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# Ubaiddullah Sindhi as a Revolutionary: A Study of Socialist Activism in Deobandi Islam

Tabir Kamran

Renowned historian Aziz Ahmed credits Pan-Islamist Ubaiddullah Sindhi as “the only political thinker of any considerable calibre to come directly in contact with Russian communism at an early stage.”<sup>1</sup> Ubaiddullah Sindhi epitomised the pluralistic character of the Ghadar Movement, of which he became a member in 1926. Therefore, he represents an antithetical viewpoint, which is in clear juxtaposition to the exclusionary and sectarian tendencies that are the general focus of the current study. In this chapter, the focus will be squarely on his political activism that emanated from his Pan-Islamist vision, which had a tangible socialist slant. Moreover, unlike other Deobandi scholars and activists, Ubaiddullah Sindhi’s political ideology as well as his interpretation of religious text(s) was inclusive, pluralistic and egalitarian. That was what differentiated Ubaiddullah Sindhi from the rest of the Ulema.

Ubaiddullah Sindhi was born on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1872, as a posthumous child at Chianwali, to a Sikh household in Daska Tehsil of Sialkot, British India. His parents were Ram Singh and Prem Kaur. His family had traditionally been associated with the profession of goldsmith. Some of them later joined government service, and others became moneylenders. He was known to be related to Mulraj, the famous Diwan of Multan who put up valiant resistance against the British.<sup>2</sup> According to M. Hajjian Shaikh, Ubaiddullah’s father Ram Singh had converted from Hinduism to Sikhism, and Ubaiddullah was born a Sikh named Buta Singh, who revolted against

1 Aziz Ahmed, *Islamic Modernism in Indian and Pakistan, 1857–1964*, London: Oxford Univ. Press 1967, 195.

2 Diwan Mulraj Chopra was the leader of the Sikh rebellion against the British. from Multan. He was the son of Diwan Sawan Mal Chopra, a governor of the city of Multan under the Sikh ruler Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1799–1839). His territory included the Southern Punjab region of Jhang. After the annexation of Lahore palace by the British, the Sikh Army fought valiantly in the two Anglo-Sikh wars. Diwan Mulraj was part of the last Sikh stand against the British and was supported by Sikh Saint Bhai Maharaj Singh, Sikh Sardars from West Punjab, and Punjabi Muslims. After the British captured Multan, they imprisoned Diwan Mulraj and later on he died in a jail near Calcutta, India. See for further details, Raj Mohan Gandhi, Punjab: *A History from Aurangzeb to Mounthatten*, Delhi: Aleph Book Company 2013, 183–186. A Diwan is “(in Islamic societies) a central finance department, chief administrative office, or regional governing body. A Diwan is a chief treasury official, finance minister, or prime minister in some Indian states” (*English Oxford Living Dictionary*, “diwan”, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/diwan> [accessed on 09/08/2017]).

his family religion and embraced Islam in 1887.<sup>3</sup> It is significant that at this time the trend in India was to convert to Christianity. Ubaidullah's conversion to Islam was therefore an important ideological step. He attended school at Jampur in the Dera Ghazi Khan district in the Punjab, where his maternal uncle lived. It is said that books like *Tubfatul Hind*, *Taghriyatul Iman*<sup>4</sup> and *Abre'aulul Akhbra* instilled in him an interest in Islam, leading eventually to his conversion. In fact, he changed his name to Ubaidullah because that was the name of the author of *Tubfatul Hind*. (*Abre'aulul Akhbra* by Maulvi Muhammad Lakhoki was a Punjabi book that Sindhi claims had inspired him, but no specific reference to the book can be found in the available literature.)<sup>5</sup> However, this claim can be disputed because it is unlikely that Sindhi, at such a tender age, could have comprehended or been influenced by such pithy narratives.

In the same year he went to Sindh where, as Sara Ansari notes, the "piers in Sindh became more conscious of the Pan-Islamic sentiment which had been stoked by the decline of the Ottoman Empire as an important world power."<sup>6</sup> Thus, a number of Sindhi pirs forged close links with Pan-Islamists in other parts of India, most notably with Deobandi Ulema. This newly-forged connection between Ulema and Sufis provided the context for Ubaidullah Sindhi's flitting between Sindh (land with Sufi culture) and Deoband, a seminary according primacy to religious 'text'.

It is important to underline that the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the time Ubaidullah Sindhi was coming of age, was the high noon of British colonialism. Within India, religious reform movements were re-defining the prevailing socio-religious ethos by emphasising the primacy of the 'texts' rather than the lived religious experience.

In essence, these reform movements were puritanical. Thus, the Deobandi movement was the puritanical response to the Colonial dispensation. Two reformist scholars, Muhammad Qasim Nanautvi (1833–1877) and Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829–1905), founded a seminary in Saharanpur in the United Provinces—which in due course became the fountainhead of Islamic puritanism<sup>7</sup>—the Darul Ulum Deoband, an institution of religious higher

3 Shahid Perwez, *The Deobandi Movement till 1920: The Ideological and Institutional Dimensions*, PhD Thesis, Aligarh Muslim University: India 1999, 164–165. Also see Muhammad Sarwar, *Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi: Halat-i-Zindagi, Talimat aur Siyasi Afkar*, Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy 1943, 17–18.

4 Ismael Shaheed, *Taghriyat al-Iman*, Lahore: Bait al Koran 1825–1826.

5 Abu Salman Shahjahanpuri, *Imam-i-Inqilab: Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, Hayat o Khidmat*, Lahore: Darul Kitab 2007, 35.

6 Sara Ansari, *Suffi Pirs and State Power: The Pirs of Sindh, 1843–1947*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 1992, 78.

7 Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900*, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press 1982.

education. It drew inspiration from the thoughts of Shah Waliullah Delhvi (1704–1762) and the campaign of Syed Ahmed from Rai Bareilly, which proved to be a continuous source of motivation for Deobandi scholars. The Deobandi denomination also acquired prominence as an anti-British movement with Mehmudul Hasan and Ubaidullah Sindhi as its stalwarts.

