

**ROLE OF SINDHI PEOPLE IN
INDIAN ANTI-BRITISH STRUGGLE
SINDH'S UNWITTING INVOLVEMENT IN
ALL-INDIA POLITICS (1905-1922)**

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Abstract

This study does not aim at giving a detailed account of Sindh's quest for freedom from British imperialism; for it excludes the analysis of the early and continued resistance to British rule in forms that are not easily recognisable (instances are on record of the rampage of political desperados glibly described as dacoits) along with militant efforts and attempts at the overthrow of British rule. Significant among these outbursts of resentment that the British had to encounter in Sindh in the nineteenth century were the Thar uprising (1846), the Nagar Parkar revolt (1859), and the Hur revolt (1896-1900). The twentieth century, however, saw many forms of resistance to British rule by Sindh patriots, including their unwitting participation in Indian anti-British struggle, with special reference to: Swadeshi Campaign, Komagata Maru Incident and Ghadr Party, Reshmi Rimal Tahrik, Satyagraha Movement, Khilafat Movement, Hijrat Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement.

Thus, this study is, on the whole, confined to the role of Sindhi intelligentsia and people in Indian anti-British struggle conducted, as it was, within the limits set by the colonial masters. As a result, Sindh was unconsciously entrapped in all-India politics and its destiny was gradually intertwined with global politics in general and geopolitics (geography + politics + economics) of the region(s) of 'South, South-West and Central Asia' in particular.

JEL Classification: Z000

Emergence of Middle Class

The British invaded Sindh in 1843 after securing victory over almost the whole of the Indian subcontinent. The former rulers of Sindh, as against the British, were tribal and feudal in outlook. They ran Sindh as a personal *zamindari* and that also in a very outmoded form. Hence, their interest in the welfare of their subjects and improvement of their property — Sindh — was, to put it mildly, casual. Whereas, the new rulers of Sindh represented a capitalist society which had not only learned how fully to utilise and exploit the resources and people of new colonies but were also radicalised in outlook because of the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the Chartist Movement of England (1837-1854).

The progressive role performed by the British rulers in the early years manifested itself to some extent in Sindh also. Measures like abolition of slavery, ban on *karo-kari* (mistakenly translated ‘honour-killing’) and *begar* (forced labour), introduction of western educational and judicial systems, re-structuring of administration on modern lines, replacement of kind with cash in wage payment and tax collection, and establishment of a regular police force were undertaken.

As a result of the above administrative and educational reforms, a new middle class with lawyers, teachers, merchants and doctors as its spokesmen emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In the years to come, this class was to play its leading role in the growth of Sindhi consciousness through such organisations as the Sindh Sabha (1882), Sindh Muhammadan Association (1884), Sindh Provincial Conference (1908), Sindh National League (1928), Sindh Hari Committee (1930), Sindh Azad Conference (1932), and also through the Indian National Congress, Indian Muslim League, Khilafat Committee and Hindu Mahasabha.

Swadeshi Campaign

The people of Sindh did play a significant role in almost all Indian anti-imperialist movements launched during the period from 1905 to 1922. In the *Swadeshi* (promotion of indigenous

industries and goods) campaign, started in 1905; (i) they opened *Swadeshi* shops and factories, (ii) organised exhibitions of indigenous articles, (iii) held public meetings for the development of the campaign, (iv) made appeals in press and public meetings to encourage local industry and buy indigenous goods, (v) appointed committees to take measures for furthering the campaign, (vi) wrote and staged dramas full of *Swadeshi* enthusiasm and extended support to such plays, (vii) organised *Swadeshi* classes and lectures, (viii) published pamphlets, and (ix) composed and published songs and poems¹ in support of the campaign.

The first ever notable strike in Sindh in the twentieth century was observed by the Garriwallas of Hyderabad from 20th January, 1906, against a directive of the local police, when not a single hackney carriage plyed on the roads for three days.

The anarchistic and terroristic activities of the Hurs in 1907 synchronised with the wave of terrorism in other parts of India, despite strict surveillance, deployment of additional police, application of the Criminal Tribes Act and establishment of Hur Concentration Camps.

In April 1908 and again in April 1909 the Sindh Provincial Conference in its first and second sessions held at Sukkur and Hyderabad respectively accorded “most cordial support” to the *Swadeshi* campaign by passing special resolutions on the subject. (Resolution no. 8 of the First Conference, *Sind Gazette*, Karachi, hereafter referred as *S.G.*, 24 April 1908, p. 4; and resolution no. 4 of the Second Conference, *S.G.*, 17 April 1909, p. 4.)

In 1909 three Sindhis, namely (1) Virumal Begraj, (2) Chetumal Harriram, and (3) Gordhanlal Topanlal were arrested under sections 124A and 153A of the Indian Penal Code for publishing in Sindhi a “seditious” pamphlet *Swadeshi Halchal ya Muhban Vatan Sriyat Tilk ja Raya*, which was exposed to public sale at the Second Sindh Provincial Conference, Hyderabad. (Judgment of the Sukkur Sessions Court, *S.G.*, 28 January 1910, pp. 4-5; and Judgment of the Court of Judicial

Commissioner, S.G., 2 May 1910, p. 4.) They were tried and convicted — the accused 3 to transportation for five years with fine of Rs. 500 and 1 and 2 each to transportation for three years with fine each of Rs. 1000. (*Ibid.*)

In June 1909 the Garriwallas and hackney carriage proprietors of Karachi went on strike against “the *zulum* of the police.”² (S.G. 14 June 1909, p. 4.) 1911 witnessed strike of students in Sindh College, Karachi, and rustication of certain students. The rustication was withdrawn on the 25th anniversary of the College. The student unrest, however, continued intermittently during the first half of the following year.³

In 1912, “criminal” activity by the Sindh Hurs was revived. In 1913, the number of “crimes” increased at an alarming rate. The Hur community became a “terror” of the whole countryside in 1912 and 1913. The crimes committed by Hurs included targeted attacks on the police and their agents, particularly in Sanghar and Sinjhor talukas. In Sanghar alone, no fewer than nine persons were killed by them in 1913.⁴ (S.G., 17 November 1914, p. 4.)

