This was a matter of reciprocity of social phenomena. Sadiq differs from a number of contemporary Turkish intellectuals who attribute the entire process of change to the West.

The need for change had dawned first on the ruling Ottoman dynasty itself, gradually influencing other segments of the intelligentsia and all aspects of life. It found expression in the Nizam-ı Cedid (New Order, 1789-1807, the reformed army established by Sultan Selim III), the Tanzimat-ı Hayriye (Beneficent Re-ordering, 1839-76), the Yeni Osmanlılar (New Ottomans, 1865) and the Jön Türkler

(The Young Turks, 1880s-1918) movements. The process of change in harmony with tradition having exhausted itself at the close of the Young Turk era, revolution overtook tradition. In contrast with the hazy secular element running through the Young Turk approach to Islam and nationalism, secular-ism evolved into an ideological pillar of the Republican era.

Many non-Western nations, which feel that the Western world view is partisan and, therefore, not as universal as it was generally assumed before, have thrown off ideas not in concord with their indigenous spirit. The memories of the past now more alive than ever, especially the conservative intellectuals in the world of Islam, champion the concept of a sui generis personality for all Muslims. While other cultures too assert their respective identities, Sadiq states that Turkey as well may be “in the throes of a new identity” reflecting a new synthesis of religion and secularism, which is the most remarkable pillar of the Turkish Revolution. The author emphasizes that the new Islamist wave has blurred the modernist image of Turkey. This is not to say, however, that the Islamist movement will transform that country into an Islamic state.

It is the contention of the author that the Turkish Revolution is irreversible. He underlines that there are certain secular elements even in the outlook of the revivalists. As heirs to the revolutionary legacy, the Turkish Revolution played a role in their formation as well. In the opinion of the author, the society’s identity will be further shaped by still another “synthesis of the changing perspective and the heritage of the Turkish Revolution.”

Such a natural process awaits all revolutions. Since the Turkish intellectuals redefine the Revolution at each turning-point of history, they will experiment with new ideas and escape the fate of eroding the whole legacy which some other movements had to experience. The author presents the Turkish Revolution still as a living phenomenon meriting re-evaluation. He concludes that the Turkish Revolution, which has escaped the fate of the other revolutions of its time, is still a living phenomenon.