Internationally Pan-Islamism was gaining importance, with Jamalud Din Afghani (1839–1897)<sup>8</sup> as its chief proponent. A term of European origin, *pan-Islamism* denotes the intellectual and institutional trends toward Islamic unity that emerged among Muslim peoples, starting in the mid-nineteenth century and continuing throughout the twentieth century. The need for a unified Islamic identity was a product of the challenges posed by Western intervention in, and domination of, Muslim societies during the colonial period.<sup>9</sup> Both of these developments profoundly influenced Ubaidullah Sindhi. It should be borne in mind that for him Deoband acted as a conduit in linking him up with a Pan-Islamist ideology. At this point, it seems pertinent that Ubaidullah Sindhi's initiation into religious instruction is brought into focus with the aim of putting his life and the anti-British campaign in historical context.

### *Sindhi in Deoband*

His biographical account reveals that Sindhi went to Deoband for the first time in 1889. At Deoband, it seems he exerted as much influence on his teachers and colleagues as they did on him. The Rowlatt Committee<sup>10</sup> characterized him as having "infected some of the staff and students with his own militant and anti-British ideas." It was here that he came under the influence of Mehmudul Hasan, his mentor and guide, who was galvanizing Sindhi on the path "to war with Britain,"<sup>11</sup> since he was the principal

8 For a detailed account, see Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din 'al-Afghani': A Political Biography*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1972.

9 Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1990.

10 "The Rowlatt committee was a Sedition Committee appointed in 1917 by the British Indian Government with Justice Rowlatt, an English judge, as its president. The purpose of the committee was to evaluate political terrorism in India, especially Bengal and Punjab, its impact, and the links with the German government and the Bolsheviks in Russia. It was instituted towards the end of World War I when the Indian Revolutionary movement had been especially active and had achieved considerable success, potency and momentum and massive assistance was received from Germany which planned to destabilise British India" (*Revolvey*, "Rowlatt Committee", [www.revolvey.com/main/index.php?s=Rowlatt%20Committee](http://www.revolvey.com/main/index.php?s=Rowlatt%20Committee) [accessed on 09 August 2017]).

11 S. A. T. [Sidney Arthur Taylor] Rowlatt, *Report Sedition Committee 1918*, Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing 1919. Quoted in Muhammad Qasim Zaman,

source of inspiration for Ubaidullah Sindhi. Mehmudul Hasan exposed Sindhi to the political vision that he tried all his life to realise.

Born in Bareilly to Maulana Zulfiqar Ali, who was inspector of schools there, Mehmudul Hasan acquired his early education from his uncle Maulana Mehtab Ali, a student of Arabic College Delhi and an alim. Mehtab Ali taught him Arabic and Persian. At the age of fifteen, Mehmudul Hasan was sent to Darul Ulum Deoband, where he received instruction from Mulla Mahmud and Muhammad Qasim Nanautvi. It was here that he developed unequivocal devotion to Shah Waliullah and Syed Ahmed of Rai Bareilly, both of whom he tried to emulate all his life. When Mehmudul Hasan completed his education in 1873, he became a member of the staff at Darul Ulum. He taught there for forty years and was the "dominating influence in its (Darul Ulum's) teaching and administration."<sup>12</sup>

Known for his exuberance and energy, Mehmudul Hasan used to teach "ten lessons each day". His loyalty to the Darul Ulum was beyond any doubt and he "resisted all [significant] invitations to leave it."<sup>13</sup> Teaching hadith was his *forte* and in the course of his protracted career he instructed "over a thousand students from such distant places as Kabul, Qandahar, Balkh, Bukhara, Mecca, Medina, and Yemen."<sup>14</sup> Scholars of the calibre of Anwar Shah Kashmiri, Shabbir Ahmed Usmani, and Hafiz Muhammad were among his pupils. Another among them was Ubaidullah Sindhi. While at Deoband, Sindhi also visited two cities of the United Provinces, Kanpur and Rampur, where he obtained an education from Maulana Ahmad Hasan and Maulvi Naaziruddin. In Deoband, Sindhi also studied the writings of Shah Waliullah and Muhammad Qasim Nanautvi. The works of the former consequently became Ubaidullah's lifelong passion, one he shared with his mentor, Mehmudul Hasan. It was under the intellectual tutelage of the latter that Sindhi, in the words of Aziz Ahmed, "evolved a curious political philosophy of his own, a kind of pseudo-Wali-Ullahi communism."<sup>15</sup>

In 1891, Sindhi graduated from Darul Ulum Deoband and went to Sukkur (Sindh) where he took up teaching under Taj Mahmud Amroti, who became his mentor after the demise of Maulana Sadiq. In 1901, Sindhi established the Darul Irshad in Goth Peer Jhanda in Sindh. He returned to Delhi in 1909, at the behest of his teacher Mehmudul Hasan and became the secretary of Jamayatul Ansar, which the Silk Letters report suggested

*Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2012, 283.

12 Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, 108.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 Aziz Ahmed, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1964, 269.

"may be called the Deoband Old Boys' Association".<sup>16</sup> There, he had the opportunity of meeting renowned scholar and Pan-Islamist Muhammad Rashid Ridā.<sup>17</sup> However, Peter Hardy holds the view that Sindhi founded Jamayatul Ansar in 1910 purely of his own accord, aiming at forging a greater fraternity between the alumni of Deoband and Muhammadan Anglo Oriental College, which was established by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in 1877 at Aligarh.<sup>18</sup> The object of Jamayatul Ansar was defined to be "preaching of Quran and hadith, to introduce reform in the faith and activities of the Muslims and to hold regular deliberations for preservation and propagation of Islamic sciences."<sup>19</sup>

Pan-Islamic sentiment was on the boil in India during the Balkan wars of 1911–1913, in which the Ottoman Empire ceded Macedonia and Tripolitania. Indian Muslims saw Britain lending support to Turkey's enemies and "were galvanized into action by anticolonial sentiment."<sup>20</sup> The issue triggered anti-British agitation which soon became religious in character, because of the famous Kanpur Mosque controversy in 1913. This led to a massive uproar and agitation which resulted in indiscriminate firing by police at demonstrators. This was when, according to Dietrich Reetz, "the three Deobandi clerics Mahmud al-Hasan, Husain Ahmed Madani, and Ubaidullah Sindhi pulled the seminary [Deoband] in the direction of international political activism."<sup>21</sup> In 1912, Sindhi took over a "Deobandi af-