On 1st April 1913 the butchers of Karachi went on strike to protest against the directive of the Health Officer, which disallowed carrying of meat by the butchers in their own carts from the slaughter-houses to the markets. (S.G., 2 April 1913, p. 6.)

Addressing the notables of Thatta, the Collector of Karachi, Lawrence, in April 1913, admitted: “There are people going about Sind to-day who are seeking to sow the seed of dangerous doctrines, in the hope that serious trouble may grow from this seed.” (S.G., 4 April 1913, p. 6.) The Collector associated these incidents with the Delhi “outrage”⁵ and remarked:

“I ask you to consider, why was a bomb thrown at the Viceroy? In every country there are men who . . . in order to obtain helpers in their revolt against authority . . . persuade simple and ignorant people that their cause is just and that they are fighting against injustice.

In India the chief argument that they proffer is that the people of India are growing poorer every year and that under the rule of the English great injustice is constantly done.” (*S.G.*, 4 April 1913, p. 6.)

The Collector called upon the notables to help the authorities in the matter. Commenting on the address of the Collector, the *Sind Gazette*, Karachi, observed: “The words of the Collector of Karachi may well cause serious searchings of heart in misguided places of political restiveness where there is a professed desire to ‘wake Sindh out of its sleep’.”⁶ (*Ibid.*)

Komagata Maru Incident and Ghadr Party

Two Sindhis, Prof. Javaharmal Mansukhani and his brother, were actively associated with the famous incident of *Komagata Maru* (1914).⁷

During the First World War, the Indian revolutionaries under the banner of the Ghadr party (established in the United States) sought to overthrow British colonial yoke. They found in the Sindhi merchants, known as the Sindh Workis, and their Sindhi employees, willing financiers, couriers and publicists. Reports of anti-British activities of these Workis reached the authorities from various parts of the empire — towns and countries situated thousands of miles apart, viz. London, Singapore, Hong Kong, Egypt, Ceylon, Penong, Shanghai, Philippines, Gibraltar, Panama, Algiers, Sumatra; and involved a number of firms, notably J. T. Chainrai, Dhanomal Chellaram, Kimatrai Bulchand, and Pohumal Brothers. (*Daily Gazette*, Karachi, hereafter referred as *D.G.*, 12 February 1919, p. 10.) The imperialist authorities took stern measures to check their anti-British activities. These measures included (i) interception in the post of letters by Sindh Workis from abroad, (ii) investigation of the records of Sindh Worki firms, (iii) house-search of Sindh Workis, (iv) deportation of Sindh Workis, (v) denial of entry to Sindh Workis or even any Sindhi in certain colonies, and (vi) imposition of severe restrictions on Sindh Workis’ movements overseas. (*Ibid.*)

Reshmi Rumal Tahrik

The Silken Letter Movement, better known as the *Reshmi Rumal Tahrik*, of 1915-1916, which aimed at the overthrow of British regime by an attack on the frontier and a simultaneous mass uprising in the country had Moulana Ubaidullah Sindhi as the mentor of the movement. Moulana Rushidullah Pir of Jhando, Moulana Taj Mahmood of Amrot, Moulana Ghulam Muhammad of Dinpur Bahawalpur Khalifa of Hafiz Muhammad Siddique Pir of Bharchundi, Moulana Abdullah Leghari, Prof. Muhammad Ibrahim Shaikh, Abdur Rahim Shaikh, Abdul Aziz Shaikh, Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi, Fateh Muhammad, Muhammad Hassan Darzi and Haji Shah Bakhsh Lashari were its prominent leaders. Moulana Ubaidullah Sindhi along with Abdullah and Fateh Muhammad left the country for Kabul in August 1915.

The Liberation Army, known as *Junood-e-Rabania*, organised by the silken letter leaders had a number of Sindhis on important positions, viz. Moulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, Commander (*Salar*) at Kabul; Moulana Taj Mahmood, Lieutenant-General; Pir Assadullah (?Rushidullah) Shah, Lieutenant-General; Prof. Muhammad Ibrahim Shaikh, Major-General; Moulana Muhammad Sadiq, Colonel; Abdur Rahim Shaikh, Colonel; and Haji Shah Bakhsh Lashari, Lieutenant-Colonel. A *fatwa* (religious behest) of *jihad* (holy war) was issued against the British by eminent *ulema* (theologians) of India, including Moulana Rushidullah, Moulana Taj Mamood and Moulana Ghulam Muhammad from Sindh.

The Silken Letter “Conspiracy” was “unearthed” by the Government in August 1916. The persons arrested in September 1916 and brought to Lahore included Sindhi leaders as well. Moulana Abdullah Leghari, one of the accused, was kept in jails at Lahore, Pathankot, Dinpur, Karachi, and finally detained in his native village Kot Nawab in district Sanghar till the end of the First World War. Other Sindhi leaders, including Abdur Rahim Shaikh and Fateh Muhammad, absconded and went underground and some of them ultimately escaped out of

the country. Moulana Rushidullah and Moulana Taj Mahmood escaped punishment for want of evidence. Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi, Moulana Muhammad Sadiq and some others were tried and convicted. Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi and Muhammad Sadiq each were awarded three years imprisonment. Prof. Muhammad Ibrahim Shaikh was killed, on his way from Afghanistan to Russia, by British agents.

