
Writers Seldom confess that their’s is not an objective study. The book under review is a noteworthy exception as the author candidly admits that he is writing history without an historical perspective. He owns, in a most disarming manner, that his work knows no distance to the subject and is, therefore, bound to be biased. It is because of this unusual confession that we reproduce here a rather lengthy excerpt from the preface:

“This work seeks to trace the course of political thought of the Muslims in India during the period 1919-1947. The historical and cultural background of political thought during this span of about three decades has been provided at some length so as to bring out and explain the prominent features of thought represented by each one of the personalities selected for study. These personalities have been chosen as representing strands of thought and movements in political life and not to make the present work a biographical study. The emphasis throughout has been on the interplay of the forces of religion and politics though prominence is accorded to political ideas and movements; on the almost total failure of the Muslims in India to separate religion and politics and achieve a secular outlook; and on their unwillingness to adapt themselves to the demands of the age - reason, liberalism, modernization and secularism. The partition of the country in 1947 has been shown as the tragic finale of the separatist thinking of the Muslims and of the extremism of some sections of the Hindu community. The concluding chapter sums up the arguments of the preceding ones and attempts a review of the present problems of the Muslim community in India. It ends with the note of optimism that though the political situation is still charged with suspicion and distrust and communalism has a vicious hold on some sections of the population, grounds for hope are not wanting and a spirit of understanding, fraternity and common citizenship may be found among progressive sections of all communities. It is on these sections and their increasing influence in the course of time that the future of our secular democracy rests.”

This note by the author of the book under review is followed by an Introduction written by the late Professor Muḥammad Ḥabīb of the Muslim University, Aligarh. The Introduction is in fact nothing but a deliberate attempt at presenting a chapterwise summary of the book and eulogising its author. It is neither a critical assessment nor does it determine the place of the present study in the range of similar works.


The proponents of each tendency are in turn assessed on the whetstone of three
concepts: nationalism, democracy, and socialism. That Abū l-Kalām Azād would fare the best through this tortuous procedure can be easily presaged after the author's pledge in the "note" which prefaces the book. Nevertheless, the chapter on the Congressite Mawlānā is not altogether devoid of a critical attitude. Doctor Shākir has ably traced Azād's intellectual development by clearly differentiating the various phases of his thought This is partly also the case with Iqbal who stands next in the author's appreciation. But the book is marred by one particular weakness: the more the writer is ideologically opposed to his respective candidate, the less he endeavours to distinguish the various phases of his career. This is especially conspicuous in the case of Mawdūdī, a writer whose life is characterised by many a volte face. Mu'in Shākir, no doubt, refers to the shifts of emphasis in Mawdūdī's writings as well but the phases are not so clearly set off from each other as in the case of Azād. While writing about Mawdūdī, why does the author speak in the past tense and after a few pages switch over to the present tense? Does Shākir want to indicate a change in Mawdūdī's stance? The lectures-English in which the whole volume is written hardly allows such a conclusion. As a whole, Khilafat to Partition reads like a dictation which the author never went through after it was typed out (Innumerable printing mistakes make the reading all the more atrocious).

Besides, it must be acknowledged that even in the cases of Azād and Iqbal where Shākir offers a somewhat clear picture of the stages of their intellectual development, this is done without real systematization. References have been made to extraneous influences without any substantiation, e. g., the impact of Near Eastern nationalism on Azād or the influence of the Muslim Brethren on Mawdūdī. In the latter case, as elsewhere, Shākir relies heavily on the evidence of Professor Muḥammad Sarwar of Lahore. Sarwar has done excellent ground-work on a number of subjects. But his aim appears to be to produce introductory works for a general readership without any pedantic pretensions. To use them as source material for a dissertation that raises academic claims, such as the one under review, does justice neither to Sarwar himself nor to the dissertation.

The author's reliance on secondary sources has misled him all too frequently. For example, his evaluation of 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi is near grotesque:

"Maulana Sindhi is the most original and progressive thinker of modern India. After Shah Waliulla and Sir Syed he made a sincere attempt to interpret Islam in accordance with the requirements of the age." (p.48)

This much of praise for an anti-Muslim Leaguer like 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi from the pen of Doctor Shākir is understandable. On the plain of pan-Indian nationalism they are, so to say, comrades-in-arms. But it becomes unbearable when Shākir writes: "Maulana Sindhi is the only Muslim thinker who supported the establishment of a democratic socialist state and society." (p. 49) It is regrettable that the author did not care to look up the easily accessible Khuṭubā’-o Maqāla-t-i Mawlānā 'Ubayd-Allāh Sindhi published by Sarwar first in 1946 (reprint 1970). One wonders how Shākir would feel when reading that his hero’s main concern was to protect the Indian youth from that seemingly inevitable socialist revolution of which Sindhi was mortally scared. In fact, all his endeavours were directed toward one supreme aim, viz., to forestall socialism by means of a peculiar brand of Indian nationalism. This nationalism, however, was to be monistic and not pantheistic as Shākir writes. Pantheism is the author's curious
translation of the mystic doctrine of *wahdat al-wujūd* preached by Sindhī as a common platform for all Indian religions and modern trends of thought. Pantheism, of course, is a possible consequence of this doctrine, but it is wrong to equate essential monism with pantheism as if the two were synonyms, especially in the case of ‘Ubayd-Allāh Sindhī who believed, like his Imām, Shāh Waliy-Allah of Delhi, in a reconciliation (*taḥqīq*) of the opposed doctrines of *wahdat al-wujūd* and *wahdat al-shuhūd*. By courtesy of ‘Azīz Āḥmad, another secondary source, Shākīr characterises Sindhī’s teachings as a “Pseudo-Wali-Allahi communism. This is the characterisation of a religious scholar who wanted to perpetuate British tutelage over India for the sake of protecting it from the violence of land-reforms!