16 In order to popularize the programme of the Jamiyatul Ansar (Assembly of Helpers), Mehmudul Hasan persuaded his colleagues in Darul Ulum to hold *Jalsa-i-Dastarbandi* (graduation ceremony) in 1910, which was attended by 30,000 Muslims of differing shades of opinion. Even the Aligarh delegation led by Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan came to take part in that event. In one of the meetings the Sahibzada put forward a proposal of exchange of students between Deoband and Aligarh. The proposal was welcomed by Deoband authorities, but ironically the first batch of Aligarh students who came to Deoband turned out to be a British team of secret agents. Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi, *The Deoband School and the Demand for Pakistan*, London: Asia Publishing House 1963, 58.

17 Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought in a Radical Age: Religious Authority and Internal Criticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2012, 11. Muhammad Rashid Ridā was an early Islamic reformer, whose ideas would later influence 20th-century Islamist thinkers in developing a political philosophy of an "Islamic state". Ridā is said to have been one of the most influential and controversial scholars of his generation and was deeply influenced by the early Salafi Movement and the movement for Islamic Modernism founded in Cairo by Muhammad 'Abdullah (1849–1905). For biographical accounts of Ridā and 'Abdullah, see Alber H. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1798–1939*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2012, 222–224, 161–192.

18 Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 1972, 181.

19 Perwez, *Deobandi Movement*, 116.

20 Dietrich Reetz, "The Deoband Universe: What Makes a Transcultural and Transnational Educational Movement of Islam?" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27: 1 (2007), 5.

21 *Ibid.*

filiate in Delhi” where he pleaded in favour of the synthesis of Aligarh’s modernism and Deoband’s traditionalism, and therefore not only introduced English-educated instructors but also put into circulation newspapers with advanced political views.

Far too political for the Deoband high command, he had to resign in 1913 and founded his own madrasa in Delhi, the *Nizarat al-Mu‘arif al-Quraniyya* (Academy of Quranic Learning) in order to acquaint Western-educated Muslim youth with Islamic knowledge. He found Nawab Vigarul Mulk (1841–1917), Hakim Ajmal Khan (1864–1927) and Dr Mukhtar Ansari (1880–1936) as his patrons. It was here that Sindhi was introduced to Muhammad Ali Jauhar (1878–1931) and Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958).<sup>22</sup> He now began to toe a militant line in his teaching and his books. *Talim-i-Quran* and *Khalid-i-Quran*, published in 1914 and 1915 respectively, clearly elucidated Sindhi’s militant streak. It is pertinent to state here that Sindhi’s social thoughts were anchored in the work of Shah Waliullah, who figures conspicuously in the intellectual genealogy of Deoband.

### Kabul Sojourn

In June 1915, Sindhi covertly established a network of contacts among the frontier tribes throughout Sindh and the Peshawar district with the aim of kindling an insurgency in the North West Frontier and the tribal areas. This was an opportune moment, because the First World War was occupying much of British attention. Thus, Mehmudul Hasan and Ubaidullah Sindhi thought it was an opportunity to rid India of the colonial yoke by organising the frontier tribesmen. They also thought seeking assistance from Afghanistan, the Ottoman Empire and Germany in liberating India from the British as the best option. As Qasim Zaman states, “a grander scheme was to forge an alliance that would enable the Indian revolutionaries to also join forces with the Ottomans and the Germans in evicting the British from India.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, along with Maulana Fazal Rabbi of Lahore and Maulana Fazal Mahmud of Peshawar, Sindhi was supposed to launch a movement in *Yaghistan*—the name attributed to the Tribal Areas by the Jamaat-i-Mujahidin, to mean land of the free Afghan tribes.<sup>24</sup> Sindhi started re-establishing Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareilly’s old military bases of Chamarikand in the Bajaur and Asmas (the latter means ‘cave’) in Buner, as new political and military centres for the organisations of religious warriors. The Intelli-

<sup>22</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black 2008, 204.

<sup>23</sup> Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Sana Haroon, *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland*, London: Hurst & Company 2007, 30–31.

gence Bureau noted Chamarikand’s strategic location as a “nodal point” for the anti-British struggle:

Chamarikand is especially adapted as a centre of intrigue... [It has] close touch with Extremist leaders in India; equally close touch, through Jelalabad which is only 42 miles distant with Kabul and is situated practically on the undemarcated portion of the Durand Line and in a tract which is neither under Afghan [control] and direct political relations with the Indian Government. Moreover, Chamarikand is accessible from Tashkent via eastern Bokhara, the Badakhashan-Pamir border and the Kumar Valley. A route which could be freely used by individuals without exciting any comment in Kabul...<sup>25</sup>

Importantly, Mujahidin came to the Frontier region in the late 1820s led by Sayyid Ahmed to wage a jihad against the Sikh regime of Maharaja Ranjitt Singh (1780–1839). That campaign ended in a disaster as the Sikhs defeated the Mujahidin and Sayyid Ahmed, along with his close companion Shah Ismael, died a martyr’s death in 1831 at the battle of Balakot. “Sayyid Ahmed’s surviving followers retreated into the mountains of Swat and established a colony near a village called Sitana on the Indus River in Buner.”<sup>26</sup> The Mujahidin maintained links with like-minded people in North India, with Patna (in Bihar) serving as a hub which provided funds and recruits mostly from the poor sections of Bengal and Bihar. The ‘Hindustani Fanatics’, as the British had started calling them from 1840 onwards, established a mutuality with the local tribesmen “through a combination of political manoeuvring and the maintenance of a low profile.”<sup>27</sup> Throughout these years the British were not bothered about them as they mostly challenged Sikh rule by periodic raiding or kidnapping, mainly of Hindu *bania* (a term used mainly by Muslims for Hindu merchants in a derogatory sense), for ransom.<sup>28</sup> In that particular context, Ubaidullah Sindhi decided to make his base in Buner and restored connections with ‘The Hindustani Fanatics’.

