

Muhammad Amanullah Khan 1939-2002

Always a 'Majlisi'

OF the few Muslim leaders who have left a lasting imprint in the former Nizam State of Hyderabad, annexed by India in September 1948 and on the region's history and public mind in the last hundred years, Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung (d.1944) was a legend. Shunning nobility, he renounced his title and became plain Bahadur Khan, and plunged himself into serving the Muslim Ummah.

Al Hajj Muhammad Amanullah Khan, 63, who died on 10 November 2002 was inspired by the Bahadur Khan while still a young boy. Born on 7 February 1939 in a modest household, whose Pathan ancestors had come from Afghanistan, Amanullah Khan remained dedicated to the cause of justice. He always stood up for what he believed was right.

Early in life he organised the poor wage earners against unjust and repressive government policies, and led several campaigns advocating the rights

of the masses. In 1962 he joined the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (MIM), a party set up by Bahadur Khan. Without the slightest desire for leadership position or recognition Amanullah Khan worked tirelessly to rebuild the party.

After the so-called Indian 'Police Action' and annexation of Hyderabad, Muslims were in a pretty terrorised state. Oppressed and persecuted by the new regime, they lived in a state of constant fear. It was leaders like Amanullah Khan, who gave them courage and confidence and a sense of direction.

In 1978 Amanullah Khan was elected member of the State Legislative Assembly (since renamed Andhra Pradesh) from the Chandrayangutta constituency in Hyderabad, a feat which he repeated in 1983, 1985, 1989 and 1994. He was one of the most active members of the assembly and widely respected even by his adversaries. His oratorical prowess in Urdu and Telugu was admired by all.

A keen advocate of Muslim rights, he emerged as their effective spokesman. Whenever there was anti-Muslim riot, Amanullah Khan was the first to arrive on the scene and demand action by the authorities. He often travelled alone in the midst of riots to ensure the safety and security of the victims.

A man of the masses, Amanullah Khan was respected by Muslims and non-Muslims alike. He teamed up with Ramdas Athwale, member of parliament, and president of Republican Party of India, and E Giri Yadav of the Praja Party to launch Peoples' Democratic Front and took on the mighty communalist forces in Andhra Pradesh.

Unhappy at the decline of the MIM and the Majlis leadership's stance on Babri Masjid issue, Amanullah Khan left MIM in 1993, and founded what he called Majlis Bachao Tehreek (MBT - Save the Majlis Movement). During the 1994 assembly election MBT won two seats, but none in the 1999 general elections.

The electoral setback did not affect his commitment to his constituency of the weak and oppressed. He rejected offers from various parties, including the ruling Telugu Desam, to join them. He would say: 'I was a Majlisi. I am a Majlisi. I always will be Majlisi.'

He came to be popularly known as Ghazi-e-Millat Sher-e-Deccan Amanullah Khan. His funeral was attended by more than a hundred thousand people, both Muslims and non-Muslims. Amanullah Khan is survived by his wife, five sons and two daughters. ■

Ayub Khan

Mustafa al-Hallaj 1938-2002

Shaikh al Fannaneen

ON 16 December 2002 the Arab-Palestine art world lost one of its legends: Mustafa al-Hallaj, 64, who was born in 1938 in the village of Salama in Yafa, Palestine. He was known as *Shaikh al Fannaneen and Sindyan Falastheen* (Guru of artists and evergreen oak of Palestine). Mustafa who died in Damascus had produced hundreds of art works since the 1960s, including paintings, graphics, murals, illustrations, cover designs and etchings. His interests extended to other creative fields such as short story, novel, cinema, drama and music.

From Palestine, he moved to Egypt in 1948 after the Zionist invasion. In the early 1950s he lived in villages and studied in schools at Cairo. His thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. He used to make long journeys to distant places only to borrow books. He read whatever reached his hands. To add to his versatility of interests, mathematics,

logic and philosophy were all his favourite subjects.

In 1952 Mustafa al-Hallaj made for himself a daily schedule for reading and writing. Starting with novel, he also penned short stories and poems. Later he found out that his forte was in visual art, so he enrolled in the Fine Arts College in 1958.

In 1963 he obtained his degree for his work on Wagner; five years later he completed his higher studies in arts. At this stage Hallaj was attracted to the ancient pharaonic arts carrying symbols of Pharaohs. After 1968 his focus moved from sculpture to graphics and illustrations. 'Since 1967 I did not practise it because it needs a permanent place and stability in life. Continuous travels and sculpture work never cope together,' he said.

After the 1970s Hallaj concentrated more on pharaoh-symbolic arts. After the Israeli invasion of Beirut, Hallaj made Damascus his home where he laid the foundation for an art gallery in memory of Naji Ali, the famous Palestinian cartoonist who was mysteriously killed in London years ago.

Thanks to the cooperation of his

fellow artists like Ghazi Naeem, Abdul Hay Musallam and Mahmood Khaleel, the gallery became a reality in 1987. In 1993 he organised his art exhibition at the Arabesque Gallery that belonged to Dr Nadya Khost, the famous Syrian woman writer. It was followed by another exhibition in Amman in 1994.

Rich with the mythological characters and Palestine village scenery, the vivid imagery of Hallaj were full of symbols, basically centring on history and folklore that shed light on contemporary events. His last experiment was 'Palestine Panorama', a 95-metre long and half-metre wide mural done during his journey to Tunisia. It was supposed to make its entry into *The Guinness Book of Records* as a lengthy art work in the history of arts. But the 11 September episode put hurdles in his way. It was also supposed to be exhibited in Madrid's National Museum. His unfulfilled dream was to have an independent gallery specifically for it at Quds, the capital of Palestine.

The death of Mustafa al-Hallaj was a tragic one. He died in a fire blast in his house, trying to save his works. ■

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