The Provisional Government for India established at Kabul in 1915 with Mahendra Partab as President and Barkatullah as Premier had Sindh's Moulana Ubaidullah Sindhi as Foreign Minister. Moulana Ubaidullah Sindhi remained a leading figure of the Provisional Government and was in exile till 4th March 1939.

During the period some of the Sindh papers, particularly Hyderabad's the *Al-amin*, the *Hindu* and the *Sindvasi*, adopted, in a limited sense, an anti-British stance which, by and large, was followed by the others with the passage of time.

On the Eve of the Montagu Declaration

During the period under this study, the Morley-Minto Reforms (the Indian Councils Act 1909) were the first reforms to be carried out in the midst of, and as a result of, widespread national agitation and demand for self-government, and with the avowed political aim to defeat that agitation and, in Morley's phrase, "rally the Moderates." The colonial masters aimed not only to consolidate the position of the propertied classes in India (e.g. princes, feudal landowners, compradors) whose support they enjoyed but also to win over to their side the leaders of the moderate wing of the so-termed national movement. The reforms were first projected in 1906, following the great upswing of the Indian national movement as a result of the *Swadeshi* campaign which was launched in 1905, and the Russian Revolution of 1905, which had shaken the other great oriental despotism, that of the Tsar.

The First World War in 1914 and the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917 struck a lasting blow to the whole structure of imperialism, bringing, as they did, the issue of national self-determination and of the dissolution of the old empires to the forefront.

The crippling war taxation, soaring prices and reckless profiteering added fuel to the fire of Indian unrest and demands for greater political reforms became a crescendo.

The struggle which the people of India had been carrying on against British imperialism with the boycott and occasional acts of “terrorism and conspiracy” as the main weapons received a new impetus from the irresistible idea of national self-determination which was brought forward by the triumphant march of the Russian Revolution.

The British Government realising that the weakest link in the imperialist chain, Tsarism, was about to snap hastened to arrest the advance of Indian national struggle⁸ and issued in August 1917 (i.e., within five months of the fall of Tsarism) what was known as the Montagu Declaration, in which the Secretary of State proclaimed the aims of British rule in India to be “the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire,” and promising “substantial steps in this direction should be taken as soon as possible.” As foretold in the Declaration, Montagu came down to India soon afterwards and began, in collaboration with Chelmsford, the then Governor General of India, the endeavour to work out the shape the promised “substantial steps” should take.

Aftermath of the Montagu Declaration

When the country-wide political debate started in the wake of the Montagu Declaration (August 1917), Sindh politics was dominated by the “extremists.” The Government started a policy of suppression. Dissident newspapers were hard-hit. In

1918, within less than six months (from 28th January to 13th July) as many as eight newspapers of Sindh, namely the *Hindvasi*, Hyderabad; the *Larkana Gazette*, Larkana; the *Sind Patrika*, Karachi; the *New Times*, Karachi; the *Home Ruler*, Karachi; the *Sindhi*, Sukkur; the *Sind Advocate*, Shikarpur; and the *Hindu*, Hyderabad; were black-listed.⁹ Their entry in the registered libraries was banned and instructions were issued to the Courts and Officers not to send them notices or advertisements. Some newspapers including the *New Times*, Karachi; the *Home Ruler*, Karachi; the *Trade Advertiser*, Karachi; the *Hindvasi*, Hyderabad; and the *Hindu*, Hyderabad;¹⁰ were asked to furnish securities under the Press Act of 1910.¹¹

Like the Sindh Congress, the Sindh Provincial Conference hitherto representing the moderates was completely under the control of “extremists” in 1918.¹² Hyderabad became the hot-bed of nationalistic activities in Sindh.

This state of affairs scared the highest symbol of British rule in the Bombay Presidency. The Governor of Bombay declined to accept the Hyderabad Citizens Association’s welcome address in February, 1919.¹³

Satyagraha Movement

The people of Sindh played a remarkable role in the *Satyagraha*¹⁴ movement, launched on 6th April, 1919, to protest against the draconian law, Rowlatt Act, made public on 18th March, 1919. This law had intensified repression against freedom-fighters in India and empowered the Governor General and the provincial governors among other things to arrest people and deport them without trial.

To express indignation against the Act an unprecedented strike was observed in Hyderabad and other towns of Sindh on 30th March, 1919. To protest against the police action in Delhi, where unarmed demonstrators had been fired upon, along with condemnation meetings at various towns of Sindh, condemnation articles and editorials were published in the press. On one such article entitled “Kalalkay Hut Kusan jo

Kope Wahey” published in the *Hindvasi*, Hyderabad, its writer and editor, Jethmal Parsram, was tried under section 124A and sentenced to two years imprisonment.

The Jalianwalla Bagh Massacre (April 13, 1919) added fuel to the fire. There was a wave of mass unrest in Sindh. To show public anger against the brutal action of the authorities, mourning processions were taken out in various towns of Sindh wherein thousands of people participated bare-headed and passed condemnation resolutions in public meetings. The Khilafat agitation started in October 1919 further added to the agitative mood of the people of Sindh. In December 1919, on the occasion of the annual session of the National Congress held at Amritsar, a special train of Sindhis went there to pay homage to the Jalianwalla Bagh martyrs and on return blood-mingled dust was brought to and displayed in Sindh. This was the historic session of the Congress which acceded to the demand of Sindhis that their province be treated as a separate province in the Congress organisation and they be allowed to form a separate Sindh Provincial Congress Committee.

To check this “unrest,” Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act 1907 was applied to Sindh in April 1919 (*D.G.*, 30 April 1919, p. 6.), but it failed to help the imperialist strategy.