Shortly afterwards, a handful of disenchanted students from Government College Lahore, such as Iqbal Shaidai, Abdul Karim Chamarikandi and Muhammad Ali Kasuri, moved to Chamarikand and joined the dissidents.<sup>29</sup> Talbot and Kamran’s recent work provides quite important details about the backgrounds of the students who absconded to Northern areas:

<sup>25</sup> Intelligence Bureau Note, NWFP Bolshevik Intrigues and Participation of the Amir of Afghanistan in anti-British Intrigues along the Frontier. 3 November 1921.L/P&S/11/201 1921 P3901.4500 IOR BL. Cited in Ian Talbot and Tahir Kamran, *Colonial Lahore: History of the City and Beyond*, London: Hurst & Company 2017, 160.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin D. Hopkins and Magnus Marsden, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, London, Hurst & Company 2011, 78.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 102–103. Also see Talbot and Kamran, *Colonial Lahore*, 163–166.

Abdul Haq, one of the absconding Lahore students, later on revealed in a statement to the Intelligence Bureau that fifteen students absconded, seven of them came from Government College Lahore. Four of them were in their third year at Lahore medical School, including Shaikh Khushi Muhammad, Khoja Shuja Ullah, who was the relative of a prominent Lahore doctor, Allah Jawaya and Rahmat Ali, whose father worked in the Commissioner's office, Lahore. Abdul Haq's father was a village cloth merchant in the Shahpur district, and Muhammad Hassan, a student of Islamia College, Lahore whose father worked in the Paise Akhbar Office. Later two students had the most ordinary backgrounds among the absconders.<sup>30</sup>

Funds were funnelled from India to the Chamarkand base for the purchase of arms, a printing press and other paraphernalia, primarily to upstage the British in India. They founded a newspaper by the name of *Al-Mujabid* which was initially in Persian, but later was published in Pashto as well. In that paper, articles decried British atrocities. The tone and tenor of *Al-Mujabid* was supportive of the Afghan government and it informed the readership of events in the wider world.<sup>31</sup> It is important to mention here the simmering discontent that occasionally spurred the people of the region to rise against the British.

Interestingly, Deoband and particularly Mehmudul Hasan wielded considerable influence here, simply because a large number of Deobandi graduates belonged to the area, most of whom were Mehmudul Hasan's students. One of them was Haji of Turangzai. Haji of Turangzai's real name was Fazal Wahid (1842–1937), and he hailed from the Utmanzai area, a town in Charsadda District in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of Pakistan. It is one of the eight main villages of Hashtnagar, one of the two constituent parts of Charsadda District. That was also the birthplace of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890–1988), the founder of the *Khudai Khidmat Gar* movement (Servants in the name of God, founded in 1929). Haji Turangzai went to Deoband in 1878 to seek Islamic instruction and came under the influence of Mehmudul Hasan. He lived there for an extended period and struck up a friendship with his teacher, Mehmudul Hasan. While travelling to Mecca to perform Hajj with Mehmudul Hasan, he became a disciple of Imdadullah Muhajir Makki (1817–1899),<sup>32</sup> an alim known for his puritanical views. He took an oath of allegiance to Imdadullah in Mecca and "promised that he would take up Sayyid Ahmed of Bareilly's mission, kept alive until that time by Haji Imdadullah, and promote revivalism and opposition to the British among

the Pakhtuns."<sup>33</sup> On his return to the northwest he took up instruction at the hands of Mulla Najumuddin, known as Mulla Hadda, committing himself to the revivalist mission of Shah Waliullah and its dissemination to the Pakhtun tribes. Haji Turangzai, having been inspired by Sayyid Ahmed's movement, kept the situation in the tribal areas on the boil, although with varying intensity. On top of this, the Ottoman Empire joined Germany in the First World War (1914–1918) and the Pan-Islamic impulse of the Indian Muslims in general and those trained and instructed at Deoband seminary in particular, moved them to act decisively against the British. Yaghistan was also affected by these events. Mehmudul Hasan, wielding his influence to stoke anti-British sentiments among Pakhtun tribes and to persuade them to wage jihad, which made his arrest imminent. At the suggestion of Dr Mukhtar A. Ansari, Mehmudul Hasan decided to proceed to Arabia in September 1915 primarily to escape arrest. In Mecca he was supported by another zealot of Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareilly, Hafiz Abdul Jabbar, a person of considerable influence. It was through Jabbar that Mehmudul Hasan managed to meet the Turkish Governor of Hijaz, Ghalib Pasha. Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi reports that Ghalib Pasha had "made all the necessary arrangements for his travel to the Ottoman capital; but in the meantime Anwar Pasha, the Turkish War minister himself arrived there and met him."<sup>34</sup> In a couple of meetings, Mehmudul Hasan was successful in convincing him of the sincerity of the intent underlying the mission. Consequently, Ghalib Pasha issued a proclamation of jihad. The document known as *Ghalimama* was widely distributed in India and also in Yaghistan.

Ubaidullah Sindhi proceeded to Afghanistan in October 1915, after having spent a short time establishing "a presence at Chamarkand and Asma" along with Maulana Abdur Raziq and Maulana Saifur Rahman (an Afghan Deobandi scholar, who was the head of the Fatehpuri mosque-madrasa in Delhi), to secure the favour and financial assistance of the Amir of Afghanistan, Habibullah Khan (1872–1919) and to prepare for a Turkish mobilization through the former. Despite its neutrality, Afghanistan was a centre of German and Turkish intrigues. Sana Haroon underscores the historic as well as strategic significance of Afghanistan as "the most obvious place in which to politically organise because of its strong historic connections to Muslim rule in India, to Islamic nationalist and pan-Islamic movements in Turkey and Iran, and as the only contemporary sovereign Muslim state."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Aziz Javed, *Haji Sahib Turangzai*, Lahore: Idara-e-Tahqiq-o-Tasneef Pakistan 1981, 42–43, quoted from Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 55.

<sup>34</sup> Faruqi, *Deoband School*, 61.

