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**A Study of Ayatollah Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani's Role in
Constitutionalists' Sit-in in UK Embassy
(A Glance at Imam Khomeini's Opinion)¹**

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Detailed abstract:

Research Paper

One of the controversial issues in the history of Iran's constitutional movement is the sit-in of about twenty thousand people from Tehran at the British embassy. This incident that happened in the first and second Jumadi months of 1324 (July and August 1906 / July and August 1285) lasted for about a month and ended with the decree of Muzaffar al-Din Shah. There is no consensus about the decision-makers and instigators of the sit-in at the British Embassy. In this regard, the role of Ayatollah Seyed Abdollah Behbahani, one of the spiritual leaders and constitutional leaders, is one of the important issues that can be examined. In this article, Behbahani's role in the sit-in of the British Embassy is discussed, and the views of supporters and opponents of his role are considered and criticized. Among the opponents of his role in the sit-in of the British Embassy is Ahmed Kasravi, whose opinion was accepted by Imam Khomeini.

The main issue of this article is whether Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani was really involved in the sit-in of the British Embassy or not? And if so, to what extent was this role and what were the reasons for this decision? And besides, is this issue a controversial issue among historians, as stated in Hamid Rouhani's writing? Or is Kasravi's opinion considered a unique case? And in this regard, what grounds and reasons does Imam Khomeini's approach have? And what was the approach of historians before and after the announcement of Imam Khomeini's opinion?

Since examining the role of Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani in the story of the British Embassy sit-in and answering some ambiguities about it requires a review and study of historical sources, therefore, in this article, the most important sources related to this issue were reviewed, among them the following works:

- First-hand Persian sources such as the history of the awakening of Iranians,

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Hayat Yahya, notes of Mohammad Ali Tehrani Katouzian, memoirs of hero Mirza Salour, memoirs of Haji Mirza Ahmad Hosseini Tafarshi and interview of Haj Mohammad Taqi Bankdar (known as Sbarati).

- The documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the British government (included in the blue book) and the authors who have cited it, such as Ismail Rayin in the book *Secret Societies in Iran's Constitutional Revolution*, the book *History of the Establishment of Constitutionalism in Iran* by Hassan Mazares, Jeanette Afari in the book *Iran's Constitutional Revolution* and Edward Brown in the book *"Iran's Constitutional Revolution"*.
- Second-hand sources such as *Iran's Constitutional History* by Ahmad Kasravi and *Iran's Constitutional Revolution History* by Mehdi Malekzadeh are placed in this section.
- The views of a number of contemporary writers and historians such as: Ali Asghar Shamim, Mahmoud Mahmoud, Mohammad Ismail Rizwani, Javad Sheikh Al-Islami and Rahim Namour.
- Recent researches include people such as: Nasser Tomehr Hodayoun, Mohammad Turkman, Rasul Jafarian, Mohsen Beheshti Sarasht, Mostafa Taqvi, Ruhollah Hosseini, and Alireza Melai Towani.

A part of the article examines the historical view of Imam Khomeini. Examining the opinions and historical opinions of Imam Khomeini, including Behbahani's role in the sit-in of the British Embassy, requires knowing his intellectual background and historical reflections. These opinions and historical opinions are the product of his lived experience as well as reading and a number of historical books. Imam Khomeini's reflections on the events of the constitutional period and later were from the position of a spiritual scholar in the field, and part of the characteristics of his political leadership are shaped by these historical reflections. Ahmad Kasravi's works can be traced in Imam Khomeini's studies during his youth and middle age.

Imam Khomeini faced various fronts in his political campaigns, which he painfully pointed out later. Accusing clerics of being British was one of the pains he was dealing with and had observed closely. This attitude existed even within seminaries, and in this context, they advised Hojjat al-Islam Hamid Rouhani to show in his historiography "the stagnation of seminaries that accused every movement of being a Marxist movement or an English movement". .

Destroying the nature of the 15 Khordad uprising was part of the Pahlavi government's propaganda policy. This policy continued both in the first years of the Islamic movement and after the exile of Imam Khomeini abroad. Considering that Imam Khomeini's ancestors were Indian, the promotion of his Englishness was on the agenda of the security circles. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in his book *"White Revolution"*, called him a person with an unknown background who "has a mysterious connection with foreign agents". Following him, Ismail Raine in

his book "English Salaries in Iran" referred to the 15 Khordad incident under the pretext of explaining the endowment of India and the role of England in the financial support of clerics in Iraq, and related this uprising to the involvement of England in political events. Iran knew.

The importance of removing the stigma of English from the struggles of the clergy was such that Ayatollah Khomeini shortly after the publication of the book Ray'in on the so-called lessons of the Islamic government tried to answer his doubts and dedicated a part of his speech to the topic of the political struggles of the clergy. According to the mentioned contexts, Imam Khomeini's point of view regarding the sensitivity towards the role of a well-known cleric (Syed Abdullah Behbahani) in an incident that indicates the involvement of the British government in an original movement can be better understood. He was familiar with Kasravi's opinion in rejecting Behbahani's role in this incident, and Hojat al-Islam Hamid Rouhani, as one of his students, was aware of this sensitivity, so he corresponded with the leader of the revolution after including the subject in the textbook, which led to Imam Khomeini's strong warning to the president. Cultural Revolution Council and the removal of this article from the textbook.

Summing up the views of historians and researchers of constitutional history shows that although they do not agree on the evaluation and judgment of the sit-in incident of the constitutionalists in the British Embassy, they agree on the recommendation of Behbahani to a number of businessmen in seeking help from the British Embassy. The content that was discussed in a number of textbooks regarding the role of England in the constitutional events was useful in informing and deepening the anti-colonial vision and reflection and thinking of the young generation on contemporary history; But the description of the details of the incident and the reasons for recommending Behbahani in the sit-in of the British Embassy is an issue that should be investigated in academic circles. Based on the precisions made in the reports, Behbahani's advice at the beginning of this story cannot be denied and it is the consensus of historians and based on historical documents. But this urgent advice to "one or two businessmen" cannot be considered as "advice to the people". If the volume, scope, and time frame of the sit-in were not expected and approved by Behbahani; But he provided an excuse for this gathering with his advice, and it seems that in the continuation of the story, people from his family played a role in encouraging and persuading them to sit in and agree with the sit-ins. Apart from the disagreement among some constitutional history researchers, similarities can be found between their views. Most of them condemn the role and interference of England in constitutional events.

The view of Imam Khomeini, who had strong anti-colonial positions and supported the struggles of political clerics and believed that British colonialism was trying to destroy and subjugate the anti-colonial clerics, has been effective

in his attitude and the acceptance and preference of Ahmad Kasravi's historical opinion.

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