The *Bharatvasi*, Hyderabad; the *Hindu*, Hyderabad; the *New Times* Karachi ; the *Sind Samachar*, Karachi; and the *Sind Advocate*, Shikarpur; continued criticising the Government.¹⁵

In order to violate the press laws, “unlawful” bulletins and agitative pamphlets were published, proscribed literature was openly sold.

Some of the Sindh newspapers including the *Sind Advocate*, Shikarpur (*D.G.*, 24 April 1919, p. 8.), were issued show cause notices of depositing security for printing objectionable matter and some of them including the *Sind Samachar*, Karachi¹⁶ (*D.G.*, 22 May 1919, p. 5.), were directed to deposit security

under the provisions of the Indian Press Act 1910 for publishing “seditious” articles.

In April 1919, the police made raids and searches at the houses, offices and premises of political workers and some of them were arrested. In Hyderabad, the raids and searches were made at Mukhi Jathanand Partabrai’s house, Lokram and Vishnu Sharmas’ (Sharma Brothers) house, Brahamcharya Ashram and Tilak Home Rule League office. Office of the *Hindvasi* and house of its editor Jethmal Parsram, offices of the *Al-amin* and its editor Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi, Rais Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgri’s office and bungalow, office of Shaikh Noor Muhammad (pleader), residence and dispensary of Swami Govindanand, Prof. Ghanshyam’s house and Besant Home Rule League office were also searched. As a result of these searches Mukhi Jethanand, Jethmal Parsram, Dr. Choithram P. Gidwani, Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi and Swami Govindanand were arrested; all of these were later released on bail.¹⁷ In Karachi, also, police raids were made at the houses of political workers including Hariram D. Mariwalla and at the office of the *Home Ruler*.

On April 11, 1919, after public announcement at a mass meeting held at Hyderabad following a successful procession attended by about five thousand people, three Sindhis, namely Jethmal Parsram, Jairamdas Daulatram and Sachoo Bania, sold proscribed literature. (*D.G.*, 14 April 1919, p. 4.) A newspaper, *Satyagrahi*, published without declaration, was also sold by its editor, Utamchand. (*Ibid.*) A “seditious” leaflet entitled the *New Call* was written and published by H. D. Mariwalla and printed by Durgadas B. Advani at the press of the *Home Ruler*, Karachi. Consequently, H. D. Mariwalla, Durgadas B. Advani and Narsinglal Dhamanmal were arrested in Karachi. In Hyderabad, European guard was kept at the Bank of Bombay and the local authorities were directed to be ready to face any eventuality. The Europeans were advised to keep two days provision in hand. (*Ibid.*) The Superintendent of Police and the Commanding Officer, Hyderabad, contacted with political leaders including Rais Ghulam Muhammad Bhurgri, Swami Govindanand, Dr. Choithram P. Gidwani, Jethmal Parsram, Mukhi Jethanand and Kanvalsing

to exert their influence for keeping the situation under control. (*Ibid.*) In Karachi, non-occurrence of violence and bloodshed, in the opinion of the Commissioner-in-Sindh, H. S. Lawrence (1916-1920), was “solely due to” the presence at Karachi of “a strong military force of British and Indian troops.” (*D.G.*, 21 April 1919, p. 4; speech at Karachi’s Khalikdina Hall.)

Khilafat Movement

17th October 1919 was observed throughout Sindh as the *Dua Deenhun* (Prayers Day) in favour of Turkey. This day is known as the “First Khilafat Day.” Anti-British public meetings, rallies and demonstrations were organised.

The Government sponsored “peace celebrations” (13th to 16th December 1919) were boycotted throughout Sindh by the nationalists. Processions against it were organised at Karachi, Hyderabad and other towns of Sindh. In a small town like Larkana a mourning procession of Hindus and Muslims numbering 7,000 carrying black flags was taken out. (*New Times*, quoted in *D.G.*, 22 February 1920, p. 6.)

The pro-British paper, the *Daily Gazette*, Karachi, remarked in December 1919: “It is a sad fact that there is no political activity in this province except that carried on by the most bitter extremist agitators, whose only method of argument is abuse, whose only policy is hostility to the British administration.”¹⁸ (*D.G.*, 22 December 1919, p. 6.)

The *Khilafat* movement, a protest against the injustices of “victorious” Britain and her allies to Turkey became a rallying point of Muslim mass unrest and agitation against British imperialism.¹⁹ Participation of Sindh in this movement was outstanding.

No less than six Sindh Provincial Khilafat Conferences at Hyderabad (January, 4), Larkana (February, 7-9), Sann (March, 17), Sehwan, (April 17), Jacobabad (May, 22-23) and Shadi Pali (June, 25) were held in first half of 1920.²⁰ The Sindh *ulema* lent

their weight to the anti-British movement and issued a *fatwa* declaring India as *dar-ul-harb* (enemy country). The *fatwa* was endorsed by the Sehwan Conference which passed the *Hijrat* resolution. The Jacobabad Conference chalked out the ways and means of its implementation.

Hijrat Movement

The revolutionary tide of rising mass unrest, reflected in the *Satyagraha* and the *Khliafat* movements, was further intensified by the *Hijrat* and the Civil Disobedience movements launched in 1920. All sections of the people shared the general unrest. For the first time authorities came face to face with the labour unrest in Sindh. In February 1920 Karachi Port Coolies and in June 1920 Railway Workers of Sukkur went on strike.

In July 1920 a special train²¹ of Sindhis, about 758, led by Barrister Jan Muhammad Junejo, having sold their property (lands, houses, crops, bullocks, house-hold impediments) worth thousands at ridiculously low prices, migrated to Afghanistan in the hope that that country would help liberate their motherland. However, most of them soon returned, for the country's fight for freedom was to be fought, necessarily, on its own soil.