<sup>35</sup> Muhammad Hussain Khan, *Afghan Badshah Alibazrat Amanullah Khan Khalilullah Malik va Hukma Ki Azimulshah Chasham Deed Dastan*, Lahore 1924, 190–251, quoted from Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 102.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>31</sup> Hopkins and Marsden, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 96.

<sup>32</sup> For Haji Imdadullah, see Seema Alvi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire*, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press 2015, 222–266.

### *Hakumat-i-Moagita-i-Hind or The Provisional Government in Exile*

While in Kabul, Sindhi tried to forge a military compact between the Turks, Germans and Afghans. In this endeavour he worked alongside Maulana Barkatullah Bhopali (1854–1927) and Raja Mahendra Pratab (1886–1979), members of the Indian National Party who had also come to Afghanistan to make it their base for anti-British activity. Here a reference to the Indian National Party and its relation with the establishment of the Kabul-based Indian Provisional Government seems warranted. A number of revolutionaries originally belonging to the Ghadar Party (established in 1913 in San Francisco) had been operating in Berlin while the clouds of the First World War were looming large. It was in Berlin that the Indian National Party came into existence under the leadership of Lala Hardayal, Mahendra Pratab and M. Barkatullah. In Germany they worked hard to mobilise public opinion against Britain and eventually succeeded in forging a Turco-German alliance,<sup>36</sup> by which the German government assured the Ottoman Empire of its support. That development emboldened the members of the Indian National Party. At the behest of German officials, the Ottoman Sultan and Enver Pasha granted them audience and promised support. Along with Mahendra Pratab and Barkatullah, Dr Fawn Bentick, Captain Qasim Bey and Captain Hayns travelled to Kabul, equipped with letters from the German Kaiser, the Ottoman Sultan and Germany's Chancellor, for a meeting with Amir Habibullah. Over the course of a number of meetings, they presented and discussed the proposed establishment of an independent Indian Government in Kabul. Amir Habibullah was not convinced at the beginning, but German members Bentick and Hayns gave him assurance that the provisional Indian Government would be recognised by Germany and would be given assistance in arms, ammunition and finance. In the case of invasion on the part of the British Government of India, the governments of Germany and the Ottoman Empire would lend all possible support to Afghanistan. These assurances must have helped Amir Habibullah to grant permission to the Indian revolutionaries to form the Provisional Indian Government in Kabul. Thus, on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1915 the Indian Revolutionary Council was convened at the residence of Abdul Razzak Khan, where the final decision to form the Provisional Indian Government was taken.<sup>37</sup> On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1915, its formation was proclaimed. The Afghan Government facilitated the provisional Government by allotting office space and providing other lo-

gistic support. Within this context it becomes easy to make sense of the options available to Ubaidullah Sindhi.

The interface with the Indian National Party's communist outlook profoundly influenced Sindhi's interests.<sup>38</sup> The bond with these stalwarts persuaded Sindhi to join the Provisional Indian government. Sindhi was assigned the portfolio of Home Minister, whereas Barkatullah Bhopali was named Prime Minister.<sup>39</sup>

The Provisional Government dealt directly with the Afghan Government and sent emissaries to various governments to solicit their assistance in their bid to evict the British from India. It contacted Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Japan, but those efforts bore no fruit. As a representative of the Provisional Government, Sindhi wrote to different heads of state in order to persuade them to wage war against the British. The governor of Russian Turkistan and the Czar of Russia were the most conspicuous of them. He urged the Czar to rescind his alliance with the British and "assist in the overthrow of British rule in India."<sup>40</sup> On 9<sup>th</sup> July 1916, he also wrote a letter to Mehmudul Hasan and proposed an alliance with the Turkish Government. He also referred to the Army of God or Hizbollah,<sup>41</sup> which was to draw recruits from India. At the same time, Maulana Muhammad Miyan Mansoor Ansari also wrote to Mehmudul Hasan in a similar vein. Both the letters of Sindhi and Ansari were "neatly and clearly written on [a] yellow silken handkerchief to escape detection by Afghan and British intelligence."<sup>42</sup> Sindhi deputed Shaikh Abdul Haq, a new convert to Islam, to hand the letter over to Shaikh Abdur Rahim. He also enclosed a cover note for Abdur Rahim, asking him to entrust the responsibility of delivering those letters to Mehmudul Hasan in the Hijaz to a reliable haji (pilgrim). Instead of handing those letters to Abdur Rahim, Abdul Haq gave them to his employer, Allah Nawaz Khan, whose father was Multan's Honorary Magistrate Khan Bahadur Rab Nawaz Khan. Thus, the silken letters reached the British Commissioner in Multan and were subsequently transmitted to the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Michael O' Dwyer.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, 103.

<sup>39</sup> Mahendra Pratab, *My Life Story of Fifty-Five Years*, World Federation: Dehradun 1947, 113.

<sup>40</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, "Silken Handkerchief Letters Conspiracy: Maulana Mahmudul Hasan", *International Journal of Allied Practice, Research and Review* 1: 2 (2014), 54.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Muhammad Miyan, *Silk Letter Movement: Accounts of 'Silk Letter Conspiracy Case' from British Records: With Introduction to the Revolutionary Movement of Shaikhul Hind Maulana Mahmood Hasan for the Freedom of India*, Delhi: Shaikhul Hind Academy in association with Manak Publications 2013, 49.

<sup>36</sup> M. Abdul Rahman, *Tehrik Reshmi Rumal*, Lahore: n.p. 1966, 171. Vinod Kumar Saxena, *Muslims and the Indian National Congress: 1885–1924*, Delhi: Discovery 1985, 160.

<sup>37</sup> Hafiz Babar Khan, *Barr-i-Saghir Pak-o-Hind ki Siyasat Mein Ulama ka Kiradar*, Islamabad: n.p. 1985, 120.