As regards Jinnah, one of Shākīr’s favourite inspirations is Bolitho. In the face of such a propensity for the use of secondary sources the reader is rather disappointed to miss in the chapter on Iqbal any reference to the excellent and most comprehensive study by Annemarie Schimmel entitled *Gabriel’s Wing* (Leiden 1963). But this is by no means the only reference-book to be recommended to Shākīr. A perusal of international journals devoted to the study of Islam could have considerably enhanced the value and authenticity of his amorphous mass of information. Besides, such articles as the one by Freeland Abbott on “The Jamā’at-i Islāmī of Pakistan” (in MEJ XI/1, 1957) could have served as a sample of how to tackle such materials as were culled by Shākīr for his chapter on Mawdūdī. Of yet greater help could have been the chapter by Charles J. Adams on “The Ideology of Mawlána Mawdūdī” contributed to *South Asian Politics and Religion* (edited by Donald E. Smith, Princeton 1966). Adams’ article makes Shākīr’s chapter on the subject superfluous from the viewpoint of research. From the viewpoint of historical writing it could have served as a useful model, especially since Adams deals in similar categories of thought and Shākīr would find his trinity-criterion of nationalism, democracy, and socialism applied by his precursor.

Adams, moreover, teaches a lesson in how to treat the subject of rationalism by expounding how, in the case of Mawdūdī, reason has only an instrumental function: it can decide which is the better of two things being compared, but it cannot independently establish the truth.

But then, these are issues of theology and philosophy beyond the reach, though surprisingly not beyond the scope, of an author endeavouring to write a political history of Muslims without studying Islam and the intricacies of philosophical thought. Therefore, another distinction one misses with Shākīr is that of the ultimate content of Mawdūdī’s ethics, according to which men as individuals and in society have to submit themselves to the law. Once they have done so, they have done all that is required of them. Finally, Shākīr has not clearly worked out the classification of Mawdūdī and his ideology. Here Adams has shown that due to his emphasis on system Mawdūdī, despite all his counter-reformationism, is to be counted among the modernists (“Mawdūdī talks of a ‘system’ that his ancestors felt no need of — the system is a kind of fortress whose intellectual walls turn aside the arrows of doubt and scepticism”, Adams op cit. p. 395).

Besides, Mawdūdī employs a principle of discrimination between the essentials and the forms of their embodiment. Like the modernists he uses this principle of discrimination to liberate himself from the authority of the accumulative Muslim past and to undercut the position of the ‘ulamā’ who represent that authority. Instead of such ratio-
nakes, the author refers in a mystifying way to one Abū Muḥammad Muṣliḥ, as the forerunner of Mawdūdī. The story reminds us of the American Muslim leader Elijah Muḥammad and his mysterious spiritual guide, W. Fard. The difference is that unlike Eric Lincoln in his study on The Black Muslims, Shakir makes no attempt to verify the identity of the said Muṣliḥ or to explode the myth. Here it almost seems as if the author was on the verge of doing some original research, however, he did not pursue the track.

Shākir’s highly misleading expression manifests itself in formulations that make the reader shudder time and again. About Mawdūdī he says: “He was equally attracted towards faith (Imān) and obedience (Īṭṣ‘at-e Amr) which are responsible for the rise of Hitler and Mussolini. Maudoodi admires them because their principles are in agreement with Islam” (p. 221) What he means to say is that those principles agree with the particular notions of Islam as advocated by Mawdūdī, but it requires quite an amount of sympathetic understanding for Shākir to give the right interpretation to his sweeping statements.

Again about Mawdūdī: “His movement and his organisation were financed by the vested interests which sought religious sanction for the Zamindari (landlord) System from the Qur’an and the Sunnah. But after partition he realized the futility of his support to the Zamindari System and began to oppose it. This too he did on Islamic grounds.” (p. 241) This is a highly interesting question and one wishes Shākir to shed more light on this controversy. But again he disappoints his reader completely. He does not indicate even a secondary source for his startling revelation and skips over the issue conveniently.

It is quite obvious that Jinnah remained a most “enigmatic” figure to the author. The respective chapter is, therefore, less concerned with the personality and role of the Qā‘id-i A‘ṣam than with the Muslim League. This distinguishes Shākir’s treatment of Jinnah from that of the other protagonists in the book under review.

In the concluding chapter the author makes an attempt at systematisation without, however, recompensating for the knots and tangles in his effusion of incoherent reflections throughout the preceding chapters. Abū l-‘Alā’ Mawdūdī and Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad are apparently forces diametrically opposed to each other. It is certainly remarkable that Shākir perceived the identity of these Counter-Reformationist twins and put them together in the same category of retrogressive pseudo-reformers. His classification of the liberals and analysis of their role and failure could have proved useful had it not remained confined to a paragraph in the concluding chapter.

The development from 1885 to 1906 has been analysed by Rafiq Zakaria in his profound and systematic study on the Rise of Muslims in Indian Politics (Bombay 1970). If we take his scholarly work as a point of departure then we cannot but conclude that the following period, i.e., from Khilāfat to Partition, has as yet to be adequately treated.

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