Civil Disobedience Movement

In August 1920 the Civil Disobedience movement against the colonial regime was started. The struggle soared to new heights. The anti-British wave surged more and more as the months rolled on. In Sindh this manifested itself in following events and actions:

1. Mass rallies, demonstrations and *hartals* at Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur and other towns of Sindh, and meetings and conferences in villages.
2. The spread of anti-British agitation in the mofussil.²²
3. Renunciation of honorary appointments and titles. These included the renunciation of *Aafrin-namas* (letters of appreciation), *Parwanas* (licences) and *Kursis*

(literally — chairs), membership of Municipal and Local Boards, School Committees, and Honorary Magistrateships.

4. Boycott of official receptions. Even the receptions arranged in honour of the Prince of Wales were boycotted.
5. Boycott of Government controlled and pro-British educational institutions including the Sindh Madressah and D. J. College²³ in Sindh and Aligarh College outside Sindh. To accommodate such students a number of national schools and other educational institutions were established at different towns of Sindh. In order to identify themselves with the national movement some of the educational institutions including Mulla schools refused to accept Government's Grants-in-aid.
6. Boycott of law courts. Parallel to British law courts, conciliatory courts headed by local headmen were established in various towns and villages of Sindh. The lawyers' boycott was, however, less successful, except for a few outstanding examples such as those of Jan Muhammad Junejo, who publicly renounced his degree of Barrister-at-Law, and Abdul Jabbar, who surrendered his licence of practice to the Judicial Commissioner.²⁴
7. Elections to the legislatures were boycotted. Posters were displayed throughout Sindh crying shame and dissuading those candidates who contested the elections. The boycott of the election by the electors was markedly successful.²⁵
8. Imported goods were boycotted. Foreign cloth became the main item of boycott. A special Conference under the presidentship of Durgadas B. Advani was held at Karachi in 1921. The movement was so successful that *Khadi* became the symbol of patriotism. Exhibitions of *Khadi* were organised at different towns of Sindh — the Larkana exhibition (November 1922) was opened by Mrs. M. K. Gandhi. (*D.G.*, 8 November 1922, p. 4.)
9. Refusal to pay state taxes. Though no such appeal was made to the people by the leaders of the movement, a considerable number of persons in Sindh publicly

declared their willingness for refusing to pay state taxes if the leadership of the movement appealed for it. Even at the local Khilafat Conference held at a remote village Dhoro Naro on 18th May 1920, about 42 landowners/zamindars declared their such willingness. (*Al-amin*, 31 May 1920, p. 6.)

At Karachi, on 8th July, 1921 the All-India Khilafat Committee declared that no Muslim should serve in the English army or assist in recruiting. In September 1921, the Ali Brothers (Moulana Muhammad Ali and Moulana Shoukat Ali) and other leaders including Pir Ghulam Mujadid of Sindh were arrested on the charge of seditious speeches at Karachi. The trial took place at Karachi, and they were sentenced each to two years imprisonment. Sindhis raised funds for their defence and other expenditure.

On 21st July 1921, the police opened fire on a crowd who had come to register their protest against the unpatriotic activities of the loyalist lackies of the colonial administration at Matiari village. One person was killed in this police firing and 12 persons were injured.

The Government and the loyalist politicians were denounced. In October 1920 at the anniversary of Shah Abdul Latif at Bhit attended by about 50,000 people, the garriwallas and camelmen refused to convey the Government officials and Co-operators to Government or else charged them much heavier rates than others.²⁶ (*D.G*, 4 November 1920, p. 5.)

National volunteer corps were organised who used to wear uniform, drill and march in mass formation proclaiming slogans to organise *hartals* and boycott by peaceful persuasion and picketing of foreign cloth and grog shops. The Volunteers were declared an illegal organisation. Arrests ensued in batches.²⁷ However, this did not succeed in killing the morale of the political workers.

The *hartal* which greeted the Prince of Wales on his arrival at Karachi on 17th March 1922 was the most overwhelming and successful demonstration of popular disaffection which Sindh had yet known. Despite the fact that the Government had interned about 56 persons and directed the printing presses and newspapers of Karachi not to publish anything contrary to the Government policy, the whole city was flooded with anti-British posters, black flags and enthusiastic demonstrators making the strike unprecedentedly successful. Even the walls and roads of the city were decorated with boycott slogans. Hyderabad's paper, the *Hindu*, brought out a special boycott number on the day and copies numbering in thousands were secretly distributed in Karachi. The strike was so successful that no *tonga* or *victoria* plyed on the roads; even tea and cigarettes were not available in the whole of city. Over 150 workers were engaged for distribution of pamphlets and chalking anti-Government slogans on the walls and roads of the city. Three of the leaders of this boycott movement, namely Maharaj Nathuram Satyapal, Lokram Sharma and Kesumal Jhangiani later known as Sadhu Keshevanand, were arrested and convicted for one year, one and a half years, and two and a half years respectively.

Infuriated by unprecedented political activity the Government made mass arrests. The imprisonment was, however, no longer a terror or fear, it rather became the badge of honour. The accused often pleaded guilty and declared in unequivocal terms that British rule was a foreign rule and it was their national duty to overthrow the Government of foreigners. The arrests were commemorated by boisterous celebrations, wherein the people displayed their joy through singing, dancing, distribution of *Kohar* and sweet drinks, and total strike. The lawyers conducted the cases of political workers without charging any fee.²⁸ The demonstrations and meetings were held near the courts to offer felicitations to under-trials for their splendid courage and readiness to welcome imprisonment. On the release, political workers were given illustrious welcomes, which included taking them in a procession after garlanding them, giving them welcome

address and in certain cases erecting welcome arches on a main road in their honour.