When the letters reached the hands of the British, Mehmudul Hasan was still in the Hijaz and after having performed Hajj, proceeded to Medina to meet Turkish diplomats (Anwar Pasha and Jamal Pasha). The British approached their ally Sharif Hussain of Mecca who detained Mehmudul Hasan along with his four 'accomplices' Hussain Ahmad Madni, Ozair Gul, Hakim Nusrat Hussain and Waheed Ahmad and deported them to Jeddah on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1916. The prisoners were handed over to the British on 22 February 1917 and transported to Egypt and from there to Malta in the Mediterranean Sea where they remained imprisoned for three years and seven months. They were eventually released on 8 June 1920.<sup>44</sup> The Silken Letters Movement (*Tebreek-i Reshmi Roomal*) did not yield the desired result, but its importance as an anti-colonial episode can hardly be denied.

As Home Minister of an Indian government-in-exile, Sindhi tried to pursue his Pan-Islamic aims, but the Arab uprising in 1916 forced him to move in a more nationalist direction. He was convinced that the interests of Indian Muslims could best be served by forging a sense of Indian Muslim identity, instead of seeking cultural authenticity and religious guidance. He asserted that Indian Muslims ought to strengthen their ties with Indians from other communities through shared economic interests. Interestingly, Sindhi's willingness to work with a Hindu (Mahendra Parthab) and readiness to forge close contacts with non-Muslim governments point to his cosmopolitan outlook, which distinguishes him from other Deobandi scholars.

The year 1919 was quite eventful. In that year the government-in-exile was dissolved as a result of British diplomatic pressure. In the same year Sindhi founded a militia, *Junud Allah* or *Junud-i Rabhaniyya* (The Muslim Salvation Army but its literal translation is The Army of Allah), for which he reached out to the pirs and successfully persuaded them not only to join its ranks but also to support it materially and to help him in recruitment. Eventually he succeeded in raising an army of 100,000 strong.<sup>45</sup> As Zaman states, it included English-educated Indian Muslims who had come to Afghanistan to pursue anti-British campaigns. Not only for them but also for those "associated with anti-British militancy in the tribal areas of the north-western Frontier" Afghanistan was a "relative safe haven."<sup>46</sup> Ayesha Jalal, while drawing on Zafar Hasan Aibak's book *Khatrat: Ap Biti*,<sup>47</sup> answers the question of why the militia was organised as a Salvation Army:

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 50; Jalal, *Partisans of Allah*, 208.

<sup>45</sup> Tanvir Anjum, "A Voice from the Margins: An Appraisal of Ubaid-Allah Sindhi's Mahabharat Sarvrajia Party and its Constitution", *Journal of Political Studies* 20: 1 (2013), 159–177, 162.

<sup>46</sup> Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 282.

<sup>47</sup> Zafar Hasan Aibak, *Khatrat: Ap Biti*, Vol.1, Lahore n. d. Also see Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*.

He (Sindhi) set up an organisation called Junud Allah, patterned on the Salvation Army, to collect the skins of animals slaughtered in the *Hajaz* on Eid. The hides would be processed in a leather factory and exported to Muslim countries. The profits were to be managed by a transnational Islamic company based in the Hijaz, and an Islamic bank was to be established to finance the project.<sup>48</sup>

The primary aim of the army (Junud Allah), according to Maia Ramnath, was to bring about "a union between Islamic kings" with Mehmudul Hasan as its General or *Al-Qaid*. Secondary centres were to be established in Ishtanbul, Tehran and Kabul and "third class" centres in countries which were under the influence of the colonial masters. Africa, India and central Asia were its potential "Spheres of Influence".<sup>49</sup> Ramnath provides graphic details of the movement's organisation:

At the apex of this army's chain of command were the Ottoman sultan-caliph, the sultan of Persia and the Amir of Afghanistan, followed by field marshals, including Enver Pasha, Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha of Egypt, the Sharif of Mecca, Nasrullah Khan of Kabul, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawabs of Rampur, Bhopal, and Bahawalpur. There are also twenty-one generals, nineteen major generals, twenty-nine colonels, ten lieutenant colonels, five majors, two captains and a lieutenant.<sup>50</sup>

The entire effort went wasted, however, because Amir Habibullah Khan was not favourably disposed to the scheme. Instead, he persuaded Sindhi to seek the support of Hindus in ridding India of British colonialism. It was at the suggestion of Habibullah Khan that Sindhi not only became a member of the Indian National Congress in 1919, but also established an independent Congress Committee of Kabul in 1922 and became its President.<sup>51</sup> In the same year (1922), through the efforts of Dr Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, he managed to get the Kabul Congress affiliated with the Indian National Congress in its Gaya (Bihar) session, meaning that it became the first foreign branch of the Congress movement.<sup>52</sup> It is pertinent to note here that Sindhi, despite being a staunch supporter of Congress, was very critical of Gandhism and lamented the fact that Gandhi was both a political and a religious leader.<sup>53</sup>

In 1919 during the Third Afghan War, Sindhi sent a public letter to his Indian compatriots urging them not to support the British Indian government, but rather to "kill the English in every possible way, don't help them

<sup>48</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah*, 207.

<sup>49</sup> Maia Ramnath, *Hajj to Utopia: How The Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire*, Berkeley: University of California Press 2011, 187–188.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>51</sup> Perwez, *Deobandi Movement*, 138.

<sup>52</sup> Anjum, "A Voice from the Margins", 162–163.

<sup>53</sup> Faruqi, *Deoband School*, 57.

with men and money, and continue to destroy rails and telegraph wires." Ubaidullah Sindhi stayed in Afghanistan for nearly seven years, leaving after the Third Anglo-Afghan War. Habibullah was killed in 1919, and his brother King Amanullah stepped into his shoes as Kabul's next Amir. In 1921 he signed a treaty with Britain which recognised Afghanistan's sovereignty. Thus, King Amanullah no longer felt the need of Indian revolutionaries "to undermine British interests".<sup>54</sup> Within a year of the signing of the treaty, Sindhi was forced to leave Afghanistan.

### *Sindhi's Movement across Russia, Turkey and Arabia*

While in Kabul, Ubaidullah Sindhi observed with great interest what was unfolding in Russia. Among his comrades was Muhammad Shafiq, later to be the Secretary of the Indian Communist Committee in Tashkent. Shafiq, supported by the Bolsheviks and their allies, organised revolutionary propaganda in India and linked it to Sindhi's group in Kabul.

