

Impacts of the Russian revolution in the South Asian subcontinent

Saturday 11 November 2017, by [KHAN Lal](#), [TARIQ Farooq](#) (Date first published: 10 November 2017).

On the occasion of the centenary of the Russian revolution, researchers are talking about the possible influence of the Tatar Mirsaid Sultan Galiev in Asia. With regard to South and Southeast Asia, it seems to be nil, perhaps because we are dealing with too different cultural worlds and too different regional interactions. In Indonesia, the issue of “Muslim socialism” arose in a wing of Sarekat Islam, but it was an endogenous development. The contribution of Lal Khan that we publish below addresses this question in particular with regard to the South Asian sub-continent.

The influence of Sultan Galiev in influencing the impacts of the Russian revolution to inspire movements in the South Asian subcontinent is unknown as far as our modest knowledge is concerned.

Mohammad Iqbal. One of the persons most affected by the revolution was the poet laureate and the so-called theoretician of the Idea of Pakistan, Sir Mohammad Iqbal. His poems drew wrath from the clergy but these poems depict the deep impacts on the intelligentsia and society in this region. Iqbal's poem titled *Lenin Khuda ke Huzoor Mein* (Lenin in God's Court), in which Lenin the leader of the Russian revolution declares: “I acknowledge Your Omnipotence, God, but how on earth could I have known whether or not You existed.”

In another poem Iqbal says: *Uttho meri dunya ke gharibon ko jaga do* (Rise and from their slumber wake the poor ones of my world. Iqbal perhaps deliberately linked these verses to the first lines of *The Internationale*: Arise ye workers from your slumber. Arise ye prisoners of want... In one of his Persian poems Iqbal names Karl Marx as a prophet Iqbal calls Marx a Prophet or a messenger without divine revelation: “He a Moses without divine manifestation; he a Christ without a Cross? And though not a Prophet or Messenger of God but has got a Book in his bosom.” {{Manabendra Nath Roy}}. In the second congress of the Communist International there were several Indian delegates with Manabendra Nath Roy was a founder of the Mexican Communist Party and later the Communist Party of India. He was also a delegate to other congresses of the Communist International and Russia's aide to China. Roy who played an important role in formulating the position of the CI and jointly wrote the CI thesis on the national question with Lenin that was adapted at this congress in 1920. A few weeks before the Congress, Vladimir Lenin personally received Roy with great warmth. It was at Lenin's behest that Roy formulated his own ideas as a supplement to Lenin's Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the

Colonial Questions. Roy's writings were published in the 'International Press Correspondence' (Inprecor), the weekly bulletin of the Communist International. Roy served as a member of the Comintern's Presidium for eight years and at one stage was a member of the Presidium, the Political Secretariat, the Executive Committee, and the World Congress. Commissioned by Lenin to prepare the East – especially India – for revolution, Roy founded military and political schools in Tashkent. In October 1920, as he formed the Communist Party of India, he contacted his erstwhile revolutionary colleagues who, at this juncture, were hesitating between socialism and Gandhi's chauvinist programme. From Moscow, Roy published his major reflections, *India in Transition*, almost simultaneously translated into other languages. In 1922 appeared Roy's own journal, the *Vanguard*, organ of the émigré Communist Party of India. Obaidullah Sindhi. Several youth inspired by the Bolshevik revolution, some with Islamic activist backgrounds started travelling to Moscow to seek Lenin's guidance and help. After the collapse of the Indian provisional government set up in Kabul by Mahendra Pratap and Obaidullah Sindhi, the Communist Party of India was formed at Tashkent in 1920. Obaidullah Sindhi was a young preacher at the Islamicist Deoband School in northern India but was so inspired by the revolution that he travelled on foot with a caravan of comrades to meet Lenin in 1919-20. But to his disappointment he could not meet Lenin but had several meetings with Georgy Chicherin. He left Russia for Turkey and later to India inspired by the communist programme. Many of his followers still have a sympathetic viewpoint about Lenin and socialism. Obaidullah was expelled from Deoband for his views but he continued to preach what he thought was the best interpretation of Islam—socialism.

Dada Amir Haider. The youth from the subcontinent who joined Moscow's Communist University had pioneering comrades of this region including (Dada) Firozuddin Mansur, Fazal Elahi Qurban, Mohammad Shafiq, Gohar Rehman, Abdul Karim and many others. The relentless and energetic revolutionary communist most famous for his Bolshevism in the subcontinent was Dada Amir Haider. He was also in the presidium of the world conference of the colonised nations.

Bhagat Singh. Another great impact was the creation of the Hindustan Socialist Revolutionary Association or Army in the 1920's. Its most renowned leader was Bhagat Singh who was assassinated through the gallows by the British Imperialists at Lahore prison in 1931 in connivance with Mohandas Gandhi. These young revolutionaries struggled so vigorously and with such deep effect that it impacted the youth and its vibrant message of revolt was being felt throughout Indian subcontinent. The British colonialists feared a mass revolt and Gandhi was defeated in his election for the congress president in 1936.

Bhagat had studied and was inspired by the revolution. He had called for only a socialist independence of the south Asian subcontinent. In prison he had read Marx, Lenin and Trotsky among other progressive writers and wrote extensively in his prison diaries and articles for the need of the socialist revolution for human emancipation. He is still an icon of hope of revolution for today's progressive youth both in India and Pakistan.

Lal Khan

A note on Muslim references in the Pakistan Peoples Party

Pakistan Peoples Party adopted "Socialism is our economy" during 1968/1969 movement in Pakistan.

One of the PPP leader called Maulana Kausar Niazi, a right winger, introduced a new slogan called "Islamic Socialism", he presented this in mass meetings, was a good speaker, the term got some influence among the Muslims, initially, but lost its impact as PPP turned more towards the right mainly after three years of coming into power in December 1971.

Niazi arguments was that Islam is in reality Socialism. Socialism adopted main theme from the teachings of Quran and Mohammed.

Maulana Kausar Niazi became minister of information and a very close ally of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The Slogan of Islamic Socialism was never adopted by the Left within the PPP. In Fact Islamic Socialism slogan was used to counter the influence of scientific Socialism.

Farooq Tariq