In certain cases even police officers and magistrates were insulted by the people and the persons under trial. The authorities took special measures to keep the tense situation under their control; for instance, to spread fear and harassment amongst the people of Hyderabad armed police platoons paraded the streets and aeroplanes fanned the skies on the occasion of the trial of the town's first two arrests, namely Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi and Vishu Sharma who were convicted for two years and three years respectively.

When Pir Mahboob Shah, brother of Rushidullah Shah Pir of Jhando, was sent to jail for a "seditious" speech, thousands assembled in Hyderabad to offer him felicitations. Fearing the wrath of the people his trial was held inside Hyderabad jail.²⁹

During the period, "seditious" speeches were publicly delivered appealing to the people to "sacrifice" their "lives," "give Parwanas and Chairs," "steal police horses, tear up rails, rob officers, break railways so that troops may not be able to move quickly." (*D.G.*, 10 August 1920, p. 4.) The mood of the country was also reflected in "the increasingly virulent tone of the vernacular newspapers."³⁰ (*Ibid.*, p. 6.)

More newspapers with decided anti-British and pro-noncooperation movement policy came out — the daily *Alwahid* from Karachi (1920),³¹ the weekly *Vande Mataram* from Hyderabad (1921), the weekly *Azadi* from Larkana (1922), the weekly *Watan* from Shikarpur (1922) and the weekly *Hamdard* from Jacobabad (1923).³² Besides these the following papers took a very aggressive part in the anti-British current continued on at the time in the Sindh press — the weekly *Bharatvasi* of Hyderabad, the weekly *Hindvasi* of Hyderabad, the weekly *Shakti* of Nawabshah,³³ the daily *Swaraj* of Sukkur and the daily *Hindu* of Hyderabad.³⁴

Many Sindh newspapers were served with show cause notices and were asked to furnish securities for publishing objectionable articles. When the *Hindu* was demanded security of Rs. 2,000 the public immediately contributed the amount. Editors of newspapers welcomed imprisonment for publishing “seditious” articles in their papers. Editors of a number of Sindh papers were arrested. The *Hindu* of Sindh was the only paper throughout India whose more than eight editors were arrested and imprisoned one after the other but the policy of the paper remained unchanged.³⁵

In the last quarter of 1921 and beginning of 1922 nationalist enthusiasm in India including Sindh was at fever pitch, but her leaders were not ready to carry forward the movement because they feared the mass activity would undermine those vested interests with which they were closely linked.³⁶ The entire movement got stuck in the morbid mud of emotional frustration when Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), the Indian leader of the movement, called off the movement in February, 1922, after the incident of Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district in the United Provinces where a crowd of angry peasants, after driving policemen who had been firing on them into the police-station building, set fire to it.³⁷

Conclusion

Thus, the first phase of the Indian anti-British movement, launched in the first quarter of the twentieth century and spearheaded mainly by the emerging middle class, of course, adequately supported by the astitute elements of other politically oriented sections of society, with an avowed aim to mobilise the masses against British imperialism, for achieving their respective objectives, eventually came to an end abruptly and unceremoniously. The masses were no doubt mobilised, indeed, beyond the expectations of their leaders but the movement’s class-conscious leadership was not prepared to allow it to move to its logical conclusion, at least, at that juncture. This is the natural fate of almost all anti-imperialist struggles conducted, as it was, within the limits set by, or suited to, the

colonial masters; especially when the leadership had vested interest in continuation of the prevalent socio-economic system.

Notes

1. Government proscribed such literature which included Maharaj Ninaram's poem in Sindhi language "Willaiti Khund jo Baheshkar" (Boycott of Foreign Sugar; in Sindhi language)
2. They went on strike on 10th June 1909, as indicated by them in their petition submitted to the District Magistrate of Karachi wherein they said that their old grievances as detailed in their petition of the 19th October 1908 had yet not been redressed (S.G., 12 June 1909, p. 4.)
3. As late as 30th May 1912, the *Sind Gazette*, Karachi, gathering from a senior student's letter, commented that "a class of students at the College, constituting a numerical majority, are in state of half open revolt, which partly finds expression in the form of 'ludicrous invective' against the principal." (S.G., 30 May 1912, p. 6.)
4. By the October 1913, the Government adopted a policy of sternest repression towards the entire Hur community, the Commissioner-in-Sindh made excessive use of the powers vested in him under the Criminal Tribes Act. The policy he initiated included the system of sending picked members of the community outside Sindh as a punishment for their "past misdeeds" and as a deterrent to those who were left behind.
5. Two Sindhis, Maharaj Lokram Sharma and his brother Vishnu Sharma, were staying on that day in the same building from which the bomb was thrown on Lord Hardinge, the then Governor General and Viceroy of India (1910-1916), at Chandni Chowk, Delhi in 1912. They also had a meeting with the main accused, Rashbehari Bose, prior to the event, through Amirchand with whom Lokram had studied in Benares and was in touch by correspondence and exchange of

political literature. Amirchand and few others were arrested and sentenced to death. Bose absconded and came to Sindh in 1913 to leave the country through the help of Hyderabad Sindh Workis but later preferred to go to the Punjab from where he arranged his escape out of country. (Sharma, 1967, p. 66.)