Subsequent to his stay in Afghanistan, Ubaidullah travelled extensively. From Afghanistan he undertook a journey to Russia, entering the country on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1922, where he was accorded the status of a state guest. Zafar Hasan, Khushi Muhammad, Iqbal Shaidai, Umar Zafar Masud, Abdul Rashid, Abdul Aziz and Somnath Bannerji accompanied him to Bukhara, which was their first port of call.<sup>55</sup> After staying in Bukhara for a few days, they proceeded to Tashkent and eventually reached Moscow on 10<sup>th</sup> November 1922 where they lodged in the Deluxe Hotel. Their lodging and food were provided for by the Russian government.<sup>56</sup> Sindhi stayed in Russia for about seven months.

Here he studied the ideology of socialism and found many lacunae in it. Nevertheless, Sindhi was profoundly impressed by the overall improvement that socialism had brought in the lot of the people. Zaman contents that, "although he would anchor his social thought in the work of ... Shah Wali Allah (d. 1762), who figures prominently in the genealogy of Deoband, the experience of living in the Soviet Union shortly after the Russian revolution undoubtedly had a significant effect on his thinking."<sup>57</sup> Sindhi himself said later that the study of socialism "enabled him to defend his religious movement, which was a branch of the philosophy of Shah Wali-Allah, against the onslaught of atheism and anti-religious trend of time".<sup>58</sup> He is

reported to have debated with the Soviet high command, trying to expound the veracity of Islam, as opposed to communism which he argued was merely "a reaction to oppression". In the capacity of president of the Congress Committee in Kabul, he also had the occasion to meet Soviet Foreign Minister Chicherin and sought assistance in ousting the British from India. Zafar Hasan maintains in his memoirs that Sindhi had four meetings with Georgy Vasilyevich Chicherin (1918-1923), and eventually the latter agreed to provide assistance against the British. Hasan also revealed that the Russian government urged Sindhi to go to Istanbul and assured him that the Russian Council there would provide him with the necessary wherewithal.<sup>59</sup>

He went to Turkey in July 1923 and stayed for three years in Istanbul. There he watched with an analytical eye events unfolding under the charismatic leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938). During that time, Turkey was undergoing an extraordinary transition from a monarchy epitomising tradition to a secular country aiming to embrace modernity. For a firebrand revolutionary and an anti-colonial Pan-Islamist as Sindhi was, it must have been a great disappointment. As Zaman states, gradually his thoughts began drifting away from Pan-Islamism, and the political future of India became his major concern.<sup>60</sup> During the course of his stay in Turkey he met various leaders including the Prime Minister Ismet Pasha [Inönü] (1884-1973),<sup>61</sup> although the outcome of those meetings are shrouded in mystery. It was during his stay in Turkey that his 'political ideology' took a definitive shape, when he founded the *Mahabbarat Sarwerjia Party* (MSP) in 1924, under the aegis of the Congress Committee of Kabul. This development will be dealt with later in this chapter.<sup>62</sup>

From Turkey Sindhi went to Mecca in 1927 and lived there for thirteen long years. During this period he remained politically inactive, dedicating himself to scholarship and introspection. While in Hijaz, he spent most of his time studying and interpreting the teachings of the Quran in the light of Shah Waliullah's works, particularly *Hujjat al-Allah al-Balighah*.<sup>63</sup> He also wrote a few books and articles on the thoughts of Shah Waliullah. Besides this, he gave lectures on Quran's tafsir (exegesis), hadith (the traditions of the Prophet) and the teachings of Shah Waliullah. He returned to India in December 1939 after a quarter of a century and began teaching Shah Waliullah's books. He also founded another party by the name of *Janna Narbada Sind Sagar Party* (JNSSP) in December 1939.

<sup>54</sup> Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 282.

<sup>55</sup> Pervez, *Deobandi Movement*, 188.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>57</sup> Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 13.

<sup>58</sup> Shaikh Muhammad Hajan, "The Political Thought of Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi", in: *The Quest of Identity* (Proceedings of the First Congress of Pakistan History and

Culture, held at the University of Islamabad, April 1973), vol. III, Waheed uz Zaman and A H Dani, eds., Islamabad: Univ. of Islamabad Press 1974, 117-129, 127.

<sup>59</sup> Aibak, *Ap Biti*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Zaman, *Modern Islamic Thought*, 14.

<sup>61</sup> Anjum, "A Voice from the Margins", 163.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

There had been several similarities in the objectives of *Jamna Narbada Sind Sagar Party* and MSP. However, by looking closely at the provisions of the JNSSP, Sindhi seemed to have gone soft on his unequivocal commitment to Indian nationalism and particularly its embeddedness in Indian tradition.<sup>64</sup> *Jamna Narbada Sind Sagar Party's* membership was open to all irrespective of religious or ethnic specificity. However, the major focus was riveted on "Sind, the valley of the Indus, its tributaries controlled from Lahore, and the Gangetic Jamna Plain, including Ajmer and Benares, with Delhi as the centre."<sup>65</sup> The principal aim that the JNSSP would strive for was "Indian independence within British Commonwealth", until the time the Indian federation had become functional. The socio-economic amelioration of the lives of the general masses was the central objective that the party's leadership had set for itself to achieve. Unequivocal commitment to the advancement of democracy and working to end the discrimination on the basis of racial and religious difference was succinctly articulated. The adoption of the European mode of living was deemed necessary in order to introduce modern industry. The inclusion of 'Europeanism' in the party's program was to lure the Western-educated Muslims who "Sindhi believed held out more promise for the future than did the products of madrassas."<sup>66</sup> Quite contrary to his previous stance that did not endorse "Indians' becoming Europeanized",<sup>67</sup> now he was all for instilling "Europeanization" of the peasantry strictly in a technical sense, "so that they could benefit from modern knowledge and improve agricultural productivity."<sup>68</sup> In that context, Sindhi recommended that Urdu be written in the Roman alphabet, "which was easier to read and learn than the Arabic script."<sup>69</sup> However, the ethical dimension of JNSSP was embedded in Waliullah's philosophy. In Sindhi's view, Waliullah's thought epitomized the synthesis of intellectual pursuits undertaken by Indian Muslim thinkers since the sixteenth century "to perfect the philosophy of Ibn al-Arabi, which Sindhi equated with Vedantism" and considered capable of "laying the political foundation for a united India."<sup>70</sup>

Ubaiddullah Sindhi died in August 1944 in Lahore, while visiting his daughter. At the end of his life, Ziya-ul-Hasan Faruqi argues, his political

64 Much of the information regarding JNSSP that is furnished below has been gleaned from Ayesha Jalal's book *Partisans of Allah*, 223-224.

65 *Ibid.*, 223.

66 *Ibid.*, 224.

67 *Ibid.*

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Ibid.*

views had been transformed and he had virtually become a "nationalist-secularist".<sup>71</sup>

### *Radicalism in Sindhi's Ideology*

Despite his criticism of the material foundations of the Soviet system, Sindhi's own thoughts regarding society's decline were informed by socialism. The reasons for the decline of any society founded on ideology (*nazariyya*), according to Sindhi, are two-fold. First, the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small elite and the impoverishment of the general populace mean that the masses are always busy making ends meet and lack the opportunity to attend to their moral or religious development. Second, the exclusion of the general population from knowledge of value to society, is the sole preserve of the elite. This exclusion, Sindhi avers, leads ordinary people to suspect the moral foundations on which the community supportably rests. These thoughts of Sindhi, some scholars suggest, were gleaned from Shah Waliullah's classic *Hujjat Allah al-Baligha*, but the socialistic ring of his discourse can hardly be disputed. That socialist ring is particularly apparent in the constitution of the *Mahabharat Saramajia Party*, which was titled *The Constitution of the Federated Republics of India*. That Constitution encompassed the political and socio-economic vision of Sindhi.<sup>72</sup> The main features of the constitution were:

- A) Securing complete Indian Independence from the Colonial yoke.
- B) Establishment of a confederal system of governance in Free India.
- C) Providing security to Islam, the Muslims and other minorities.
- D) Doing away with feudal and capitalist dispensation(s).
- E) Bringing about an Asiatic Federation to ward off any possibility of imperialism and colonialism.
- F) The Government of Free India must be comprised of members of the peasantry, labour and the intelligentsia.<sup>73</sup>

As *The Constitution of the Federated Republics of India* succinctly states, Ubaiddullah Sindhi's political ideals did not espouse India's status as a single country, but his ideology was inclusive and his nationalism had a pluralistic

71 Faruqi, *Deoband School*, 57.

72 It must be clarified here that the writer has benefited immensely from Tanvir Anjum's article "A Voice from the Margins" and a detailed chapter entitled "Bar-i-Saghir ka Dastoori Khaka, 15 September 1924" from Ubaiddullah Sindhi's own *Khutbat wa Maqalat (Letters and Articles)*, *Tabreeki-Azadi kay Tanazar mein tebrir kye jame wa ley Siasi, Iqtisadi, dastoori wa Tarikhi Khuthat wa Maqalat*, Lahore: Darul Tehqiq wa Isha'at 2002.

73 Aibak, *Ap Bitti*, 101-102

resonance. Given the geographical, linguistic and cultural diversity of India, he proposed to divide India into three distinct zones: north-western, eastern and southern. Each zone would have the status of a democratic republic. Sindhi proposed the North-Western Indian Republic, which would comprise the regions of Punjab, the North West Frontier Province, Kashmir, Sindh, Baluchistan and Gujrat. For these republics, he proposed universal adult franchise with all adult men and women granted the right to vote. The people representing peasantry, labour/manual workers and intelligentsia would constitute the majority in the parliaments. Sindhi proposed proportional representation, with each social stratum electing its own representatives. How the social strata would be defined remained unclear.<sup>74</sup>

Nationalisation of all public utilities, restricted ownership of property, excessive taxation of the affluent and wealthy, doing away with feudalism, abolition of usury, free accommodation and medical facilities for all, compulsory education up to grade eight and the establishment of labour unions and their empowerment were the principal features of the MSP's constitution. Every republic would be able to have its religion, professed by the majority. Nevertheless, it would be made sure that economic and social realities held precedence over the religion. As regards the division of power between the republics and the central government, the constitution of the MSP proposed that foreign policy, defence and international trade and commerce would fall under the purview of the Central Government.<sup>75</sup>

Whereas Ubaidullah Sindhi embraced communist ideals, he was nevertheless constrained to keep his idealism within the larger framework of Indian Muslim identity. It would appear that he could not reconcile the various influences prevalent at the time—a hatred for British colonial rule manifested in violent resistance against the feudal system, an Indian Muslim identity shaped by Jamalud Din Afghani's Pan-Islamism, and Sindhi's own attempt to introduce inclusionary politics in the larger exclusionary schema of Deobandi thought. Thus, his well-meaning but vain attempts at creating a synthesised version of communism acceptable to Muslim religious sentiments contain various contradictions.

Membership in the MSP was open to all, irrespective of caste, creed or gender. Economic and social equality was a cornerstone of the party. Sindhi himself states that in the proposed political dispensation the possibility of capitalism's revival would cease. He was cognisant of India's multicultural ethos and he therefore strongly advocated against cow-slaughter so that Hindu sensitivities were not offended.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Ubaidullah Sindhi, *Khatbat-ea Maqalat*, 131–191.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Anjum, "A Voice from the Margins", 166.

To conclude this study, Ubaidullah Sindhi was markedly different from the rest of Muslim political thinkers in modern South Asia. He tried to be inclusive and pluralistic despite his Pan-Islamist tendency at the outset. An interesting aspect of Ubaidullah Sindhi was his endeavour to bring about a synthesis between socialism and Islam, which was, to say the least, quite a novel initiative in the second decade of twentieth century. Another remarkable feature of his personality was his nationalism. Having said all this, Sindhi's inability to translate his rather grandiose ideas into practice was far too conspicuous to be ignored. It was also noticeable that he embarked on action before giving proper attention to details. There is an increasing academic interest in the eventful life of Ubaidullah Sindhi and his attempts to re-interpret Islamic teachings in the light of the revolutionary currents of his own age. One may hope that the academic circles of Pakistan also reassess his role in history.