6. Some Sindhis including Lokram Sharma; Prof. Jiwatram Kirpalani later known as Acharya Kirpalani; Prof. Javaharmal Totiram Mansukhani later known as Swami Govindanand; Vishnu Sharma and Dr. Choithram P. Gidwani came in touch with Indian terrorists in second half of the first decade of the twentieth century. Later some of the terrorists came to Sindh during their abscondment. These included two of the associates of Khudiram Bose who was hanged on the charge of murder of two English ladies through a bomb at Muzaffarpur, Bihar.
7. A steamer chartered by Baba Gurdit Singh, a member of the *Ghadr*, — the Indian revolutionaries had started the *Ghadr* newspaper in San Francisco in 1913 — taking about 376 Punjabi passengers to Canada. They were not permitted, on account of prohibitive immigration laws, to land at Vancouver, or on the return journey at Hong Kong, Shanghai and some Japanese ports. The steamer then left for Calcutta, passengers landed at Budge-Budge, the Government restricted their liberty of movement and proposed to send them immediately by special train to their homes in the Punjab. The men tried to march towards Calcutta. A scuffle ensued, when eighteen persons were killed, twenty-nine including Gurdit disappeared — during his abscondment he remained in Sindh in 1920-21. A large number of persons were arrested and over thirty were imprisoned. Amongst the prisoners were two Sindhis, Prof. Mansukhani and his brother, who started their journey from Japan where the former had performed the duties of their spokesman with the British and Japanese authorities and with the Japanese press and correspondents of the British press, telegraphically informed the Indian leaders about the

miseries of the men aboard and extended all help to them. Consequently, on his arrival in India he was arrested and imprisoned for 44 months in Bengal jails. (For further details see Govindanand, n.d., Pt. I.)

8. A new revolutionary crisis was building up in India at the time. It found its expression in:
 - a) The *Ghadr* (Uprising) movement and mutinies in the army, which were suppressed with ruthless executions and sentences.
 - b) Formation of the provisional Indian Government in exile at Kabul in 1915.
 - c) The Silken Letter “Conspiracy” discovered in 1916.
 - d) Formation of the Home Rule for India League in 1916.
 - e) The All-India National Congress (formed in 1885) and the All-India Muslim League (formed in 1906) Pact, arrived at Lucknow in 1916, declaring their readiness to engage in united action for achieving self-Government for India.
 - f) Reunion between “moderates” and “extremists” of the All-India National Congress, who had parted company after the Surat Congress (1907), achieved at the Lucknow Congress in 1916.
9. The first three papers were black-listed from 28th January and the last five papers from 13th July 1918. (*D.G.*, 5 August 1918, p. 6.)
10. The weekly *Hindu*, Hyderabad, instead of depositing within required 14 days an amount of Rs. 2,000 as security in connection with the publication of 16 objectionable articles, they published all of them in a single issue, two days before the expiry of the period, with the comments that what was written in them was right and justified; and informed readers about the

- closure of the paper and the press in protest. 5,000 copies of the paper were sold out instantly. The press was sold out in pieces to different parties; the authorities were unable to seize it for they were unable to trace out the press or its purchasers. (Advani, n.d. [1965], pp.62-63.)
11. The Sindh Provincial Conference by a special resolution, passed on 1st April 1918, strongly condemned Government's policy in Sindh of "demanding securities under the Press Act . . . without any justifiable grounds" and suppression of "all out spoken Indian newspapers in Sind by putting a ban on them." (*D.G.*, 3 April 1918, p. 9.)
 12. The pro-Government paper, the *Daily Gazette*, Karachi, had no hesitation to admit in August 1918 that "the extremists in Sind being the only active political party at present and carrying off their feat by exuberance and volubility." (*D.G.*, 13 August 1918, p. 4.) Commenting upon the special Sindh Provincial Conference held in August 1918, the *Daily Gazette* advised that "there should be a separate Conference of Sind Moderates to support the Chelmsford–Montagu scheme." The reply of the *New Times*, Karachi, was: "Where are the Moderates in Sind? There is not even a single in Sind." (*D.G.*, 20 August 1918, p. 8.)
 13. In a public meeting called by the Association to consider the Governor's declination, a move, albeit abortive, was made to enter "a most emphatic protest," call upon the people "to abstain from taking any part in the functions that may take place during the visit of the Governor" and observe a *hartal* on the occasion. (*D.G.*, 14 February 1919, p. 4.)
 14. Gandhian technique of non-violent action for social and political reform, or policy of passive resistance to British rule in India. It is often equated with non-violence.
 15. The period saw widening of the horizon of Sindhi press of Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Sukkur and Larkana which dealt with "all-India topics and high politics almost to the exclusion of the local affairs" — a few years earlier they were concerned "almost entirely with local affairs." (*D.G.*, 17 January 1920, p.6.)

16. Action against the *Sind Samachar* was taken in connection with the publication of two articles, namely (i) “jindagi ya Mout” (Life or Death) and (ii) “Satyagraha” in its issue of 26th April, 1919.
17. Mukhi Jethanand was required to give two sureties for Rs. 25,000 each and last four of Rs. 5000 each. (*D.G.* 28 April 1919, p. 5; and *D.G.*, 30 April 1919, p. 5.)
18. The *Daily Gazette* time and again complained and warned about the development of a new revolutionary trend in Sindh politics. In February 1923, it pointed out: “A study of the Indian newspapers holding extreme political views and published in different parts of India, reveals the fact that they all print ‘letters’ from Sind, – generally dated from Hyderabad or Karachi, – wherein the crude outpouring of immature, inexperienced minds obviously nourished on the *Daily Herald* [London] and other similar ‘labour’ ‘socialistic’, and ‘communistic’ sheets from Europe, find frequent publicity.” (*D.G.*, 19 February 1923, p. 6.)
19. The broad masses of the Muslim population saw the anti-colonial aspect of the movement, rather than the religious one, as the most important. The rank and file of the movement often referred to it simply as the *Khilafat* movement (from the word *Khilaf* which means “against”), i.e. directed against Britain.
20. In these Conferences aggressive anti-imperialist speeches were delivered such as equating the British Government of India with Nimrod who was ultimately destroyed by a mosquito and that because the Hedjaz Railway had been blown up, the Indian railways should also be torn asunder. (*Daily Gazette*, under the guise of a “rumour,” reported such a speech delivered by a “crazy mullah” at Larkana Conference. (*D.G.*, 23 February 1920, p. 6.)
21. Throughout India this was the first special train which was arranged in connection with the *Hijrat* movement. Similarly, throughout India it was again a Sindhi, Ali Hassan Ghanghro, who faced the first prosecution in connection with the *Hijrat* movement.

22. The pro-British circles in Sindh were not ignorant of its vital importance. The *Daily Gazette* remarked in August 1920: "The Karachi 'leaders' are mere figure-heads, wind-bags who have little real influence but whose vanity implies them to utter high-sounding words which they are perfectly ready to eat the moment the authorities show any disposition to hold them responsible. The agitation in the mofussil is far more dangerous in that its source of inspiration is obscure, . . . but there can be little doubt that the propaganda is widespread and that it is none the less dangerous because no prominent Muhammadan or Hindu in the province is openly connected with it." (*D.G.*, 10 August 1920, p. 6.)
23. About 150 students of this College left it on political grounds. (Sharma, 1967, p. 120.)
24. Jan Muhammad Junejo died in April 1921 and Abdul Jabbar re-started his practice in 1924-25 when the movement had practically ended.
25. Even a staunch pro-Government paper like the *Daily Gazette* had no hesitation to publish a report of its Hyderabad correspondent admitting that "Non-Cooperation workers were very active and succeeded to a considerable extent in scaring the people away." The report further added: "Telegrams received here from different stations show the following percentages of voters who have gone to the polls:- Hala, number of voters 268, recorded 100. Matli, number of voters 300, recorded 13. Larkana, number of voters 1,957, recorded 268. Mirpurkhas, number of voters 261, recorded 168. Kotri, number of voters 500, recorded 52. Shikarpur, number of voters 6,780, recorded 80." (*D.G.*, 19 November 1920, p. 5.) As per semi-official estimate accepted by the *Daily Gazette* as "approximately correct," 23% of the electorate exercised their vote in the franchise in Karachi. "In Hyderabad the percentage is rather larger being estimated at 25 per cent of the electorate." (*D.G.*, 17 November 1920, p. 6.)

26. The pro-Government leader and a candidate for Bombay Legislative Council election of 1920, Ali Akbar Hassanally Effendi, while returning to Shahdadpur station, was shown no courtesy and had to be satisfied with a donkey which he obliged and rode. (*D.G.*, 4 November 1920, p.5.)
27. The period saw for the first time in Sindh the organisation of whole-time paid student-workers engaged in political work under the auspices of the Sindh National Service of Students. Initially around five dozen students joined the service and went to different towns and villages of Sindh for political work assigned to them. Each of them was given a stipend of Rs. 30 per month by the National Schools Service. Later on some of them were employed in the National Schools which paid them their stipend instead of the National Service. (Sharma, 1967, pp. 120-21.)
28. In this respect, Santdas Mangharam became the most prominent among all Sindhi lawyers.
29. Government's such action was strongly condemned by the nationalist press. The pro-Government press, however, upheld the decision: "It is entirely in the interests of the public peace and law and order . . . excited people have been congregated in the vicinity of the Jail for the past few days and if the Pir had been brought out to stand his trial there is not knowing what disturbance might not occur during his passage through the streets in custody." (*D.G.*, 11 August 1920, p. 6.) However, true to his class characteristics, Sindhi Pir felt no shame in offering an apology to the Government for his release.
30. The rising political consciousness was reflected through a number of books. Sadhu T. L. Vaswani alone wrote a number of books on the matter which included (i) *Indian Arise*; (ii) *Awake , Young India*; (iii) *Indian Adventure*; (iv) *India in Chains*; (v) *Secret of Asia*; (vi) *Builders of Tomorrow*; (vii) *Apostles of Tomorrow*; and (viii) *My Motherland*. (Syed, 1967, Vol. I, p. 138.)

31. Its editor, Kazi Abdur Rehman, was convicted for one year in January 1921.
32. Its editor, Ramchand Bunsiram Bhavnani, was convicted for six months in May 1923.
33. Its two editors, Khemchand Belani and Hemandas Shewakram, were convicted for one year, and nine months respectively in 1922.
34. The *Hindu* was converted from weekly to daily in 1919.
35. The list of its arrested editors included the names of (i) Vishnu Sharma, (ii) Jairamdas Daulatram, (iii) Prof. Ghanshyam Jethanand, (iv) Dr. Choithram P. Gidwani, (v) Lokram Sharma, (vi) Prof. Jhamatmal Lakhasing, (vii) Hiranand Karamchand, and (viii) Prof. Choithram Valichha. (Sharma, 1967, p. 97.)
36. As early as April 1919, Sindh's European owned pro-British paper, the *Daily Gazette*, Karachi, had proclaimed: "Bolshevism would rule the country by the most hideous form of murder and tyranny. The Government of India at present are not fighting against the comparatively harmless politician but against the forces of anarchy and chaos such as have converted unhappy Russia into a hell. Therefore the Government are entitled to the sympathy and support of all law-abiding citizens." (*D.G.*, 23 April 1919, p. 6.)
37. The incident, in which twentytwo policemen were burned to death, took place on February 6, 1922. "On February 7 Gandhi unilaterally suspended" the movement "to the consternation of other Congressmen." He was "worried that radical . . . elements would take over control if he continued the movement to the point of dislodging the existing British government ." On the charge of 'conspiracy', "Gandhi was arrested on March 10 and imprisoned for six months." (By that time the heightened emotions of the masses against his arbitrary, unwarranted decision were virtually cooled down.) Surjit Mansingh, *Historical Dictionary of India* (New Delhi: Vision Books Pvt. Ltd., 2005), p.294; entry 'Non-Cooperation Movement'.

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